Youth Gangs: Prevention And Intervention

Ivy Jones Turner, TAS
Nancy Kelly, TAS
  National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

Dennis Talbert, President
  Michigan Neighborhood Partnership

Safe Schools
Healthy Students

Youth Gangs:

- Do we have youth gangs in our community?

- Do we have youth gangs in our schools?

- How have gangs revealed their presence?

- What have been the biggest obstacles to addressing youth gang problems in our schools or community? What measures have/can we take to overcome these obstacles?

Youth Gangs in America

- **History:** Gangs have been present in the United States for more than 200 years

  Shelden, Tracy, and Brown, *Youth Gangs in American Society* 2001

- **Where They Are:** Throughout the U.S. over 25% of communities with 2,500 pop. report confronting gang problems

  2006 National Youth Gang Survey

Youth Gangs in America (cont.)

- **Numbers:** Estimates are 785,000 active members and 25,500 gangs

  2006 National Youth Gang Survey

- **Membership:** Diverse – multi-ethnic/multi-racial (between 42% rural and 54% suburban communities estimate gangs are multi-ethnic/racial), may include females with same level of leadership as males;

  1998 National Youth Gang Survey

Why do Youth join gangs?

Primary Reasons given:

- social network—friends/family are members

- protection—perceived safety the gang provides

(Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Peterson et al., 2004; Thornberry et al., 2003)

THE SOLUTION:

There is no magic bullet

An Effective Anti-Gang Approach includes:

- **P**revention

- **I**ntervention

- **E**nforcement/**S**uppression

An Effective Anti-Gang Approach includes:

- **P**revention – build social & emotional skills/knowledge and/or meet the social/emotional needs of all youth to eliminate interest in gang membership;

- **I**ntervention – provide focused opportunities and resources (education, employment, etc.) targeted to youth in gangs as alternative to gang (followers/minnows)

- **E**nforcement/**S**uppression – targeted use of full law enforcement power to monitor and respond to gang activity of leaders or hard-core members (sharks)

![Safe Schools Healthy Students logo]

What Evidence Based prevention AND intervention Gang Response Programs exist?

– Brief Strategic Family Therapy

– Family Behavioral Therapy

– Multi-Systemic Therapy for Juvenile Offenders

– Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model

Safe Schools Healthy Students

OJJDP has found that effective responses to gangs include the following strategies

– Community Mobilization

– Opportunity Provision

– Social Interventions

– Suppression

– Organizational Change & Development

Spergel 1995, Spergel et al 1992, Spergel and Curry 1993

Community Mobilization

- Involvement of community members, including former gang-involved youth, community agencies & groups, etc.

- Coordinated programs and staff functions within & across agencies

Opportunity Provision

- Variety of education, training and employment programs developed and targeted towards gang-involved youth

- Focus is to provide opportunities to assist with disassociating self from gang

Social Interventions

- Involvement of youth-serving agencies, schools, community and faith-based agencies, law enforcement, and other juvenile/criminal justice organizations

- Reaching out to gang-involved youth and their families to link them to resources/services

Suppression

- Formal and informal social control procedures (supervision & monitoring of gang involved youth)

- Involvement of juvenile/criminal justice system with community and faith-based agencies and schools

Organizational Change & Development

- Policies and procedures developed that make the most effective use of resources within and across partner agencies to address gang presence

Within SS/HS, areas of focus can include

- Community involvement

- Providing program and educational opportunities

- Social Intervention programs

- Sustainable partnerships/collaborations

Example of SS/HS Intervention Program

- Anaheim City School District – Gang Reduction, Intervention Partnership

Example from a Community Based Agency

- Michigan Neighborhood Partnership

"**Building a Community Will**"

Dennis Talbert, President

Michigan Neighborhood Partnership

Defining "Community Will"

1. Building Collaborations
2. Engaging Community Organizations
3. Right Partnerships
4. Building Parental involvement

Community Elements

- Mentoring

- Recreation

- Academic Enhancement/Tutoring

- Community Incentives

- Parental Engagement

- Employment Readiness / Jobs

- Spiritual/Churches (urban)

The Who's of Collaboration

- Juvenile Justice Agencies
- Human Services Agencies
- Recreational Programs
- Churches/Spiritual Communities
- Mentoring Programs
- Colleges and Universities
- Counseling Agencies
- Organizations serving girls and young women

Educating the Entire Community

- Developing a flier or brochure which highlights the impact of gangs on communities

- Highlight the impact of gangs on children

- Secure the endorsement of public officials and other high profile individuals in your community

Safe Schools
Healthy Students

Educating the Entire Community

- Host a series of public meeting design to educate the community on the impact of gangs on communities

- Highlight information on the known gangs in your area – (provide information regarding signs and other tags which promote the gang)

Steps to Success

1. Build In-School Collaboration
2. Build Community Collaboration
3. Determine Expected Outcomes
4. Educate the Community
   A. Parental
   B. Clergy
   C. Community Leaders
5. Identify Community Group Roles and Responsibilities
6. Identify Specific Students to be targeted
7. Fund Development

Identify Financial Support

Select from within the collaboration
a fiduciary organization

- United Way

- Community Foundation

- Educational Foundations

- OJJDP – Mentoring

- Department of Education – Mentoring

- Local Business Association

Discussion

- What are we currently doing to address gang presence in our community through intervention as well as prevention?

- How are we working to address gang presence across neighborhoods & cultures?

- What have been the biggest obstacles to addressing youth gang problems in our schools or community? What measures have/can we take to overcome these obstacles?

- How do/can our gang prevention and intervention efforts create a continuum of support for youth?

- How are our SS/HS partners involved in supporting prevention and intervention efforts? Where can this deepen?

Selected Resources/References

NCMHPYVP www.PromotePrevent.org resources on gangs

- http://www.promoteprevent.org/Resources/briefs/gangs.html (resource pages on gang issues)
- http://learn.aero.und.edu/pages.asp?PageID=123806 (Gang Prevention strategies in Latino Communities)

US DOE online training event "Youth Gangs: Going Beyond the Myths to Address a Critical Problem"

- http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/training/gangs/problem.html

OJJDP Best Practices to Address Community Gang Problems Guide

- http://www.iir.com/nygc/publications/gang-problems.pdf

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model- Assessing Youth Gang Problem Guide

- http://www.iir.com/nygc/acgp/assessment.htm