

**1995-96 VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY****First Final Report****Response: Ventura County Mental Health**

On behalf of the entire Mental Health Department and especially the manager and staff of our Crisis Team, we would like to thank the Grand Jury for their interest in mental health crisis services and our interface with local law enforcement. We strongly agree that this partnership is very important for our community and should receive priority for planning and support.

This written response will focus on those recommendations and actions within the authority and responsibility of the Mental Health Department. Recommendations related to County budget priorities or the policies and procedures of the Sheriff's Department or local police agencies require a response beyond the authority of the Mental Health Department.

Recommendations:

1. **Due to recent tragic situations resulting in death and injury to both officers and mental patients, permanent Crisis Teams should be set up. When the police receive a call that is designated "a 5150" (danger to self or others), it should trigger an immediate call to the Mental Health Department Crisis Teams.**

Ventura County Mental Health has established a permanent Crisis Team as recommended, including the East County Satellite Team. The Crisis Team assigns a priority to any police request for assistance and responds immediately within the limits of available personnel.

2. **The Mental Health Crisis Teams should continue to provide training to police departments and make sessions available to police personnel at mutually convenient times.**

The Mental Health Department is involved in a number of initiatives with local law enforcement agencies to provide information and training to front line police officers. They include the following:

- The Supervisor of the Crisis Team participates monthly in the two day COPPS Training (Community Policing) Program for local law enforcement personnel conducted by the Sheriff's Department. Since September, 1995, the Crisis Team Supervisor has delivered a monthly one hour presentation

about the Crisis Team and mental health crisis intervention services to law enforcement officers as part of these trainings.

- The Supervisor and other staff from the Crisis Team have initiated meetings with police chiefs and senior police executives from Ventura, Oxnard, and Simi Valley to provide information and promote collaboration. Similar meetings for the other city departments will occur during the coming year. This is an ongoing commitment to develop, maintain, and expand lines of communication.
- Crisis Team staff have also attended "role-call" meetings, most recently in Simi Valley, and in April in Oxnard. These meetings occur during day and evening shift and enable our Crisis Team staff to communicate directly with all line officers. These outreach efforts will be ongoing during the coming year.

3. **The police departments (city and county) develop a program of cooperation and training with the Crisis Teams in order to use both agencies efficiently. The program that is now being implemented between the City of Ventura and the Crisis Teams can be used as model. Meetings between the Crisis Teams counselors and the police officers can be scheduled on a regular basis and also as situation arise.**

The Mental Health Department will continue to cooperate and promote opportunities for partnership and collaboration between the Crisis Team and local law enforcement agencies. If police departments develop new training opportunities our staff will be glad to participate.

4. **The Crisis Team supervisors should set up meetings with police officers and counselors in order for the counselor to learn more about how the police can handle persons who are in trouble.**

The Crisis Team Supervisor and staff have met and will continue to meet with the Sheriff's staff and senior police officers to learn about police policy and procedures. New staff on the Crisis Team participate in "ride-alongs" as part of their orientation and training. This is in addition to the other examples of collaboration and communication referred to earlier.

5. **The Mental Health Department should set up a system that will record the number of times that the Mobile Crisis Teams are used in conjunction with the police in each jurisdiction.**

The Mental Health Department will initiate a data collection system to identify the number of law enforcement referrals and contacts by jurisdiction. This information will be shared with the Sheriff and Police Chiefs.

6. **Funds for the Mobile Crisis Teams should be provided on a permanent basis. The Board of Supervisors should find a method to provide funds and designate Crisis Teams as a matter of public safety.**

Budget decisions for all services are made by the Board of Supervisors. At the department level we have assigned a high budget priority to the Crisis Team and will protect this vital service to the extent possible.

7. **Law enforcement agencies should also seriously consider providing Crisis Team funds under this designation as a function of public safety.**

This policy recommendation calls for a decision by the Board of Supervisors and is beyond the level of department policy or action.

8. **Funds should be provided immediately for a back-up team to be put "on alert" for the East Valley when the primary team is out on a call.**

We currently have six staff (two three-person shifts) from noon until midnight seven days per week, based at the East Valley Sheriff's Station. Provisions for back-up staff from Ventura to work shifts at the East County site during times of illness or vacation are in place. A fourth person on each shift is scheduled for assignment to the East Valley Sheriff's station when additional space can be identified. If space is not available this year within the Sheriff's Station which is ideal, we will have to explore alternatives at another 24 hour site but within the East County. Ventura based staff do remain "on alert" and screen all calls, including those from the East County, to assess risk and respond to the highest priority need.

9. **Funds that were deleted last year should be replaced for the support staff of a half-time Office Assistant III.**

Budget decisions are made by the Board of Supervisors. The Department will continue to collect essential program and financial data using available Crisis Team staff not occupied with a current emergency.

cc: Sheriff Larry Carpenter
Chief Bob Brooks
Commander Bruce McDowell
Lt. William Boyd
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