KAREN BASS
MAYOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 21

Issue Date: September 24, 2026

Subject: Improving the Los Angeles Police Department's Response to Mental Health and Behavioral Health Crises and Preserving Life

This evaluation aims to assess current Los Angeles Police Department policies, practices, and training, identify strategic opportunities and best practices, and make recommendations for strengthening crisis response protocols for individuals experiencing behavioral and mental health challenges, with the overarching goal of advancing public safety and saving lives.

Introduction

Decades of systemic disinvestment in mental and behavioral health services have created a severe shortage of care, leaving individuals in acute crisis with virtually nowhere to turn. As a result, individuals with untreated mental illness or behavioral health crises too often experience repeated encounters with law enforcement, or cycle between the streets, emergency rooms, and detention facilities and eventually end up in the criminal justice system.

Use of force incidents or custodial arrests resulting in death or serious bodily injury have profound consequences for individuals, families, communities, and Los Angeles Police Department personnel. Each incident warrants careful and independent examination to determine what occurred, identify contributing factors, and assess whether changes in policy, training, tactics, supervision, equipment, or crisis response could lead to safer outcomes. This is particularly true when the encounter possibly involves someone experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.

Accordingly, this Executive Directive calls for an independent and comprehensive evaluation of LAPD uses of force and custodial arrests that result in death or serious bodily injury that may have involved individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health crises. The evaluation shall attempt to determine if the individual was experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis, identify contributing factors, potential systemic gaps, and evidence-informed opportunities to strengthen policy and practice, enhance accountability and safety, and advance the preservation of life.

Any examination of these types of incidents shall be conducted for purposes of organizational learning and prospective improvement, including identifying patterns, contributing factors, systemic issues, and opportunities to strengthen policy, training, tactics, supervision, and operations. The examination shall not involve an evaluation of current open cases (individual incidents or determinations made through existing Department, Police Commission, prosecutorial, or judicial processes) related to use of force investigations and adjudications.

Furthermore, this evaluation will determine whether the Department's resources for employee mental wellness are adequate, culturally and gender competent, reflect best practices, and ensure LAPD personnel receive appropriate and effective care in the wake of a use of force or in-custody death throughout their career. Employee wellness must be a key component of safe and respectful interactions within our community.

I hereby direct the Board of Police Commissioners to retain an independent evaluation firm with demonstrated expertise in constitutional policing and mental and behavioral health crisis response to conduct an assessment consistent with this directive and submit recommendations to the Mayor's Office and the Board of Police Commissioners within six months of contract execution. The assessment must thoroughly evaluate and provide actionable recommendations for reform in the following core areas: prioritizing proactive de-escalation tactics, targeted training enhancements, and reducing or mitigating the likelihood of deadly-force incidents involving persons experiencing behavioral or mental health crises. The evaluation shall also include, but not be limited to, the following LAPD policies, training, tactics, procedures, and operational practices for both sworn and civilian personnel:

I. Identifying Individuals Experiencing Mental and/or Behavioral Health Crises

- **A.** Evaluate how department personnel currently identify and determine if an individual is experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis. This should also include individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities such as autism or deafness, or individuals under the influence of an illegal substance, who may present to personnel as experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.
- **B.** Evaluate existing protocols for LAPD's responses to individuals in crisis with known histories of mental or behavioral health conditions.
- **C.** Examine incidents occurring during the past five years which involved uses of force or custodial arrests resulting in death or serious bodily injury to determine whether the decedent or individual injured was experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.
- **D.** Examine incidents occurring during the past five years that did not result in a use of force in order to identify common themes or best practices that successfully de-escalated the incident or allowed officers to gain compliance without using force with individuals experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.

E. Examine incidents occurring during the past five years which involved uses of force or custodial arrests resulting in death or serious bodily injury, to determine whether the decedent or the person injured had an intellectual disability that may have presented as a mental or behavioral crisis.

F. Assess Department procedures for logging, monitoring, and analyzing repeat calls involving individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health crises. This should also include individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities such as autism or deafness, or individuals under the influence of an illegal substance, who may present to personnel as experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.

II. Examine Education and Training of Personnel

A. Evaluate the curriculum and methods used to train department personnel in how to respond to incidents involving persons experiencing mental and behavioral crises.

B. Evaluate the curriculum and methods used to train department personnel in how to respond to incidents involving persons with intellectual or physical disabilities such as autism or deafness, or individuals under the influence of an illegal substance, which may present as a mental or behavioral health crisis.

C. Evaluate the quality and quantity of training officers receive post academy including updating officers in current research, e.g., mental and behavioral health disorders, physical and intellectual disabilities and new illegal drugs.

D. Assess and make recommendations for how the Department should continuously evaluate and incorporate lessons learned from uses of force or custodial arrests resulting in death or serious bodily injury related to individuals who were experiencing a mental or behavioral health crises, to consistently update and improve tactics, training, policies and procedures.

III. Utilization of Lethal and Less Lethal Force

A. Force Options: Evaluate department policies and procedures governing the availability and use of lethal and less lethal force options, including new and emerging technologies, during encounters involving individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health crises, including individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities such as autism or deafness, or individuals under the influence of an illegal substance, which may present as a mental or behavioral health crisis.

IV. Align Officers with Appropriate Support and Wellness Care

A. Evaluate Department protocols, examine best practices, and make recommendations for improving:

1. **Short-Term Mental Health Care:** mandatory administrative leave, psychological debriefings, and immediate peer-support availability following a use of force or custodial arrests resulting in death or serious bodily injury.
2. **Long-Term Care:** proactive mental health monitoring, confidential counseling services, department capacity, and the removal of cultural or administrative stigmas surrounding care.
3. **Resiliency Programs:** ongoing training focused on cumulative stress, trauma mitigation, and mental health check-ins for all personnel.
4. **Cultural and Gender Competency:** the Department's ability to provide culturally and gender competent care to ensure all personnel will receive appropriate assistance, including wellness resources that are linguistically and culturally diverse.

V. Custodial and Detention-Facility Protocols

A. In-Custody Training & Curriculum Assessment: Evaluate in-academy, post-academy, and continuous training programs for both sworn and civilian personnel regarding individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health crises while in LAPD custody.

B. Restraint Utilization: Evaluate the use of all restraints on people reasonably believed to be experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis while in LAPD custody.

C. Immediate Intervention: Evaluate protocols for immediate transfer to medical facilities when an in-custody detainee exhibits signs of medical or mental or behavioral health distress.

D. Dispatch and Officer Notification: Evaluate and make recommendations regarding dispatch protocols and operational practices for properly notifying medical professionals and detention officers of an individual's known histories of mental or behavioral health conditions and preferred language or interpretation needs.

Executed on this 24th day of September, 2026

KAREN BASS
Mayor