



Richmond Police Department Training Bulletin



Date: March 17, 2025

TB 25-02

- Responding to individuals experiencing mental health crises.
- Providing immediate behavioral health support.
- Connecting individuals to ongoing care and resources.

Engaging the A3 team may lead to more appropriate resolutions for individuals in crisis and can help reduce the need for law enforcement intervention. However, officers must remain actively involved in ensuring safety and cannot defer responsibility entirely to A3.

If a crime has been committed, officers must handle the investigation and enforce the law accordingly.

If no crime has been committed, officers should weigh the totality of the circumstances before using force and determine whether notifying A3 is the best course of action.

Officer Awareness

Officers are reminded to:

- Assess whether a crime has occurred before treating an incident solely as a mental health crisis.
- Complete a Crime/Incident Report when a crime has been committed, incorporating details of any 5150 hold.
- Use de-escalation techniques and consider alternative responses, such as the A3 Crisis Response Team, while ensuring officer safety, public safety, and the subject's well-being.
- Remain engaged and decisive when responding to calls with A3. Officers should not be passive but rather work in coordination with A3 while maintaining their law enforcement responsibilities.

Follow-up & Conclusion

The management team has requested a legal opinion from the City Attorney's Office for clarity regarding the Ninth Circuit Court decision in *Scott v. Smith* involving Las Vegas PD. This case, decided in July 2024, denied qualified immunity to officers in an excessive force claim where an officer temporarily used bodyweight compression on a prone individual's back and neck. The Court emphasized that the individual was mentally ill, not suspected of a crime, and did not present a risk to officers or others.



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Training bulletins are designed to provide legal updates, investigative tips, and information helpful to Richmond Police personnel. All training bulletins shall be adhered to unless directed otherwise.

Purpose

This training bulletin serves as a reminder of our duty per policy when responding to incidents involving individuals experiencing mental health crises. Officers must complete a Crime/Incident Report whenever a crime has occurred, even for lower-level offenses, to ensure proper documentation and protect themselves should a use of force incident arise.

When assisting A3 for a response, public safety, officer safety, and the subject's safety are paramount. Officers are expected to be decisive and engaged when responding to calls with A3, not passive or indifferent. **A3 is a resource, but it does not replace law enforcement's role in ensuring safety and order.**

Crime Reporting Requirements

Policy 344 – Report Preparation requires officers to complete a Crime/Incident Report whenever a reportable offense has occurred, regardless of an individual's mental health status. Proper documentation ensures investigative integrity, protects officers from liability, and provides transparency in case force is used.

Officers Should:

- Complete a 5150 form to accompany paramedics when initiating a mental health hold.
- Document the elements of any crime committed, along with details of the 5150 hold, within the Crime/Incident Report.

Note: Separate reports for the crime and the 5150 hold are not necessary; both should be integrated into a single comprehensive report.

Alternative Response: A3 Crisis Response

Officers are encouraged to utilize the A3 Crisis Response Team, a 24/7 mobile crisis intervention service provided by Contra Costa Health, when appropriate. The A3 team specializes in:



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While this ruling does not establish a blanket denial of qualified immunity for officers responding to mental health calls, it underscores the need for officers to remain vigilant in their approach to these calls, ensuring that their actions align with RPD policy and training.

<https://jones-mayer.com/vol-40-no-2-no-qualified-immunity-on-excessive-force-claim-where-police-used-bodyweight-force-on-the-back-of-a-prone-individual-who-was-mentally-ill-not-suspected-of-a-crime-and-did-not-present-a/>