



King County

Office of Law Enforcement Oversight

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TO: Sheriff John Urquhart

FR: Deborah Jacobs, Director, Office of Law Enforcement Oversight

RE: Crisis Intervention Team Training and Policy Recommendations

As Washington State struggles to provide adequate services for people with behavioral health issues, police are frequently called upon to help people in crisis. These interactions can pose dangers to deputies and citizens alike. We want KCSO's deputies to have every advantage in securing safe and peaceful resolutions to interactions with people in behavioral crisis. With this in mind, and following the conclusion of all reviews of the October 21, 2016 shooting of Renee Davis at Muckleshoot, we wanted to share thoughts and recommendations on how to best position KCSO deputies to respond to calls regarding people in behavioral crisis. Our recommendations are drawn from exposure to CIT training, as well as expertise from local and national experts from the law enforcement and mental health fields.

We hope that you will consider the following policy and training recommendations on interacting with and using force on persons in behavioral crisis, and connecting those persons to community resources that are more appropriate than jail or the hospital. We believe that these recommendations will protect the interests of officers and citizens alike by providing more tools to utilize when engaging persons in crisis, and ultimately lead to safer conditions for all involved.

Recommendation #1 - Require all commissioned officers, prioritizing trainers in the Police Training Officer (PTO) program, complete the 40-hr Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Basic training and annual live, in-person CIT-specific training thereafter.

Currently, under RCW 43.101.427, each full-time general authority officer must receive at minimum eight hours of CIT training, and KCSO, under the General Orders Manual (GOM)

5.08.040(3), requires all department personnel complete a two-hour online refresher training annually. In addition to these requirements, new hires also receive some CIT training through the patrol procedures portion during post-Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA).

Although a step in the right direction, any CIT knowledge gained during the 8-hr CIT training, online and post-BLEA is only a basic overview of responding to and helping people in behavioral crisis. This limited training cannot adequately prepare officers because there is not sufficient time for officers to be immersed in crucial components such as role-playing, mock scenarios or engage in dialogue with the trainers and people with mental health diagnoses or developmental disabilities who share their stories and experiences.

Given the significant number of calls KCSO receives that involves a person in behavioral crisis, KCSO officers should be as prepared as possible to respond. As you know, the 40-hr CIT Basic training provides officers with a foundation for building crisis intervention skills. The training also educates officers about different community resources so that options are not limited to taking the person to jail or the hospital where they are too often released without the help they needed. In addition, requiring annual live, in-person CIT training enables officers to continuously build upon and put into skills learned during the 40-hr CIT training, something online training cannot accomplish.

We are aware that some precincts have already started sending its officers to the 40-hr CIT training and understand it will take some time to have all remaining officers complete the training. It is our understanding that not all PTO's and MPO's have taken the 40-hr CIT training. We recommend that KCSO prioritize sending trainers from the PTO program because they are in a unique position to disseminate knowledge to new hires (lateral or straight from BLEA). We encourage you to establish an aggressive goal for getting everyone through the program as soon as possible.

We also understand the current resource constraints on requiring annual live, in-person CIT training and want to work with KCSO in finding solutions to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation #2 – Designate a CIT Coordinator who works through behavioral health crisis related incidents and questions with officers, is involved in reviewing KCSO CIT-related policies, helps develop CIT in-person training, acts as a liaison between behavioral health providers, OLEO and other community stakeholders, and maintains CIT data.

A CIT coordinator is important in providing in-field support and expertise to officers. While the 40-hr CIT Basic training will provide officers with a strong foundation of skills, every real-life situation varies. Having a point person for officers to discuss strategy and tactics with, either before or after a situation, further allows KCSO to deliver better service to persons in crisis. This coordinator should also work closely with providers, OLEO and stakeholders to develop in-person training, disseminate information to officers regarding community resources, coordinate solutions with providers and community resources as gaps are identified, maintain CIT data, and use knowledge gained as the coordinator to review and revise KCSO policies.

Again, we are sensitive to the resource constraints on creating a CIT coordinator position and will gladly support and collaborate with you to try to secure funding.

Recommendation #3 – Review and revise relevant KCSO policies.

Although de-escalation is the goal of any encounter between officers and a person in behavioral crisis, policy should emphasize that an officer must take all possible steps to not aggravate a situation and then take steps toward de-escalation. CIT reports by other law enforcement agencies or organizations emphasize that slowing actions down, creating space and active listening does not compromise officer safety and, in fact, sometimes showing weapons and aggressively commanding persons in crisis (in hopes of making scenes safe) has the opposite effect. OLEO has identified the following policies, at minimum, that should be reviewed for changes:

- GOM 5.00.055(8) – Community Caretaking Searches should be made consistent or reference GOM 5.08.020 (Responding to Individuals in Behavioral Crisis) and GOM 6.00.020 (De-escalation) since the decision to search may aggravate a situation and actually end up compromising officer-safety.
- GOM 5.08.000 – Persons in Behavioral Crisis – currently flagged as yellow in the GOM, but we recommend this section be flagged as red. This GOM should also cross-reference the De-escalation policy (GOM 6.00.020).
- GOM 6.00.020 – De-escalation – should reference GOM 5.08.020 (Responding to Individuals in Behavioral Crisis) and 5.08.100 (Contacting People with Intellectual and Development Disabilities) when adopted. The de-escalation policy should specifically include slowing down, active listening, verbal persuasion, and consideration that physical confrontation (including rushing to pat someone down for weapons) may aggravate the situation.

There are good examples of model policies from other jurisdictions including [Memphis](#) and [Seminole County, Florida](#).

Thank you for considering these recommendations and advising on your course of action. We hope you will agree that better KCSO training in this arena is a win-win that can help prevent tragedies that impact the lives of all involved.