

## Juvenile Call-ins

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### Introduction

Focused deterrence, also known as a “call-in,” is a strategy in which community stakeholder groups deliver a nonviolence message to community members who are most likely to commit violence. Call-ins rely on the partnership of community representatives, service providers, and law enforcement to collaboratively deliver a three-point message against violence: (1) violence affects everyone in the community and will not be tolerated; (2) the community cares about at risk individuals, and will provide services and assistance to those who need and want help; and (3) those who continue to commit violence despite this fair warning will face the full consequences of the law, along with the other members of their violent groups. Call-ins have been associated with substantial reductions in gun violence in Boston and Indianapolis (McGarrell, Chermak, Wilson, & Corsaro, 2006), and have become a widely used strategy for gang violence intervention throughout the country.

As call-in strategies are implemented in more cities throughout the country, some cities are interested in applying focused deterrence to a new target population: high risk juveniles. Most call-ins did not originally include juveniles (Bonner, Worden, & McLean, 2008). Based on differences in age and legal technicalities such as privacy and parental consent requirements, juveniles must be treated differently than adults, and call-ins must be adjusted.

This California Cities Gang Prevention Network bulletin draws on academic literature and the experiences of Network cities like Oxnard and Salinas, and other cities including Union City, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and Winston-Salem, North Carolina to provide information about juvenile call-ins. Also, to advise effective implementation of juvenile call-ins, this bulletin provides examples from cities that apply call-ins to juveniles, discusses how call-ins may differ for juveniles and adults, and discusses key elements of effective call-ins.

### Call-ins: Planning, Executing, and Delivering a Nonviolence Message

Focused deterrence depends on the combined efforts of community stakeholders and organizations to communicate a unified nonviolence message. The clear rejection of violence, as a firm and widely supported community norm, is the single most important component of the call-in strategy. To deliver this message, call-ins rely heavily on strong partnerships among law enforcement agencies, service providers, and community members to plan, execute, and follow up to the call-in with the most suitable participants.

#### Planning a Call-in

Before the call-in meeting is held, law enforcement and communities identify the individuals or groups that they will target with the call-in through a process called a “problem analysis.” Typically, violent offenders and gangs that actively engage in violence are identified as target participants. Most cities prioritize the most serious offenders, or those who are most at risk of committing violence. Boston, Lowell, Minneapolis, and Cincinnati, for example, target gang members. Other cities, such as Indianapolis and Rochester, target high risk probationers and parolees, while High Point’s program focuses on active street dealers. Once the target population is identified, selected call-in participants, who are commonly on probation, are required to attend the mandatory call-in.

#### Executing a Call-in

During the call-in, law enforcement and the community reinforce their concern for the individuals invited while emphasizing the first part of the three-point anti-violence message. The first component of the message establishes law enforcement’s commitment to uphold predictable consequences for acts of violence. It is delivered by a partnership of federal, state, and city law enforcement, including officers, police chiefs, and district and federal attorneys. These partners notify participants that they have been by law enforcement for surveillance, and that those who do not agree to stop violence are given the alternative of being targeted with the full attention of the law and receiving the maximum penalties for future offenses. The warning is strengthened by the commitment by law enforcement

to “pull every lever” to ensure that participants receive the fullest possible consequences for their actions. Furthermore, law enforcement establishes that not only the individual, but the entire group with whom they are involved, will be punished for any future acts of violence.

The next point of the message comes from community service providers, who express concern for the well-being of call-in participants by offering an alternative to crime, and the sanctions that follow. These speakers offer assistance to the participants who wish to end the lifestyle and activities that place them at risk for being involved with violence (Tillyer, Engel, & Lovins, 2010). Service providers offer a wide range of supports, including counseling, drug or alcohol assistance, job training, housing assistance, educational assistance, employment skills training, or even paid employment opportunities (GoDanRiver, 2011; Cohn, 2010; Koenig, 2001). The aim is to offer services that can provide participants with the opportunity to establish a new life as nonviolent community members.

The final point of the message represents the moral voice of the community. It is presented by individuals from the community who are affected by violence. This may include a range of individuals, from faith-based community leaders to parents of victims to ex-offenders who have turned away from violence themselves. The role of these community representatives is to articulate credible community norms against violence and communicate the need for violence to stop. They express their caring for one another, and demonstrate how violence affects not just the individuals involved, but everyone in the community. Participants learn that the community is willing to stand up and speak out against violence, and will support law enforcement in their efforts to end violence in the community.

#### **Follow-up to a Call-in**

The community’s commitment to the anti-violence message is demonstrated by the follow-up process that occurs after a call-in. Police, service providers, and community representatives must follow through with the promises made at the call-in. Police must maintain close surveillance of participants and respond to criminal behavior. If a call-in participant is arrested, the police make sure to inform other call-in participants about the arrest, reinforcing the certainty of the law enforcement message. Service providers must provide the services they promised. The resources promised have to actually be available, accessible, and attainable.

Effective follow-up also requires that everyone involved in the call-in continue efforts to maintain contact with participants after the initial meeting and express commitment to call-in participants on behalf of the community. This shows participants that the community cares and is serious about its anti-violence message. It also emphasizes that the community wants participants to take advantage of the services offered and become part of the community (GoDanRiver, 2011).

## **Applying Call-ins to Juveniles**

There are several aspects of the call-in that must be adjusted when applying the strategy to juveniles. While juvenile call-ins also focus on delivering a nonviolence message, how the anti-violence message is delivered is modified slightly based on the age of participants.

Salinas Deputy Police Chief Kelly McMillin, Oxnard Gang Reduction Coordinator Mike Matlock, and Union City Youth and Family Services Counselor Patricia Abadesco drew on their experiences executing juvenile call-ins to identify the factors that distinguish juvenile call-ins from call-ins designed for adults (personal communication, May and June 2011). McMillin, Matlock, and Abadesco identified five main differences:

- *Problem analysis* is often adjusted to identify juvenile call-in participants. While some cities use the same process to identify juveniles and adults, many find the selection criteria do not apply equally well to both groups. Since juveniles do not always fit the criteria used to identify adult call-in participants, many cities instead rely on partnerships with youth serving organizations to identify the most at-risk juveniles. Schools and juvenile detention facilities, for instance, may be included in the problem analysis and partnership. Unlike adult call-ins, which only include previous offenders, juvenile call-ins may target at-risk youth without a criminal past.
- *Partnerships with juvenile institutions* such as schools, juvenile justice facilities, and social services working with youth are unique to juvenile call-ins. Not only do partnerships with juvenile facilities change the selection process for juvenile call-ins, but they shape the structure and setting of the call-in. While traditional call-ins consist mostly of law enforcement officers presenting lecture-style messages to a lecture-style audience, juveniles are more often placed in a classroom-type setting or round-table seating, which facilitators perceive as making youth more apt to be comfortable and involved.
- *The message emphasizes inspiration over enforcement* in juvenile call-ins. Juvenile call-ins are often more informational, and rather than focusing on the threat of law enforcement, they focus on motivating youth to become involved in more positive activities and behaviors. Speakers usually emphasize alternatives to risk behaviors as well as opportunities for youth to build a positive future. To send this message, law enforcement’s role is reduced, with fewer law enforcement speakers speaking for a shorter period of time. Rather than threatening participants with legal consequences, law enforcement expresses their concern for the youths’ well-being. Additionally, law enforcement may share their speaking time with local clergy or ex-offenders

who have experienced the consequences of crime and successfully turned their lives around.

- *Parental involvement* is also a major difference between juvenile and adult call-ins. Although all call-ins encourage family to take part along with the participants, parents play a particularly integral role in the juvenile call in strategy. Because parents play a significant role in the lives of juveniles, juvenile call-ins extend the nonviolence and community support message to parents as well. Parents, like juveniles, are offered services (e.g., parenting classes) to help them support their youth. This inevitably alters how cities prepare for call ins; they must provide parents with advance notice and secure their participation, have services available for parents, and adjust the message to address parents as much as the juveniles.
- *Services* offered to juveniles are often different from the services offered in adult call-ins. Employment or employment training may be less essential or relevant. The types of services offered may be more age-specific and focus more on developmental and educational opportunities (e.g., counseling, mentoring, educational assistance, or team-building recreational activities).

## Examples of Juvenile Call-ins: Salinas, Oxnard, Boston, and Winston-Salem

As McMillin, Matlock, and Abadesco's experiences show, slight adjustments to the message and procedures cumulatively distinguish juvenile call-ins from adult call-ins. However, the ultimate focus of the juvenile call-in, like the adult call-in, continues to be the same: the violence must stop. To contextualize how juvenile call-ins compare to adult call-ins, this section will provide an overview of Oxnard, California; Salinas, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and Winston-Salem, North Carolina's juvenile call-in strategies.

### Oxnard, California: Juvenile Facility Call-ins

Oxnard does not always separate juveniles from adults for call-in sessions, mostly because Oxnard's adult call-ins target younger adults, just over 18. However, in some cases separate juvenile call-ins are held at the juvenile detention facility.

Call-ins at the juvenile facility run similarly to general call-in sessions outside the facility, with a few adjustments. One difference is that community call-ins have an extensive array of speakers, but in juvenile call-ins, the list of speakers is shortened to accommodate visitor regulations at the facility. Furthermore, Oxnard's community call-ins are usually set up in classroom-style seating, while juvenile call-ins at the facility are generally held around a round table. While the content is the same, call-ins at the juvenile facility tend to be more relaxed for the participants and speakers, whether because of the round-table seating or because participants are not singled out from the community

during the call-in process.

One unique aspect of Oxnard's call-ins is the particular type of services provided to juvenile call in participants. After the call-in, participants are tracked into the Oxnard City Corps, run by Oxnard's Recreation Department. The Oxnard City Corps is a service program where at-risk youth work in crews to develop job skills and a sense of community while working on service projects. While developing skills through community service, they are constantly inundated with positive thinking. The program also serves to substitute the things that attract youth to gangs with these small-group projects instead, giving youth a sense of belonging, responsibility, and accomplishment. Finally, after serving an allotted amount of time in the program, some students are offered paid employment through the program.

### Salinas, California: School Assembly Call-ins

Salinas partners with alternative schools—schools that matriculate high rates of at-risk youth—to hold call-ins for all students through general school assemblies. Salinas' previous problem analyses discovered that juveniles do not fit the traditional adult call-in criteria, which generally focus on adult offenses and parole violations that do not apply to juveniles. For this reason, students in alternative schools are selected as the target participants for juvenile call-ins.

Instead of selecting individuals, Salinas selects entire schools as their target participants. To execute the call-in, the entire student body is invited to a mandatory school-wide assembly. Not only does an assembly function as a means of reaching out to large numbers of at-risk students without singling out individuals, but mandatory attendance solves the challenges of parental consent complications. Parents are also invited to the assembly, but their participation is not mandatory.

Salinas makes a number of other modifications for juvenile call-ins. First, the number of speakers is smaller; while adult call-ins usually have about 10 speakers, these juvenile call-ins have only 3 to 4. The juvenile call-ins are shorter and place a higher emphasis on changing life paths for the better, with a shift in focus from law enforcement to public health. Salinas' speakers also modify the language and tone they use to address juveniles. Law enforcement officers speak less than they would in front of adults and do not appear in uniform. Rather than emphasizing the threat of enforcement, law enforcement speakers voice their support for youth and their regret toward seeing youth arrested and killed. They express their intention to help. Following law enforcement speakers, community members and service providers take the floor. Parents of youth violence victims and outreach workers discuss the consequences of youth violence in the community, and positive alternatives. In one instance, a father spoke about the death of his son, stating that he hoped his son's killer had other opportunities. Service providers are available to offer support and services to call-in participants.

**Boston, Massachusetts: Truancy Surveillance Programs**

Boston, Massachusetts, the birthplace of CeaseFire—a violence reduction initiative in which call-ins play a key component—dismantled its CeaseFire strategy in 2000, but reconstructed it in 2007. As part of its reconstruction, Boston has evolved its call-in strategy to include juveniles (National Network for Safe Communities, undated). The call-ins, for the most part, follow a traditional format. They last about 30–35 minutes, are held at the courthouse, and probationers make up most of the target participants. Boston, like Oxnard, tried mixing juveniles with adults in call-ins; however, this strategy proved unsuccessful because juveniles lacked the maturity to accompany adult participants. Instead, like Salinas, Boston is now working with schools. The city has initiated school truancy surveillance programs in which school officers work with school administrators to keep tabs on truancy, a warning sign of gang involvement. Frequently truant students receive a home visit from officers.

**Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Following a Traditional Format**

Winston-Salem focuses its call-in efforts on serious juvenile offenders, targeting the specific individuals, sites, and neighborhoods that have the highest rates of criminal violence. According to Winston-Salem's problem analyses, which incorporate the input of law enforcement and local service providers, a small number (0.4%) of the total juvenile population (68,298 persons) under 18 years of age are regarded as "serious violent offenders." Repeat offenders from this list are invited to call-ins (Easterling, Harvey, Mac-Thompson, & Allen, 2003).

The call-ins follow a traditional format. Federal, state, and local law enforcement are present at the meetings, in addition to community members, clergy, and outreach workers. These stakeholders send juveniles a dual message: we are here to help you, but we will not tolerate violence. Winston-Salem follows up with participants with the appropriate social service offers through the creation of Operation Reach, a four-to-six-person team composed of police officers, probation officers, clergy, and community advocates. This team is in charge of following up on the services promised during the call-in. They link youth to services and programs, and make sure that youth abstain from violence.

**Additional Issues to Consider**

While call-ins have been shown to be effective in reducing violence, and have gained support in many communities, critics highlight areas worthy of caution. Like most intervention strategies, the success of call-ins depends on the quality of implementation. Call-ins that are not carefully implemented can have serious consequences for the community. Call-ins are sometimes criticized for resulting in unjust legal scrutiny, unresponsiveness and mistrust from communities, and insufficient resources and services (personal communication, June 2011; Winston, 2011). This section discusses common

criticisms of call-ins, voiced by community members through interviews and related literature.

Many opponents are skeptical of the accuracy and fairness of the participant selection process, which can ultimately result in unjust legal consequences for individuals called in. These criticisms point to narrow and oversimplified selection criteria that do not always distinguish between former and current offenders on the streets (Reynolds, 2009). This is particularly true of participants selected for serving parole or probation, or selected for alleged gang association—a historically ill-defined and over-imposed accusation (Winston, 2011; personal communication, June 2011). Since participation is mandatory and enforced by arrest, these critics argue that some participants face serious legal scrutiny based on the accusation of potential future criminality, when no actual crime has been committed. While cities maintain that their problem analyses locate key individuals in problem areas, community members argue that this form of selection targets a narrow selection of individuals while some of the most problematic criminals remain on the streets (Winston, 2011). These critics call for a more thorough selection process to verify the most appropriate participants by allowing community a lead role in the problem analysis, before imposing undeserving juveniles and community members with a punishable offense.

Additionally, critics of call-ins argue that the strategy overemphasizes a law enforcement agenda at the expense of authentic community involvement. While the strategy calls for a holistic community partnership, some community members feel neglected during the call-in process. Community partnerships are only effective when the partnering organizations and representatives are originally from the community and can identify with call-in participants. However, some argue that law enforcement only partner with a select few organizations that are willing to adhere to the law enforcement agenda (personal communication, June 2011). This type of call-in may be less responsive to specific community needs and less effective for call-in participants. Call-ins must involve authentic community organizations in a primary role to build understanding and trust with the participants they hope to reach.

Cities must also be cautioned against overemphasizing law enforcement messages when conducting the call-in. Opening with a heavy-handed law enforcement message may focus participants on the intentions of legal threats and lessen the impact of the service offers that follow (Winston, 2011). This may lead some participants to ignore or antagonize community service providers, whom they begin to associate with routine threats from law enforcement. This situation defeats the purpose of the strategy, leaving participants disaffected and feeling set up for failure by their own communities.

Finally, call-ins receive complaints when the services promised to participants are not adequate or available. Opponents argue that services offered do not match needs or are not

fully available to all call-in participants. When the city cannot follow through with services offered, participants lose faith in the process (personal communication, June 2011). One critic complained that call-in participants were subjected to threats of legal action and incarceration, but when it came time to offer services, there were only two menial job opportunities for 14 participants (Winston, 2011). In response to this deficit, participants may end up feeling that call-ins are more focused on making arrests than helping people in the community.

## Recommendations for Effective Juvenile Call-ins

Since the quality of implementation can make or break the call-in strategy, cities which plan to apply call-ins to juveniles must be aware of the most important elements of effective implementation. This section provides recommendations for successful juvenile call-ins.

### Juvenile Call-in Message

The three-point call-in message must be adjusted for the juvenile audience. The three points of the juvenile call-in message are as follows:

1. There are serious consequences to violence, and violence affects everyone in the community.
2. The community cares about youth and does not want to see them affected by violence; in fact, the community is committed to helping youth avoid violence.
3. There are positive alternatives to violence, and youth have opportunities to succeed.

While this message is similar to the adult call-in message, juvenile call-ins should be more positive and informational, and rely less on threats of enforcement, with a focus on educating youth about positive alternatives to violence. This difference is most pronounced in the role of law enforcement. When presenting to juveniles, law enforcement must soften the message of enforcement with a message of hope and education. Instead of focusing on the legal consequences of crime, officers should express their caring for juveniles, and use the call-in as a first step in establishing trust between juveniles and law enforcement. Reducing the number of law enforcement speakers and having a trusted community member open the meeting by introducing law enforcement as allies can help build trust. Officers may also choose to attend unarmed and out of uniform.

### Strong, Well-rounded Partnerships

To ensure that every point of the juvenile call-in receives equal attention from the call-in presenters and the juvenile participants, strong partnerships must be built among a wide array of community representatives, service providers, and law enforcement. Partnerships with juvenile-oriented

organizations—especially schools and youth-serving community organizations—are particularly important, and often the most effective. Juvenile organizations can lead more accurate problem analysis when identifying at-risk youth, and provide a more comfortable setting for juvenile call-ins.

### Authenticity of Community Partners

Selection of partners should strictly rely on the authenticity of community members and organizations. Authentic community partners ensure that the message is relevant to the juvenile community participants. Furthermore, juveniles respond better to people to whom they can relate. For this reason, juveniles are most likely to listen to members of their own community who possess authentic knowledge and understanding of the community and its youth. Participation of local ex-offenders as community partners or speakers is particularly effective for juveniles. Ex-offenders who now lead legal, successful lifestyles serve as an inspiration for juveniles, who see that they too can become successful and turn their lives around.

### Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is strongly encouraged during juvenile call-ins. Since parents affect every aspect of juveniles' lives, call-ins should aim to involve parents as much as possible. The call-in message and services should be focused and delivered to parents, as well as their children. Parental involvement can also strengthen the relationship between juveniles and their parents by incorporating them both in dedication to the nonviolence lifestyle. To best reach parents, juvenile call-ins should be scheduled in the evenings so parents can attend after work. Additionally, providing food is a good way to help busy parents make time for the call-in, and reinforces a sense of comfort and community. It also encourages parents to remain after the meeting and speak with service providers and law enforcement (Contreras, personal communication, 2011).

## Conclusion

As call-ins become a more established strategy throughout the nation, the strategy is increasingly being implemented with juveniles. While call-ins were not originally designed for juveniles, the strategy shows great potential for serving a younger audience. As new cities begin the process of implementing juvenile call-ins, lessons learned will continue to improve this intervention strategy. Consistent communication between cities about what is most effective, what to watch out for, and how to solve potential problems can lead to better implementation and more positive impact on juvenile call-in participants.

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## Resources

These websites provide additional resources and information regarding call-ins:

National Institute of Justice  
<http://www.nij.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/focused-deterrence.htm>

National Network for Safe Communities  
[http://www.nnscommunities.org/pages/group\\_violence\\_overview.php](http://www.nnscommunities.org/pages/group_violence_overview.php)

OJJDP Model Programs Guide  
<http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/mpgProgramDetails.aspx>

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), in partnership with the National League of Cities’ Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute), launched the California Cities Gang Prevention Network to reduce gang violence and victimization, mortality and morbidity, and to develop a statewide policy agenda to abet promising local efforts. NCCD promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice. The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of children, youth, and families.

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