

# School Threat Assessment and Response (STAR)

Riverside County's Response to  
Managing Incidents of School Violence



2017

***A Community Effort in Responding to a Young Person Threatening or Inflicting Violence at School***

Prepared and Revised March 2017 by:



Riverside County Probation Department



Riverside County District Attorney's Office



Riverside County Sheriff's Department



Riverside County Office of Education



Superior Court of California, County of Riverside



Riverside County Behavioral Health Services



Riverside County Department of Public Social Services

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# **I. School Threat Assessment and Response (STAR)**

## **STAR Mission Statement:**

*Protect the Safety and Welfare of Students, School Staff, and the Community Through Effective Prevention and Immediate Intervention by the Multi-Agency Team Throughout Riverside County.*

## **Introduction:**

The nation continues to be stunned by violent threats or incidents involving students on school campuses. Research indicates these potentially violent youth do not just snap; rather, they exhibit warning signs prior to acting out. The Secret Service found that in more than 75% of the incidents they studied, other youth knew about the attack before it occurred, and an adult had expressed concerns about the student. In more than half of the cases, more than one person had expressed concern. Over half of the attackers developed the idea to harm the target at least two weeks prior to the incident. Noting the devastation and wishing to avoid the tragic experiences of other communities which have suffered senseless violence on school campuses, a Multi-Agency Team (MAT) has been comprised, consisting of the Superior Court of CA in Riverside, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement agencies, in conjunction with the Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, Department of Public social Services and Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health, the Riverside County Office of Education, and local school districts.

This Protocol is to be used in school-related incidents for prevention, threat assessment, intervention, and response to youth who are at risk to commit or have committed a violent act. Members of the MAT have agreed to the uniform implementation, enforcement, and reporting of incidents involving youth and guns/explosive devices or threat of great harm to students, schools, or school staff. Based upon law enforcement's assessment of the situation, the Protocol may also be used for other weapon or broad ranging criminal threat offenses.

# **II. STAR Protocol Agreement**

The members of the Multi-Agency Team (MAT) have agreed in principle that:

1. **Law Enforcement** will investigate and prepare a written report of the circumstances of the incident. They will expand the investigation by contacting the parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) and make a home visit to conduct a safety evaluation.
2. The **Probation Department (Probation)** will detain the youth at Juvenile Hall pursuant to a law violation. The Detention Control Officer will notify the Juvenile Field Intake Unit of the youth being detained under the STAR Protocol. Information and assessment from the combined members of the team will be used to determine future intervention strategies, including continued detention.
3. The **Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE)** will make information available concerning the youth to the appropriate agencies, and serve as a liaison between MAT and local school districts.

4. The **Riverside University Health System – Department of Behavioral Health (Behavioral Health)** will administer and interpret the results of the Problem Behavior Inventory assessment tool within 24 hours of the youth being booked into Juvenile Hall, and complete an evaluation to determine if the youth is a danger to themselves or others. Information from other cooperating agencies will be considered while completing the assessment, which will be shared with members of the team where appropriate, pursuant to rules and regulations regarding confidentiality.
5. The **District Attorney’s Office (District Attorney)** will review all reports for legal sufficiency and prosecute any youth found to have threatened great harm to students, schools, or school staff, or youth in possession of a gun, explosive device, or other dangerous weapon on a school campus. Prosecution against the parent, legal guardian, or responsible party will be enforced when appropriate. The District Attorney's Office will coordinate with the MAT to ensure the interests of public safety and the youth are protected.
6. The **Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Child Protective Services Division (CPS)** will respond upon request from law enforcement to conduct a family and child welfare assessment to determine the overall well-being and functioning of other children in the home. CPS will also research its database to determine if there is an open file or CPS history on the youth or their family and share the information with the MAT.
7. The **Juvenile Court judge** will hear and make an order on School Threat Assessment and Response cases whenever a Juvenile Court petition has been filed.
8. The STAR Protocol will be reviewed and updated biennially.

### **III. STAR Protocol Responsibilities**

#### **Law Enforcement**

##### **A. Dispatcher Responsibilities:**

1. Assign the call utilizing existing prioritization guidelines.
2. Assign a report number to the call for documentation purposes.
3. Contact the appropriate on-duty field supervisor, if required, per department policy.
4. Assist with telephone calls to other agencies if requested by investigating officer or field supervisor.

##### **B. Officer Responsibilities:**

1. The responding officer should make contact with the reporting party via phone or in person. Contact should then be made with the senior school administrator of that campus, preferably in person. Responding officer may be the School Resource Officer. Determination to initiate a “campus lock down” should be made during this initial phase.
2. Contact known suspect(s) and eliminate any potential immediate threat by searching the suspect(s) for firearms or explosives. Based upon the officer's assessment of the situation, the Protocol may also be used for other weapon offenses. If applicable, search locker, backpack, computer and cell phone.

Police search in school requires a warrant unless:

- Probable cause exists at the inception of the search, along with exigent circumstances.
  - There is a specific rule waiving the warrant requirement.
  - Informed consent of the person to be searched has been obtained.
  - Pursuant to a lawful arrest.
  - The custodian of the place to be searched requests the search.
  - A public school official does not need a warrant or "probable cause" to search a public school student, provided that the official has a *reasonable suspicion* that the student has violated either a law or a school regulation. Case law states that a school official may request a law enforcement officer to assist in or conduct the search of a student based upon the school official's reasonable suspicion that a violation has occurred.
3. Identify and interview all victims and witnesses. Assess the threat by investigating the suspect's past behavior, including police contacts and school-related problems. If possible, use school records to check student's past history and conduct checks of the internet, social media websites, cell phones, or other electronic devices.
  4. Evaluate the youth for Welfare and Institution Code 5150 criteria.
  5. Notify the youth's parent(s)/guardian(s) of the incident and inquire about the history and availability of firearms, weapons, or explosives.
  6. Go to the youth's home to conduct a safety assessment. Make every effort to obtain a consent search of the youth's residence/bedroom and vehicle for firearms, weapons, or explosive devices. If the suspect is a juvenile, obtain consent from the parent(s)/guardian(s) for common areas and areas where the juvenile has ready access. If parent(s)/guardian(s) permit the youth to lock his/her bedroom door or otherwise deny access to certain areas, a search warrant may be necessary.
  7. If consent cannot be obtained, advise the field supervisor of the situation and all known facts. The supervisor will provide guidance as to whether a search warrant will be sought.
  8. When examining the youth's bedroom for firearms, explosive devices, threatening letters, computers, cell phones, etc., take note of the room's condition and any indicators of violent, dark or morbid themes.
  9. If evidence is seized, follow your department's policy with respect to documentation and proper handling. Contact the Hazardous Device Team if explosives are discovered.
  10. In the event there is probable cause for arrest, complete a Juvenile Court Application for Petition (J132), a statement of probable cause, and an arrest report that fully documents your investigation. In addition to the normal investigation, the report is to include the following:
    - Reaction of youth's parent(s)/guardian(s);
    - Inquire with parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding any prior suicidal thoughts, behaviors, actions, or treatment for mental health issues on behalf of the youth;
    - Youth's access to firearms;
    - Youth's familiarity and training with firearms;
    - Description of youth's bedroom and general home environment;

- Collection of evidence to include photographs;
- Inform if DPSS was called to the residence to investigate;
- Internet, computer and cell phone activity.

If there is insufficient evidence to support an arrest, an informational report should be taken to document the circumstances surrounding the incident.

11. If probable cause exists to arrest, transport youth to Juvenile Hall.
12. Notify the Juvenile Hall Detention Control Officer of the nature of the arrest and inform if DPSS was called to the residence and of the STAR Protocol requirements.

**C. Field Supervisor Responsibilities:**

1. Monitor status of investigation.
2. Ensure thoroughness of investigation.
3. Provide guidance to the investigative officer as needed.
4. Request assistance from follow-up detectives when necessary.
5. Review crime report for details prior to booking into juvenile hall.
6. Manage designated information to media and press.
7. Document information into supervisor's "Pass On Log."
8. Obtain a search warrant if applicable.
9. Notify Chain of Command

**District Attorney's Office**

- A. The District Attorney has a zero tolerance policy for firearms on any school campus.
- B. The District Attorney's Office will prosecute any youth found in possession of a gun, explosive device, or other dangerous weapon on school grounds. Threats of violence against a school, its staff, or youth at the facility, made in person, by phone, or on internet or social media sites may be prosecuted accordingly.
- C. In any case wherein a youth is unlawfully found in possession of a firearm, explosive device, or other dangerous weapon not on a school campus, and there exists a direct nexus to a school or the school community, the District Attorney may designate the case a "School Threat Assessment and Response" case, and prosecute accordingly.
- D. The District Attorney may enforce violations of cases where a parent or legal guardian is found not to have exercised reasonable care, supervision, protection, and control over their child. The following Penal Codes sections may apply:
  1. Penal Code 272 (Contributing to the Delinquency of a Youth)
  2. Penal Code 25100 (Criminal Storage of a Firearm)
- E. The District Attorney will coordinate and cooperate with schools, law enforcement agencies, Probation, Behavioral Health, and other county agencies in reducing and preventing illegal possession of firearms or explosive devices by youth, in the interests of public safety and the youth.

## **Probation Department**

### **A. Identify as a Protocol Case:**

Upon booking, law enforcement will notify the Detention Control Officer that the youth is a STAR Protocol Case.

### **B. Responsibilities of Detention Control Officer:**

1. Review Juvenile Court Application for Petition (J132), probable cause statement, and crime report.
2. Obtain, or arrange to obtain, any additional information from the arresting officer.
3. Complete the STAR log to identify the referral as a Protocol Case; establish time frames for completing the assessment; complete the STAR profile on the youth and coordinate the assessment.
4. Interview the youth, per normal Juvenile Hall procedures, and administer the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI). Notify Behavioral Health of the STAR case and the need for them to administer the Problem Behavior Inventory instrument (PBI) within 24 hours. A Behavioral Health clinician will interpret the results of the PBI. When indicated by the results of the PBI, Behavioral Health will complete an assessment to determine if the youth is a danger to themselves or others. The assessment will be shared with other MAT members if and when appropriate.
5. Contact parent(s)/guardian(s).
6. Contact the school authorities if not already done so by law enforcement/others.
7. Contact DPSS for any known information about the youth/family if law enforcement/others have not already done so.
8. Complete the detention process of the youth per normal Juvenile Hall procedure.
9. If the youth is determined to be "low risk" per the Intake Assessment Form, PBI, MAYSI, or supervisor override (due to circumstances of the offense), they may be released to parent(s)/guardian(s) with approval of the facility administrator. However, the PBI must be administered and the results evaluated by BHS prior to release. If a youth is released, charges may be filed out of custody. Juvenile Probation may refer the youth for diversion services through a community-based organization and/or Behavioral Health services may be initiated.
10. When the youth is released from Juvenile Hall, the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be provided a Fact/Resource Sheet on "High Risk Indicators," and a list of available counseling agencies to utilize.
11. Youth determined to be "at-risk," per the Intake Assessment Form, PBI, MAYSI, or supervisor override will be detained in Juvenile Hall and have a petition filed to appear in Juvenile Court.
12. Juvenile Hall staff will provide the following to the Juvenile Probation Intake Unit within legal time frames:



- The Juvenile Court Application for Petition (J132), all law enforcement reports, and probable cause statements.
- The completed Juvenile Hall STAR Protocol Log; the STAR Profile and other pertinent Juvenile Hall information.

### **Department of Behavioral Health**

- A. When a youth is brought to Juvenile Hall for a STAR related offense, a Behavioral Health clinician will administer the Problem Behavior Inventory (PBI) within 24 hours, and interpret the results. When indicated by the results of the PBI, Behavioral Health will initiate an assessment of the youth for danger to self or others and differentiate between conduct disorder behavior and other types of mental health problems.
- B. When completing an assessment, Behavioral Health staff will also review information obtained from law enforcement, schools, Child Protective Services, probation and parents for the following risk factors:
1. Response of youth;
  2. Response of parent;
  3. Suicidal ideations, behaviors, or indicators;
  4. Assessment of access to firearms, explosive devices in the home;
  5. Assessment of home and room of youth, computer, internet, text and cell phone activity.
- C. The assessment will be shared where legally and professionally appropriate with the following agencies:
1. Probation
  2. Schools
  3. Child Protective Services (CPS)
  4. Law Enforcement
- Any release of information must comply with the Welfare & Institutions Code sections 827 and 5328.
- D. Behavioral Health currently maintains staff in Riverside, Indio and Southwest Juvenile Halls. Behavioral Health clinicians will respond and complete assessments within 24 hours to STAR referrals.

### **Department of Public Social Services**

- A. **Staff Responsibilities:**  
When a report involving youth with a STAR Protocol incident is received by Child Protective Services (CPS), the following responses will be initiated:
1. The Central Intake Center (CIC) staff will create a referral and assess the information to determine if an "Immediate Response" or "10-Day Response" is needed.
  2. If law enforcement requests assistance through CIC, and there are immediate child protection issues, a referral will be generated and assigned to an Emergency Response (ER) social worker in the respective region as an "Immediate Response (IR)."
  3. For cases in which child protection is not a primary concern, but law enforcement is requesting assistance in assessing overall functioning of families and children, the referral will be assigned to the respective region's ER Unit as a "10-Day Response."

4. Social workers who determine that a child has threatened to use or has access to a gun or other deadly weapons during routine home visits or investigation will assess safety issues and contact law enforcement and the CIC immediately. Per current CPS policy, the social worker will remove the child if there is imminent risk.
5. All referrals meeting the STAR Protocol criteria will be entered in CWS/CMS and coded specifically for tracking purposes by the CIC. Regardless of the action taken, relevant information regarding the youth/family in question will be shared with the MAT partners on all STAR referrals.

### **Riverside County Office of Education/Principal at Juvenile Hall/Local School Districts**

#### **A. Principal of Juvenile Hall Responsibilities:**

1. Upon notification of a STAR case, immediately contact the principal of youth's school of attendance.
2. Immediately forward information received from the school site principal to the Juvenile Hall Detention Control Officer.

#### **B. Responsibilities of School District Personnel:**

1. When school site staff initiate the STAR Protocol:
  - Detain student (only if safe to do so).
  - Contact local law enforcement or School Resource Officer.
  - Initiate Protocol.
  - Prepare assessment data and provide to Juvenile Hall.
  - Prepare suspension/expulsion paperwork.
2. When school site staff is contacted by the Juvenile Hall Coordinator/Principal on a Protocol Case:
  - Give priority to request for information regarding student; i.e., discipline history, grades, health, attendance and any other information, which would assist in the assessment of the individual in custody.
  - Immediately gather information requested.
  - Provide assessment information (the form will be forwarded to you to complete) to Juvenile Hall Coordinator/Principal by telephone or fax.

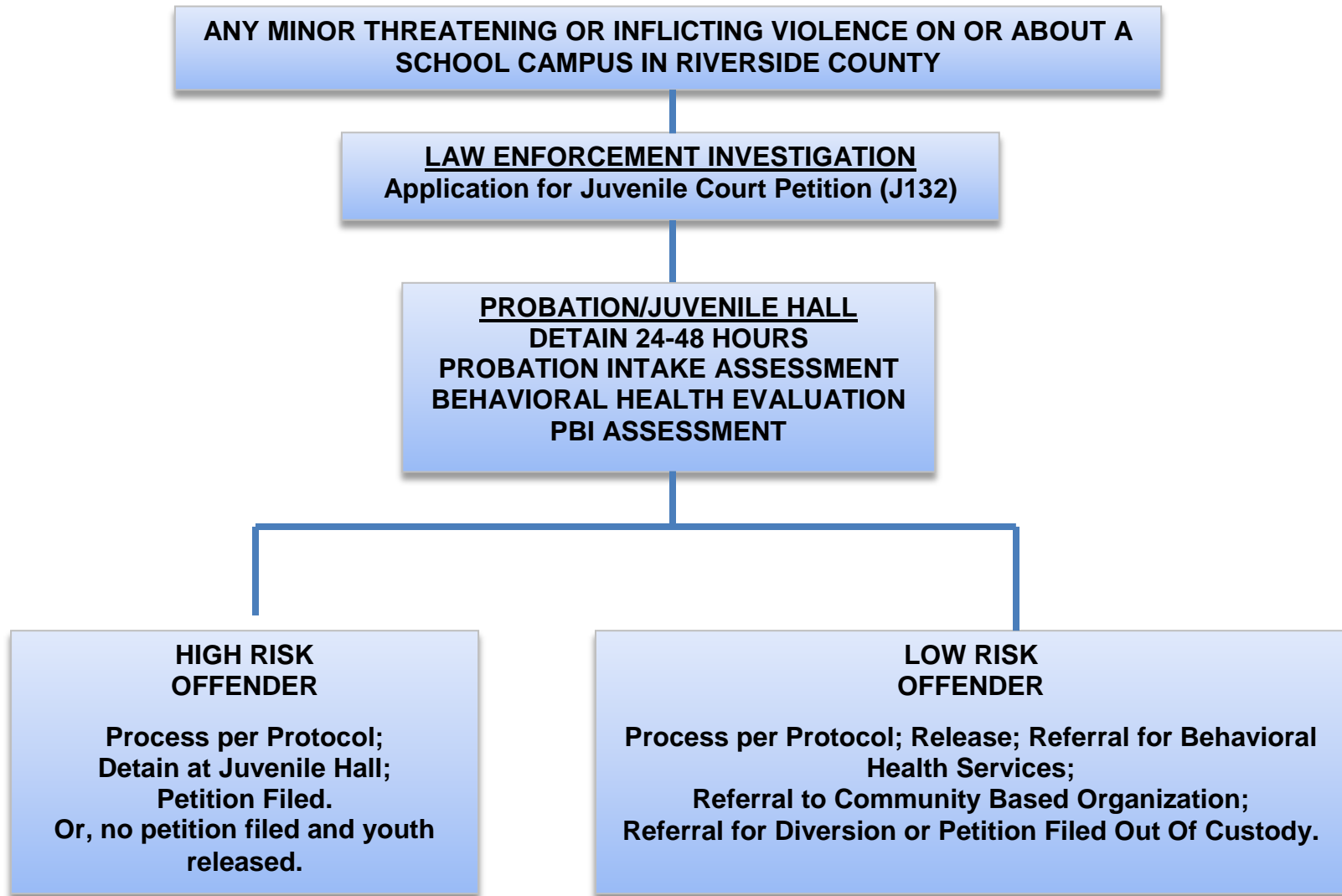
#### IV: HIGH RISK INDICATORS

Youth typically exhibit multiple warning signs, usually with increasing intensity over time. Prior to most incidents, friends or other students knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack. Below are some "high risk" indicators that parents and all who work with youth should be aware of and consider.

- Typically between ages 11-16.
- May not have ever been arrested or been to Juvenile Court for a law violation.
- Few or no friends.
- Withdrawn, excessive feelings of rejection.
- May have moved frequently.
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.
- Depression.
- May have difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures.
- May have suicidal comments or self-mutilated.
- May be a victim of violence/abuse.
- Pattern of angry behavior.
- May have history of tantrums, explosive rage.
- May have felt bullied, persecuted by others.
- Violent or dark themes.
- Discussion, drawings, writings, fantasies, video games, posters, music, computers, internet, text and cell phone activity.
- Preoccupation with guns, explosive devices or possibly other dangerous weapons.
- Animal cruelty.
- Torture or mutilation of animals in the past.
- Past history of setting fires.
- Verbal cues.
- Talks about something "big" happening.
- Talks about being noticed/becoming famous.
- Makes specific threats against a person or group.
- Access to guns and knowledge of their use.
- Parents may minimize or deny.

**Note:** A youth may have more than one high risk characteristic and never commit a violent offense. However, we all want to be aware and do everything possible to immediately assess a threat to prevent a tragic situation from occurring.

**V: Community Response Plan Diagram**

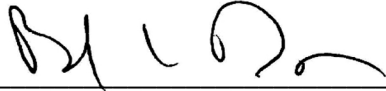


## **VI: PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

Alvord Unified School District  
Banning Police Department  
Banning Unified School District  
Beaumont Police Department  
Beaumont Unified School District  
Blythe Police Department  
Cathedral City Police Department  
Coachella Valley Unified School District  
Corona Police Department Services  
Corona-Norco Unified School District  
Desert Center Unified School District  
Desert Sands Unified School District  
Hemet Police Department  
Hemet Unified School District  
Indio Police Department  
Jurupa Unified School District  
Lake Elsinore Unified School District  
Menifee Union School District  
Moreno Valley Unified School District  
Murrieta Police Department

Murrieta Valley Unified School District  
Nuvview Union School District  
Palm Springs Police Department  
Palm Springs Unified School District  
Palo Verde Unified School District  
Perris School District  
Perris Union High School District  
Riverside County Dept. of Public Social Services  
Riverside County District Attorney  
Riverside County Mental Health  
Riverside County Office of Education  
Riverside County Probation  
Riverside County Sheriff  
Riverside County Superior Court  
Riverside Police Department  
Riverside Unified School District  
Romoland School District  
San Jacinto Unified School District  
Temecula Valley Unified School District  
Val Verde Unified School District

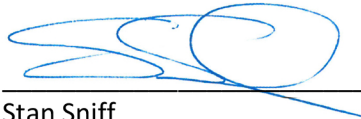
**VII: Signature Page**



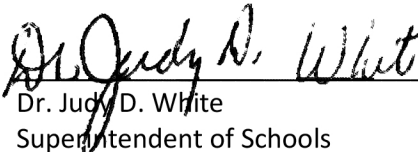
Becky Dugan  
Presiding Judge Superior Court



Mark A. Hake  
Chief Probation Officer



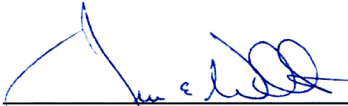
Stan Sniff  
Riverside County Sheriff - Coroner



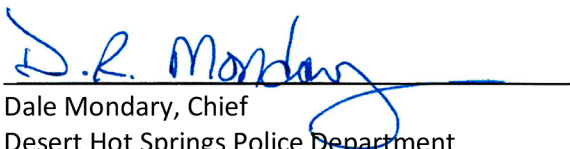
Dr. Judy D. White  
Superintendent of Schools



Alex Diaz, Chief  
Banning Police Department



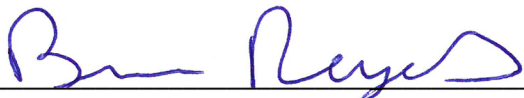
Travis Walker, Chief  
Cathedral City Police Department



Dale Mondary, Chief  
Desert Hot Springs Police Department



Michael R. Washburn, Chief  
Indio Police Department



Brian Reyes, Chief  
Palm Springs Police Department



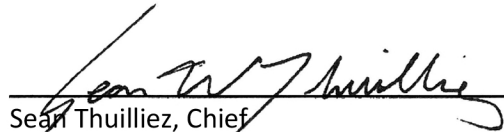
Judith Clark  
Presiding Judge Juvenile Court



Michael Hestrin  
District Attorney



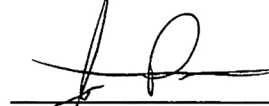
Steven Steinberg, Director  
Behavioral Health, RUHS



Sean Thuilliez, Chief  
Beaumont Police Department



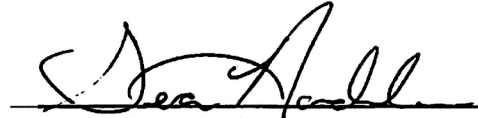
Jeffrey Wade, Chief  
Blythe Police Department



James Patton, Interim Chief  
Corona Police Department



Charles Webb, Chief  
Hemet Police Department



Sean Hadden, Chief  
Murrieta Police Department



Sergio G. Diaz, Chief  
Riverside Police Department