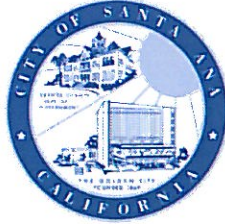


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POLICE DEPARTMENT

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

September 10, 2013

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

Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report – To Protect and To Serve: A Look at Tools to Assist Law Enforcement in Achieving Positive Outcomes with the Homeless Mentally Ill

Dear Presiding Judge Borris:

The Santa Ana Police Department has reviewed the Grand Jury's report related to the homeless mentally ill. As you are aware, the City of Santa Ana is disproportionately impacted by homelessness in Orange County, and we concur that a significant portion of our homeless population do suffer from various forms of mental illness. The Santa Ana Police Department has taken a proactive approach to dealing with the issue of homelessness in an effort to provide services to those affected while also addressing the quality of life issues that impact government agencies, businesses and residents in our community.

The Santa Ana Police Department uses our Civic Center Patrol detail as well as patrol officers to address the issue of homelessness collaboratively with several county and city agencies. The Police Department routinely works with clinicians from the Orange County Health Care Agency, the Centralized Assessment Team (CAT), the Psychiatric Evaluation Team (PET), other law enforcement agencies as well as various City departments to find solutions that serve the best interests of all our stakeholders. The Santa Ana Police Department currently has five officers trained in crisis intervention for the mentally ill and several others that have crisis intervention training not specifically related to the mentally ill.

The Police Department implemented the Homeless Evaluation Assessment Response Team (HEART) Program in October 2012, which is a non-traditional law enforcement program designed to link the homeless population with applicable services in an effort to help those in need and reduce the number of homeless in our community. The Department's database currently has 958 homeless individuals identified as living within the city limits, 560 of which are HEART clients. The database assists police officers and other members of our agency when dealing with the city's homeless population to ensure the most effective results possible. On May 18, 2013, the Santa Ana Police Department hosted the first HEART Program Event in the Civic Center area. Five law enforcement agencies and 13 homeless outreach providers joined the Santa Ana Police Department in this event, which was aimed at bringing available services to the homeless community in an effort to empower and encourage people to end homelessness. During this event, participating agencies contacted 331 members of the homeless community. While several signed up for services, over 80 actually followed up with the providers after the event and have received services aimed at helping them improve their situation.

In accordance with California Penal Code §§ 933 and 933.05(a), the Santa Ana Police Department respectfully makes the following comments as to the findings of the Grand Jury:

F1 – 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.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding. As a matter of practice, the Santa Ana Police Department does document all training provided to members of the Department and maintains extensive training records on each employee to track the type and amount of training received by each of our members.

F2 – Field officers desire more in-depth training in dealing with the mentally ill on the street.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report.

F3 – There is one officer – in a very few instances two officers – for every one-thousand (1,000) citizens in a given city within the County who are expected to deal with the full range of law enforcement issues of that city.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding and currently employs 320 sworn police officers to service a residential population of approximately 325,000, which does not include visitors or members of the public who regularly work in or visit our community.

F4 – Nationally accredited police departments police less than 10% of Orange County cities.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report.

F5 – Not all Orange County cities have at least one officer trained in Crisis Intervention.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report but reiterates that our Department currently has five officers that have received such training and are deployed in the field to work with our homeless community.

F6 – 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.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report. The Santa Ana Police Department acknowledges the competing topics of interest to law enforcement and our community, and we strive to provide the best training available to our officers within budgetary realities.

F7 – Five departments have their patrol officers ride periodically with the homeless liaison officer. Seventeen do not.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report.

F8 – 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.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report. As noted in the Grand Jury's report as well as the information provided above, the Santa Ana Police Department has a long history of partnering with other agencies to provide the best possible services to our homeless community as well as the government agencies, businesses and residents impacted by homelessness. The HEART Program is an excellent example of the lengths to which the Santa Ana Police Department has gone to address the concerns related to homelessness.

F10 – All police departments adhere to a written policy, procedure and/or protocol regarding contact with mentally ill persons.

The Santa Ana Police Department agrees with this finding based on information provided in the Grand Jury's report.

In accordance with California Penal Code §§ 933 and 933.05(b), the Santa Ana Police Department respectfully makes the following comments as to the recommendations of the Grand Jury:

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

- **Orange County City Police Chiefs and the Sheriff-Coroner shall corroborate with the Orange County Chiefs and Sheriff’s Association to set the type, hours and frequency of this supplemental training:**
 - **Include Crisis Intervention Training (perhaps the Memphis model);**
 - **Training is to be documented. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, F10)**

The Santa Ana Police Department will implement the type, frequency and hours of this supplemental training upon agreement with the Orange County Chief’s and Sheriff’s Association.

R2 – All Orange County City Police Departments and the Sheriff’s Department shall be accredited with a national accreditation agency within five (5) years. (F4)

This recommendation will not be implemented by the Santa Ana Police Department. As noted above, the Santa Ana Police Department currently employs 320 sworn police officers compared to 380 officers five years prior. Budgetary constraints are the primary reason for this significant loss of staff. The requirement to engage in the accreditation process is overly burdensome from both a fiscal and operational standpoint. The Department does not have the funding or personnel resources to embark on this cumbersome endeavor, and the Department is not aware of any funding sources available to assist with such a project.

Furthermore, accreditation is not the industry standard in California because of the robust accountability systems in place through California’s Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST). The Santa Ana Police Department is a member agency of POST, which mandates standards as they relate to the hiring and training of police officers. In addition, the Santa Ana Police Department has an extensive library of policies and procedures to guide the performance of our officers in the course and scope of their duties. Those policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are up to date and consistent with the industry’s best practices. Furthermore, the Santa Ana Police Department plans to migrate to the Lexipol policy system in the near future to provide further assurances that our policies remain current. Lastly, the Santa Ana Police Department has an Assistant City Attorney assigned to the Police Department as the Legal Advisor. The main purpose of the Legal Advisor is to advise the Chief of Police and Command Staff members on matters of law, policy, liability and litigation to ensure the Department is providing the highest quality law enforcement services consistent with legal standards, practices and requirements.

Sincerely,



CARLOS ROJAS
Chief of Police