



Seattle Office of Inspector General

SENT VIA EMAIL

MEMORANDUM

February 18, 2021

To: Chief Adrian Diaz, Seattle Police Department
From: Lisa Judge, Inspector General for Public Safety
Re: SPD Response to Persons In Crisis with Bladed or Blunt Weapons

Thank you for the productive conversation today about the need to address SPD's response to people in crisis when they are armed with bladed or blunt weapons. Unless and until there is another means for assisting people in crisis, especially those who believe they want to end their lives, SPD will continue to be called. I am glad we agree it must be in a different way. I also appreciate (and completely agree with) your belief that officers responding to people in crisis should do so with a mindset of concern and a desire to help. I agree with you that this requires the appropriate training, tools, supervision/mentoring, and review processes to keep officers proficient in addressing crisis situations in the least harmful way possible.

OIG is eager to work with SPD, OPA, and other stakeholders to try to eliminate the likelihood or need to resolve calls involving persons in crisis with a use of deadly force. We understand the need for proper and forward-thinking training and policy in this area, and will work with you to ensure officers are trained and equipped to use approaches that resolve calls to assist persons in crisis by getting them appropriate care, and minimizing the need for deadly force. It would also be beneficial to assess the training and policy needs to support proper supervision of these calls, as well as making sure FTO and mentoring programs provide sufficient guidance to officers.

Ensuring SPD officers are prepared to deal with these encounters in a different way will necessitate a willingness to embrace unconventional thinking and I am glad you acknowledge nothing should be off the table as we explore strategies and tools to find a better way forward. For example, I know SPD is familiar with de-escalation approaches like ICAT, as well as potential virtual training technologies (like Virtra systems) to enhance decision-making training opportunities. I am also hopeful about your efforts to research other relevant virtual reality training opportunities.

I look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss next steps. Thank you for your collaborative approach to this critical community concern.