

VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



MEDIA RELEASE

BILL AYUB, SHERIFF

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Nature of Incident: Therapeutic Inmate Management Unit

Narrative:

In recognition of the need for advanced mental health treatment and services in the custody setting, the Ventura County Sheriff's Office in early 2019 created the Therapeutic Inmate Management Unit (TIMU) as a means to address the many needs of mentally ill persons who have been incarcerated.

The goal of the TIMU is to ensure the quality treatment of inmates with mental illnesses that aligns with the values of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office and the communities we serve. The team has implemented quality of life changes within the jail environment by offering various treatment programs to inmates with mental illnesses.

The TIMU is comprised of Sheriff's Deputies and Sheriff's Service Technicians (SST's) who were selected because of their commitment to helping others, especially those with mental illnesses. Deputies and SST's are part of a permanent rotation within the jail setting to help foster consistency within the mentally ill population, as we know this is essential to promoting healthy relationships with individuals with mental illnesses. These deputies and SST's are an important component to the TIMU's goal and are a big part of its current success. In addition, the deputies and SST's undergo advanced training specific to mental health issues and crisis intervention.

Our staff's commitment to those inmates with mental illnesses has fostered relationships of trust and have created a safer environment for all within the jails. Since the creation of the TIMU, the Ventura County Sheriff's Office, Detention Services Division has seen a significant decrease in use of force incidents and fewer incidents of inmates expressing suicidal ideations within the mentally ill population.

The members of the unit encourage socialization techniques, which include group activities such as watching movies, listening to music, and art appreciation. The TIMU has also established an inmate incentive program specific to psychiatric inmates which has been successful in curbing some negative behaviors and increasing inmate hygiene. The incentive program rewards positive behavior by assigning point values to all activities such as having a clean cell, taking their medications, participating in programs, exercise, personal hygiene, and getting along with fellow inmates. The inmates can then use the points they earned throughout the week to get hygiene items and snack items from the TIMU at the end of each week.

The TIMU works closely with Wellpath, our medical partners within the jail setting. In consultation with mental health professionals and mental health programs from other correctional facilities, the TIMU completed a repainting of the psychiatric sections in the jail. The paint scheme was

changed to colors deemed more therapeutic to psychiatric inmates, and some of the correctional grade fixtures were removed and replaced with sand filled furniture that can be moved by the inmates to different locations within the dayroom. In addition, the TIMU acts as a liaison to family members and caretakers of inmates. TIMU deputies maintain contact with family members and provide them with updates on their loved ones as well as obtain information about the inmate's psychiatric history and ways to mitigate behaviors.

Prepared by: Senior Deputy Danny Lopez

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Media Follow-Up Contact: Sergeant Cyrus Zadeh 805-947-9263
cyrus.zadeh@ventura.org

Approved by: Captain Eric Buschow

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