



August 8, 2024

The Honorable Maria Hernandez
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Steve Jones
Mayor

Cindy Ngoc Tran
Mayor Pro Tem - District 3

George S. Brietigam
Council Member - District 1

John R. O'Neill
Council Member - District 2

Joe DoVinh
Council Member - District 4

Stephanie Klopfenstein
Council Member - District 5

Kim B. Nguyen-Penalosa
Council Member - District 6

RE: Response to the 2023-24 Orange County Grand Jury Report re: Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service.

Dear Judge Hernandez,

In accordance with Penal Code 933.05(a) and (b), the City of Garden Grove submits the following response to the report, findings, and recommendations of the 2023-24 Orange County Grand Jury Report entitled, "Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service."

FINDINGS

F1. Mental health training for law enforcement officers 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.

Response: The City of Garden Grove agrees with the above finding. The recommendation has been implemented. The Garden Grove Police Department is fully committed to ongoing mental health training. Currently, the Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) requires officers to complete 24 hours of training every two years, which includes three hours of mental health training. The Garden Grove Police Department exceeds this required training and mandates officers to complete two hours of mental health training annually. This training exceeds the mandated training by POST and is also required by our accreditation through the Commission of Accreditation for Law Enforcement (CALEA). The Garden Grove Police Department was last accredited in July of 2024.

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.

Response: The City of Garden Grove agrees with the above finding. The recommendation has been implemented. The City of Garden Grove was the first City in the County to implement both full-time Be Well crisis counselors and a part-time Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) clinician. Officers can access the Crisis Assessment Team (CAT) if Be Well or PERT are unavailable. In addition, Garden Grove staff participated in the Orange County Mental Health Crisis Response Continuum Forum hosted at Freedom Hall Mile Square Park, and the City's GGPD Special Resource Team regularly collaborates with the County mobile CAT team to address mental health needs.

F3. Law enforcement collaboration with County PERT clinicians and Be Well mobile response units has been an effective tool when responding to mental health calls for service.

Response: The City of Garden Grove agrees with the above finding. The recommendation has been implemented. Furthermore, the City of Garden Grove has been a pioneer in mental health services and was the first City in Orange County to have both Be Well crisis counselors and PERT clinicians simultaneously.

F4. People with mental illness respond more positively to "soft uniformed" police personnel, which can be effective in de-escalating situations.

Response: The City of Garden Grove agrees with the above finding. The recommendation has been implemented. GGPD authorizes their Special Resource Team the ability to wear and respond to calls in a modified uniform consisting of gray pants, a black polo shirt, and the optional soft boots or athletic shoes. This uniform is distinctly different from the standard navy wool uniform worn by patrol officers and most GGPD officers. Furthermore, Special Resource Officers have an unmarked truck to respond to mental health calls and perform homeless outreach. GGPD observes that individuals are more likely to react favorably to officers' presence when officers are not in a traditional police uniform and are not driving marked black and white police vehicles.

F5. Providing follow-up case management is not only necessary but critical for the well-being of people experiencing mental health issues.

Response: The City of Garden Grove agrees with the above finding. The recommendation has been implemented. GGPD routinely collaborates with PERT, CAT, and Be Well on case management and following up with our community members' mental health needs. A significant portion of Be Well and PERT's time is spent on case management. Additionally, GGPD allows Be Well to follow up without an officer present when the situation permits. Be Well counselors are also available 18 hours a day and can follow up after school and traditional work hours, unlike PERT, which is only available for conventional working hours.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Shawn Park, Assistant to the City Manager, at (714) 741-5371 or by email at shawnp@ggcity.org.

Respectfully Submitted,



Steven R. Jones
Mayor of Garden Grove