

September 3, 2013

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

Dear Judge Borris:

As Chief of Police of the Seal Beach Police Department, I have reviewed the June 19, 2013 report of the Orange County Grand Jury entitled "*To Protect and Serve: A Look at Tools to Assist Law Enforcement in Achieving Positive Outcomes with the Homeless Mentally Ill*". Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, my response addresses the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury as it pertains solely to the Seal Beach Police Department. My response specifically addresses the Grand Jury report findings F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, and F10, as well as recommendations R1 and R2, as requested.

### RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

**Finding 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.*

**Response to Finding F1:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding.

**Finding F2:** *Field officers desire more in-depth training in dealing with the mentally ill on the street. (Interviews)*

**Response to Finding F2:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding.

**Finding 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.*



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**Response to Finding F3:** I partially agree with this finding. The City of Seal Beach is situated as the gateway to Orange County and is at the crossroads of three major freeways. The population of Seal Beach, and the ratio of officers to that population, fluctuates depending on a variety of factors. Tourism, beach visitors, holidays, and special events can increase the population of the City of Seal Beach at any given time, and skew the ratio of police officers to population.

**Finding F4:** *Nationally accredited police departments police less than 10% of Orange County cities.*

**Response to Finding F4:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding. However, the Seal Beach Police Department and greater than 65% of the Orange County police agencies use the Lexipol policy manual, which is a well-established “best practice” source.

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

**Response to Finding F5:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding.

**Finding 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.*

**Response to Finding F6:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding.

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

**Response to Finding F7:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding.

**Finding 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.*



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**Response to Finding F8:** I agree with this finding. The Seal Beach Police Department Homeless Liaison Officer co-created a professional group of Orange County Law Enforcement Officers called the Orange County Community Officers Working Group. The officers in this working group are currently in assignments that are tasked with issues related to homelessness. They meet on a monthly basis to network, share ideas, and seek out best practices for law enforcement interactions with the homeless population. The majority of police agencies in the county have participated in this working group.

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

**Response to Finding F10:** Based on the information provided in the Grand Jury report, I agree with this finding.

## RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 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)*

### **Response to Recommendation R1:**

Mandated training requirements for police officers are the responsibility of the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). The Seal Beach Police Department is in full compliance with POST standards and regularly undergoes an exhaustive audit of its training records and documentation to ensure compliance.

The Orange County Chiefs' and Sheriff's Association does not impose mandated training requirements upon its membership. The Orange County Chiefs' of Police and Sheriff's Association (OCCPSA) meets to discuss best practices for law enforcement and create protocols for its membership to follow. OCCPSA has endorsed attendance of the 16-hour training course provided by Golden West College; "Crisis Intervention for Law Enforcement – Understanding Mental Illness". As of today, 58% of the current Seal Beach Police Officers and 100% of our custodial staff have attended this course, and the training has been documented.



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## **Recommendation 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)*

## **Response to Recommendation R2:**

This recommendation will not be implemented by the Seal Beach Police Department because it is not warranted and is not reasonable.

Currently, the Seal Beach Police Department utilizes the Lexipol policy program. The majority of municipal police departments in Orange County use Lexipol, which has proven to be a comprehensive risk management system that withstands scrutiny and legal challenge.

It is also our understanding that CALEA and other national accreditation bodies were created to provide those states without peace officer standards a blueprint in creating standardization, as well as best policies and practices. California is not one of those states. We, along with over 600 other agencies in California, participate in the California Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) program. California Peace Officers Standards and Training regulations were established and adopted in compliance with, and by authority of, Penal Code sections 13500 et seq., and are codified in Title 11, Division 2 of the California Code of Regulations. Our ongoing participation is witness to our compliance, with all regulatory requirements established by the State of California.

Finally, the unfunded mandate and long-term commitment of personnel to the accreditation process is the core basis for disagreement with this Grand Jury recommendation. CALEA accreditation is costly, requiring an initial cost of \$10,000.00 and an annual fee of \$4000.00, as well as additional "hidden costs" in time and manpower needed to manage and maintain accreditation compliance. Furthermore, CALEA accreditation is redundant to standards set forth by POST and Lexipol. At this time, there does not appear to be a tangible benefit to CALEA accreditation.

Respectfully,

Joe Stilinovich  
Chief of Police