

Office of the City Council



August 20, 2024

Honorable D. Maria Hernandez, Presiding Judge
Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Response to 2023-2024 Orange County Grand Jury Report "Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service"

Your Honor:

On May 30, 2024, the Orange County Grand Jury issued a report entitled "Law Enforcement's Response to Mental Health Calls for Service" that examined the degree to which law enforcement agencies provide for those experiencing a mental health crisis.

At the conclusion of its analysis, the Grand Jury made five findings, with no recommendations, and required the City to respond to each of the five findings. In accordance with California Penal Code 933.05(a) and (b), the Orange County Grand Jury requires responses of each of the findings. The City of Tustin responds as set forth below.

FINDINGS

Finding 1. 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 to Finding 1: The City of Tustin agrees with Finding 1. Tustin PD officers attend 15 hours of "People with Disabilities" training when they attend the Police Academy. Every two years all Tustin PD officers and sergeants attend 4 hours of "Strategic Communication" training. This training includes mental health and de-escalation tactics.

California Penal Code 13515.28(a)(1) requires Field Training Officers (FTO) who are instructors for the field training program to attend 8 hours of "Crisis Intervention Training" (CIT). This training better prepares officers in effectively addressing incidents involving persons with a mental illness or intellectual disabilities. Tustin PD sends all FTO's to 16 hours of Advanced CIT training.

In addition, the Homeless Liaison Officer, Community Impact Officer, and Behavioral Health Response Unit (BHRU) Manager has also attended 16 hours of Advanced CIT training since they regularly interact with individuals experiencing mental health problems.

Finding 2. 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.

Honorable D. Maria Hernandez, Presiding Judge

August 20, 2024

Page 2

Response to Finding 2: The City of Tustin agrees with Finding 2. Tustin PD has a Homeless Liaison Officer and Community Impact Officer who works side by side with the BHRU Manager. Together they handle day-to-day calls for service received from dispatch, engaging with individuals who may be struggling with mental health problems. Often these calls require further follow-up and the BHRU Manager re-engages with these individuals, checking on their well-being and linking them to resources.

Finding 3. 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 to Finding 3: The City of Tustin agrees with Finding 3. An Orange County Health Care Agency PERT clinician rides with the Homeless Liaison Officer and Community Impact Officer every Tuesday. Together they respond to mental health calls for service.

While Tustin PD does not partner with Be Well's mobile unit, the City has used Be Well's Orange facility to assist individuals who need immediate mental health services or who need assistance with sobering from alcohol or drugs.

Additionally, Tustin PD outsources homeless outreach and engagement services through City Net. Many of these contacts are done in conjunction with the Tustin PD BHRU Manager, Homeless Liaison Officer and Community Impact Officer.

Finding 4. People with mental illness respond more positively to "soft uniformed" police personnel, which can be effective in de-escalating situations.

Response to Finding 4. The City of Tustin agrees with Finding 4. The BHRU Manager, Homeless Liaison Officer and Community Impact Officer wear non-traditional police uniforms which assist in de-escalating contacts and allow for non-confrontational encounters. Furthermore, the BHRU Manager and Homeless Liaison Officer drive unmarked vehicles.

Finding 5. Providing follow-up case management is not only necessary but critical for the well-being of people experiencing mental health issues.

Response to Finding 5: The City of Tustin agrees with Finding 5. Tustin PD's BHRU Manager provides comprehensive follow-up services to individuals in need; ensuring they receive the support and assistance necessary to address any issues they may be facing.

Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact Lieutenant Sarah Fetterling at Tustin Police Department at 714.573.3308 or via email at SFetterling@tustinca.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Austin Lombard".

Austin Lombard, Mayor

cc: Orange County Grand Jury