

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing
Saturday, February 14, 2015
Sheriff Sandra Hutchens, Orange County, California

Good morning, my name is Sandra Hutchens and I am the Sheriff of Orange County, California. It is my distinct pleasure to be with you all today on behalf of the Major County Sheriffs' Association.

I currently serve as the Vice President of the Major County Sheriffs' and have been in law enforcement for 37 years – the past 7 as the Sheriff of Orange County.

Today's Listening Session on "Training and Education" is of vital importance and I thank you all again for allowing me to be part of this discussion.

- Training and education *together* serve as the cornerstone to good community policing. Law enforcement officers face a variety of challenges day in and day out – every situation is unique. Without proper training and education, our deputies and police officers wouldn't have the tools and knowledge they need to help resolve a domestic violence incident, a mentally ill individual set on self harm, a victim of sex trafficking, or an adolescent in the midst of an opioid overdose.

One of the topics you have noted for discussion asks for recommendations on working with the mentally ill.

- Mental illness is as prevalent as ever and for far too long, our nation has stigmatized the issue instead of confronting it head on. Over the years, our nation's local jails have progressively become the primary lodging and treatment institutions for the mentally ill although their actions are more often than not, driven by the manifestations of their illness, rather than criminal intent. Jails were never meant or designed to be hospital facilities however, that's the reality we are currently facing.

- In my county, our monthly average for active/open mental health cases is 1,500. The monthly average for inmates on mental health medication is 856. My total average daily population is 5,300.

As a nation, we need to take the initiative to improve access to treatment and strengthen community oriented programs to effectively combat recidivism.

- Specifically, I'll mention the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA). MIOTCRA was signed into law under President George W. Bush in 2004 and since 2006, has provided 321 grants to fund innovative and critical initiatives such as mental health courts for adults and juveniles, training for law enforcement officers and diversion programs.
- For fiscal year 2015, MIOTCRA was funded at \$8.5 million dollars and the President's budget request for fiscal year 2016 included a plus up of \$5.5 million. As my colleague, Sheriff Rich Stanek from Hennepin Co., Minnesota, recommended to you at the first listening session, Sheriffs need stable and consistent funding for programs and initiatives designed to assist State and local law enforcement. Changes from year to year can disrupt our community initiatives, training and counseling services – all needed to ensure an effective, reliable and responsive police force.

Special attention should also be paid to community based diversion programs.

- Low level mentally ill offenders do not belong in jail and should not be caught in the revolving door. With the help of community based diversion initiatives, law enforcement officials, prosecutors and courts can effectively reduce recidivism and save lives.

- Orange County has utilized a successful collaboration between the Superior Court, the Public Defender, the Public Law Center, the Veteran's Administration, and Health Care to address low level mentally ill and drug offenders. The Orange County Collaborative Courts include Homeless Outreach Court, Drug Court, and Veteran's Court. Individuals are effectively diverted from jail to programs designed to meet their individual needs.

Crisis intervention training has proven to be a valuable and worthwhile tool for law enforcement officials. Designed to improve the outcomes of police interactions for those suffering from mental illness, CIT training calls upon law enforcement agencies, mental health providers and community support networks to collaborate and work together towards recognizing mental illness, providing the right resources and fostering sustainable change.

In far too many organizations, including those in the law enforcement community, training is severely reduced or eliminated when budgets are tight.

- When these decisions are made, Sheriffs and Chiefs prioritize certification training, such as fire arms qualifications, for the few dollars that remain. As a result, training and educational opportunities for supervisors, managers and the executive staff are put on hold until money is available. Yet frequently, it is the failure to train and supervise that form the basis for bad outcomes and law suits arising from critical events.

Within the field of leadership development, there are many important topics and behaviors to consider.

- One area of focus that is absolutely critical is the employee performance appraisal system. While it must begin with a well-structured process and document that focuses on relevant and measurable behaviors, the most *important* element is the skill of

the supervisor to advise the employee of performance expectation, continuous observation during the rating period, frank and professional feedback and the development of an improvement plan.

The development of the Citizen's Police Academy is an excellent example of a co-educational opportunity for law enforcement and the community.

- It provides a non-threatening environment to bring representatives together for the purpose of creating a better understanding of the role and practice of policing.
- Unfortunately, like most good ideas, Citizen's Academies, due to their success, have fallen victim to the adage 'If it's not broke, don't fix it'. What is needed now is a critical examination of this community program to determine if the program is reaching all segments of the community.

In closing, as you all work towards your goal of identifying best practices and providing concrete recommendations to the President, I encourage you to look upon Sheriffs as a resource – we are willing partners. As the only democratically elected law enforcement leaders in our nation, we each provide a unique perspective.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to any questions you might have.