



EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2010-2011

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH CRISES

Case Number GJ 010-007

REASON FOR REPORT

The El Dorado County Grand Jury (EDCGJ) learned that a number of recent encounters between law enforcement and persons in emotional crisis have resulted in confrontations leading to injury or even death. An investigation was initiated to develop workable recommendations for interagency collaboration that would reduce risks to officers, subjects and citizens.

BACKGROUND

Local law enforcement services within El Dorado County (EDC) are provided by the Placerville Police Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, and the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department. The California Highway Patrol provides back up to local law enforcement as needed. Emergency calls regarding community disturbances or life threatening behavior are responded to by the appropriate law enforcement agency. When a call involves a report of violent acts that have been committed or are in progress, a tactical law enforcement response is initiated. When a call involves threats of violence or suicide, officers are dispatched to respond, assess, and investigate. If initial attempts to de-escalate the situation fail, a quick assessment must be made in the interest of public and officer safety.

Nationwide calls for assistance involving threatening behavior now account for 15 to 20 percent of the total number of calls. This percentage is anticipated to increase as the at-risk population expands and mental health resources diminish. Recent encounters in El Dorado County culminating with the death of a mental health patient in Placerville in March of 2010 caused local authorities to acknowledge this disturbing trend. They have expressed a commitment to participate in an effort to strengthen prevention by

developing effective, tested, intervention protocols designed to de-escalate potentially violent encounters.

METHODOLOGY

- The Grand Jury conducted multiple interviews with law enforcement and persons involved in the administration and delivery of mental health programs, attended meetings, and collected information from a variety of sources. Persons from the following organizations were interviewed:
 - Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
 - District Attorney Office, EDC
 - Emergency Services Authority, EDC
 - Health Services Department, Mental Health Division, EDC
 - Human Services Department, EDC
 - Marshall Hospital
 - Mental Health Commission
 - Multidisciplinary Team, EDCSO
 - National Alliance on Mental Illness
 - Placer County Sheriff Office
 - Placerville Police Department
 - Probation Department, EDC
 - Public Defender, EDC
 - Rocklin Police Department
 - Veterans Affairs, EDC
 - Veterans Affairs, Sacramento County
- The Grand Jury reviewed relevant portions of the following documents (August 2010 to April 2011):
 - Analysis of Crisis Services Provided 10/25/10 through 1/21/2011 by EDC Mental Health Division (2/8/11)
 - Autism Registry Guidelines -El Dorado County Sheriff Department (not dated)
 - Behavioral Health Team Guidelines - El Dorado County Superior Court May 2006
 - California Association of Mental Health Patient Rights Advocates, Rights Manual, 2011
 - Cooperative Law Enforcement Agreement between the Sheriff of El Dorado County and the Pacific Southwest Region of the USDA Forest Service. 5/23/03
 - CPES Estimates of Need for Mental Health Services For El Dorado County for 2007
 - Crisis Intervention 2.0: Law Enforcements Expanded Role; Pickens, Kirkham & Hammitt, 2009.
 - District Attorney Office Mental Health Statistics Summary, (4/1/2011)
 - District Attorney's Report of the Investigation of the Incident of 3/28/10 (8/10)

- El Dorado County Multi-agency Memo of Understanding addressing mental health custody issues – drafted February, 2011
- El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office Policy Manual
- Guide for Families of Arrested Mental Health Patients, Alameda County Sheriff’s Office, 3/20/11
- Guidelines for Recognizing Mental Illness, Rocklin Police Department Procedures Manual, revised November 2010
- Incident Report, USDA Forest Service, 3/27/10
- Mental Health Commission Mission and Organizational Underpinnings.
- Mental Health Commission/West Slope Report to BOS 2009
- Mental Illness And The Potential For Violence, Cato News Journal, summer 2010
- National Alliance On Mental Illness Resource Information, 10/27/10
- Placer County 5150 Emergency Response, 2/16/11
- Placerville Police Department Policy Manual
- Print Media Reports Regarding Mental Health Related Actions
- San Joaquin County Mental Health Services Policy and Procedure Manual- Revised May 21, 2004
- Security Management Guidelines-Marshall Hospital, revised 2010
- Welfare & Institutions Code §5150

FINDINGS

1. Agencies which have signaled an interest in participating in joint efforts to improve prevention and response to mental health crises include: El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office, EDC Mental Health, Placerville Police Department, EDC District Attorney, National Alliance on Mental Illness, EDC Emergency Services Authority, EDC Mental Health Commission EDC Probation Department and Marshall Hospital.
2. This commitment to move forward resulted in written agreements, augmented participation in training programs, and expanded use of the Sheriff’s Department sponsored Multi-Disciplinary Team.
3. There is a lack of leadership structure supported by agency heads and the Board of Supervisors. This deficiency could make the joint effort less effective and subject to collapse should interagency conflict arise or public interest wane.
4. The potential for continued or increased encounters with persons in crisis is apparent according to available data. There is a significant increase in the at-risk population. For example, in El Dorado County there are 521 veterans who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and 681 veterans receiving care for other mental health disorders. This group represents a small portion of the at-risk population in the county.

5. Declining revenues limit the ability of organizations to commit resources to these mental health incidents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The EDC Board of Supervisors should immediately appoint an ad hoc committee to develop a plan for prevention of and response to emergency health crises and make recommendations for the creation of an official structure to implement and manage this plan.

This committee would be chaired by the Director of Health Services and will be comprised of executive representatives of the Sheriff, the District Attorney, the Chiefs of South Lake Tahoe and Placerville Police Departments, EDC Emergency Services Authority and other entities as necessary (e.g. Mental Health Commission, National Alliance for Mental Illness).

The committee should meet and make its recommendations within ninety days from the date of its creation which will then be considered for adoption by the BOS.

The recommended official mental health emergency response organization might be a variation of the Incident Command System that originated in California to respond and fight fires and has been adopted nationally to respond to all emergencies, large and small.

2. The recommended emergency mental health crisis plan should also address conflict intervention training, required drills, intervention strategies, identification of warning signs, communication and notification protocols.

RESPONSES

Responses to both numbered findings and recommendations in this report are required in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Address responses to: The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court, 1354 Johnson Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

This report has been provided to the following for response:

- El Dorado County Sheriff
- EDC Director of Mental Health
- Placerville Chief of Police
- EDC District Attorney

- Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness
- EDC Director of Emergency Services Authority
- President, EDC Mental Health Commission
- EDC Chief of Probation
- Director of Marshall Hospital Placerville, CA

Elected officials under statute are given 60 days to respond, and non-elected officials are provided a 90-day response period from the release date of this report.