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Cheryle A. Broom

King County Auditor

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MANAGEMENT LETTER

DATE: October 30, 2006

TO: Metropolitan King County Councilmembers

FROM: Cheryle A. Broom, County Auditor

SUBJECT: King County Sheriff's Office Complaint Analysis

Introduction

This management letter provides information on the nature and extent of complaints and employee misconduct in the King County Sheriff's Office. This review was intended to provide previously unavailable information about how prevalent complaints are across the agency and among employees, the seriousness and outcome of the complaints, and their source. We also gathered information to gauge how Sheriff's Office complaints and *use of force* policies compare to other law enforcement agencies and national best practices.

From this information our summary findings are:

- The number of complaints investigated by the Sheriff's Office has declined sharply in recent years; however, the number of complaints referred to supervisors for review has steadily increased. Investigations of more serious allegations have declined slightly.
- Most complaints are generated by a relatively small percentage of officers, the majority of who work in Field Operations.
- Sheriff's Office overall complaint rates are generally lower than those of other law enforcement agencies and national averages; however, *use of force* complaints occur at a similar rate.
- The Sheriff's Office policies and procedures for managing *use of force* are in compliance with state law; however, they do not consistently meet national standards and best practices. Management practices could be improved by strengthening policies, ensuring consistency by providing ongoing *use of force* training to staff, and implementing an early intervention system that includes *use of force* as a key component.

The complaint and *use of force* information we analyzed was selected because it represents some of the basic information found in early intervention systems. Early intervention systems are designed to help law enforcement agencies monitor employee performance trends and patterns across their organizations, and to address potential conduct problems proactively before they become critical.

The following sections, organized by question, describe in more detail the results of our analysis.

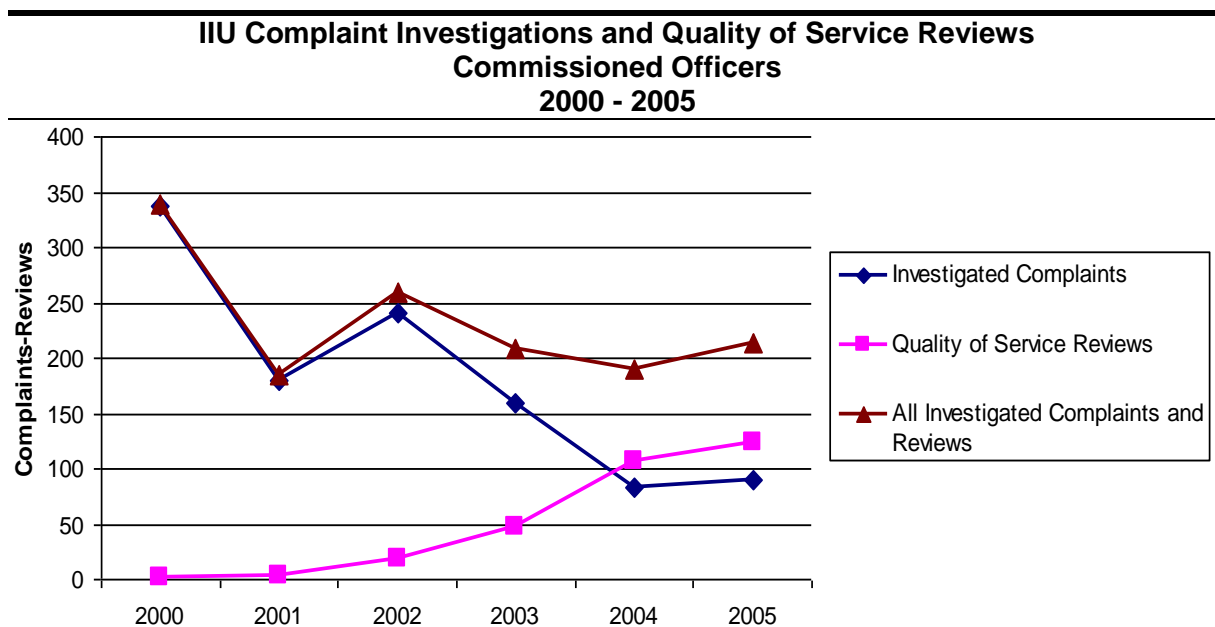
How many complaints are typically received?

In 2005, the Sheriff's Office Internal Investigations Unit (IIU) conducted full investigations of 132 formal complaint allegations. The majority (68 percent) were filed against commissioned officers, and the remainder (32 percent) against non-commissioned staff.

In 2005, the IIU also received 124 complaints and contacts from citizens that were reviewed rather than investigated. These are called *quality of service* reviews, and they include instances where the IIU has determined that no clear violation of policy or misconduct has occurred, or that the case does not warrant a full IIU investigation based on the information provided. These reviews are frequently performed in response to citizen dissatisfaction with the manner in which an incident was handled, and can also include complaints or inquiries in which citizens or other parties contact the IIU but then choose not to file a formal complaint. After completing its review, the IIU refers these cases to employees' supervisors for further attention.

Any complaints made directly to employees' supervisors are not centrally tracked by the Sheriff's Office unless they are subsequently referred to the IIU. The Sheriff's Office therefore does not collect information on them.

As the chart below demonstrates, the total number of IIU complaints and *quality of service* reviews received by commissioned officers declined from 339 to 214 between 2000 and 2005, despite an increase in 2001.



SOURCE: Auditor's analysis of King County Sheriff's Office data.

The sharpest declines in IIU investigated complaints occurred in administrative or managerial complaint categories, such as *obedience to orders* and *violation of policy*. However, some declines also occurred in categories considered to be more serious, such as *use of force*, *conduct unbecoming*, and *harassment/discrimination*.

Although the number of investigated complaints declined fairly substantially during this period, the number of *quality of service* reviews steadily increased and now exceeds the number of IIU investigations. The Sheriff's Office does not classify its *quality of service* reviews by type, or

distinguish between those that were complaints versus inquiries, and therefore could not provide information on which types of cases increased or decreased during this period of time.

Also, because this audit did not evaluate the IIU's criteria for determining which cases are investigated or referred to employees' supervisors, we cannot comment on why the number of complaint investigations declined so sharply. Further analysis would be required to determine the reason.

How prevalent are complaints across employees?

A relatively small percentage of employees generate complaints within the Sheriff's Office. In 2005, the Internal Investigations Unit (IIU) investigated 90 complaint allegations involving 55 officers, or approximately eight percent of the Sheriff's Office commissioned officers.

As the following table shows, the number of complaints received by individual officers ranged from none to seven, with the majority receiving zero or one complaint. This distribution of complaints across officers was similar in both 2003 and 2004.

2005 Investigated Complaints by Number of Officers			
	Number of Officers	Number of Complaints Received	Percent of All Commissioned Officers
Officers With Complaints	55	90	8%
	37	1	5%
	8	2	1%
	8	3	1%
	0	4	0%
	0	5	0%
	1	6	0%
	1	7	0%
Officers With No Complaints	648	0	92%
Total	703	90	100%

SOURCE: Auditor's analysis of Sheriff's Office data.

An additional 82 officers received complaints or inquiries that generated *quality of service* reviews, but did not receive any complaints that were investigated. When combined, 19 percent of all officers received *either* a formal IIU complaint or a *quality of service* review in 2005.¹

What characteristics describe employees who received investigated complaints?

Years of experience?

Between 2000 and 2004, most officers receiving complaints had between 9 and 13 years of service with the Sheriff's Office. This figure was somewhat higher – 16 years – in 2005. These officers were therefore not new to the job, nor were they the most experienced. This finding was similar for most complaint categories with the exception of *use of force* complaints, which were filed on officers with somewhat fewer years of experience (6-10 years).

¹ Out of 703 commissioned officers in 2005, 55 were the subject of IIU investigations and 82 others received *quality of service* reviews but had no investigated complaints.

On-duty or off-duty?

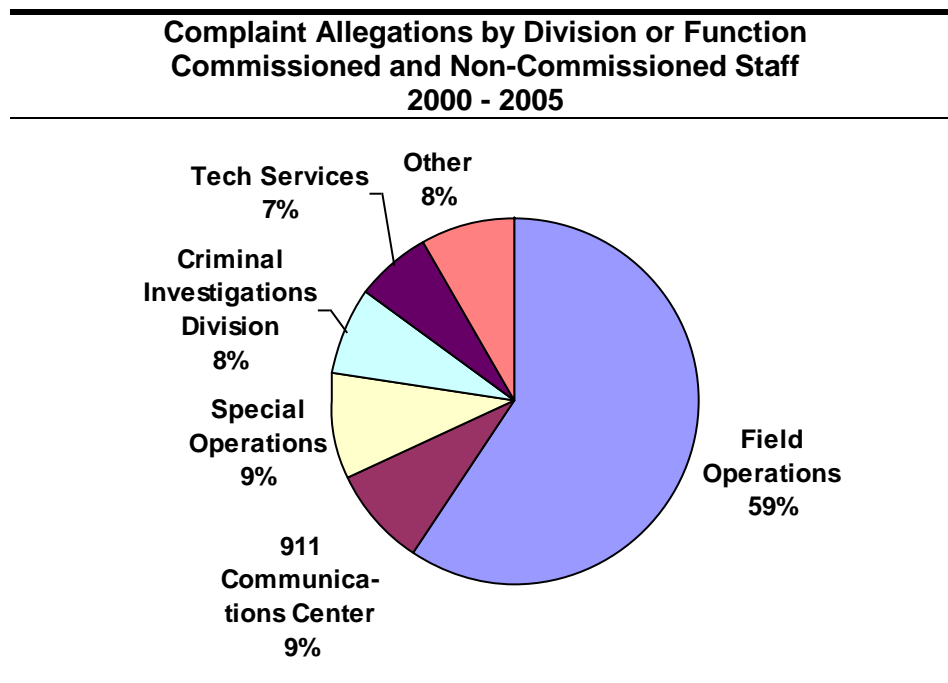
Complaints occurring while officers are off-duty can make up a fairly large percentage of total complaints. In 2004 and 2005, off-duty complaints represented 27 and 35 percent of all complaints, respectively. While many of these complaints related to violations of off-duty employment policies, they also included allegations of *conduct unbecoming*, *obedience to laws and orders*, and *criminal conduct*.

Citizen-initiated or internally generated?

The majority of complaints investigated by the IIU are generated by citizens. Over the six-year period from 2000 through 2005, about 56 percent of complaints were filed by citizens, compared with 40 percent from within the Sheriff's Office and four percent from other sources. Internally generated complaints are those filed by supervisors or peers.

How widespread are complaints across the agency?

The chart below shows the percentage of investigated complaints within Sheriff's Office divisions and functions, between 2000 and 2005. These figures include both commissioned officers and non-commissioned employees. Field Operations personnel, which includes patrol operations, typically received the most complaints. The high percentage of complaints for Field Operations, 59 percent, could be attributed to its being the largest division within the Sheriff's Office with the most direct public contact.

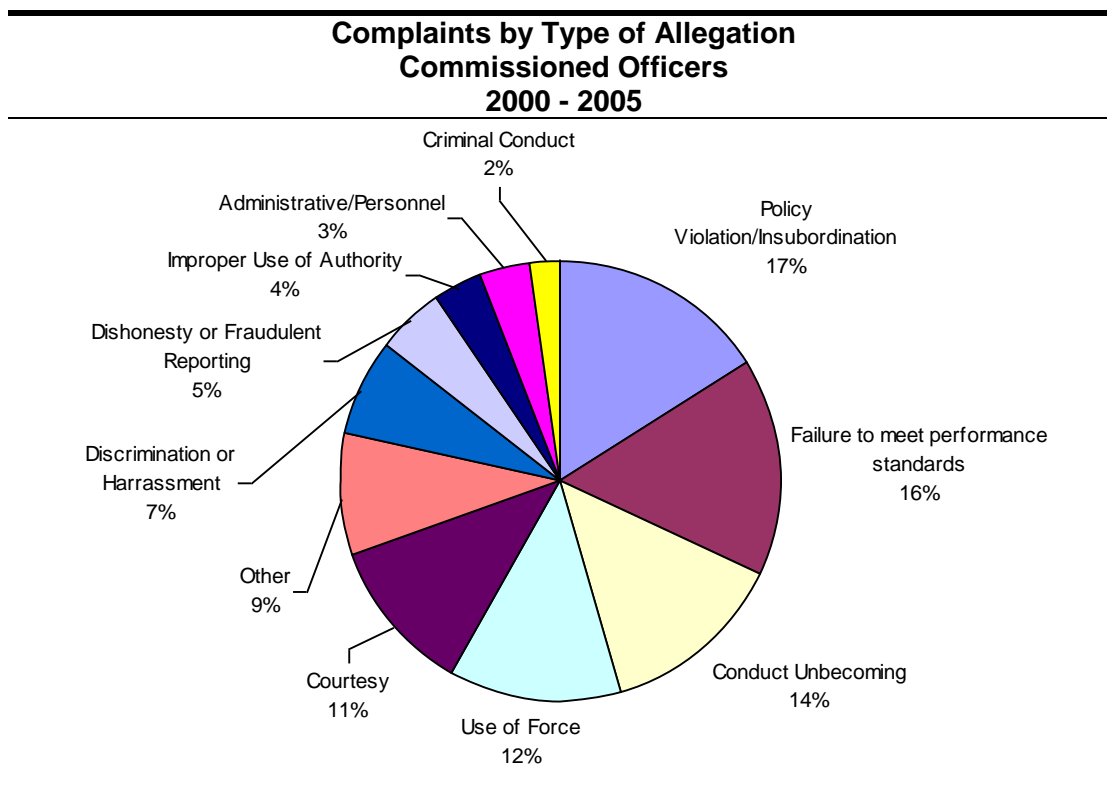


SOURCE: Auditor's analysis of Sheriff's Office data.

However, as the chart also demonstrates, a large proportion of complaints (over 30 percent) are directed towards officers within the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) and Special Operations, as well as non-commissioned employees in the Communications Center (911 emergency call center) and Technical Services Division.

What is the nature of the complaints?

From 2000 through 2005, the most common complaint allegations for commissioned officers were *policy violation/insubordination*, *failure to meet performance standards*, *conduct unbecoming*, *use of force*, and *courtesy*. Approximately 70 percent of investigated complaints fell within these five categories. The remaining categories each make up less than 10 percent of all complaints. The chart below shows the individual percentages by type of complaint.



SOURCE: Auditor's analysis of Sheriff's Office data.

Over this same time period, the most common complaints received for non-commissioned staff were *conduct unbecoming* (18 percent), *administrative/personnel* (14 percent), and *courtesy* (13 percent).

What is the outcome of the complaints?

Between 2000 and 2005, 21 percent of all complaint allegations were sustained. As shown in the table below, this sustained rate varied from five percent to 63 percent, depending on the type of allegation.

Percentage of Complaint Allegations Sustained Commissioned Officers 2000 - 2005			
Complaint Category	Number Investigated	Number Sustained	Percent Sustained
Failure to Meet Performance Standards	173	44	25%
Policy Violation/Insubordination	176	37	21%
Conduct Unbecoming	149	34	23%
Use of Force	135	9	7%
Courtesy	125	13	10%
Other	96	34	35%
Discrimination/Harassment	78	4	5%
Dishonesty or Fraudulent Reporting	55	15	27%
Improper Use of Authority	40	11	28%
Administrative/Personnel	38	24	63%
Criminal Conduct	25	8	32%
Total Sustained Complaint Allegations	1090	233	21%
Citizen-initiated	611	51	8%
Internal KCSO	434	163	38%
Other	45	19	42%

SOURCE: Auditor's analysis of Sheriff's Office data.

Another pattern observed was that internal complaints originating from within the Sheriff's Office were more likely to be sustained than citizen complaints. Over the six-year period from 2000 through 2005, 38 percent of internal complaints were sustained compared to 8 percent of citizen-initiated complaints.

How do Sheriff's Office complaints compare to those of other law enforcement agencies?

To evaluate how the Sheriff's Office complaint rates compare to those of other law enforcement agencies, we surveyed seven other jurisdictions considered to be leaders in the field of police accountability and somewhat comparable in size.² We also reviewed national research on police *use of force*, as published by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Our analysis shows that the Sheriff's Office overall and *use of force* complaint rates are similar or less than those of the surveyed agencies. As the table below shows, in 2005 the Sheriff's Office received approximately 12.8 complaints per 100 sworn officers, as compared to the survey average of 33.4.

² Surveyed agencies included the City of Boise Police Department, City-County of Denver Police Department, City of San Jose Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Miami-Dade Police Department, Portland Police Bureau, and the Seattle Police Department. All have independent civilian oversight entities and nationally recognized police accountability systems, and are professionally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) or other local organizations.

**Complaint and Use of Force Comparison
Commissioned Officers
2005**

Complaint and Use of Force Comparison Performance Measures	King County Sheriff's Office	Average from Survey	Bureau of Justice Statistics
Number of sworn officers	703	1291	n/a
Complaints per 100 sworn officers	12.8	33.4	n/a
Use of Force Complaints per 100 arrests	0.2	0.2	n/a
Use of Force Complaints per 100 patrol officers	2.0	n/a	11.8
Use of Force Complaints per 100 sworn officers	1.8	5.2	6.9

SOURCE: King County Sheriff's Office; Auditor's Office *Use of Force Performance and Best Practices Survey*, September 2006; Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2002 data).

When *use of force* complaint rates are compared, the Sheriff's Office received approximately 0.2 complaints for every 100 arrests, which was the same as the average among the surveyed agencies. The *use of force* complaint rate of 1.8 per 100 sworn officers was substantially below both the survey average (5.2) and the national average of 6.9 complaints for agencies of comparable size.³

This comparative data includes only those *use of force* incidents that generated investigated complaints, not those that resulted in *quality of service* reviews by supervisors.⁴ When combined, the total number of *use of force* complaints that were either investigated or reviewed by the Sheriff's Office is slightly higher than shown in the table above but still similar to the surveyed agencies.

How do the Sheriff's Office conduct and *use of force* policies compare to nationally recognized standards and best practices?

In addition to comparing the Sheriff's Office complaint rates to other law enforcement jurisdictions, we also evaluated how its *use of force* policies and procedures compared to national standards, best practices, and the policies and procedures of our surveyed agencies. We found that the Sheriff's Office was in compliance with state law; however, its policies are not consistent with national standards and best practices for *use of force*.

National Standards and Best Practices

The survey questions focused on the key elements and generally accepted standards for implementing an effective *use of force* model as described in Dr. Samuel Walker's *The New World of Police Accountability* and other national studies.⁵

Standards regarding the *use of force* have also been established by national law enforcement associations. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) recommends that officers be provided with a clear and concise departmental policy that establishes guidelines and limitations on the *use of force*. In addition, consolidating deadly force and nondeadly force policies reinforces the concept of the *use of force* as a continuum for officers, and the necessity of using a level of force that is appropriate to the incident at-hand.

³ The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data represents agencies with 500 to 999 commissioned officers. Also, the BJS statistics include only citizen complaints, and exclude internal agency-initiated complaints.

⁴ This is consistent with the manner the survey agencies reported their 2005 statistics.

⁵ Dr. Samuel Walker is a nationally recognized expert in the field of police accountability.

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA)⁶ requires accredited police agencies to develop written directives limiting officers to use only the force necessary to accomplish lawful objectives: deadly force must be used only in defense of human life or to prevent serious physical injury. Accredited police agencies must also have a written directive that governs the use of less than lethal weapons.

National standards and the agencies within our survey have policies and procedures that not only contain extensive *use of force* provisions, but also detailed guidelines on when to apply lethal and non-lethal levels of force. The guidelines reinforce opportunities to minimize the use of excessive or deadly force.

How does the Sheriff's Office compare?

The following table summarizes the Sheriff's Office *use of force* policies and practices compared to key *use of force* management standards and practices.

Comparison of Sheriff's Office Policies and Practices and Key Elements for Effective Use of Force Model			
Key Elements	Complete	Implementation Planned or In Progress	Opportunity to Expand Practices to Be Consistent with Standards
Use of Force Policies Developed	✓		
Levels of Force/Responses Included in Consolidated Use of Force Policies			✓
<i>Use of Force</i> Incident Reports Completed	✓		
Written Reports Reviewed by Supervisor/Commander	✓		
Early Intervention System Implemented or Use of Force Analysis Performed			✓
Police Auditor, Ombudsman, or Citizen Oversight Function Implemented		✓	
Broad Use of Force Investigation Framework Established*			✓
Performance Measures Developed for Accountability Improvements		✓	

SOURCE: King County Auditor's Office, *Use of Force Performance and Best Practices Survey, September 2006*.

*Note: Broad *use of force* investigation framework includes examining police tactics and precipitating events; informing existing policies, practices, training and management; and enforcing standards through consistent discipline.

As the table shows, the Sheriff's Office either does not have, or is in the process of implementing, a number of these key elements. Based on this research, we determined that opportunities exist to expand the Sheriff's Office *use of force* policies and practices. The following is a discussion of those opportunities based on nationally recognized law enforcement standards and select best practices in other agencies.

⁶ CALEA has established professional management standards for policing, and provides an accreditation program that provides law enforcement agencies with a means of ensuring and demonstrating that they meet national standards and best practices.

Use of Force Policies and Guidance

How does the Sheriff's Office compare?

The Sheriff's Office has developed *use of force* policies that are clear and consistent with state law. However, its policies are relatively general when compared to model policies, best practices, and national standards. Rather than providing guidance to supervisors and officers on when and how to use various types and levels of force when responding to incidents, the policies tend to emphasize legal definitions and the process for conducting *use of force* investigations after incidents occur. In addition, officers do not routinely receive *use of force* instruction to reinforce the policies except during their initial academy training and Field Training Officer program.

The survey of the seven "model" law enforcement agencies found that each agency had developed a *use of force* policy that included less than lethal force provisions in their *use of force* policies. While the agencies had differing approaches to providing specific directives regarding when and how to apply different forms of force, including use of weapons, all seven agencies reported offering *use of force* training as well as documented expectations for appropriate level-of-force responses. Two agencies posted their *use of force* policies on the internet, which is considered a best practice to promote transparency and accountability in law enforcement.

Again, while the Sheriff's Office does have *use of force* policies and procedures in place, the policies do not provide the level of guidance and specificity on *use of force* needed to meet national standards and practices, and are not routinely reinforced through training.

Standards and Policies for Reporting and Reviewing Use of Force/Critical Incidents

National Standards and Best Practices

The IACP and CALEA have adopted standards for *use of force*/critical incident reporting by officers as well as procedures for effective reviews by supervisors and command personnel. IACP's standards emphasize the importance of formal procedures for reviewing and reporting *use of force* incidents, because *use of force* policies and procedures are of little value without the oversight of line supervisors and command personnel to ensure officer compliance.

The benefits of formal *use of force* reporting and effective *use of force*/critical incident reports are:

- Identifying *use of force* issues and trends;
- Improving training and employee safety;
- Providing timely information to the public;
- Protecting officers and the community as necessary; and
- Ensuring agency credibility, individual officer accountability, and community trust in the system.

In *The New World of Police Accountability*, Dr. Walker notes that less than lethal force is far more common and more difficult to control than deadly force, and that law enforcement agencies do not have a consensus of opinion on reporting, reviewing/investigating, or controlling such incidents.

How does the Sheriff's Office compare?

Consistent with national standards, the Sheriff's Office and all seven surveyed agencies have adopted policies requiring formal *use of force* reports and reviews. Sheriff's Office policies identify the purpose of *use of force* reviews, when the reviews are required, and who is responsible for conducting the reviews. The Sheriff's Office has also developed specific forms and procedures, for *use of force* reporting, conducting supervisory reviews of incident reports, and identifying appropriate steps to correct officer or organizational performance.

The Sheriff's Office and one surveyed agency identified two exceptions in implementing nationally recognized standards for *use of force* incident reports and reviews: One surveyed agency did not require written *use of force* reports for all *use of force* incidents, and the Sheriff's Office did not require reviews for all *use of force* incidents.

Early Intervention System

National Standards and Best Practices

Law enforcement associations and agencies commonly recognize that a significant proportion of citizen complaints, including excessive force complaints, are generated by a small minority of police officers. An electronic (as opposed to manual) data-based early warning system is widely considered to be an effective management tool to provide for the early identification of problem officers or trends, intervention through training or counseling, and post-intervention monitoring to ensure that problem behavior is corrected.

The criteria for identifying officers as candidates for early intervention varied, but typically included officers that exceeded established thresholds (e.g., three or more incidents) of citizen complaints, civil litigation, *use of force* and firearm incidents, and high-speed pursuits.⁷

Six of the seven agencies surveyed had implemented early intervention systems. The majority of the surveyed agencies had electronic systems to identify individual officer or organizational patterns and trends that required correction. In addition, most of the jurisdictions had established internal or external oversight offices that provided input to the law enforcement agencies on emerging patterns or trends that required corrective action. In several instances, the oversight offices also made recommendations on corrective action to ensure consistent discipline and/or adherence to law enforcement policies and practices.

One unique best practice cited by a surveyed agency as being highly effective was the practice of holding supervisors accountable for team performance when a single or multiple officers within a unit committed "offenses" that exceeded established thresholds. For example, if one or more officers with an excessive number of vehicle pursuits were required to attend defensive driving classes, the responsible sergeant was also required to attend defensive driving classes. The agency's intent was to ensure that the supervisors also received training to reinforce acceptable team performance in the future and to avoid "freeway supervision"—rotating officers with performance issues to other units.

How does the Sheriff's Office compare?

The Sheriff's Office has not implemented a comprehensive early intervention system. Employee complaint information has primarily been used for tracking IIU investigations, and not

⁷ A National Institute of Justice sponsored study found that early warning systems can reduce citizen complaints and problematic police behavior, but the effectiveness of early warning systems ultimately depends upon related policies and procedures (including training) that enforce standards of discipline, are consistently applied, and create a climate of accountability.

for systematic review of trends or patterns of employee behavior. As noted earlier, many complaints and inquiries are not investigated by the IIU. Some are instead classified as *quality of service* reviews and subsequently referred to supervisors, while others are received directly by supervisors and never seen by the IIU or upper management. The Sheriff's Office does not monitor the outcome of these complaints and inquiries, so information on their resolution was not available. Also, prior to this analysis, management did not have a consolidated record of IIU complaints and *quality of service* reviews for each employee.

The complaint analysis conducted within this management review demonstrates that the Sheriff's Office has the basic information needed for an early intervention system and that it could be collected and analyzed on an ongoing basis. Most of the information we used is located in the existing IIU complaint and *quality of service* tracking databases. Other information proved relatively easy for the Sheriff's Office to obtain, including the *use of force* incident data and arrest information researched for this report. The Sheriff's Office has the information needed to immediately begin monitoring a limited number of officer performance and conduct indicators.

Establishment of a Broad Use of Force Investigation Framework

National Standards and Best Practices

As defined by Dr. Walker, the broad *use of force* investigation framework includes:

- Examining police tactics and precipitating events;
- Informing existing policies, practices, training and management; and
- Enforcing standards through consistent discipline.⁸

Both the IACP and CALEA have developed standards and related issue papers on the merits of thorough reviews and investigations of *use of force*/critical incidents, using the results of critical incident reviews and investigations to inform policies, practices and training; and enforcing standards through discipline. As stated earlier, CALEA recommends that law enforcement agencies conduct a documented annual analysis of *use of force* reports, because the annual reviews may reveal patterns or trends that could indicate the need for training, equipment upgrades, and/or policy modifications.

The IACP recognizes that considerable guidance and direction on *use of force* is provided to officers during training by translating policy and operational procedures into practice. The association strongly recommends that law enforcement agencies provide routine instruction and periodic testing on the agency *use of force* policy as well as instruction that covers a broad range of force techniques and practical exercises in making decisions regarding use of deadly force. CALEA also requires annual *use of force* training for officers that carry lethal and less than lethal weapons. Training is not only instrumental in efforts to control and manage *use of force*, but can also impact efforts to justify actions involving the *use of force* in court.

All the surveyed agencies reported adhering to the three-pronged *use of force* framework through internal operations as well as in their external oversight functions. They had established policies and procedures for reviews/investigations of critical incidents, as well as:

- Received input from internal and external oversight offices to improve policies,
- Created discipline boards or discipline coordinators to ensure the appropriateness and consistency of discipline, and

⁸ *The New World of Police Accountability*, pp. 66-68.

- Refined existing or developed specialized training programs to address individual or organizational performance issues.

How does the Sheriff's Office compare?

The Sheriff's Office adheres to some elements of this three-pronged investigation framework. One exception is that it does not offer routine training of officers beyond new field officer training and annual tactical/weapons training.⁹ The lack of periodic training for all officers in *use of force* policies and tactics is inconsistent with nationally recognized *use of force* standards and best practices.

Another exception is that the Sheriff's Office had not, until our review, collected department wide information on historical *use of force* incidents. This information was collected upon our request, which was used for the complaint and *use of force* analysis discussed in the first part of this report. We did not evaluate Sheriff's Office's application of discipline, and, therefore cannot comment on its adequacy or consistency.

Police Accountability Measures

The benefits of performance measures for police accountability, including employee performance evaluations, are discussed at length in *The New World of Police Accountability* and in various *use of force* studies conducted or funded by the National Institute of Justice. Examples of such measures include reducing the number of *use of force* incidents, or reducing the percentage of incidents in which *lethal force* is applied. The benefits include improved quality of police services, reduced risks, enhanced supervision and safety, and the ability to track agency performance and respond proactively to organizational and environmental changes.

How does the Sheriff's Office compare?

The Sheriff's Office and the seven surveyed agencies do not have police accountability performance measures. However, six of the seven surveyed agencies do use annual officer performance evaluations as accountability tools; one surveyed agency suspended its performance evaluation process to streamline its lengthy performance evaluation form. The Sheriff's Office also suspended annual performance evaluations several years ago, but expects them to be reinstituted in 2007.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the nature and prevalence of officer misconduct and *use of force* within the Sheriff's Office appears generally consistent with that of the surveyed agencies and with national statistics. We found that complaints within the Sheriff's Office are generated by a relatively small number of officers, and that the prevalence of complaints is less than or the same as that experienced by other law enforcement agencies. The number of investigated complaints has also substantially declined over the last few years.

In contrast to formal complaints, the number of *quality of service* complaints and inquiries referred to supervisors has steadily increased and has surpassed the number of investigated complaints. Because detailed information was not available on these reviews, and because we did not evaluate how complaints are screened, we cannot comment on whether overall complaint trends are moving in a positive direction.

⁹ The Sheriff's Office does provide ongoing training for those officers who are assigned tasers.

Additionally, a best practice performance accountability system has not yet been implemented within the Sheriff's Office and its policies for managing *use of force* do not consistently meet national standards and best practices. Our review identified four best practices that could enhance the Sheriff's Office management of *use of force*:

- Implement an early intervention system that includes *use of force* as a key component
- Strengthen *use of force* policies and provide ongoing training to supervisors and officers
- Perform regular agency-wide *use of force* reviews
- Use results of *use of force* investigations to modify policies and training programs

Strengthening *use of force* policies, procedures and training to align with best practices and CALEA accreditation requirements could improve the Sheriff's Office management of misconduct and *use of force* incidents. Detailed policies and guidelines, integrated with ongoing training of supervisors and officers, can help ensure that management's expectations with regard to conduct and *use of force* are clear and consistent.

The Sheriff's Office has basic elements in place for monitoring employee conduct and managing *use of force*. However, a considerable effort will be required to develop a comprehensive employee performance and conduct management system, and to bring its practices up to national standards.

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the cooperation received from the management and staff of the Sheriff's Office.

Liz DuBois and Susan Baugh conducted this management review. Please contact Liz at 296-0377 or me at 296-1655 if you have any questions about the issues discussed in this letter.

Attachment: King County Sheriff's Response

cc: Susan Rahr, King County Sheriff
Ron Sims, King County Executive
Jon Scholes, Legislative Aide, King County Council
George Allen, Legislative Aide, King County Council
Clifton Curry, Senior Legislative Analyst, King County Council

ATTACHMENT



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Susan L. Rahr
Sheriff

RECEIVED

OCT 20 2006

KING COUNTY AUDITOR

October 20, 2006

TO: Ms. Cheryle Broom, King County Auditor

FR:  Sue Rahr, Sheriff

RE: KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE COMPLAINT ANALYSIS

The Sheriff's Office has had the opportunity to review your Management Letter dated October 5, 2006, regarding "King County Sheriff's Office Complaint Analysis." In general we concur with your findings and would like to take this opportunity to respond.

I want to first recognize and thank you and your staff for the professional manner in which this examination was conducted. It was an invaluable experience that can only help us in our efforts to address necessary reforms within the King County Sheriff's Office. I especially want to recognize Liz DuBois. My staff had only the highest praise for her courtesy and professionalism.

As you may be aware, the Sheriff's Office asked the Executive, Council and Prosecutor to form a Blue Ribbon Panel to review management systems and issues related to employee discipline. The panel met for over 6 months and delivered its final report to the King County Council on September 11, 2006. In addition to a series of findings, the panel also made specific recommendations, including strategies to improve the employee discipline process and the management of complaints. The Blue Ribbon Panel covered many of the areas you have addressed. We will be presenting our response to that report to the County Council before the end of October.

In January of 2006, I made a request for funding to establish an Inspectional Services Unit. The purpose of this unit within the KCSO would be to review policies, procedures and SOP's for every unit within the Sheriff's Office. This is an important first step in getting the organization aligned with the CALEA standards you mentioned in the report. Additionally, the 2007 KCSO budget includes requests for an early intervention system, as you have also suggested. We will also be seeking more sergeants to reduce our span of control in the field, a critical and widely recognized issue for the effective management and supervision of deputies.

In addition to a new HR manager/employment attorney now on my staff, we have recently hired a new training systems manager. Under his direction, we have already

ATTACHMENT (Continued)

developed over 180 individual training modules that deputies are required to review and respond to before they can log onto their computers. Topics include everything from pursuit scenarios to changing state laws and use of force issues. Deputies can access this training from their patrol cars via wireless capability. We have named this innovative program "Take 5." This is being developed in addition to regular roll call trainings and any state or federally required training that our deputies receive annually (note that state law now requires a minimum of 24 hours of training for all commissioned officers annually). We work closely with Risk Management to ensure that we are current first and foremost with all mandated training. "T5" is designed to reinforce critical learning, policy and procedures. Flexible and portable, we are able to develop these training modules quickly and can adapt them to address any emergent topic. While we will continue to strive to achieve the levels of improvement you discuss, we have made progress in the area of pursuits and taser use, for example, as use of force issues.

We also appreciate your input regarding use of force policies and procedures. We consider ongoing review and refinement essential. I have forwarded your comments to the King County Prosecutor's office. We have worked with King County prosecutors in the past regarding various policies involving use of force and applications of less lethal weapons. We will continue to consult with the Prosecutor's office on use of force policies and as the Inspectional Services Unit reviews existing policies and we move toward alignment with CALEA standards.

In FFY 2006, we successfully obtained a federal earmark to design and implement professional/career development, management and leadership training specifically for our Captains. It is my hope that we will be able to secure a continuation of that funding source in FFY 2007 to also create sergeants-level training and professional development as well.

As required by King County, the KCSO has also been working for over 18 months with a nationally recognized consultant firm to develop a comprehensive system of performance standards and measures. To complete that process, we have designed employee evaluations and are now getting them implemented at the precinct level. A performance management system will contribute significantly to our overall employee management processes.

The issue of funding the required improvements is now before the County Executive and King County Council. I currently do not have all of the resources needed to address several recommendations expressed in your report, such as an early warning system. Independent oversight is also something that must be developed outside of my office and is currently being considered by the Council. All of the major systems improvements mentioned here are being addressed in the current 2007 County budget deliberations.

Please let me know if there is any additional information that my office can provide, or if you require any further response.