

What do you think are the top city-wide priorities for SPD?

Mental Health and Law Enforcement Training

Crisis Intervention Training

In recent years, the number of police-related calls for service involving persons with mental illness has increased. In response to this increase, beginning in 2015, the Sacramento Police Department implemented a training requirement that all police officers and first-line supervisors attend an eight-hour crisis intervention awareness class. This class provided officers with a basic introduction and general awareness of mental health issues.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the Crisis Intervention Team training model emerged in Memphis, Tennessee, and is often referred to as the "Memphis Model." This model incorporates law enforcement training scenarios that focus on those in mental health crisis. In addition to expanded training for first responders, the model includes a partnership with non-governmental mental health care providers to local mental health services for those in need. The in-depth 40-hour training is widely accepted as the "gold standard" for officers when it comes to mental health training. In 2017, the City Council provided funding for all SPD officers to attend this 40-hour training.

As of January 25, 2018, seventeen training classes have been held and almost 100% of the Sacramento Police Department officers have attended this valuable training. SPD officers now have an even stronger foundation to help individuals experiencing a mental health crisis than the state standard.

Force Options Simulator

The Force Options Simulator (FOS) is a computerized, virtual training system designed to provide participants with realistic use-of-force and decision-making opportunities utilizing filmed scenarios. This training system comes in two basic configurations: a single, large flat screen as well as a system with multiple screens creating an immersive experience. Both systems utilize several types of weapons including modified firearms that simulate recoil, less-than-lethal weapons, and replica weapons which all interact directly with the computer system. Both systems feature a "branching program" that can be used to change the scenario in response to the user's actions as they perform the scenario. Both systems have been up and running since March 2016.

There are numerous instructors trained throughout the department to run the system for the patrol stations and the Department has introduced a standard list of scenarios that cover a broad range of topics. These scenarios are changed periodically to keep the training as realistic and up-to-date as possible and in the future, will include new, dynamic scenarios based on real-life events that have happened both in our area and nationally to enhance the training experience.

Updated Policies based on Nationwide Best Practices

The Department has updated policies on Use of Force and Discharge of Firearms. Policy development began over eight months ago and included the reviews of existing law enforcement policies and best practices from local, regional, statewide and nationwide agencies. The changes to these policies include updated language emphasizing the sanctity and preservation of life, use of de-escalation tactics, and the use of less lethal force options. Furthermore, the policies balance medical assessment and care with scene security. All sworn officers have received training on the new policies regarding the impacts and implementation of the changes.

Expanded Less-Lethal Options

For law enforcement officers to effectively deal with individuals suffering from mental illness or drug induced psychosis, they must have access to appropriate equipment. Officers currently have access to a baton, pepper-spray and Taser when encountering confrontational individuals. Although these less lethal tools can be very effective, they require the officer to be close to the subject which can limit the officer's ability to effectively evaluate changes as they occur. To give officers more options, SPD is deploying three less lethal tools to patrol that will allow the officer to maintain a greater distance, allowing more time for appropriate evaluation, better tactics, and increased safety for all.

Currently officers are issued a shotgun that is deployed in the vehicle during their shift. The shotguns will be converted to launchers that fire a drag stabilized bean bag round. These bean bag rounds can incapacitate an individual from a distance, allowing officers time to safely detain the subject.

In addition, each patrol team will be issued a 40-mm launcher that fires a 3-ounce rubber projectile. These launchers effectively incapacitate a subject at a greater distance than the shotgun launcher and can be used when the drag stabilized bean bag would be ineffective.

Finally, the Department has purchased new Pepperball launchers that are more accurate and effective than our current model. A modern design that improves the accuracy and stability of these launchers will make them more effective during dynamic, fast breaking incidents. Each patrol team will be issued two of these Pepperball launchers for deployment during their shift.

Prior to deploying these new less-lethal launchers, patrol officers will participate in five hours of training. The first two hours are dedicated to familiarizing officers with the launchers and teaching proper handling and deployment. The remaining three hours are scenario based; focusing on communication, coordination, and teamwork to realize a positive outcome.

Lastly, all officers will be issued new first-aid kits that will allow officers to provide enhanced on scene care for those suffering from physical trauma.