

The People are the City



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401 East Chapman Avenue – Placentia, California 92870

September 3, 2024

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

**RE: 2023-2024 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT ENTITLED “LAW ENFORCEMENT’S RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH CALLS FOR SERVICE”**

Dear Judge Hernandez:

The City of Placentia has reviewed the 2023-2024 Orange County Jury Report, “Law Enforcement’s Response to Mental Health Calls for Service.” We thank the volunteer members of the Grand Jury for their time and considerable effort in analyzing the various aspects of Orange County law enforcement’s model for training law enforcement personnel on mental health crisis intervention techniques and collaborating with behavioral organizations to improve service and reduce stigma for those affected by mental illness. The report made several findings on which the City of Placentia must comment, including Findings F1, F2, F4, and F5. Please consider this letter as the City’s official response to these findings.

**Finding 1 (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.

City’s Response: AGREE. All police academies in Orange County meet or exceed the minimum POST requirements. During their field training period, new police officers receive additional mental health training. Supervisors also present and discuss the handling of mental health calls for service during briefing training.

**Finding 2 (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.

City’s Response: AGREE. One of the ways that Placentia has done this is by having the foresight to build a navigation center that provides a whole host of services and collaborating with outside providers to address homelessness and mental health calls for service. The navigation center in Placentia was the result of Placentia being one of twelve cities that established a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to create the North Orange County Service Planning Area (North SPA). The North SPA was awarded over twelve million dollars in 2018 to address the homelessness crisis. A navigation center



was also opened in Buena Park. These navigation centers, in collaboration with Outreach Grid, provide trained personnel to go out into our community to engage people experiencing homelessness and those with mental health issues and provide them with the services and care they need. Outreach Grid developed an app that is a resource database. Outreach Grid facilitates resources from first contact in the field to housing placement. Our outreach workers and police officers access it via cell phones or another device to confirm the availability of the specific resources needed, such as a bed in our navigation center for the individual(s) being contacted. In short, it identifies available resources in real time that can then be provided to those in need. Placentia also has one full-time Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) and two ancillary HLO's that routinely assist those who are homeless and those with mental health issues. The North SPA was established during the height of the homelessness crisis throughout California. The quality of care provided by this full-service system created by Placentia and other North SPA cities has become a model for other cities to follow nationwide. Placentia is also a member of the North Orange County Public Safety Collaborative, which was formed in 2017. This is a coalition of cities, police agencies, nonprofits, behavioral health practitioners, and community health workers dedicated to providing health and human services to the community. Part of this collaborative was creating the HOPE Center. The HOPE Center's mission is to provide reliable help and consistent support to those experiencing homelessness in the North SPA.

**Finding 4 (F4):** People with mental illness respond more positively to “soft uniformed” police personnel, which can be effective in de-escalating situations.

City's Response: AGREE. This is practiced in our partnership with Hope Center. Their proactive engagement in our community by fielding behavioral health street practitioners and community health workers dressed in “soft clothes” with a uniformed officer to assist as needed puts this finding into practical application. This mobile approach to those with mental health issues enables those in need to get help directly on the streets. This provides the client with stability, respite, and a welcoming environment. This also includes transportation and ongoing case management. Although this can often be the case, there are many circumstances in which a uniformed police presence may de-escalate situations, too. Being immediately identifiable as the police is essential to letting everyone involved in a call for service or bystanders know that the police have arrived. Wearing uniforms and driving marked units that society can immediately identify as being the police demonstrates stability and additional support to those in need. Society understands the authority of a police presence to resolve complex conflicts while protecting people, including outreach and mental health workers providing initial services in the field. Having both options to respond as needed 24/7 would be an ideal method of practice for an agency with the personnel and fiscal resources to do so.

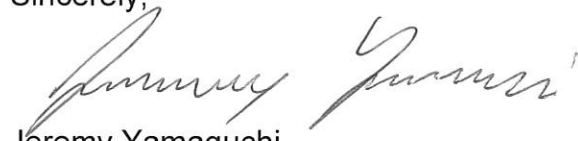
**Finding 5 (F5):** Providing follow-up case management is not only necessary but critical for the wellbeing of people experiencing mental health issues.

City's Response: AGREE. This is absolutely the case, and, again, why Placentia has built a Navigation Center and provides or arranges all our services for our homeless and those with mental health issues. The many services offered allow for various care options for those in need. Recognizing the importance of familiarity and stability with those who have mental health issues, family reunification is also offered. The Public Safety Collaborative,

which Placentia participates in, also follows through with food and housing vouchers. Those who enter our Navigation Center receive case management while in residency and for up to nine months to a year after exiting the facility. The North SPA is a success story with metrics that show that it continues to make a real difference in our communities.

Thank you for affording the City this opportunity to comment upon the findings of the Grand Jury. Should you have any questions or need clarification regarding the City's responses contained herein, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeremy Yamaguchi".

Jeremy Yamaguchi  
Mayor, City of Placentia

cc: Placentia City Council  
Damien Arrula, City Administrator  
Brad Butts, Police Chief  
Orange County Grand Jury