



City of Santa Barbara

Office of the Mayor

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August 20, 2024

Randy Rowse
Mayor

Presiding Judge Pauline Maxwell
1100 Anacapa Street
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Re: Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report Entitled *“Individuals in Crisis: The Right Care at the Right Time”*

Mailing Address:
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Dear Presiding Judge Maxwell:

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The 2023 – 2024 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report recently released its report entitled *“Individuals in Crisis: The Right Care at the Right Time.”* The Grand Jury has requested the City of Santa Barbara respond to Findings 1 Recommendations 1b within 90 days of the report issuance.

RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY

Finding 1:

The Jury finds that increased implementation of the 5150 holds by trained law enforcement officers and more Behavioral Wellness clinicians would benefit all citizens of Santa Barbara County.

Recommendation 1b: The jury recommends that all County and City law enforcement officers who are trained in crisis intervention, in accordance with State guidelines, be encouraged to fully exercise the issuance of 5150 holds in appropriate circumstances.

City Response: Disagree partially with an explanation. The City of Santa Barbara must partially disagree with this recommendation and do not plan to implement it in its entirety. We truly appreciate the intention behind the recommendation and agree that we should not completely defer the decision or our authority to place a psychiatric hold to the County Department of Behavioral Wellness.

The Santa Barbara Police Department will train some officers but not all officers to write psychiatric holds. In fact, we have worked diligently with the County Department of Behavioral Wellness to have trained officers write psychiatric holds. Beginning in January of 2024, specially trained officers assigned to Santa Barbara Police Department’s Co-Response and Community Action Teams were trained to write psychiatric holds for Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 5150 and 5585 under the following circumstances:

1. The Co-Response Officer does not have their clinical partner available during the call for service.
2. There is an extended wait time for the Behavioral Wellness Mobile Crisis or SAFETY Response Team.
3. The person in crisis is demonstrating probable cause for psychiatric detention by presenting one or more of the following conditions: danger to self, danger to others, or gravely disabled due to a mental health diagnosis or presentation, and the use of a trained SBPD officer in writing the hold would be advantageous to the immediate safety of the officer, public or subject in crisis.

This communication was received by the Grand Jury on March 5, 2025.



Please consider the environment before printing this letter.

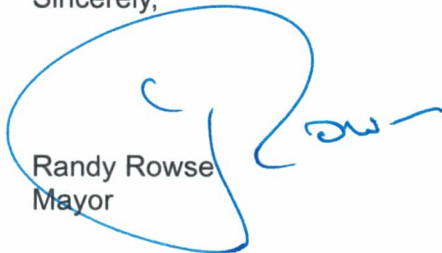
Santa Barbara Police Department's multi-tiered approach and current protocols balance the specialized skills of mental health professionals with the operational capabilities of law enforcement, ensuring improved outcomes for people experiencing a mental health crisis. When co-response teams, Mobile Crisis or SAFETY are not available, or would face substantial delays, our protocol authorizes a select group of trained police officers to evaluate and write psychiatric holds for Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 5150 and 5585 (Santa Barbara Police Department Training VOL. 2024 NO. 001). These officers are currently assigned to our Co-Response and Community Action Teams and have completed comprehensive training, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle mental health crises effectively and compassionately. These officers are carefully chosen to ensure they can respond appropriately in these critical situations. This training and expertise are essential for accurately assessing and managing individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

This tiered approach ensures that individuals in crisis receive the most appropriate and effective care available, whether from mental health professionals, integrated co-response teams, or specially trained law enforcement officers. It allows flexibility and responsiveness while maintaining a high standard of care and safety for all involved. By leveraging the strengths of mental health professionals and trained law enforcement personnel, our current protocol provides a more comprehensive and effective response to mental health crises than a model that relies solely on law enforcement officers to place persons on 5150 holds.

Our focus will remain on supporting and enhancing our protocols to ensure the best outcomes for those in crisis and the community at large. We also believe it is imperative there be additional resources to meet the need for persons experiencing crisis, both as it relates to the availability of Mobile Crisis and co-response clinicians and appropriate facilities for housing these individuals until they can safely return to the community.

Additionally, we will continue to increase the number of officers with the appropriate training and expertise that are able to write psychiatric holds for Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 5150 and 5585, which will allow them to facilitate a hold when necessary if mental health professionals are not available as we determine it is necessary to meet the needs of our community. It is our goal to have trained officers available to write these holds at all times of the day and days of the week.

Sincerely,



Randy Rowse
Mayor

CC. Eva Macias
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