



The California Cities Gang Prevention Network

Welcome to the third bulletin of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network, which now numbers 13 cities! We are very pleased to announce that San Bernardino and Oxnard have joined our Network. In addition to updating you on a few pieces of news, this month we spotlight three different approaches to gang prevention in the San Fernando Valley.

NEWSBRIEFS

Site Visits

Given the planned site visits with San Jose, Salinas, and Stockton during the week of December 4, we will have visited all sites with the exception of Oxnard, our newest. We thank each of you for your time, energy, and commitment, but most important for the learning—yes, the issues, the problems, but also the nuggets, which we look forward to sharing with your colleagues.

Reminder

The first meeting of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network will take place on January 24th and 25th, 2007, in Oakland. Information regarding travel and accommodations will be sent to city points of contact during the first week in December. Recall that we will support the travel, lodging, and meals for your five-member team; however, some of you have expressed interest in bringing an additional person or two at your own expense. We'd love to accommodate as many of you as possible, but space is very tight. To make certain we have enough plates, please check in

with NCCD's Fabiana Silva at fsilva@sf.nccd-crc.org or 510-208-0500 x307 to see if we can seat your additional representatives.

Training will respond to the needs highlighted during the site visits, and will incorporate challenges, promising programs, strategies, and new resolutions or commissions. Structured around the three core constructs—prevention, intervention, enforcement—the bulk of the training will give you the opportunity to maximize the conversation among you and to revise and refine your city plans.

The draft agenda will be in your hands in two weeks. Finally, for the conference book, we intend a short profile on the salient aspects of your work and plans. So you'll have homework to do. Be on the lookout for the agenda and profile!

Statewide Advisory Committee Formed

This new committee is chaired by Paul Seave, Chief Counsel of the California State Board of Education and former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District (Sacramento) and Director of the Attorney General's Crime and Violence Prevention Center. The Committee includes representatives from the executive and legislative branches, statewide constituency organizations, and service providers, and will meet on January 26th, the day following our inaugural conference. Responsible for project implementation, the Committee's prime role is to help guide the policy and legislative implications of our work. We'll send you the full roster when it is finalized.

Good News in the Offing?

The potency and promise of your work has attracted three additional supporters, two private and one public. Each will announce their decisions in early December. We'll share the news in next month's bulletin.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Despite significant successes in the reduction of the incidence of gang violence in the recent past, the San Fernando Valley now faces increased levels of violence. The LAPD reports at least 80 gangs with an estimated 20,000 gang members in the San Fernando Valley. Local organizations and efforts are addressing this growing problem and are focused on adapting their services and programs to the changing circumstances. In this bulletin, we spotlight the San Fernando Coalition on Gangs, the Communities in Schools Program, and the LAPD's Jeopardy Balancing the Odds after-school program. Despite differences in emphasis and scope, all three efforts recognize the importance of city-wide cooperation, with a focus on prevention, intervention, and suppression.

The San Fernando Coalition on Gangs

The San Fernando Coalition on Gangs was formed in 2001 by Ronald Bergmann, then deputy chief of the LAPD's Operations-Valley Bureau, and Commander Valentino Paniccia. Realizing that traditional law enforcement approaches to combating the gang problem were not working, Bergmann and Paniccia pulled together a diverse group of service and governmental organizations, politicians, and community leaders. The goals were to overcome the lack of coordination among agencies and to identify the available resources. This collaboration led to the formation of a multi-disciplinary San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs.

The Coalition's goals are to:

- Reduce gang crime and gang membership;
- Empower the community through education and increased awareness;
- Reduce the fear and incidence of crime;
- Strengthen neighborhood cohesion;
- Provide services that promote positive lifestyle changes; and
- Increase community and inter-agency awareness of available resources.

The Coalition, which meets monthly, is chaired by LAPD Deputy Chief Michel Moore and includes more than 50 members who work together to address gang crime. This coalition reports a number of successes during its five years. It sponsors a resource guide; several community events every year to build bridges between gang members, law enforcement, and the community; mentoring for at-risk youth; and the Community Advocacy Partnership, which brings together community organizations and city agencies to provide counseling and guidance to at-risk youth and their families. In 2005, the Coalition received the National Community Policing Award from the International Association of Chiefs of Police and ITT Industries Night Vision.

After five years of working to successfully establish linkages among key stakeholders and interested groups and agencies, the Coalition now works to keep these linkages strong and to respond to street-level reality. To that end, the Coalition has taken extra steps to promote safety in Canoga Park, where much of the rise in crime is rooted. The Coalition sponsored the first in a series of meetings last month for Canoga Park community

stakeholders to come together to share ideas and pool resources for at-risk youth. Furthermore, in May, 2006, the Coalition began a Friday night teen program to create a safe haven for all and to steer young people away from gangs. The events include team sports such as co-ed softball, dances, and speakers. The teen program resulted from collaboration among the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, the LAPD, the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and other coalition members. The coalition plans to implement this program in each of the San Fernando Valley's six police divisions. For additional information about the Coalition, please contact Michel Moore, Deputy Chief, Commanding Officer of Operations-Valley Bureau, at 818-838-9465 or mooremi@lapd.lacity.org.

Los Angeles Police Department's Jeopardy Program

LAPD Operations-Valley Bureau sponsors an after-school, gang prevention program titled "Jeopardy Balancing the Odds." Jeopardy is the City's premier after-school gang crime prevention program and is housed in each of the six Valley Bureau police stations. Jeopardy provides educational support, counseling, mentoring, and after-school recreation for youth at risk of gang involvement, as well as parenting classes for their families.

Jeopardy represents the department's efforts to combine gang suppression with intervention and prevention services. As Lieutenant Gary Nanson, the Gang Coordinator of the Valley Bureau says, "it is clear that efforts to reduce gang membership must be combined with gang prevention if we are ever to have a long-term effect on the problem of gang violence."

Jeopardy benefits from the creative recruitment of volunteers. For example, Jeopardy is qualified as a placement for internships for therapists in training. Furthermore, experienced volunteers, such as retired teachers, are actively recruited to provide tutoring and homework assistance. Jeopardy has also entered

into an agreement with California State University Northridge to provide students the opportunity to volunteer in the program as part of their class curricula.

Involvement of the LAPD in Jeopardy spurred support from other county and community agencies. The LAPD has partnered with the LA County Probation Department to accept youth at risk of gang involvement as a formal condition of probation. In addition to Probation, youth are referred to the program by parents, the local school district, other community-based organizations, and by gang officers. The distribution of the six police stations throughout the San Fernando Valley helps assure that at-risk youth and their families have access to the program with minimal transportation issues. To find out more about the work of the LAPD's Jeopardy Balancing the Odds, please contact Lieutenant Gary Nanson, Operations-Valley Bureau Gang Coordinator, at 818-838-9480.

Communities in Schools

Communities in Schools, San Fernando Valley, Greater Los Angeles (CIS-GLA) is the Los Angeles affiliate of Communities in Schools, Inc., a leading national community-based organization focused on helping youth succeed in school and prepare for life.

A world champion in martial arts and kickboxing, CIS Executive Director, William "Blinky" Rodriguez has a long history of working with youth. In 1990, Blinky's 16-year old son was killed in a drive-by shooting, inspiring Blinky to dedicate his life to ending gang violence. Instead of focusing on retribution, Blinky negotiated a truce called the Valley Unity Peace Treaty, which was signed by over 75 gangs. The treaty was stunningly successful: gang-related homicides were reduced in the following year from 52 to 2!

A study conducted by CSUN and funded by the California State Legislature under AB 2650 found the peace treaty to be effective in demonstrating peacekeeping strategies and recommended its replication

statewide. This eventually led to the formation of CIS-GLA in 1994. CIS-GLA has been named a “model” program for gang intervention by the State of California, LA County, and the City of Los Angeles. CIS-GLA aims to bring the community together to address local youth violence through a wide range of violence prevention, gang intervention, community empowerment, job development, and mentoring.

For every at-risk youth, the organization aims to provide:

- A personal, one on one relationship with a caring adult;
- A safe place to learn and grow;
- A healthy start – a healthy future;
- A marketable skill to use upon graduation;
- A chance to give back to the community.

Current services include an after-school program that serves over 200 at-risk youth annually; gang intervention for gang members, their families, and others affected by gang violence; a wide array of job-related services; and mediation and restitution services for youth offenders and their victims.

CIS-GLA intends to expand its services to include individual educational strategies for at-risk youth, the refinement and dissemination of best practices and quality assurance standards for violence prevention, and the expansion of their intervention services to teen mothers on probation and younger children. To find out more about the work of Communities in Schools, San Fernando Valley, please contact William “Blinky” Rodriguez, Executive Director, at 818-891-9399.

The California Cities Gang Prevention Network Project is funded by a grant from the California Wellness Foundation (TCWF). Created in 1992 as an independent, private foundation, TCWF’s mission is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention.

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