



# San Diego County Sheriff's Department

Post Office Box 939062 • San Diego, California 92193-9062



*William D. Gore, Sheriff*

August 25, 2020

Susan N. Youngflesh, Board Chairperson  
Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board  
555 West Beech Street, Suite 505  
San Diego, CA 92101-3819

**CLERB CASE NUMBER: 19-037**

Dear Chairperson Youngflesh,

The Sheriff's Department welcomes and supports the Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board's independent review of complaints alleging improper actions by members of this organization. We continuously strive to respond with professionalism and concern to the citizens we serve and the CLERB process provides invaluable input to that end.

After reviewing the CLERB Investigator's report and the Review Board's advisory Policy Recommendation letter dated July 17, 2020, the Sheriff's Department understands the concerns expressed by the CLERB members.

Your policy recommendation regarding Detention Services Bureau Policy and Procedure section *J.5 Inmate Suicide Prevention Practices and Inmate Safety Program* have been reviewed by all levels in the Department. We concur with your request to modify this section and have added previously removed language to this policy. Please see the attached revised policy, which was implemented effective August 21, 2020.

It is our goal to provide the highest quality public safety services to everyone in San Diego County. I would like to thank you for your service to the citizens of the County of San Diego.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM D. GORE, SHERIFF

Scott Amos, Lieutenant  
Office of the Sheriff  
Division of Inspectional Services  
WDG:SA:am

**San Diego County Sheriff's Department Detention Services Bureau – Manual of Policies and Procedures**

<b>DATE:</b>	AUGUST 21, 2020
<b>NUMBER:</b>	J.5
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	INMATE SUICIDE PREVENTION PRACTICES & INMATE SAFETY PROGRAM
<b>RELATED SECTIONS:</b>	<a href="#">J.1</a> , <a href="#">J.3</a> , <a href="#">J.4</a> , <a href="#">M.25</a> , <a href="#">MSD S.10</a>

**PURPOSE**

To set forth procedures for detention staff to identify those inmates who may be an elevated risk for self-harm or suicide.

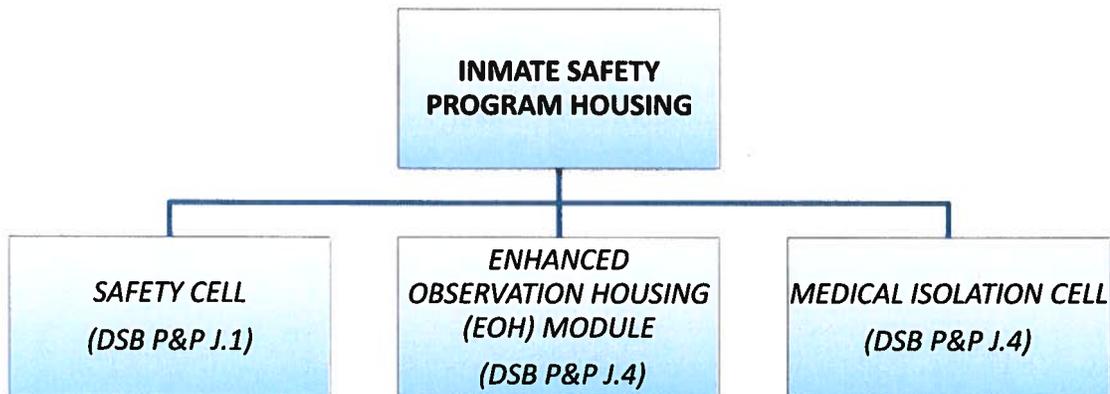
**POLICY**

Inmates who are recognized and observed as being a potential self-harm or suicide risk shall be assessed for consideration of placement into one of the defined Inmate Safety Program (ISP) housing options as further described in Detention Services Bureau Policies and Procedures (DSB P&P) J.1 and J.4. Sworn staff shall immediately notify health staff and the watch commander of any inmate that presents a potential or actual danger to self, danger to others or is unable to care for self.

Suicide risk assessment for the ISP will be conducted by the facility gatekeeper. The gatekeeper is a Qualified Mental Health Provider (QMHP) or assigned designee in their absence.

**DEFINITIONS**

ISP housing is defined as placement into any of the following housing options for the purpose of providing proper intervention, close observation and assessment of inmates who may be at an elevated risk for suicide.



**Qualified Mental Health Provider (QMHP)** - Refers to a Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Licensed Mental Health Clinician (MHC), Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP), or contracted Psychiatric Registered Nurse (PRN).

**Assigned Designee** - Refers to staff assigned to perform certain tasks when a QMHP is not present in the facility. The assigned designee will be an assigned registered nurse for the shift at each facility.

Sworn staff should be familiar with the following definitions:

**Suicidal Ideation** - Thinking about, considering or planning suicide.

**Self-Harm** – The act of deliberately causing destruction and/or damage to one's body.

**Suicide Attempt** - A non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior; suicide attempts might not result in injury. This includes behavior that would likely have resulted in death or serious injury had staff not intervened.

**Suicide** - Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.

## PROCEDURE

### I. RISK FACTORS FOR ISP HOUSING ASSESSMENT

- A. The following are identified high suicide risk factors that, when identified, require further assessment by the facility gatekeeper for consideration of placement into ISP housing:
1. High publicity case with possible evasion of arrest or SWAT/SED standoff with serious felony charges including, but not limited to, homicide, rape or child-victim crimes.
  2. Severe, life or death sentences.
  3. The inmate states they are suicidal and/or makes suicidal statements, either verbally or in writing, to others (e.g., family members, sworn staff, health staff, inmate processing staff, counseling staff, reentry services staff, volunteers, clergy, etc.).
  4. Previous suicide attempts (within the past five years).
  5. Staff observation of depressed/emotional turmoil.
- B. Other risk factors that could cause circumstantial concerns and may initiate an assessment for consideration of placement into ISP housing include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. History of psychiatric illness
  2. First time offender

3. Intoxication/withdrawal
4. Severe aggressiveness
5. Physical signs of depression (e.g., sadness, crying, withdrawal/silence, sudden loss or gain in appetite, insomnia, mood variations, lethargy, etc.).

## II. ASSESSMENT FOR PLACEMENT INTO ISP HOUSING

- A. All inmates requiring an assessment and consideration for placement into ISP housing due to suicidal risk shall be evaluated by the facility gatekeeper.
- B. If the facility gatekeeper determines the inmate requires placement into the ISP, they shall determine the appropriate ISP housing (e.g., safety cell vs. EOH). Actively self-harming or actively assaultive inmates may be temporarily placed in a safety cell (refer to DSB P&P J.1). The watch commander shall be notified of placements into ISP.
- C. If under exigent circumstances a watch commander determines an inmate requires placement in ISP housing without consultation or recommendation from the facility gatekeeper, the watch commander is required to articulate why the inmate was placed using a Jail Information Management System (JIMS) incident report.
- D. All calls through the Mental Health Advocacy Hotline will be answered by a detentions information assistant (DIA) assigned to the San Diego Central Jail (SDCJ). The DIA will complete the Mental Health Advocacy Hotline caller log. The information received will be shared, without delay, with the on-duty watch commander at the inmate's assigned housing facility. The watch commander will contact the on-duty gatekeeper to determine the inmate's need for a mental health evaluation.

## III. INMATES PLACED IN A SAFETY CELL (REFER TO DSB P&P J.1)

## IV. INMATES PLACED IN AN ENHANCED OBSERVATION HOUSING MODULE OR MEDICAL ISOLATION (REFER TO DSB P&P J.4)

## V. INMATES PLACED IN THE PSYCHIATRIC STABILIZATION UNIT (REFER TO DSB P&P M.25)

## VI. DURING INTAKE

- A. Every arrestee shall be screened during the intake process for the self-harm risk factors indicated in section I and assessed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy. If the facility gatekeeper determines placement into ISP housing is required, the following shall occur:
  1. Actively self-harming or actively assaultive arrestees may temporarily be placed in a safety cell (refer to DSB P&P J.1).
  2. Arrestees not actively self-harming and not actively assaultive may be housed in

EOH, except arrestees with a Book and Release (B&R) status (refer to DSB P&P J.4).

3. Sworn staff shall notify the watch commander of the ISP placement.
4. When an arrestee is medically unstable, the facility shall medically reject the arrestee and refer the arresting officer to a hospital emergency department (ED) for evaluation.
5. If the arrestee is in urgent need of an assessment with a psychiatrist for immediate psychotropic medication to control symptoms of aggression or psychosis, the arrestee will be medically rejected and the arresting officer will be referred to the Emergency Psychiatric Unit at the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital (EPU) for evaluation. Arrestees initially rejected from the Vista Detention Facility (VDF) will be transported to SDCJ (males) or Las Colinas Detention and Reentry Facility (females) after the evaluation at EPU.
6. For arrestees/inmates with suicidal risk evaluated by an EPU psychiatrist and returning to a facility:
  - a. The EPU psychiatrist orders the arrestee/inmate to be admitted to a psychiatric stabilization unit, the inmate shall be housed according to the order (refer to DSB P&P M.25).
  - b. If the EPU psychiatrist recommends ISP housing and/or safety restrictions (e.g., a recommendation for a safety cell placement or no safety garment) the facility gatekeeper shall determine the appropriate ISP housing and/or safety restrictions. When EOH is deemed appropriate instead of a safety cell, the facility gatekeeper will call the EPU psychiatrist for further consultation and an updated order.

## VII. REPORTING PROCEDURES

- A. All requests for ISP assessments will be documented by sworn staff in a JIMS incident report. The incident report will articulate the reason an ISP assessment was requested and the subsequent outcome (refer to DSB P&P J.1 and J.4 for safety cell or EOH placements).
- B. All incidents of actual (or attempt) self-harm or attempt suicide that occur within a detention facility shall be reported by sworn staff in NetRMS.
  1. All initial reports written for actual (or attempt) self-harm or attempt suicide will use the offense code, "981155 – ZZ – Self-Harm Incident (Jails Only)."
  2. Once approved by the sworn supervisor, the case report, all available video footage and the inmate's health record will be reviewed by a Chief Mental Health Clinician (CMHC).

3. If after review, the CMHC determines the incident to be a suicide attempt, the reporting officer will be notified to change the offense code to, "93000 – ZZ – Suicide Attempt."

#### VIII. POST SELF-HARM OR SUICIDE ATTEMPTS (WHILE IN CUSTODY)

- A. For an inmate that does not require transportation to the ED, the inmate will be evaluated by facility health staff and assessed by the facility gatekeeper for ISP housing.
- B. For an inmate that requires immediate treatment for physical medical problems, the inmate shall be transported to the closest ED. The inmate shall also be evaluated by a psychiatrist at EPU for appropriate care immediately after discharge from the hospital and prior to returning to a detention facility. Upon return to a facility, the facility gatekeeper will review the EPU documentation and determine the appropriate housing assignment.

#### IX. REMOVAL/CLEARANCE FROM THE INMATE SAFETY PROGRAM

- A. Inmates can be moved from one housing assignment to another within the ISP based on the observations and direction of the facility gatekeeper. An inmate who is no longer self-harming or actively assaultive shall be moved from a safety cell to EOH and conversely, an inmate that becomes actively self-harming or actively assaultive may be moved from EOH to a safety cell.
- B. If under exigent circumstances a watch commander determines the need to override the direction of the facility gatekeeper and requests the inmate be retained in ISP housing, the watch commander is required to articulate why the inmate was retained in a JIMS incident report.
- C. Removal/clearance from the ISP is determined solely by a QMHP (refer to Medical Services Division Operations Manual section S.10 for further details).
- D. When the medical or mental health condition of an inmate would be threatened by continued retention in any ISP housing, the inmate shall immediately be removed and transported to an ED. If a watch commander removes an inmate from ISP housing under such exigent circumstances and without consultation with a QMHP, the watch commander is required to articulate why the inmate was removed in a JIMS incident report.