

LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION

**REVIEW OF
THE DEPARTMENT'S
EARLY WARNING
SYSTEM**



Conducted by the

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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EARLY WARNING SYSTEM**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD or Department) maintains as its central database the Training Evaluation and Management System II (TEAMS). Among other things, TEAMS functions as an Early Warning System (EWS) that alerts the Department when sworn officers exhibit potentially problematic behavior. In this report, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) examines the effectiveness and efficiency of the EWS.

II. BACKGROUND

In 1981, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recommended that all police agencies create an EWS to identify officers who may be exhibiting patterns indicative of improper behavior, thereby allowing management an opportunity to address the behavior.¹ By 1999, 27 percent of law enforcement agencies serving populations of at least 50,000 had established an EWS.²

In January 2007, while under the Consent Decree, the Department implemented an EWS using the Risk Management Information System (RMIS) within TEAMS.³ The RMIS captures officer at-risk events, including uses of force, complaints, vehicle pursuits, preventable traffic collisions, and claims and lawsuits. The RMIS also examines combinations of events in an officer's history and compares them to other officers within the Department. When an officer's performance triggers one or more alerts, an Action Item (AI) is automatically generated.⁴

An AI is an alert generated in TEAMS which requires the triggering officer's supervisor to address the alert and indicate whether any corrective action is recommended.⁵ The supervisor then forwards the AI through TEAMS to superiors in the officer's Chain of Command (COC). The number of levels of review varies with assignment. Typically, a patrol officer's AI receives five levels of review: sergeant, lieutenant, patrol captain, geographic area captain, and bureau

¹ WHO IS GUARDING THE GUARDIANS? A REPORT ON POLICE PRACTICES, U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS (1981).

² Samuel Walker, Geoffrey P. Alpert, and Dennis J. Kenney, "Early Warning Systems: Responding to the Problem Police Officer," National Institute of Justice *Research in Brief*, July 2001, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188565.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2014).

³ See Department Manual Volume 1, § 668.01, "Risk Management Information System."

⁴ The alerts can occur in 1 of 15 following areas: 1. Uses of Force (UOFs) to Stops; 2. UOFs to Arrests; 3. UOFs to Employee; 4. Combination of 1 to 3; 5. Complaints (CFs) to Stops; 6. CFs to Arrests; 7. CFs to Employee; 8. Combination of 5 to 7; 9. Claims/Lawsuits (C/Ls) to Stops; 10. C/Ls to Arrests; 11. C/Ls to Employee; 12. Combination of 9 to 11; 13. Traffic Collisions to Employee; 14. Vehicle Pursuits to Employee; and 15. Universal (combination of 1 to 14).

⁵ A supervisor must select one of thirteen possible categories to indicate what actions were taken. See Appendix for full description of all 13 dispositions.

commander. Superiors may revise the supervisor's recommended disposition. The final disposition appears on the officer's TEAMS report for five years and is viewable by the COC, Professional Standards Bureau, and the OIG.

III. DEPARTMENT DISPOSITION OF ACTION ITEMS

A. Examining Dispositions

To examine the effectiveness of AIs, the OIG examined the dispositions assigned to AIs for a four-month period from November 1, 2012, through February 28, 2013. The OIG reviewed all 748 AIs that were completed during this time period. The OIG reviewed these AIs to identify the Department's actions to address the officers' behaviors.

Disposition	Count	Percentage
No Action	524	70.0%
Informal Meeting	168	22.5%
Further Action Not Required	32 ⁶	4.3%
Training	9	1.2%
Comment Card	8	1.1%
Commendation	1	<1.0%
Comment Card, Training	1	<1.0%
Directed Behavioral Science Service Referral	1	<1.0%
Modified Field Duties	1	<1.0%
Modified Field Duties, Training	1	<1.0%
Special Evaluation Report	1	<1.0%
Training, Further Action Not Required	1	<1.0%

The dispositions showed that 74.3% of the AIs resulted in no Department action at all and an additional 22.5% resulted in an "informal meeting." Special Order No. 28, dated August 29, 2008, defines an informal meeting as "when a supervisor meets with the employee and conducts an informal counseling session that does not result in any further action." The OIG determined that the Department took some sort of action on approximately 25% of the warnings. However, the Department took substantive action requiring formal documentation on approximately 3% of the warnings.

⁶ Five AIs were assigned a disposition of "Assigned to Non-Field Duties." The OIG determined that the officers had already been assigned to non-field duties before the AI was created, and the disposition should have been "Further Action Not Required." Also, one AI was assigned dispositions of "Complaint" and "Modified Field Duties," but the OIG determined that the officer had already been assigned to modified field duties as a result of the complaint and the appropriate disposition should have been "Further Action Not Required." The OIG adjusted the numbers in this table accordingly.

"Further Action Not Required" means that the Department took some action with the officer before the AI was created, and therefore no additional action was needed in response to the AI.

B. Chain of Command Time Demands

Regardless whether supervisors take actions on AIs, the process requires a considerable investment of Department resources. Each AI requires an officer's COC to document their response in the TEAMS database. Each level of the COC is required to access the TEAMS database, review the AI and the recommended disposition for the warned-about behavior, approve or disapprove the recommendation, and then forward to the next level of command. Even if the time demands to review each AI are minimal, the aggregate amount of time that the Department spends on AIs can be substantial.

IV. EARLY WARNINGS ABOUT TERMINATED OFFICERS

Between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2013, the Department terminated the employment of 40 police officers. The OIG examined the TEAMS report for each of these terminated officers and focused on whether the EWS provided any warning to the Department about these officers. Of the 40 officers terminated in the two-year period, 30 (75%) had zero or one AI generated in the five-year period visible on the TEAMS report. The remaining 10 officers had 16 AIs generated, but the OIG found little correlation between AIs and the officer terminations.

Table 2: Action Items Generated Over 5 Years for Terminated Officers

Number of Officers	Action Items in 5 Years
13	0
17	1
4	2
3	3
2	5
1	6

The OIG found that the EWS generally provided no advance "warning" prior to the event that resulted in each officer's termination.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based upon the above analysis, it appears that the EWS requires a substantial time commitment from Department personnel while providing limited predictive capabilities. The OIG recommends that the Department review the EWS and, to the extent possible, modify the system to remedy some of these concerns. Regardless of the outcome of such a review, the OIG would further recommend that the Department present its findings and recommendations to the Commission.

VII. DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE

The Department has shared similar concerns as some of those identified by the OIG in its review of RMIS. As such, in 2013, the LAPD asked its research partner, Dr. Craig Uchida of Justice & Security Strategies, Inc. (JSS), to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of TEAMS II. As a result, JSS applied for and was awarded a grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the research arm of the US Department of Justice.

The study is scheduled to begin in July 2014 and will address issues raised by the OIG in its recent report as well as a number of other important research questions. The evaluation will address the following:

1. How powerful is the TEAMS II system in accurately identifying officers who will become "problem" officers?
2. How good are the TEAMS II data systems in capturing the actual occurrence of the undesired behaviors that the system was designed to track?
3. In TEAMS II, immediate supervisors use their judgment in reviewing computer-generated lists of officers whose high statistical scores mandate scrutiny. What standards do they use and what is the result?
4. To what extent does the TEAMS II system reduce undesired police practices?
5. What are the costs of the TEAMS II system for the organization? How much supervisor effort does the system require? To what extent does it reduce or extinguish desired police behaviors? How does it affect officer morale, creativity, and initiative?

The JSS researchers will use a variety of methods to answer these questions. These include:

1. An extensive analysis of data within TEAMS II that examines action item dispositions, thresholds, and error rates.
2. Analyses of use of force incidents, complaints against police officers, claims and lawsuits, preventable vehicle crashes, and pursuits over a six-year period (2008-2013).
3. Departmentwide surveys of officers and supervisors that capture their perceptions about TEAMS II. Stratified random samples of officers and supervisors will be selected for the surveys.
4. Interviews and focus groups with supervisors about specific cases to determine the time that it takes to do specific tasks, the information they used in making decisions, and other important elements.

Dr. Uchida will ultimately provide a report to the LAPD and the NIJ that describes the methodology applied and the overall findings of the review, as well as an executive summary that provides succinct findings and recommendations. The final report will be completed by December 2015. Those findings and recommendations will be reviewed with the OIG and presented in a report to the Board of Police Commissioners.

APPENDIX

Policy Governing Usage of the 13 Available Action Item Dispositions⁷

Further Action Not Required – “Used if some action was taken in connection with the same triggering incident/event before the Action Item was activated and no further action is required.”

No Action – “Used when no pattern of behavior posing potential risk was identified.”

Commendation – “Used when the assessment determined that the behavior deserves a commendation.”

Informal Meeting – “Used when a supervisor meets with the employee and conducts an informal counseling session that does not result in any further action.”

Training – “Used when the assessment identified a need for formal training.”

Special Evaluation Reports – “Used when the assessment determined an employee needs mentoring and that special evaluation reports are required.”

Modified Field Duties – “Used when the supervisor identifies a need for modified field duties.”

Assigned to Non-Field Duties – “Used when the supervisor determines that the employee should be removed from the field and placed in a non-field duty assignment.”

Risk Management Executive Committee Referral – “Used when the supervisor determines that the employee should be referred to the RMEC.”

Directed Behavioral Science Services Referral – “Used when the supervisor determines that employee should be referred to BSS.”

Comment Card – “Used when the supervisor determines that a comment card is appropriate.”

Notice to Correct – “Used when the supervisor determined that a NTC, Form General 78, is necessary.”

Complaint – “Used in the event misconduct is identified and a personnel complaint initiated.”

⁷ Per Special Order Nos. 28-2008 and 14-2010.