



DATE: September 6, 2024

TO: Honorable Members of the City Council

FROM: Andy Hanau, City Auditor

SUBJECT: **Response to Council Request to Estimate the Difference in Cost Between Police Investigative Service Officers and Police Officers Answering Certain Calls for Service**

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### Summary

Our [Performance Audit of San Diego Police Department \(SDPD\) Overtime](#) found between April 1 through June 30, 2023, 13 percent of calls for service could have been dispatched to a Police Investigative Service Officer (PISO),<sup>1</sup> which would be less costly than dispatching a Police Officer. Recommendation 2.1 is that SDPD analyze how many PISOs or similar civilian positions would be necessary to maximize the use of SDPD's resources. SDPD is currently working on the recommended analysis, which it expects to complete by the end of CY2024. In the meantime, Council President Elo-Rivera asked us to estimate the difference in cost of dispatching PISOs to answer those calls compared to Police Officers.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a preliminary analysis in response to the Council President's request, in advance of our presentation of the audit to the City Council on September 10, 2024. As SDPD is still completing a more comprehensive analysis, we used a comparison of the cost of 100 PISOs to 100 Police Officers for this preliminary estimate, and determined that 100 PISOs would cost approximately \$2.8 million to \$10 million less per year than 100 Police Officers. However, according to SDPD, even with additional PISOs, SDPD would need to add officers in order to respond timely to calls for service, especially those that are higher-priority. Thus, the \$2.8 million to \$10 million is a difference in potential additional costs, not a cost savings in SDPD's existing budget. In addition, as SDPD's response times are currently far slower than goals for most call priorities, it is important to recognize that aside from being lower cost, a primary benefit of additional PISOs would be a potentially significant improvement in SDPD's response times.

We would like to thank SDPD and the Office of the Independent Budget Analyst for their assistance on this review.

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<sup>1</sup> PISOs are just one type of civilian position, which we focused on in the audit because PISOs can respond to many of the lower-priority service calls SDPD receives. According to SDPD, there are other additional civilian positions as well.

**Using an Example of 100 PISOs vs 100 Police Officers, the PISOs Would Cost Approximately \$2.8 Million to \$10 Million Less Per Year**

Our audit found that approximately 13 percent of SDPD’s calls for service could be responded to by PISOs instead of Police Officers.<sup>2</sup> Using SDPD’s existing staffing of approximately 1,800 Police Officers, this means SDPD could potentially have the need for more than 200 PISOs. In response to Recommendation 2.1 from the audit, SDPD is currently conducting an analysis of how many PISOs and other similar civilian positions are needed. According to SDPD, preliminary results indicate that staffing more than 200 PISOs may not be feasible for a variety of operational reasons.<sup>3</sup>

While SDPD’s analysis is forthcoming, we used a comparison of the cost of 100 PISOs to 100 Police Officers as an example. In FY25, we estimate the personnel cost, excluding overtime, of one PISO is \$70,485 to \$84,005 per year, while the cost of one Police Officer is \$112,225 to \$170,616.

Thus, if SDPD were to add 100 PISOs, we estimate the personnel cost would be \$7 million to \$8.4 million per year, excluding overtime. Comparatively, adding 100 Police Officers would cost an estimated \$11.2 million to \$17.1 million per year. Therefore, 100 PISOs would cost \$2.8 million to \$10 million less than 100 officers. This analysis is shown below in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: Cost Estimates of PISOs and Police Officers**

<b>POSITION</b>	<b>Average Total Personnel Cost<sup>4</sup> CY2023</b>	<b>Estimated Average Total Personnel Cost FY2025<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Average Total Personnel Cost FY2025 for 100 Positions</b>
PISO I	\$ 56,772	\$ 70,485	\$ 7,048,489
PISO II	\$ 79,075	\$ 84,005	\$ 8,400,535
POLICE OFFICER I	\$ 89,361	\$ 112,225	\$ 11,222,466
POLICE OFFICER II	\$ 143,339	\$ 170,616	\$ 17,061,640

\* This analysis excludes overtime because the amount of overtime worked varied significantly between PISOs and Police Officers for the period we reviewed (CY2023).

\*\* This analysis excludes costs to hire and equip PISOs and Police Officers, such as recruiting, training/academies, and vehicles and equipment. According to SDPD, vehicle and equipment costs for PISOs

<sup>2</sup> As discussed in the audit, examples of calls that could be responded to by PISOs include injury, hit and run, or auto theft.

<sup>3</sup> For example, according to SDPD, aligning calls for service with the needed police staffing is complex and multifaceted, and staffing needs can change day-to-day or hour-by-hour. Additionally, as discussed in the audit, SDPD faces hiring challenges for both PISOs and officers.

<sup>4</sup> Total Personnel Cost includes actual salary, benefits, lump-sum, and other pay for calendar year (CY) 2023. Total Personnel Cost does not include overtime pay.

<sup>5</sup> Estimated based on actual salary increases for fiscal year (FY) 2025 and estimated benefits, lump-sum, and other pay based on CY2023 actual amounts. Estimated Average Total Personnel Cost does not include overtime pay.

and Police Officers are similar.

### **There Are Numerous Factors That Could Lead to Higher Or Lower Cost Differences Between PISOs and Police Officers**

Actual cost differences between PISOs and Police Officers could vary significantly from the \$2.8 million to \$10 million estimated in the example above, based on a variety of factors that are difficult to foresee or estimate. The cost difference can be more accurately estimated upon implementation of Recommendation 2.1 from the audit.

Factors that could lead to cost differences being **higher than** \$2.8 million to \$10 million include:

- If SDPD adds more than the 100 PISOs used in the example above;
- If SDPD is able to dispatch a single PISO to calls that would otherwise be responded to by a two-officer unit;<sup>6</sup>
- If Police Officers receive larger pay increases in the future than PISOs receive; and
- If the addition of PISOs significantly reduces the amount of overtime needed for Police Officers. However, SDPD indicates that in the near term, this is unlikely, as current Police Officer staffing shortages will still necessitate Police Officer overtime, due to higher-priority call response needs and the need to have a minimum number of Police Officers on patrol at all times for officer safety.

Factors that could lead to cost differences being **lower than** \$2.8 million to \$10 million include:

- If SDPD adds less than the 100 PISOs used in the example above; and
- If PISOs receive larger pay increases in the future than Police Officers receive.

### **Additional PISOs Would Likely Improve SDPD's Response Times**

As discussed in the audit, beyond their lower cost, adding civilian positions such as PISOs is likely to improve response times by freeing up officers for higher-priority emergency calls, while PISOs focus on lower-priority calls. In recent years SDPD has not met response time targets for all but the highest-priority calls, as shown in **Table 2** below.

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<sup>6</sup> According to SDPD, Police Officer units may include either one or two officers. When SDPD dispatches a Police Officer unit to lower-priority calls, they try to send a one-Officer unit, but may have to send a two-Officer unit depending on availability. In contrast, PISOs are always one-person units.

**Table 2: SDPD Response Times**

Call Priority	Description	Goal Response Time	FY2019 Response Time	FY2023 Response Time
Priority 0	Calls that involve an imminent threat to life (such as an officer/person down or an attempted suicide).	7 minutes	6.7 minutes	<b>6.5 minutes</b>
Priority 1	Calls that involve serious crimes in progress or a threat to life (such as missing children, domestic violence, or disturbances involving weapons).	14 minutes	22.5 minutes	<b>33.3 minutes</b>
Priority 2	Calls that involve complaints regarding less serious crimes in which there is no threat to life (such as prowlers who have left, injured animals, or loud parties with mitigating circumstances).	27 minutes	60.6 minutes	<b>103.3 minutes</b>
Priority 3	Calls that involve minor crimes or requests for service which are not urgent (such as investigating a cold crime or loud parties involving noise only).	80 minutes	101 minutes	<b>159.6 minutes</b>
Priority 4	Calls that involve minor requests for police service (such as found property or parking violations).	90 minutes	103.1 minutes	95.5 minutes

Note: Table 2 appears as Exhibit 12 on page 29 in the audit.

The potential response time benefits of additional civilian positions such as PISOs may be even more significant than cost differences. For example, as described above, on the high end we estimate adding 100 PISOs would cost about \$7 million to \$8.4 million per year, not including initial recruiting, training, and equipment costs. This is approximately 1.2 percent to 1.4 percent of SDPD's current budget of \$593 million. In contrast, adding 100 PISOs would represent an increase of about 5.6 percent in SDPD's staffing that can respond to calls.

## Conclusion

While SDPD is working on a more detailed analysis of the number of PISOs and similar civilian positions that are needed to respond to lower-priority calls and supplement sworn officer resources, it is clear that adding PISOs would have significant monetary and non-monetary benefits. Specifically, we estimate 100 PISOs would cost about \$2.8 million to \$10 million less per year than 100 Police Officers. This is a difference in potential additional

costs, not a cost savings in SDPD's existing budget. Importantly, additional PISOs would likely result in improvements to SDPD's response times.

Please contact me with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,



cc: Honorable Members of the Audit Committee  
Eric Dargan, Chief Operating Officer  
Chief Scott Wahl, Chief of Police, San Diego Police Department  
Paul Connelly, Assistant Chief, San Diego Police Department  
Jeffrey Jordan, Captain, San Diego Police Department  
Kyle Meaux, Assistant Director, San Diego Police Department  
Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst  
Baku Patel, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Office of the  
Independent Budget Analyst  
Christiana Gauger, Chief Compliance Officer  
Luis Briseño, Program Manager, Compliance Department  
Matt Yagyagan, Director of Policy, Office of the Mayor