



The California Cities Gang Prevention Network

We at the Oakland-based National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) introduce you to the first bulletin for the California Cities Gang Prevention Network. This initiative creates a network of major California cities to combat gang violence and victimization.

We aim to keep these bulletins brief, use them to share news from your city, describe promising strategies from other jurisdictions across the nation, and to report on emerging federal policies and funding opportunities. Since each of your cities is doing exciting and innovative work in this arena, it is difficult to know where to begin. Do not feel discouraged if your particular efforts are not described in this bulletin. We will report late-breaking news and encouraging signs from each of your cities over time.

The Work

Led by the mayor's office and law enforcement officials, each city will assemble a five-member team of key stakeholders, such as representatives from probation and public health offices, schools, community-based organizations, and the faith community. These teams will convene twice a year to develop, refine, and implement comprehensive, locally appropriate action plans to prevent gang violence. At this time, participating cities include Fresno, Los Angeles (San Fernando Valley), Oakland, Richmond, Sacramento, Salinas, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Rosa, and Stockton.

The core thrust of our collective work is to create a durable learning network of urban leaders in California who will work with and learn from peers to

advance their local anti-gang strategies; to reduce gang-related violence and victimization; and to plan for and recommend state policy changes at the administrative, legislative, and funding levels. We intend that by the end of year one of the initiative, each city will be well versed about existing gang-related research. Also, each city will have begun implementation of a newly developed or modified plan of action to address gang issues with a comprehensive municipal approach.

In addition to organizing inter-city meetings and monthly bulletins, we will support your efforts by providing ongoing feedback and troubleshooting difficulties that may arise. Occasional strategy papers will detail more in-depth results.

We will link you to helpful public and private resources at the local and national levels and—budget permitting—provide you with opportunities to visit your sister cities.

We commend you. This initiative is a national first!

Mark Your Calendars: First Meeting

The first meeting of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network will take place January 24th and 25th, 2007, in the San Francisco bay area. The training will be directly responsive to the needs highlighted during our site visits to each participating city and will incorporate innovative and model practices, strategies, laws, and regulations from other jurisdictions. City leaders will have the opportunity to teach and advance their local anti-gang strategies as well as learn from their peers and experts in the field. Time will be allotted for sub-group meetings—e.g., law enforcement, community-based organizations—to discuss issues of common concern.

The Challenge

According to Alan Fox, criminologist at Northeastern University, the incidence of gang homicide has risen by more than 50 percent since 1999. In both Chicago and Los Angeles, gang-related homicides account for approximately half of all homicides. Gang activity significantly affects cities through intended and unintended bodily injuries and deaths, by diverting youth from healthy social, educational, and emotional development, and by creating environments riddled with fear and civic paralysis. Studies find a strong link between the presence of gang-involved youth in schools and the availability of drugs, visibility of guns, and occurrences of violence at the schools. The economic consequences are significant: nationwide, a single assault-related gunshot injury is assessed at approximately \$1 million.

The resulting challenge is clear: stop the violence; get those who are in gangs out; keep those on the edge from drifting further, connecting or reconnecting them to the mainstream; and establish or strengthen strategies that help create vital families and communities that do not produce crime and violence.

Hopeful Strategies

Successful gang prevention strategies in cities across the country—Boston and Chicago’s Ceasefire, Baton Rouge’s Operation Eiger, San Jose’s Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force, and Stockton’s version of Ceasefire, to name a few—share key elements:

- A clear message from city leaders, civic and political, that the violence must stop and that the leaders are publicly willing to devote time and energy to stopping it.
- Identification of the small percentage of offenders causing the most violence combined with leaders from criminal justice, the service community, and community and religious organizations sending a clear message to these offenders that their violence will no longer be tolerated and offering intensive support and services to help keep them out of trouble. In short, clear consequences; clear offers of help.

- Intervention services for those on the edge, such as alternative education, after school programs, mentoring, and service opportunities.
- Prevention: starting early to help build resilient children, families, and communities through services such as parent support, high-quality visitation programs, pre-k education, and male responsibility initiatives.

Successful initiatives interweave enforcement, intervention, prevention, and the moral voice of the community. These messages should not be independent of each other; they must be interconnected. Enforcement officials must emphasize the necessity of prevention and intervention; the prevention community—parents, schools, and the faith community—must speak of enforcement and intervention; and the interveners—recreational clubs, mentors, mental health experts, educators in alternative schools—must discuss prevention and enforcement. In contrast, unsuccessful efforts portray law enforcement as the “hammer”—only concerned with punishment, while the service community are the “angels,” the good guys who do not warn of consequences as they deliver services. The community is not together in its message or its response. The community must work together to assert a new social norm—again, clear consequences and clear offers of help.

Local Efforts

The San Jose Mayor’s Gang Task Force provides an example of an integrated approach towards gangs. Begun in the mid-1990s and co-chaired by the mayor and police chief and involving city, county, state, community, and faith-based organizations, the Task Force has reduced youth violent crime by almost half, cut the school dropout rate, and has reduced commitments to the California Youth Authority and to foster care. Similarly, Oakland and San Francisco have recently committed to Ceasefire—a well-known strategy to address gang violence—and to bringing their respective cities’ strong commitment to intervention and prevention services into closer coordination with enforcement strategies. We will describe these efforts in much more detail as we go forward in this effort.

National Efforts

For the most part, recent pending federal legislation stresses enforcement. S 155, the “Gang Prevention and Effective Deterrence Act” and the related HR 970, would create new gang offenses, enhance existing penalties, and lower the number of people necessary to be defined as a gang; HR 1279, the “Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005,” passed by the House, calls for new mandatory minimum sentences and increases penalties for gang-related offenses; HR 2933, the “Alien Gang Removal Act,” would authorize the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to deport groups designated as criminal street gangs; and S 1322, the “ANTI-GANG Act,” would create new gang offenses, provide resources for expanding the enforcement of criminal laws against gangs, for the investigation and prosecution of gangs, and for a study on expanding federal authority over juvenile offenders.

However, U.S. Attorney General Gonzales is somewhat broadening these efforts by dedicating \$30 million in grant funding to expand gang prevention work. He is requiring each of the U.S. Attorneys to hold a gang summit that focuses on tough enforcement, prevention, and returning offenders. Fresno hosts its U.S. Attorney-led summit on November 29. Contact your U.S. Attorney to find out what they have planned.

Late Breaking News: City of San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention

The Mayor of San Diego, Jerry Sanders, has recently announced the creation of a Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention. This commission will serve as an official advisory body to the Mayor, City Council, and City Manager on policy issues relating to gang prevention and intervention. The Commission’s aim is to develop a more strategic, coordinated, and collaborative effort between the city, law enforcement agencies, social service providers, and the general public with the objective of reducing gang-related violence.

In line with this collaborative approach, the Gang Commission will consist of 17 members and will meet monthly in order to:

- make policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on gang prevention, intervention, diversion, and suppression methods;
- identify best practices;
- identify local, state, and federal funding sources;
- form subcommittees to analyze critical issues of gang involvement;
- network with agencies and community residents on gang-related issues.

You can get a copy of the full report by contacting Lynn Sharpe-Underwood, Executive Director, City of San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention, (619) 236-5936, lsharpeunderwood@sandiego.gov

We are delighted to welcome you and to work with you on this pioneering effort. We are certain that by uniting and by sharing information—that which is hopeful, that which is not—we will not only reduce the incidence of gang violence: we will help create vital, interactive communities that support children and their families. We believe that as the project moves forward, together we will have a strong influence on state and federal policy and the local and national conversation about gangs.

This bulletin will be co-written by NCCD and Jack Calhoun. Please send thoughts/items about this and future bulletins to Dr. Angela Wolf, Senior Researcher, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, (510) 208-0500 x 302, awolf@sf.nccd-crc.org with a copy to Jack Calhoun, President, HopeMatters, Consultant, National League of Cities, (703) 442-0318, hopenmatters@cox.net