

# ***SHERIFF'S CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM IT'S ABOUT CARING***

## ***SUMMARY***

In 1995 a young pastor from a local San Diego County church entered a Sheriff's patrol station and introduced himself as a Sheriff's chaplain. The on-duty sergeant responded with a liberal sprinkling of colorful profanity, "is he trying to convert us to some religion?" The pastor responded to the sergeant's comments with a smile and explained, "The San Diego County Sheriff has reorganized the chaplain's program to be more concerned with deputies, employees and their families who serve San Diego County". He explained further that pastors were no longer just on call, but would be actively involved with deputies and support staff in a meaningful way. This would include frequent visits with deputies at their patrol station, going on ride alongs, counseling about family concerns, taking part in Sheriff's award ceremonies, performing marriages, officiating at funerals, assisting during crises situations and working to be a trusted friend or companion for deputies and staff.

Sheriff's Chaplains service is unpaid and proselytizing is not allowed, although if asked, a chaplain may respond to a deputy's questions about religion. The San Diego County Sheriff's department supports two chaplaincy programs. The larger of the two serves inmates at all county sheriff's detention facilities. The detention chaplains are volunteers from county churches and other religious organizations. Their training is generally On the Job Training (OJT) working with an experienced chaplain. Those who serve deputies and support staff are almost always pastors, priests or rabbis. These clergy must pass extensive background checks, respond to questions at multiple interviews and complete additional training prior to acceptance to the Chaplaincy Program. The needs and requirements of the two programs are diverse. The stresses and demands experienced by law enforcement are unique. Someone who can reduce these stresses and understands the demands on a deputy must be a special, caring person. For the record, the young pastor and sergeant are now good friends.

## ***PURPOSE***

To learn about the San Diego County Sheriff's Chaplaincy Program and determine its impact as a department asset.

## ***PROCEDURES***

### ***Interviewed:***

- Four Sheriff's Deputy Chaplains
- One Sheriff's Deputy
- One Sheriff's Detention Chaplain

***Reviewed:***

- The San Diego County Sheriff's Chaplaincy Program's printed material

***DISCUSSION***

Those who make their living in law enforcement deal with stresses and responsibilities that are unique in the work-a-day world. Police and sheriff deputies face danger, threats and ridicule every hour whether on duty or off. Law enforcement officers have constant interaction with criminals and the negative sector of society. This interaction often involves life and death situations requiring instantaneous decisions whether to shoot or not. These situations create psychological tensions that can modify behavior when compounded with long irregular shifts. Additionally, because a deputy must often suppress his personal ethical and moral beliefs to perform his or her duty, personal relationships and job performance can be affected.

To diminish the negative affects of these stresses, the Sheriff's Department decided to restructure the chaplaincy program in 1995, to address deputy and staff concerns in a more effective way. Two San Diego pastors were selected to organize and initiate the new program. For a period of time, these pastors searched the county, read newspapers, yellow pages and other publications to identify available pastors to recruit. With the help of two additional pastors, they also developed guidelines, defined areas of chaplain responsibility, established rules of engagement, defined training requirements and most importantly, documented the need for this program.

The Chaplaincy Program's mission is to provide San Diego County Sheriff's Department employees and their families with spiritual and moral counsel, assistance during and following critical events and provide services for family and department community events. During all of these activities, a chaplain is to demonstrate love and a caring attitude for department employees and their families.

An example of how a chaplain can develop a firm, lasting relationship might begin when counseling a deputy whose marriage has been torn apart by the stresses of law enforcement. Further, chaplains often attend family graduations or perhaps a barbeque hosted by a deputy or staff member. They can also perform a marriage ceremony for an employee or a family member in an appropriate manner as determined by a prior marriage interview or officiating at funerals and be available to comfort those who are grieving.

Chaplains are encouraged to visit sheriff's patrol stations regularly to establish relationships with deputies. Other ways to interact might be to join three deputies to complete a foursome for a round of golf, or go on a ride-along to establish a one-on-one relationship with deputies, Chaplains should respond to critical incident events as directed by the lead chaplain and administer to deputies or anyone that may be in need of crisis counseling. The chaplaincy programs importance was confirmed by their commendable activity during the Cedar Fire and the shootings at Santana and Granite

Hills High Schools. Religious sermons or discussions with a deputy or staff during these incidents are not allowed, unless the subject was requested by the deputy or staff. Following selection as a law enforcement chaplain, continued training is paramount to perform successfully and in a caring way.

Understanding the negative consequences of law enforcement, having a heart for those who must deal with these consequences and the love to do something about it are the primary qualities of a law enforcement chaplain. Applicants must have a valid California driver's license, pass a rigorous background check, submit to one or more interviews, be an ordained pastor, priest or rabbi having a congregation or hold an advanced theology degree.

Prior to selection, chaplain candidates are encouraged to have family and/or congregation support before making a commitment to serve; due to a sacrifice of time that will occur when chaplains begin spending quality time with deputies and staff. Following acceptance into the program, the rookie chaplain is required to attend training sessions. Critical incident stress management training is important and the basic course is considered mandatory. Currently all law enforcement chaplains have completed this course. Two thirds of the current chaplaincy volunteers have completed an advanced stress management course. Other available classes include CPR and defibrillator training, law enforcement protocol training, Federal Emergency Management Agency National Incident Management System (FEMA NIMS) qualifications, basic first aid, firearms orientation, radio operation and more at the sheriff's academy. Completion of courses is imperative to increased sensitivity to deputy and staff needs and increased ability to respond in an appropriate, caring way.

To reach all Sheriff's deputies and staff, the program is organized into three areas. Visits to a sheriff's patrol station in the chaplain's local area, meetings with deputies and staff at courts and/or detention facilities or be on call as a member of the at-large chaplaincy group. At-large chaplains are a special group with unique training and faith outside the main stream. They respond to and coordinate crisis events, and officiate at weddings, funerals and/or church gatherings for those outside their predominate faith. How a chaplain is selected, trained or organized are not as important as the chaplains faith in God and having a deep and abiding love for mankind.

Following its investigation, the 2006-2007 San Diego Grand Jury concluded that the Sheriff's Chaplaincy Program for deputies and supporting staff is an important department asset. The jury also concluded that the many hours the chaplains sacrifice from their required daily activities should be recognized and they should be commended for their service.

## ***FACTS AND FINDINGS***

***Fact:*** The Sheriff's Department supports two chaplaincy programs.

***Finding:*** The first program serves deputies and law enforcement personal. The second program cares for inmates at the seven detention facilities in San Diego County. Both programs are voluntary, but different and the two shall never be one. It is a matter of trust that they remain separate. Should a chaplain serve both deputy and inmate, he would not be trusted by either. This distinction in no way implies that one is more important than the other. The Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Program was selected for its uniqueness and other chaplaincy programs such as that of the San Diego Police Department, are emulating this organization. Both programs know that it is all about caring.

***Fact:*** Law enforcement communications are of utmost importance in crisis situations and routine patrol operations.

***Finding:*** Sheriff's chaplains experience difficulty communicating with law enforcement and other chaplains who are responding to a crisis event and maintaining performance levels as a crisis plays out. Cell phones and land lines are often over-loaded putting the chaplain crisis coordinator at a disadvantage in communication.

## ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

**The 2006-2007 San Diego County Grand Jury recommends that the San Diego County Sheriff's Department:**

**07-14:** provide 800 MHZ radios permanently to the chaplaincy executive board members to enhance communication during routine and crisis situations.

## ***COMMENDATION***

The 2006-2007 San Diego County Grand Jury is pleased to commend the San Diego County Sheriff's Department for restructuring the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Program to be proactive rather than reactive as they assist and serve the deputies, staff and their families. We also commend the pastors, priests and rabbis who have volunteered to provide spiritual guidance, counseling and moral encouragement to law enforcement personnel. Those churches and lay members who have volunteered to serve and assist the inmates at county detention facilities are also commended for their heartfelt concern for those who are incarcerated.

## ***REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS***

The California Penal Code §933(c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made *no later than 90 days* after the Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such

comment shall be made *within 60 days* to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code §933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
  - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding
  - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
  - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
  - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
  - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
  - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code §933.05 are required from the:

<u>Responding Agency</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Date</u>
San Diego County Sheriff's Department	07-14	07/09/07