



The California Cities Gang Prevention Network

Welcome to the 14th bulletin of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network! This bulletin provides an overview of the latest All City Teams Meeting. We hope you enjoy it!

3rd All City Teams Meeting

On February 26-27th, 2009, the California Cities Gang Prevention Network (CCGPN) held its third annual meeting of all its city team members. The meeting, held in beautiful Santa Rosa, benefited tremendously from gracious hosting by members of the Santa Rosa city team. The attendees addressed issues of most concern to them, namely, service provision in a time of economic downturn, maximizing city/county working relationships, emerging state and federal legislation, juvenile detention reform, and involving those living in high crime areas.

The conference's large turnout was a testament to the commitment and passion of the city team members to finding and implementing effective solutions to gang violence. It is clear that despite significant obstacles and variations in emphasis, the participants are all committed both to assisting each other and collaborating to address gang violence and to implement each of their city's comprehensive plans. For CCGPN's coordinators, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the National League of Cities, it has been tremendously rewarding to see the strengthening of CCGPN over the last 30 months, and to see network members support each other.

In addition to the city team members, guests included Paul Seave, Director of the Governor's Office of Gang Youth and Violence Policy, representatives from the offices of Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey and State Senator Jared Huffman, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the League of California Cities, and the California Conservation Corps.

Looking for opportunities amidst the economic downturn

Much of the conference focused on strategies to confront the economic downturn. Participants expressed deep concern about the impact of this downturn on their ability to address gang violence in their community. Some city leaders, however, suggested that reduced budgets presented an opportunity to examine all available programs, and to support effective and successful programs. Other leaders talked about new revenue-generating strategies within their city, such as sliding scale fee-for-services. Cities were encouraged to check the following resources to find out more about funding opportunities through the Recovery Act:

- Frequently check the National League of Cities website (<http://www.nlc.org>) for guidance on stimulus dollars available through the American Recovery and Investment Act.
- Frequently check www.recovery.gov for direct information on available stimulus dollars.
- Visit the League of California Cities website for a weekly-updated bulletin on how to access

stimulus dollars: <http://www.cacities.org/federalstimulus>

Attendees discussed gang-related state and federal policy that may provide funds to communities. The federal discussion centered on Rep. Schiff and Senator Feinstein's Gang Abatement Act and Rep. Scott's Youth PROMISE Act. Attendees urged representatives to seek compromise in the two now-competing bills. Dorothy Johnson, of the California League of Cities and Paul Seave led a discussion of state gang-related policy. Jack Calhoun discussed AB 455, the newly-introduced legislation via State Senator Jared Huffman. It is, at this point, a statement of principles, and awaits policy specificity.

City-County Collaboration

The conference presented an opportunity for city leaders to examine how to improve collaboration with their county leaders. City/county collaboration is essential as counties are responsible for important resources in combating gang violence (e.g. probation, public health). Several cities employ gang task forces that include representation from city and county leaders. City leaders discussed police-probation partnerships, where officers patrolled the streets together; probation-school partnerships with probation officers stationed in the schools; as well as collaboration between police and social workers to ensure that the needs of youth of arrested parents are properly addressed. City participants stated that to ensure the success of such partnerships, it is important that city and county leaders have shared goals and target limited resources in the highest-need areas.

NCCD President Barry Krisberg led a panel discussion of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), a large-scale juvenile detention reform effort that supports youth and has led to significant cost reduction. Given the current economic climate, Dr. Krisberg encouraged cities and counties to consider working together to reform juvenile detention efforts as a cost-cutting strategy that

will improve services for youth without endangering public safety. Panelists included Judy Cox, former Santa Cruz Chief Probation Officer; Bill Sifferman, San Francisco's Chief Juvenile Probation Officer; and John Crombach, Chief of the Oxnard Police Department. Panelists credit JDAI with helping them reduce the number of confined youth in their communities, address disproportionate minority confinement, and reduce costs. Chief Sifferman emphasized that juvenile justice systems are often geared towards high-risk youth, but actually serve low-risk youth. These low-risk youth do not need to be confined, but they do need appropriate services. All panelists stressed the importance of offering valid alternatives to detention. It is not enough to simply reduce caseloads, youth must be offered meaningful alternatives that will serve as useful interventions in their lives. Furthermore, panelists agreed that reduction of caseloads did not lead to negative public safety outcomes. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (www.aecf.org) has information available for those interested in implementing JDAI in their communities.

Reaching Out To Hard-Hit Communities

A panel discussion on reaching out to hard-hit communities, included Devone Boggan, Director of the Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety; Kevin Grant, Coordinator of Oakland's Mayor's Street Outreach Program; and Oxnard's Reverend Edgar Mohorko, Chair of the Police Department Clergy Council. Those living in crime-besieged communities may be unable, unwilling or too afraid to join in gang prevention strategies, yet their participation and presence is essential. Boggan's statement that "Love is a necessary beginning for the healing process" captured the panelists' insistence on the importance of caring for and supporting youth, even when youth do not behave in an ideal manner. The panelists advised cities to:

- Focus on relationships. In order to build trust from individuals who have traditionally been alienated from family, neighborhood and school a long-term commitment to relationships must

be demonstrated. For example, Rev. Mohorko shared the story of a youth he was working with who was jailed for committing a serious crime. The pastor visited the child frequently in jail, communicating to the youth that despite his actions, Rev. Mohorko cared about his well-being. Furthermore, writing off youth who will soon return to their communities is short-sighted—both for youth and the community..

- Reach out to community members in their geographic comfort zones. Panelists stressed the importance to reaching out to youth in their own communities. There are a number of reasons, especially safety, as youth will often not attend events outside of their area or “turf.”
- Leverage the talent and resources of community members. For example, the Police Department Clergy Council is able to use the resource of faith-based and community-based organizations, in addition to individual volunteers from the community and law enforcement. To ensure their cooperation, Rev. Mohorko works closely with community members to find activities that will match their interests, abilities, and comfort levels. For instance Mohorko recruits grandmothers simply to “be with” at-risk fourth graders.

Conference participants found the conference to be an informative and inspiring opportunity to share, learn and grow in their work towards comprehensively responding to youth gang violence. In written evaluations, communication and collaboration were the most commonly praised aspects of CCGPN and of the conference. One participant noted that, “Every meeting we have gets better. Now that our programs are two, three or more years old we are beginning to hear real stories of what is working and what is not. It is very useful to bring these stories together to help develop new strategies and legislative options.” Another participant praised the camaraderie and sense of shared purpose felt between participating cities, “After three years, we know each other well enough to share openly our struggles as well as our triumphs. This meeting was a great example of this.”

The California Cities Gang Prevention Network Project is funded by grants from The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF), the East Bay Community Foundation, and the Richmond Children’s Foundation.

The California Endowment is a private, statewide health foundation created in 1996 with a mission to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.

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.

This bulletin is co-written by Angela Wolf, Senior Researcher, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, amwolf@sf.nccd-crc.org, Tiffany Morris, Research Associate, National Council on Crime and Delinquency (510) 208-0500 x340, tmorris@sf.nccd-crc.org, and Jack Calhoun, President, HopeMatters, Consultant, National League of Cities (703) 442-0318, hopenatters@cox.net. Please send thoughts or items about this and future bulletins to Fabiana with a copy to Angela and Jack.