

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: September 26, 2013 REPORT NO. 13-078
ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of October 9, 2013
SUBJECT: Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) Presentation

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego Police Department presents a report to the Committee on the department's collaboration with the county funded program, PERT Inc., the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team.

Early in the 1990's several "use-of-force" situations occurred involving the police department detaining individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. The situations were cleared through our Internal Affairs Unit and the San Diego County District Attorney's Office. However, law enforcement, family members, individuals with mental illness and media questioned law enforcements tactics.

In 1993, in response to law enforcement's use of force, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors developed a task force to evaluate use of force and mental health training. The task force was made up of mental health professionals, law enforcement personnel, families of individuals with mental illness and mental health consumers.

In 1996, in response to the task force recommendations of the need for more expertise while responding to radio calls involving individuals experiencing mental health crisis, the San Diego Police Department developed a pilot program in Western Division pairing a psychiatric clinician and a San Diego Police officer. This team became known as the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT). The clinician and officer works in a patrol car and responded to mental health calls for service.

DISCUSSION

According to County Health and Human Services Agency one in four people will experience mental health issues within their lifetime. The Department recognizes the majority of mental health calls for service do not involve criminal behavior but instead a call for help.

San Diego Police Department Crime Analysis Unit reports the Department has seen a 53% increase in mental health calls for service since 2008. In 2008 we responded to approximately 8,000 calls for service. In 2012 we responded to approximately 13,700 mental health calls for service. The first three months of this calendar year the Department has responded to approximately 3,235 mental health calls for service. This is an increase of 2% from the same time period in 2012.

The mission of the PERT program is to provide effective and compassionate crisis intervention to individuals living with mental illness in the community who come into contact with law enforcement officers. The PERT team provides linkages to appropriate levels of psychiatric service.

The PERT program pairs a licensed mental health professional with a police officer. The team rides together in the field for an entire shift and is a first responder to assist in mental health related emergencies brought to the attention of law enforcement. By riding in a car together the team combines law enforcement and mental health skills and expertise which enable a compassionate and effective crisis intervention.

Our Department currently contracts with PERT Inc. for the services of 9.5 full time clinicians. The PERT teams usually work between the hours of 0600 until midnight. All clinicians are employees of PERT Inc. and are funded by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency. There is no cost to the City of San Diego.

The goals of the PERT program are:

- Prevent unnecessary incarceration and/or hospitalization of mentally ill individuals.
- Provide compassionate alternative care in the least restrictive environment.
- Provide a coordinated and comprehensive system-wide approach.
- Allow police patrol units to return to service sooner.

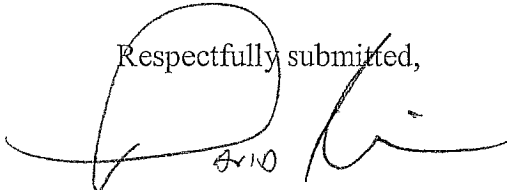
In addition to providing the clinicians to our Department, the PERT program sponsors mental health and crisis intervention training for sworn personnel and dispatchers. This training consists of:

- 3-Day/24 Hour POST Certified PERT Academy (4 times a year)
- 1-Day/8 Hour POST Certified PERT Academy (8 times a year)
- Quarterly Training Day (10 hours)
- On-Going Line Up/Briefing Training
- Community Outreach/Training

CONCLUSION

The Psychiatric Emergency Response Team has been recognized throughout the United States as a best practice program. The program is now funded throughout the San Diego County with all Police Chiefs/Sheriff through a partnership agreement. The partnership agreement provides a coordinated law enforcement response to mental health calls for service. The partnerships created between the county, city and community has enabled the police officers and deputies on the street to effectively work with individuals experiencing mental health crisis.

Respectfully submitted,

 *EX. ASST - CHIEF*
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For

William M. Lansdowne
Chief of Police