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CITY OF SANTA ANA

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July 15, 2024

Honorable Judge Maria Hernandez
Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

City of Santa Ana's Response to 2023-2024 Orange County Grand Jury Report-
Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service

Honorable Presiding Judge Hernandez,

Santa Ana's responses to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations of the 2023-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report-Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service ("Grand Jury Report") are set forth in the attachment in accordance with the format required by Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05.

Respectfully,

Alvaro Nuñez
City Manager

Enclosure: Santa Ana's Response to Findings

Cc: Orange County Grand Jury

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RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

Finding F1:

Mental health training for law enforcement officer in Orange County exceeds the State's requirements, resulting in law enforcement applying these skills to better evaluate and handle mental health calls for service

The City of Santa Ana agrees with this finding. The City of Santa Ana Police Department fields a Quality of Life Team (QOLT), which specializes in engaging with unhoused individuals and those suffering from mental health issues. QOLT works in partnership with local, county, and state entities to provide services that are generally outside the scope of law enforcement practice. QOLT officers have specialized training to aid them in accomplishing their specialized duties.

Finding F2:

Law enforcement agencies in Orange County have developed unique ways to deal with mental health calls in their communities based on their particular needs and budgets, enabling law enforcement to better serve their communities.

The City of Santa Ana agrees with this finding. The needs and budgets differ from city to city throughout the County. Law enforcement agencies deploy their personnel according to the unique needs of their respective cities. Notwithstanding the budget and other challenges faced by the City of Santa Ana, the Santa Ana Police Department recognizes the importance of its response to mental health calls for service, and to that end and as previously mentioned, the Department has dedicated a full-time Quality of Life Team.

Finding F3:

Law enforcement collaboration with County PERT clinicians and Be Well mobileresponse units has been an effective tool when responding to mental health calls for service.

The City of Santa Ana agrees with this finding. The QOLT program includes an officer specifically assigned to a Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) clinician. This partnership is invaluable in providing services to persons experiencing mental health crisis. Currently, the Santa Ana Police Department does not collaborate in the Be Well mobile response units. Instead, the City of Santa Ana partners with City Net to offer resources to officers and citizens alike for dealing with mental health issues.

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Finding F4:

People with mental illness respond more positively to “soft uniformed” police personnel, which can be effective in de-escalating situations.

The City of Santa Ana agrees with this finding. QOLT officers, to include the officer assigned to the PERT clinician, wear a “soft uniform” consisting of a clearly marked Santa Ana Police Department polo shirt, jeans, and a gun belt. This uniform is a balance between uniformed command presence and a relaxed demeanor suitable for de-escalation.

Finding F5:

Providing follow-up case management is not only necessary but critical for the wellbeing of people experiencing mental health issues.

The City of Santa Ana agrees with this finding. As part of their daily responsibilities, the Officer assigned to the PERT Clinician and the clinician conduct follow-up case management. They regularly follow up with clients regarding medication and appointment attendance. Case management is essential for the client's well-being and success.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Orange County Grand Jury report does not contain any recommendations.

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