

The California Cities Gang Prevention Network

Welcome to the eighth bulletin of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network! In addition to updating you about Governor Schwarzenegger's appointments to lead his gang prevention efforts and the launch of Salinas' *Abuelitas* initiative, we will spotlight several cities' efforts towards creating a comprehensive gang strategy plan.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Governor Schwarzenegger's Gang Advisory Appointments

Paul Seave, the chair of our statewide advisory committee, was appointed as California's first Director of Gang and Youth Violence Policy by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In addition, Jack Calhoun, who leads the implementation of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network for the National League of Cities, was appointed to the governor's 10-member Gang Advisory Committee.

Rounding out the Advisory Committee are:

- David L. Brewer III, Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District
- Reverend Dr. Joseph Bryant, Jr., Senior Pastor, Calvary Hill Community Church, San Francisco
- Darryl Charles, Founder, Overcoming Gangs, San Diego
- Jerry Dyer, Chief of Police, Fresno
- Connie Rice, CEO, The Advancement Project, Los Angeles

- Sandra Rodriguez, Principal, San Bernardino High School
- John Shegerian, CEO, Electronic Recyclers, Fresno
- Harvey Woo, Assistant Commander, Sacramento Sheriff's Department

We are excited by these appointments and believe they present the state with a magnificent opportunity to reduce gang violence and help build communities that do not produce gangs via support for comprehensive, citywide strategies that blend prevention, intervention, and enforcement.

Salinas' Abuelitas

On July 28, about sixty grandmothers gathered in St. Mary's church in Salinas to discuss their potential role in fulfilling Mayor Dennis Donohue's vision of a "city at peace." The Mayor and Monterey Bishop Richard Garcia are hoping to engage *abuelitas* (Spanish for grandmothers), to help divert youth away from gang life.

According to Community Safety Director Trevor Iida, this tactic is only one piece in the city's multi-faceted approach to combat gang violence. Grandmothers are not expected to single-handedly resolve the gang issue, but the city does want to address this issue from a holistic perspective using all of its available resources, including motivated grandmothers. Iida said "feedback from the community has been outstanding," as grandmothers are worried about Salinas' children and eager to channel their wisdom, energy, and enthusiasm into action.

The first meeting of the *Abuelitas* served as a brainstorming session. The grandmothers discussed the prevention approaches that had worked in their own families, and discussed what they could do on a larger scale to make their community safer. Various ideas were discussed, such as teaching parents to communicate with their children, providing children with library cards and arranging for their grandmothers to take them to the library, setting drug-free examples, and emphasizing values and morals. No specific plan for the grandmothers has been adopted yet, though a follow-up meeting is scheduled for the beginning of October.

In addition to community interest and support for this initiative, the *Abuelitas* effort has already gathered a significant amount of print and television media coverage.

CITY UPDATES

The thirteen Network cities are currently developing or refining comprehensive, citywide, multi-sector action plans to combat gang violence. By year's end, each is expected to have completed a strategic plan. The work is hard. It is easy to put in a program here and there, but it is difficult to develop a comprehensive plan that specifies leadership and includes vision, goals, accountability, staffing, management, and buy-in from all key civic sectors. Below, we spotlight some of the work that three of the Network cities are currently engaged in towards creating these comprehensive plans.

Santa Rosa

Santa Rosa's Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force was established by then Mayor Sharon Wright in July, 2003. Since then, voters approved an ordinance for a ¼ cent sales tax for public safety programs that would ensure sustained funding for the activities of the Task Force. The Task Force is composed of a Policy Team that outlines a strategic plan, mobilizes the community, and garners resources, and an Operational Team, that coordinates efforts, implements programs, and accomplishes the strategic plan.

Currently, Santa Rosa is in the final stages of completing its Strategic Plan. The plan focuses on the five key strategies of the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force: Awareness, Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, and Systems/Metrics. Santa Rosa has included all members of its Policy and Operational teams in the review process. Task Force members hope to have their plan finished by October.

According to Ernesto Olivares, manager of Gang Prevention and Intervention Services for the Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks Department, the Task Force has had a difficult time in identifying realistic benchmarks for their indicators of success to include in their plan for the next two to three years. Santa Rosa's indicators of success are:

- Reduce violent youth offenses
- Reduce self-reported gang-involvement in California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)
- Reduce recidivism of gang-involved youth
- Improve academic performance index
- Improve school attendance rates
- Improve high school graduation rates

The Task Force needs to identify benchmarks for each of their indicators of success, particularly in regards to how success in these areas relates to the Task Force's efforts. For example, to what extent can the Task Force take credit for improved academic performance or high school graduation rates? The Task Force's overall goal to cut gang crime in half in five years is ambitious. Although Task Force members do not want the benchmarks for their indicators of success to be too unambitious, they on the other hand worry about creating unrealistic benchmarks. They may have to prioritize how they tackle the indicators, recognizing that they are interrelated and success or failure in one may impact others. In addition, though Santa Rosa's grant-funded prevention and intervention programs are being evaluated by Peter Ellis, founding partner of Community Crime Prevention Associates, the Task Force is also investigating how to encourage other providers to evaluate and measure their successes. Olivares

credits the Task Force with moving forward in its work, despite these difficult questions. In particular, they have developed recommendations for improving their areas of focus, such as school attendance.

San Francisco

San Francisco currently has two citywide planning processes in place, the Citywide Violence Prevention Planning Initiative, and the (temporarily titled) Coalition to Stop Street Violence. The goal of the Planning Initiative, which began in November, 2006, is to develop a 3-5 year strategic plan that will serve as a framework for a comprehensive citywide approach for violence prevention. San Francisco has a number of successful prevention programs, but it has multiple plans and no unified strategies or mechanisms for accountability. The Initiative aims to establish clear policy priorities, create an infrastructure for collaboration between city prevention programs, and increase accountability for violence prevention outcomes. Lenore Anderson, Director for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, says the group expects to have the 3-5 year strategic plan finished by the end of this month. After the plan is completed, a governance board will lead its implementation.

Anderson admits that it is challenging to design a strategy that aligns all relevant city resources and initiatives under one plan and that the road to developing this plan has been bumpy. Violence prevention is a concept that covers a wide variety of programs, and envisioning a way to tie them together to achieve broader outcomes is daunting. Furthermore, obtaining necessary data regarding violence in the city is difficult. Despite these obstacles, Anderson feels that participating agencies agree about the need for more coordination and a united vision.

The Coalition to Stop Street Violence, formed in February of this year, focuses specifically on those individuals already on probation or parole who are at high risk of getting involved in street violence, either as victims or perpetrators. The Coalition was formed to launch a targeted intervention strategy aimed at reducing

the risk that known system-involved individuals face. The strategy combines delivering a clear, succinct, anti-violence message from city and community officials alike and following up with significant offerings of services and support to get out of the street lifestyle. The Coalition includes representatives from the Police Department, Adult Probation, the Department of Public Health, the Department for Children, Youth, and their Families, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, the District Attorney's Office, the Community Response Network, service providers, and faith leaders. By bringing these diverse agencies together, the Coalition is able to communicate a comprehensive message to these high-risk individuals of "clear consequences and a clear way out." The Coalition will continue to meet regularly for the foreseeable future.

According to Anderson, this new pilot program has also faced challenges and successes. Given many of these individuals' extensive histories with probation and the criminal justice system, they have been offered a variety of services in the past, and Coalition members have to figure out new programs and new ways of delivering services that will be effective. The Coalition does not want to replicate the services for these high-risk individuals that have not worked in the past. Nonetheless, this Coalition is building working relationships focused on intervening with high-risk residents with a number of agencies that have not had significant working relationships in the past. By actively working together, representatives from these agencies have already begun to show increased reliance on each other.

Oxnard

The City of Oxnard is addressing youth and gang violence prevention through its multi-sector collaborative called the Community Action Partnership. The Community Action Partnership Policy Team chose the City of Oxnard as a pilot city in the County of Ventura with the hope of replicating its violence prevention model in other county cities. The Community Action Partnership's purpose is to create a safe environment for youth and families in their homes,

schools, and communities. Mayor Tom Holden and Supervisor Kathy Long co-chair the meetings, with Supervisor John Flynn and City of Oxnard Council Member Andres Herrera lending their support as elected officials. The City and County partnership is a strong indicator of the “political will” that is present to prevent violence in the community. The Community Action Partnership membership also includes other representatives from city and county government, the Ventura County Human Services Agency, Public Health and Behavioral Health Departments, Probation Agency, Juvenile Courts, Oxnard Police Department, Oxnard Recreation and Community Services Department, the community, schools, community-based organizations, and the faith community.

Currently, the city is working towards an ambitious comprehensive strategy that includes prevention, intervention, enforcement, and community mobilization. The City of Oxnard leaders believe the City should move beyond isolated programs to a more coordinated response that includes community empowerment. The City’s community outreach strategy will include the mobilization of the faith community as a means to engage an often untapped community resource. Barbara Marquez-O’Neill, a consultant with the Community Action Partnership and the Ventura County Partnership for Safe Families & Communities, along with Edgar Mohorko, a consultant with the City of Oxnard and leader of the Oxnard Police Department’s Clergy Council are working on this strategy.

As part of the development of the city’s comprehensive strategy, the Oxnard team is currently engaged in an assessment of its community’s stressors and assets. The results will provide a map of city “hot spots” and resources, and establish a baseline for the City initiative. The data collected will assist the team in selecting a neighborhood in which to conduct in-depth work. In addition, through a grant from The California Endowment, the Community Action Partnership is collaborating with the Ventura County Partnership

for Safe Families & Communities and Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation to implement a pilot community empowerment project in the chosen neighborhood. The California Endowment grant also provided for training on primary prevention from the Prevention Institute in June. During the training, the Prevention Institute’s Spectrum of Prevention Tool was introduced to local stakeholders. The California Endowment’s Center for Healthy Communities is planning to provide training in policy and media advocacy in the coming months. Through a focus on community empowerment, primary prevention, the media, and public policy, Oxnard city leaders hope to influence the numerous factors that contribute to violence in their city.

The City of Oxnard leadership is excited about its comprehensive approach towards violence prevention and recognizes that the city’s challenge will be to include all these components in a timely fashion into an implementable, citywide plan.

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