



November 12, 2013

Honorable Thomas J. Borris, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California
County of Orange
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Honorable Thomas J. Borris:

First, I must apologize for the tardiness of this response to the 2012 – 2013 Orange County Grand Jury Report dated June 17th, 2013, *“To Protect and Serve: A Look at Tools to Assist Law Enforcement in Achieving Positive Outcomes with the Homeless Mentally Ill”*. The report was both informative and enlightening regarding the homeless/mental illness problem in our community today. In accordance with Penal Code sections 933 and 933.5, the following is our response to the Grand Jury’s Report.

Findings: F1-F11

- 1. Although POST requires continuing education in the area of dealing with individuals who are mentally ill, it does not specify the number of hours or frequency of officer training; nor does it require that such training be documented.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report. Our Field Training Program provides every newly hired La Palma Police Officers with additional training on dealing with the mentally ill, resources available to assist the mentally ill and their family, as well as resources available for the homeless in our community. The Field Training Program is California POST Approved, and this training is documented in the officer’s training manual.
- 2. Field officers desire more in-depth training in dealing with the mentally ill on the street.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report. The La Palma Police Department has committed to providing all officers with more in-depth training in dealing with the mentally ill. We have sent all of our supervisors to the 16-hour California POST approved Crisis Intervention Training.
- 3. There is one officer – in a very few instances two officers – for every one thousand (1000) citizens in a given city within the County who are expected to deal with the full range of law enforcement issues of that city.**

- Partially agree with the data. The Orange County Grand Jury Report states most cities within Orange County have about one officer per one thousand residents. The report states the range of officers per one thousand individuals is .88 to 2.04. The City of La Palma has a resident population of approximately 15,860 residents with the authorized number of police officers at 23.
4. **Nationally accredited police departments police less than 10% of Orange County cities.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury Report.
 5. **Not all Orange County cities have at least one officer training in Crisis Intervention.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report. As noted above, all of our supervisors are required to attend Crisis Intervention Training.
 6. **There is a broad spectrum of on-going training provided to patrol officers in order to develop their abilities and strategies in dealing with the mentally ill. Some departments provide minimal training; others have comprehensive programs in place.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report. The La Palma Police Department follows a comprehensive training plan which starts in the police academy, where officers are introduced to strategies on providing support to those with mental illness. These strategies are reinforced and built upon during the Field Training Program where officers gain real world experience in providing support to the mentally ill.
 7. **Five departments have their patrol officer's ride periodically with the homeless liaison officer. Seventeen do not.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report.
 8. **Departments are reaching out – or beginning to reach out – to neighboring departments and to other skilled professionals. Both in dialogue about the mentally ill and homeless issues in their cities, and to learn more effective strategies in dealing with these individuals.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report.
 9. **All police departments believe that on-going training should be supported by Mental Health Services-Act funding.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report. It is important to leverage all available and appropriate funding to train our field personnel in this area.
 10. **All police departments adhere to written policy, procedure and/or protocol regarding contact with mentally ill persons.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report. The La Palma Police Department has policies and procedures to provide guidance to officers when contacting those who are mentally ill or are emotionally disturbed. These policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are up to date, accurate, and consistent with best practices.
 11. **Policy and lawmakers in the County of Orange continue to examine Laura's Law in light of its potential impact on the mentally ill and all citizens for positive outcomes.**
 - Agrees with finding based upon the information provided in the Grand Jury report.

Recommendations:

R1 – Require specific continuing education for all police officers and sheriff's deputies in interacting with the mentally ill and homeless population:

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation established by the Orange County Chief's and Sheriff's Association. As a member of the association, I will work closely with other members to fulfill this recommendation and the La Palma Police Department will make every effort to provide the specified training.

R2 – All Orange County City Police Departments and the Sheriff's Department shall be accredited with a national accreditation agency within (5) years.

The recommendation requires further analysis. While the La Palma Police Department has previously expressed an interest in national, the initial and recurring costs and necessary resources associated with implementation of accreditation may be prohibitive based on the fiscal restraints of the city.

R3 – The County of Orange Board of Supervisors shall implement a pilot program for Laura's Law with the necessary accommodations to insure that the program will function effectively as an essential tool to help those with mental illness, thus benefiting law enforcement, and the citizens of Orange County

Implementation of this recommendation falls under the scope and responsibility of the County of Orange Board of Supervisors; however, the La Palma Police Department is supportive of additional analysis for establishing a pilot program for Laura's Law as an additional tool for law enforcement to help those with mental illness.

R4 – The Orange County Department of Mental Health Services and the Orange County Board of Supervisors shall provide funding for on-going police officer training through Mental Health Services Act Funding. (F9)

Implementation of this recommendation falls under the scope and responsibility of the County of Orange Board of Supervisors and the Orange County Department of Mental Health Services, however, the La Palma Police Department is supportive of Orange County Department of Mental Health Services and the Orange County Board of Supervisors providing funding for on-going officer training through Mental Health Services Act Funding.

The La Palma Police Department is proud to be in partnership with the Grand Jury in an effort to increase positive outcomes with the homeless and mentally ill at a higher level, and making our community safer as a whole.

Very Best,


Eric R. Nuñez
Chief of Police