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DEPARTMENT OF  
POLICE

CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA

HALL OF JUSTICE  
813 SIXTH STREET  
SACRAMENTO, CA  
95814-2495

November 6, 1991

916-449-5121

JOHN P. KEARNS  
CHIEF OF POLICE

City Council  
Sacramento, California

**APPROVED**  
BY THE CITY COUNCIL

HONORABLE MEMBERS IN SESSION:

NOV 12 1991

SUBJECT: POLICE VIOLENCE AVOIDANCE COMMITTEE

OFFICE OF THE  
CITY CLERK

LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT: City

**SUMMARY**

Upon the recommendation of Council Member Serna, and at the direction of the Council, the police department instituted a Violence Avoidance Committee in March, 1991. This committee was charged with the responsibility to review current police training programs, internal procedures and stress reduction programs and determine if sufficient training is provided for officers in these areas. In addition, the committee was to compile a list of topics and develop resources for future presentations during the police academy, as well as other training courses.

After meeting for several months, the Violence Avoidance Committee made several significant recommendations to improve the training programs. After reviewing the department's stress management programs, the committee concluded that cumulative stress has a major impact on the emotional welfare of officers. Therefore, they made two specific recommendations for improvements to the stress management and reduction programs.

The police department has reviewed the committee's recommendations concerning the stress management programs and concurs with the

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recommendations regarding a psychologist whose focus would be centered on police employees and to partially fund the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy. Both programs would positively impact the emotional well-being of officers, thereby reducing the potential for violent confrontations.

**COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTION: NONE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

After reviewing the police department's various training programs, the Violence Avoidance Committee made numerous suggestions for improvement to the course curriculums. In addition, the committee made the following two recommendations for improvement in the area of stress management:

1. Hire a full-time psychologist for the police department, one who has been trained to handle the stresses facing police personnel on a daily basis.
2. Approve the partial funding of the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy to assist their efforts in meeting the support and counselling needs of officers and their families.

The police department has reviewed and evaluated the Violence Avoidance Committee's recommendations and has taken steps to implement the suggested improvements to the training course curriculums. The department recognizes the value of the other two recommendations and endorses the hiring of a departmental psychologist and partial funding of the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy.

It is recommended that the Council adopt the two Violence Avoidance Committee recommendations pertaining to the hiring of a department psychologist and funding for the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy.

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Violence Avoidance Committee Established**

In March, 1991, upon the recommendation of Council Member Serna, the Council directed the police department to establish a Violence Avoidance Committee in an effort to insure that sufficient training is provided for officers in violence avoidance and stress recognition and reduction. The committee was formed to safeguard against an incident of excessive force by police, such as the Rodney King incident in Los Angeles.

The Violence Avoidance Committee was charged with the responsibility to review police training programs, internal procedures and stress reduction programs. The committee was to make suggestions for improvements and compile a list of topics and develop resources for presentations during the police academy as well as other training courses.

The Violence Avoidance Committee is comprised of Deputy Chief Fred Arthur, Psychologist John Kohls, Law Enforcement Chaplain Gary Benjestorf, and Sacramento Police Officer Association Representative Leon Taylor. To assist in their review and in order to provide community input, the committee appointed two sub-committees

The first sub-committee appointed was the citizen review committee. This committee is made up of the following community representatives:

Clyde Rainwater	-	African American Advisory Committee
Manuela Serna	-	Hispanic Committee on Law Enforcement
Jimmie Yee	-	Asian American Advisory Committee
Ed Condon	-	River City Democratic Club

The citizen review committee reviewed the various training and stress management programs from a citizen's viewpoint, developed suggestions for improvements and forwarded these suggestions to the Violence Avoidance Committee for their action.

The second sub-committee appointed was the working committee which is composed of Deputy Chief Fred Arthur, Training Lieutenant Dean LaChapelle, and Basic Academy Sergeant Richard Shiraishi. This committee also reviewed all the training course curriculums and internal procedures in order to suggest improvements. Additionally, this committee was given the responsibility for implementing any approved changes.

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### **Police Training Programs**

The first area the Violence Avoidance Committee reviewed was the police department's training programs. The committee found that the department has an extensive, pro-active training program for both entry level and in-service police personnel. The committee did make several suggestions for improvements in the department's training program. As a result, this training program comprehensively addresses several areas that impact the use of force. See Exhibit A.

### **Basic Recruit Academy**

The Violence Avoidance Committee suggested that during the 20-week basic academy violence management be integrated into all subject areas which directly or indirectly involve the use of force. Arrest, control, baton, and firearms training are supplemented with citizen contact training, cultural awareness, crisis intervention, ethics and professionalism. These courses give officers many of the skills required to de-escalate and defuse volatile incidents and avoid or temper the use of force.

### **Verbal Judo**

Since interpersonal communication is the first level of force used by officers, the police department sent instructors to a course on verbal judo, also known as tactical communications. Verbal judo will instruct officers in how to look creatively at conflict and use specific strategies and tactics to find peaceful solutions to potentially violent encounters without escalating to physical force options.

### **Patrol Simulation Day**

The Violence Avoidance Committee also approved the addition of a patrol simulation day to the basic academy training schedule. This is a full day of instruction consisting of 20 exercises that represent the typical day of a patrol officer. The cadets are assigned police vehicles and are dispatched to calls just as they would be after graduation. The exercise includes problems in police ethics, cultural awareness, police violence, and the de-escalation and management of force.

The patrol simulation day provides cadets with the opportunity to apply classroom theories in an environment that allows for mistakes. It provides the academy staff with a scale to measure the effectiveness of classroom presentations.

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### **In-service Training**

The second area of training reviewed by the Violence Avoidance Committee was the 40 hour of in-service training course provided to all officers on a yearly basis. This training course is designed to reinforce proper procedures and update officers in the latest innovations in the law enforcement profession. Courses dealing with firearms, arrest-control and baton skills are routinely presented. In addition, each year officers are required to qualify in either weaponless defense or riot and crowd control techniques.

The Violence Avoidance Committee was involved in setting the course curriculum for the 1991/92 course which began on November 4, 1991. This year's training session includes classes on legal and psychological aspects of force, police ethics and professionalism, traumatic incident survival, stress recognition and management, skills of defusing and de-escalation of force. The course will be rounded out with a "shoot--don't shoot" exercise at the firearms range. This "shoot-don't shoot" exercise is another innovation to the department's training program brought about as a result of input from the committee.

### **Supervisor In-service Training**

In addition to the annual in-service training for all police officers, the Violence Avoidance Committee reviewed the additional 10 hour training course the department provides for supervisors. During this training, supervisors are provided with techniques to recognize stress in subordinates. Using these techniques, supervisors evaluate the behavior of the officers under their command. Should they observe an employee under stress, whose job performance is impaired, supervisors can request that the officer be given a fitness for duty examination by a psychologist.

### **Master Trainer Concept**

With the support of the Violence Avoidance Committee, the police department has recently initiated a master training concept in the area of weaponless defense. A master weaponless defense instructor has been appointed along with two lead instructors who are assigned to the Office of Operations. These individuals are responsible for a continuous review of the course curriculums and training manuals.

In addition, the master instructor and lead instructors will be providing weaponless defense instruction to five field instructors throughout the patrol division. The field instructors will be available for weekly team training and immediate remedial training of officers who exhibit incorrect or unsafe techniques.

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These weaponless defense instructors form an empowered team that will review problems in training and develop techniques that insure continuity, learning and policy compliance. The master training concept allows for a continuous review of training skills for field officers and instructors alike. It will aid in correcting behavior before it becomes problematic.

The Violence Avoidance Committee recommended and the police department has developed plans to expand the master instructor and empowered team concept to other areas of violence management such as crisis intervention and cultural awareness.

#### **Internal Procedures**

The second area on which the Violence Avoidance Committee focused was the internal procedures which deal with violence management.

#### **Supervisor Review of Violent Incidents**

The committee found that the police department has a program for the constant review and evaluation of violent incidents. A shooting review committee looks at every officer-involved shooting to insure that officer actions conform to departmental standards. Remedial training is scheduled in those cases where officer actions did not meet minimum standards.

The department is also instituting a program of immediate, on-scene review of violent incidents. Supervisors will now be called to each scene where an injury due to the use of force has occurred.

#### **Internal Investigation Section**

The recent addition of a computer program to the internal investigation process makes it possible to use citizen complaints as an "early warning system". As complaints are received, they are entered into a data management program. The program is then searched for other complaints against the same employee. If two or more complaints are on file, all complaints are summarized and reviewed by the Chief of Police. If a pattern appears to be developing, the employee will be assigned to remedial training.

In addition, the Chief of Police reviews all excessive force and officer involved shooting cases. If there is a possibility of criminal prosecution in a case, the Detective Division conducts an independent investigation. This investigation is forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for review and determination on whether or not charges will be filed against the employee.

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Additionally, the orientation training for newly promoted sergeants now includes a one week assignment in the Internal Investigation Section. This training provides new supervisors with personal knowledge of investigative procedures and training in excessive force investigations. As a result, these new supervisors are better prepared to handle situations which may occur on the street.

#### **Stress Reduction Programs**

The final area that the Violence Avoidance Committee was charged with reviewing was the stress reduction programs offered by the police department. One of the major issues confronting police officers is cumulative stress. Cumulative stress results in job burn-out, low morale, low productivity and psychological problems that affect the work and home lives of officers. If left unchecked, stress can manifest itself in violent over-reaction to what would otherwise be low level threats. Long term stress often leads to divorce, alcoholism or suicide.

While instruction in stress prevention and control begins at the basic recruit academy, the committee recommended that the cadets be provided with two courses of instruction. The first is held at the start of the academy and prepares them for the rigors of police training. The second session is held at the end of the academy and prepares the cadets for actual police work.

In addition, on the advice of the committee, new officers are provided with a third stress awareness training session prior to the completion of probation. During this session they review problems which they may have experienced during the first months of patrol duty.

Update training in stress management and recognition will also be conducted on a periodic basis during the annual in-service training program.

#### **Other Stress Related Programs**

In addition to reviewing the departments training programs in stress management, the Violence Avoidance Committee examined the department's Post-trauma Response Program, the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Program, and the City's Employee Assistance Program.

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### **Post-trauma Response Program**

The police department has developed a program to provide post-trauma debriefing and peer support for employees experiencing a traumatic incident. A traumatic incident is defined as any situation that individuals may find emotionally overwhelming and that attacks their ability to cope.

When such an incident occurs, a peer support member and/or chaplain is requested to respond to the employee's location. Peer support personnel are department employees who have received specialized training in crisis recognition, intervention and counselling as well as listening and assessment skills.

Peer support personnel provide emotional support to involved personnel to diffuse shock and also provide information on possible reactions that the employee may experience later. Additionally, they may suggest resources and referrals as the need arises.

After a traumatic incident, involved employees are scheduled for a mandatory appointment with a psychologist. The mandated visit is educational and informative in nature with the psychologist providing information on possible psychological reactions and stress management techniques.

### **Law Enforcement Chaplaincy**

The Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Program was founded in 1977 to serve police officers and their families in time of crisis. They are active participants in the peer support and post traumatic incident program. Additionally, they provide officers and other employees with counseling on personal matters which may affect an officer's job performance.

Over the last year law enforcement chaplains have responded to 58 emergencies, visited employees at home or in the hospital 436 times, and provided counseling in 168 cases. In addition, they have presided over 26 funerals or memorials, 3 weddings and 94 official functions.

### **City Employee Assistance Program**

In addition to the counselling provided by the peer support program and the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy, police officers are eligible to participate in the City's Employee Assistance Program. Should an employee wish to participate, they can receive up to five appointments with a psychologist to assist them with resolution of problems or stresses.



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### **Violence Avoidance Committee Recommendations**

After reviewing all of the police department's stress management programs, the Violence Avoidance Committee concluded that cumulative stress has a major impact on the emotional welfare of officers. Based on this conclusion, the committee made two recommendations.

The committee's first recommendation is for the department to employ the services of a full-time psychologist for in-house training, counselling and research. The committee believes a full-time psychologist would aid in the recognition and reduction of stress and other related problems in police officers.

Having a full time psychologist would be beneficial to the department. Police officers have not been overly responsive to the City's Employee Assistance Program. They tend to use the service only when directed by management. Many officers believe that a service selected as the lowest bidder will not provide the needed services, especially when the company makes more money if employees do not use the service.

In addition, psychologists who contract with Occupational Health Services are not readily available. Officers must call an 800 number to get the name of a counselor. They are then assigned to a person who may have minimal skills or experience with the traumatic and critical situations that confront police officers.

The committee believes officers will feel more comfortable with a department psychologist, one who has been trained to handle the stresses facing police personnel on a daily basis. This psychologist would be more like a family doctor.

Additionally, a departmental psychologist will be able to provide on-going training in the area of human behavior and assist the department in providing a training program which integrates crisis intervention and stress management techniques with the use of force.

The Violence Avoidance Committee's second recommendation was to provide partial funding of the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy to assist their efforts in meeting the support and counselling needs of officers and their families.

The Law Enforcement Chaplaincy has been responding to the needs of police officers for many years. Due to the rising number of employees, the chaplaincy program is finding it difficult to meet growing demands for their services. The chaplaincy program needs

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additional funds to continue to provide a much needed and valuable service to law enforcement.

**Police Department Endorses Violence Avoidance Committee Recommendations**

The police department reviewed and evaluated the Violence Avoidance Committee recommendations and has taken steps to implement the suggested improvements in the training course curriculums.

The police department concurs with the committee's recommendations regarding a psychologist whose focus would be centered on police employees and to partially fund the law enforcement chaplaincy. Both programs would positively impact the emotional well-being of officers, thereby reducing the potential for violent confrontations.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The cost to implement the Violence Avoidance Committee's recommendations would be approximately \$75,000 a year for the psychologist and \$33,000 for the chaplaincy program.

Currently, the police department expends approximately \$24,000 of the City's annual budget for the Employee Assistance Program. Those funds could be diverted to offset a portion of the psychologist's salary and benefits.

Additionally, the department currently contracts with psychologists to instruct at the basic recruit academy and the in-service training sessions. The \$6,000 expended for these services could also be used.

Unfortunately, the department does not have other funds available to pay the total cost for these services. Should the Council wish to pursue these recommendations, resources would have to be developed to offset the costs.

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

The Violence Avoidance Committee's recommendations are in keeping with the Council's stated goal to insure that police officers receive sufficient training in violence avoidance and stress recognition and reduction.

The committee has performed a valuable service for the police department. The police department will continue to meet with the committee to insure that the training and stress related programs

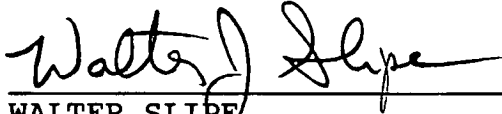
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instituted by the department are effective in minimizing and avoiding violent confrontations.

Sincerely,

  
JOHN P. KEARNS  
CHIEF OF POLICE

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:

  
WALTER SLIFE  
CITY MANAGER

For Council meeting of November 12, 1991

Contact for more information:  
Lieutenant Dean LaChapelle  
449-5264

JPK:crs  
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EXHIBIT A

**REFERENCE MATERIAL**

The following reference material is available for review by contacting the Sacramento Police Department Personnel and Training Section.

Sacramento Police General Order 580.03 - Discharging of Firearms

Sacramento Police Department Baton Manual

Sacramento Police Department Chemical Agents Manual

Sacramento Police Department Crowd and Riot Control Manual

Sacramento Police Academy Class Schedule

Sacramento Police Academy Recruit Study Guide including:

Legal Aspects of Force

Deadly Force

Effects of Force

Reasonable Force

P.O.S.T. Unit Guide - Legal Aspects of Force

Sacramento Police General Order 580.02 - Use of Chemical Mace,  
Baton, Yawara Stick, and Carotid Constriction Hold

Arrest and Control

Police Baton

Carotid Control

P.O.S.T. Unit Guide - Understanding Stress

Stress Factors

Crisis Intervention

Phase Training Manual including:

Daily Field Training Officer Report Form

Weekly Evaluation Report Form

Monthly Evaluation Report Form

1990/91 In-service Advanced Officer Training Lesson Plan -  
Crowd and Riot Control

1991/92 In-service Advanced Officer Training Schedule