



San Diego County Sheriff's Department

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William D. Gore, Sheriff

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SAN DIEGO
COUNTY GRAND JURY

June 29, 2017

Honorable Jeffrey B. Barton
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County Courthouse
220 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Judge Barton:

Response to the San Diego County Grand Jury Report: "Suicides in San Diego Jails"
Dated May 4, 2017.

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(c), the following is my response to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations 17-24 through 17-27.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Grand Jury Finding 01:

The Policy and Procedures Manual does not contain a comprehensive overall suicide-prevention plan with a policy statement listing the protocols (professional standards) to be used, nor does it clearly state that suicide-prevention principles must be in effect at all times.

Response:

The Sheriff's Department disagrees in part with this finding. The San Diego County Sheriff's Department Medical Services Division Policy & Procedure does contain suicide prevention policies and procedures. Those policies include the inmate safety program and enhanced observation housing and training. The Department recognizes the Grand Jury's concern that all suicide prevention policies and procedures are not located in one comprehensive format and has taken steps to remedy the situation.

RECOMMENDATION 17-24:

Update the Policy and Procedures Manual (P&PM) to include a detailed suicide-prevention policy noting the nationally recognized protocols used in the jails for suicide prevention.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented. A comprehensive suicide prevention policy, which incorporates national suicide prevention standards, has been drafted for review. Approval of the policy should be completed by September 30, 2017.

Grand Jury Finding 02:

The Sheriff's P&PM shows provisions for various training and development but does not show adequate and sustained training programs to ensure a continuum of comprehensive suicide-prevention services.

Response:

The Sheriff's Department disagrees in part with the finding. The Department believes that its training and development is adequate to ensure comprehensive suicide prevention training. However, the Department is continually evaluating the training provided to all of its employees in order to find ways to decrease suicide risk.

RECOMMENDATION 17-25:

Update the Policy and Procedure Manual to include appropriate and ongoing training for all staff and mental health personnel who observe or counsel suicide-risk inmates.

Response:

The recommendation has been partially implemented. An 8-hour initial mental health illness training is held at least once a month for both sworn and medical staff. The training was implemented in September 2016 and is ongoing. A second phase of training is in the process of development. It is comprised of 2-4 hours of annual training. The San Diego Sheriff's Department will also collaborate with PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Team) to develop a training lab and curriculum that will include specialized training for sworn and medical staff on suicide risks and prevention. A draft of the training plan will be completed on September 30, 2017 to coincide with the completion of the comprehensive Suicide Prevention Policy & Procedures.

Grand Jury Finding 03:

There is a need great enough for mental health services supervision in the Detention Services Bureau that a full-time Mental Health Officer for the jails should be a requirement.

Response:

The Sheriff's Department disagrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATION 17-26:

Create and fill the position of a full-time Mental Health Director for the County jails.

Response:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Liberty Healthcare provides the Department with three mental health professionals in key leadership positions dedicated to overseeing the delivery of services and quality of care of mental health in our jails. These positions are Regional Program Director, Medical Director, and Program Administrator. In addition, the Sheriff's Department employs a Chief Licensed Mental Health Clinician who has program oversight for the Inmate Safety Program and Suicide Prevention. As a result, the Department believes that a full time Mental Health Officer is not a great need at this time.

Grand Jury Finding 04:

A continuous oversight of the suicide-prevention plan is needed in order to ensure that the suicide-prevention plan, the P&PM, and the facilities' physical features are kept current with suicide methods used by the inmates.

Response:

The Sheriff's Department agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATION 17-27:

Create a suicide-prevention oversight group that recommends changes to the P&PM, verifies that suicide-prevention training is taking place, and implements any changes needed to keep the facilities as suicide-proof as possible.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented. A Suicide Prevention Response & Improvement Team has been formed and is working collaboratively to update policy and procedures to reflect the Grand Jury's recommendations. The Team will also be responsible for the oversight of all staff training related to suicide prevention.

In closing, I would like to thank the Grand Jury for their efforts in working with the Sheriff's Department through this investigation.

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June 29, 2017
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If further clarification or additional discussion is needed, please feel free to contact Lieutenant Esther MacLyman of the Detention Support Division at (858) 974-2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William D. Gore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William D. Gore, Sheriff

WDG:em

cc: Members, Board of Supervisors
Helen Robbins-Meyer, CAO
David Hall, Director, Clerk of the Board
Alan I. Baskin, Foreman, San Diego County Grand Jury