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**Parole Model**

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## Statement of the Problem

The fulfillment of the traditional parole mission has grown more difficult because of the increased number of gang youth paroled and the decreased allocation of funds for parole officers and services in some states. Parole supervision of gang youth is more complicated than supervision of non gang youth because of the pressures of gang solidarity and coercion exerted on gang youth. Parole of gang youth requires the development of specialized suppression and intervention programs to augment regular supervision programs.

Many paroled youth, whether they are affiliated with youth gangs or not, confront a variety of neighborhood and personal issues in their reintegration into their communities. Many agencies and organizations do not accept parolees because of their criminal background and withhold access to legitimate opportunities. Youths paroled back to weak, disorganized communities often find alternate illegitimate opportunities which enable them to survive until their parole is violated or they are rearrested.

Gang youths are under severe pressure to become reinvolved with gangs. They are not simply subject to peer pressure and physical coercion but in fact are often highly loyal to their gangs and find gang criminal lifestyles which may include a significant criminal component very attractive. Parole agencies must provide interventions which minimize the gang youth's tendency for reinvolverment with the gang. These interventions should include referral to conventional sources of income production, organizational affiliation and group camaraderie. Parole agencies should also develop strategies which reduce the resistance of conventional elements, especially places of employment, in providing access to legitimate opportunities to paroled youth.

Upon release from the correctional institution, most parolees are also resource poor and cannot provide for clothing, food, transportation, other subsistence necessities, and personal recreation. The parole agency thus must somehow assist paroled youth to meet immediate survival needs as well as to embark on a meaningful educational, social, vocational skill development, and job finding program.

The nature of the gang characteristics of the community also affects the possibility for social adjustment of the parolee. A chronic gang problem context makes readjustment considerably more difficult. A chronic gang problem community is one where gang violence, intimidation, and gang related crime have persisted, sometimes in acute form for many years. A large number of gangs and gang members are often present. While local agencies and members of the community have clearly identified the problem, resources in the affected community are lacking. Not only is there high unemployment and poverty, but local legitimate institutions are weak and services to youth are fragmented.

On the other hand, it may be considerably less difficult for a gang parolee to readjust or follow a conventional path in an

emerging gang problem city. An emerging gang problem context is one where the gang problem has been recently discovered in some acute but not necessarily serious form, usually within the last 5 to 10 years. A relatively small number of youth gangs and gang members have been identified. Gang crime has not yet assumed a persistent traditional form and to a large extent still resembles street corner disorderliness, but selected traditional gang signs and symbols have begun to appear. By and large, only a few agencies have paid attention to the problem, utilizing mainly suppression strategies. The residents of the affected area as well as outsiders are reluctant to identify the community as gang ridden for a variety of political, social, economic, organizational, and racial/ethnic interest reasons. These communities do not necessarily lack opportunities and resources for youth, though certain neighborhoods may be in decline.

Emerging and chronic community gang characteristics indicate the types of gang problems and the amounts and types of community resources the parole agency will have to work with. Gang suppression and intervention strategies should be designed accordingly. Special support in the development of additional opportunity programs, particularly in regard to remedial education, appropriate training, and increased access to jobs, may be required in chronic gang problem contexts. A different set of less concentrated program arrangements may be necessary in the emerging gang problem community.

### Mission and Goals

Parole agencies have two interrelated responsibilities in the supervision of youths paroled from correctional institutions. The major one is to monitor the behavior of paroled youths to insure that they meet conditions of their parole and that the community is protected from harm. The other is to assist in the development of a set of community-based services to meet their educational, occupational, social, and residential needs. All gang youth on parole should be subject to an appropriate mix of suppression and intervention programming to reduce the parole problems that their gang membership can cause.

In deciding how to intervene with paroled gang members distinctions should be based on the scope and character of criminal activities of the gang to which they are affiliated, gang member role, age characteristics of the youth, and on the resource base of the parole agency. For example, a parolee returning to a high gang crime community where his gang is currently very active in intergang conflict is in great risk of being driven into violent behavior. A high degree of surveillance and restriction is required for this parolee. The general objective of the parole officer would be to help each gang member to disassociate from the gang.

## Strategies of Intervention

In light of parole resource limitations, priorities will have to be determined as to which types of communities, youth gangs, and gang members are to be targeted for which mix of strategies and services. Five strategies are available to the parole officer for dealing with the youth gang problem: community mobilization, social intervention, opportunities provision, suppression, and organizational development.

Community Mobilization. Community mobilization or networking is a primary strategy in youth gang parole work. The parole agency in the exercise of its suppression and intervention mission will be dependent largely on a variety of community agencies and groups for education, employment assistance, job development, and specialized treatment services for parolees. It will look to schools, employers as well as local police for assistance in supervision of youth who have been released on parole. It is therefore important that the parole agency systematically identify the specific array of justice system and community agencies, and grassroots organizations, as well as the program resources they can make available to paroled gang youth in the different jurisdictions. Effective communication and coordination with these organizations must be developed.

Key to the success of any parole services project for gang youth will be the relationships which parole officers establish with staff at the various agencies and organizations. The knowledge gained while the youth was institutionalized should be available to the parole officer in programming for gang youth and in making appropriate community contacts and preparations. Since many paroled youth will have a poor school performance history, they will need to be enrolled in a school or GED program for remedial assistance. Vocational training and job placement will also be essential, if these young people are to resist returning to the gang and helped to pursue positive means for earning an income. Perhaps most important for some of the younger youth without a history or adequate understanding of what a job means, a pre-employment introduction to the world of work experience will be necessary.

Important will be the development of close working relationship with police and other justice system personnel. Regular as well as crisis meetings with police should be held regarding paroled gang youth on the progress they make and sometimes the gang related problems they suddenly create. Parole officers should have access and contribute to any intelligence system which is developed to track the criminal activity of gangs and gang members. Such a system should assist not only in uncovering the criminal conduct of parolees but also in describing trends or patterns of gang activity both in the community and the correctional institution.

The parole officer is an important intermediary between the correctional institution and the community in the coordination of information about gang problems that affect both the correctional

institution and the community, often in interactive ways. While the intent of parole services is to assist youth to complete their parole terms as successfully as possible, it is unreasonable to assume, based on existing research on recidivism, that gang parolees, in particular, will do so without committing various parole infractions or new crimes. The parole officer should develop contacts with the specific prosecuting attorney in the county, sometimes specializing in work with gang offenders, who can be useful when the youth violates court orders.

In order to develop inter-organizational relationships for purposes of rehabilitation of paroled gang youth, gang parole staff should meet with community-based agencies, schools, representatives of local businesses and criminal justice agencies to describe the goals and strategies of the agency's gang suppression and intervention program and enlist their assistance and support. Ongoing relationships should be based on mutually agreed definition of the responsibilities of the agencies concerned, the resources to be exchanged, expectations of parolees, methods of referral, follow up, and problem resolution.

A variety of organizational arrangements are possible in the utilization of community resources. The simplest is the referral of parolees to community programs by the parole agency. A more integral arrangement could be the housing of parole staff in one or more of these community agencies or the clustering of many of the service providers and parole staff together in a common facility or office -- both for accessibility to parolees and to facilitate referrals between these programs. The participation of parole staff in various board, advisory group, or grassroots organizational arrangements to serve gang parolees is also desirable.

Most communities lack the resources, e.g., residential placements, educational and job training and placement opportunities, mental health, drug treatment, etc. needed by parolees. The parole agency can use several strategies to mitigate these local community resource deficits. It may use its own state derived funds to aid in the development of community services and/or lobby city and state government to provide additional funds for specialized gang programming for parolees. An example is the need to develop residential placements, group homes or contract with private homes on behalf of youthful parolees. An advocacy and community mobilization function of the parole agency can be based on the results of community surveys and research which then can be used to demonstrate to legislative bodies and funding authorities a need for more resources to support local programs for parolees.

While the parole agency must develop a community mobilization strategy so that it can effectively carry out its primary responsibilities with respect to intervention and supervision of gang member parolees, secondarily, it should also be available to assist in broader community efforts at prevention and control of the youth gang problem. The agency should recognize its potential for initiating and contributing expertise, leadership, and influence as a public agency in promoting policy that will in the

long term reduce state costs before youth reach the correctional system.

### Opportunities Provision.

Opportunities provision refers to education and job related experiences as the principal means for youth gang parolees to achieve legitimate status and success. Remedial education, job training, and job placement are central ingredients in a rehabilitation program to integrate youth back into the conventional community. The logic behind this strategy is not simply to keep paroled youth busy or employed at low level jobs. Opportunities should be designed and used which have primary relevance for the youth's long-term successful adaptation. This is no simple process.

Age and maturity differences dictate that different opportunities programs be available for younger and older gang youth. The reintegration of youth into the regular school system or an alternative educational system may be more appropriate for younger gang parolees. GED programs are probably more appropriate for older youth who may also have a greater need for specific occupational skill development and job placement.

Educational and job related strategies and referrals should utilize mainstream organizations and resources to the extent possible. A community-based youth serving agency may be a useful collaborator or broker. This will minimize undue labelling of gang youth by segregating them into programs especially designed for offenders or ex-offenders. Mainstreaming provides a context in which parolees have a greater chance of developing attachments with other non-gang youths and adults than in a more specialized setting. Nevertheless, specialized remedial educational, job readiness, job training and placement programs may be essential where mainstream opportunities do not initially exist or are clearly inappropriate, e.g., for the highly aggressive or academically deficient parolee. The youth must be helped to understand that his placement in a particular class or job is a first step until he gains more knowledge and skill, and especially problem solving ability. A sequence of academic, vocational and job steps must be clearly identified for, and accepted by these youth who ordinarily are quickly discouraged.

A combined social opportunities and social intervention strategy is necessary to support the parolee. The development of a cadre of volunteer mentors is recommended for paroled gang youth. These should include, but not be limited to, people from the same neighborhood who have established conventional roles or careers. They can be assigned and matched to paroled youth and used as tutors, job training and planning facilitators, or simply available as supportive "irritants" to remind youth to do what they are supposed to. Mentors can provide one on one technical assistance to youth; they augment the regular educational and job achievement of the parolees. Through personalized involvement, they can contribute both to the enhancement of the self esteem of and

pressures on parole youth to pursue their learning, job training, and work obligations.

A combined opportunities provision and community mobilization campaign is also required. Community-based agencies, businesses, even the police can be enlisted in obtaining meaningful job development efforts for gang youth. There is a skilled labor shortage in industries in some cities or areas. A variety of interagency, school, and business linked arrangements can be encouraged or coordinated by parole and other agencies to facilitate meaningful employment of gang youth, including those on parole. Business or entrepreneurial activities by non-profit agencies can be encouraged and supported through state parole funding on a contract basis, e.g., graffiti expunging, housing repair, food catering. A variety of tax credit or incentive programs under federal and state law or even local city ordinances can also be initiated in which businesses and industry are awarded contracts on condition they train and employ socially disadvantaged workers, including youth gang parolees.

The parole agency should also give thought to different administrative approaches for developing job opportunities for youth gang parolees in emerging and chronic gang problem contexts. In emerging gang problem cities it may be sufficient for individual parole officers to develop their own individual job banks or employment networks and rely on them for referral or placement of individual gang parolees. However, in large chronic problem cities, this approach may not be adequate. Caseloads are large and parole officers are overworked, if not overwhelmed with routine tasks such as keeping track of parolees. Consideration in chronic problem cities should be given to the development of a centralized job development unit to coordinate job placement for an entire city or county. This would enable the individual parole officer to concentrate on getting parolees to select, develop commitment to, and stay on a job.

#### Social Intervention.

Social intervention strategies emphasize social and emotional support activities, including counseling, informal educational, values change, drug treatment, social and mental health referral and other activities which assist the parolee to make the right choices and support his progress at schools, on the job, and in the neighborhood. The parole officer should pay special attention to the situations which encourage or pressure the youth gang parolee to participate in criminal youth gang activity.

The particular social interventions used with gang parolees should be determined as early as possible based on a systematic assessment of the youth's treatment and supervision needs. The level of initial supervision should be based on the youth's risk of returning to gang involvement and criminal activity. The needs of the prospective parolee for residential placement, specific types of education, job, and other support services should be determined. The parole officer's social intervention approach should be

characterized by concern and caring for the parolee. This is a key element in an effective relationship to facilitate the youth's access to, and meaningful use of, social opportunities as well as social controls or constraints that must be imposed on the youth.

There are no simple counseling techniques which magically persuade or aid the youth to stay out of gang related or other kinds of trouble. A variety of constraints and supports are required including those that grow out of the structure of a school or training program, a job, a sound interpersonal relationship with a girlfriend. Much of the officer's counseling focus, whether in individual or group treatment, should be to assist the youth to find substitutes for youth gang camaraderie, excitement, and income.

Discussion groups, mutual support, or gang awareness groups can be useful for the parolee, his parents, wife or girlfriend. The meaning and values of the gang subculture and subsociety can be raised and challenged. These discussion groups should be faced with the specific reality of violence, victimization, and non-rational characteristic of gang behavior. Dispute resolution and violence control techniques should be discussed and even experienced. For example, parolees from opposing gangs, non-gang member victims, family members, neighborhood residents, and even law enforcement officers can be introduced into these groups for consciousness raising and problem solving purposes.

#### Suppression.

Suppression is a key underlying strategy of the parole officer. A major function of parole is protection of the community from the criminal acts of gang youth. Suppression activities have preventive, control, and even retributinal aspects. In its most extreme form, suppression means that the parolee can be returned to the institution for a violation of a parole condition or upon commission of a new offense. A variety of graded alternatives should be available to control gang parolees from regular supervision to electronic monitoring, detention, and return to the institution. Some of these options may be already structured into the parole programs for the youth (See below for examples of types of parole).

There are at least three key interrelated components of suppression which the parole officer must attend to: 1) the level of supervision to be applied; 2) specification of conditions of parole by the release authority; and 3) follow-up investigation and intelligence analysis. Fundamentally, these and other components of suppression are intended to impress on the gang member parolee his accountability for his behavior and the responsibility of the parole officer to hold him accountable.

The level of supervision will vary from least restrictive to most restrictive depending on the level of risk the gang youth parolee represents to the safety and security of the community as well as his potential for social development based on his past record. A complex risk assessment will have to be made by the

parole agent based on data available from various sources, including correctional records, parole recommendations and orders, as well as interviews with the parolee before he is released from the institution. Further investigation and contacts will be required with parents or wife and the police, particularly if the parolee is a core gang member or gang leader. His return to the community may significantly affect a gang conflict situation or the nature and level of existing gang organization. The parole agent may also contact school or employers to assess the potentials in the community context for providing support and thereby inducement to positive behavior by the parolee.

The risk assessment will be influenced by orders of the parole authority as to the length of time the youth is to remain in his parole status and under what restrictive conditions. The conditions of parole should be reviewed with the parolee prior to as well as upon release from the correctional facility. A full discussion of the available resources and ways and means the parolee has to fulfill these conditions must be carried out. It is often useful to have the youth sign a typed copy of these conditions which should include the means agreed upon to implement the conditions. The parole officer should also sign the document.

A copy of these conditions of parole and the working agreement should be given to significant individuals involved in the rehabilitation process including either a family member or the director of his group home or other residential facility, his employer or school official. This will facilitate communication and coordination and reduce misunderstandings. It should also be possible to periodically review, change, and update the agreement, based in part on changed parole orders.

The parole officer should continually gather information about the actual and potential involvement of the parolee in gang related activity. Sources of such data include police, family members, neighbors, other gang members, as well as the parolee himself. Analysis of such data then becomes a basis for discussion with the parolee and changing the degree of structure required to keep both the community and the youth safe and secure. Finally such investigation and intelligence should be shared with appropriate authorities, particularly the police.

A major consideration should be collaboration with law enforcement and community agencies in preventing or controlling the outbreak of youth gang activity in which the parolee may or will have already participated in. A series of law enforcement tactics may be in order: increased patrols of certain parts of the community; changed or enhanced programming by a youth agency or special crisis team to divert or prevent gang attacks or retaliation; or arrest of various youth, including the parolee. Both short-term and long-term controls on the youth and the gang(s) in question must be considered depending on the circumstances and community resources available.

## Organizational Development.

Effective suppression and intervention into gang problems is dependent also on the capacity of the parole organization to: 1) define its mission and policies adequately; 2) select appropriate strategies or combinations thereof, in relation to the nature and scope of the problem and the resources available in the community; and 3) organize and coordinate these resources in the most effective way. Staff selection and training, and the evaluation of program efforts are key elements of the organizational development process.

Staff Selection and Training. The parole program, directed to dealing with gang youth should be staffed by people who want to work with young people and who preferably have work experience in community or criminal justice agencies, specifically with gang youth, or other delinquents. The candidate needs to be sufficiently free of hang-ups, e.g., over identification with gang youth or overuse of authority and be able to work in a relatively open setting where the parole officer has to exercise maximize personal and professional self discipline. The staff person needs to have a range of skills in counseling, setting authoritative limits, and networking with community organizations. A baccalaureate degree should be a minimum qualification for most staff.

A special qualification should be sensitivity to low income and minority group culture and behavior in the particular community. Successful parole work requires that staff either be from such a background or have considerable understanding and experience in working in high crime or gang neighborhoods. Parole staff especially need to be able to deal with the nuances of Black and Hispanic, and possibly Asian, cultures. Staff should recognize the role of institutional racism in the creation of poor and socially isolated communities where the gang problem often thrives. The parole officer should also have some awareness and ability to deal with the politics of race relationships in defining the needs of these communities, specifically related to the youth gang problem.

Although staff are expected to possess relevant personal capacities suitable for effective work with gang youth, the parole agency should develop a staff training program which addresses certain parole and gang specific knowledge and skills. The topics to be covered should include: how the juvenile justice system generally operates, state regulations covering parole services, the characteristics and dynamics of gangs and gang crime, adolescent development and behavior, and the specific philosophy, objectives and problems of operating a gang control and rehabilitation program for parolees. If appropriate, other organizational staff who regularly interact with the parole agency, including correctional institutions, police, and community-based organizations, should be invited as trainers and even co-participants in these training sessions, to foster mutual understanding and interagency relationships between parole and the other programs.

Research and Evaluation. Regular and systematic evaluation of the special gang parolee program should be conducted. Based on the objectives defined for the program, key outcome measures should be developed and assessed. Of importance is appropriate data as to whether gang parolees continue to commit offenses and whether new offenses are gang or non-gang motivated. Data should be collected on school and job performance and attendance; stability of their family relationships; whether parolees continue to hang out with gang peers; and the extent to which they participate in special community programs arranged for them. Of special importance will be a comparison of results for gang parolees in special programs and those not in such programs; and a comparison of results for gang and non-gang parolees with similar social backgrounds and criminal histories.

Systematic evaluation should also serve several program development and policy functions in parole. First, it should inform the organization as to whether it is succeeding in achieving specific program objectives. Second, it should identify the program elements which are working and those which need to be modified. Third, evaluations can be used to garner political support for or defend the program against attack. Gang intervention programs carry special risks of political or community controversy, especially when particular gang youth on parole get into serious trouble. It is therefore useful to develop informed support from the state's correction and parole authorities as well as from key legislators and local government officials and representatives of local agencies and community groups. Research evaluations of program effects are critical to establishing and maintaining such support as well as advancing knowledge for improved policy and practice.

#### Examples of Parole Programs

The following are examples of different types of parole programs which may be more or less relevant in emerging or chronic gang problem communities. These programs elaborate and integrate some of the strategies and activities described above.

Gradual release programs. Some older youth gang members, whether returning to emerging or chronic gang communities, can benefit from gradual release programs. In this type of program, several furloughs are arranged under the supervision of the parole officer prior to "official" release from the correctional institution. During these releases prospective parolees attempt to locate and interview for jobs, seek admission to special training and educational programs, and locate apartments. This gradual release program requires planning with the parole officer. Reorientation to family and community responsibilities is facilitated and "down time" prior to full parole is minimized. Gradual release programs may be especially appropriate for married gang members or those with other special needs and circumstances.

Parole to new communities. Some gang members from chronic gang problem communities can benefit by parole to communities other

than their original ones. This is useful for those who wish to avoid reinvolvement in the gang or who would experience intense pressures from their old gang peers or problems from members of opposing gangs. These youth require special residential placement, supervision and support in their new communities. Residential placement and staffing for these programs could be provided directly by the parole agency or through contractual arrangements with non profit and private group home operators and citizens in screened private homes.

However, placement in new communities may not be an uncomplicated solution, since gang problems may be emerging. The parole officer will need to pay special attention to signs of such development, and be prepared to assist community agencies to recognize the problem and appropriately react to it. The parolee will still require assistance and special supervision so that he does not become reinvolved. Personal problems of separation from his old community and social isolation in his new community may induce the parolee to organize branches of his old gang in the new community for now more sophisticated criminal purposes, such as drug trafficking.

Step down programs. Step down programs provide a set of structured programs with different levels of supervision, varying with the age or social maturity of parolees and especially with the risks of the youth for reinvolvement in gang crime. Such programs should be particularly useful in chronic gang problem communities.

The step down program utilizes supervised group home or community residential facilities along with appropriate programming and staffing. A continuum of program services is provided through which youth move from around-the-clock institutional to "self-supervision" in the community. Initially, the program provides program youth with structure and controls for as much of their day as possible to prevent them from becoming re-acquainted with former criminal gang associates and engaging in criminal activity. The program often involves serious gang offenders in intensive socialization and skill development activities both in a residential facility as well as in an open but still controlled community setting. The expectation is that as gang youth participate in constructive but variably supervised activities and achieve new skills they will develop a sense of accomplishment which reinforces their pursuit of a conventional path to adult social development.

During a highly structured initial stage, contractual agreements should be established with paroled youth so that they know clearly what consequences await them, should infractions, especially serious infractions, occur. During the first 30 to 90 days of their stay in the residential facility or supervised apartment, gang youth will only be allowed to leave during the day to attend school, work, look for a job, keep scheduled appointments or participate in supervised activities. After that time they would be permitted to earn more unsupervised time by demonstrating an ability to follow program rules. Youth with a history of drug

abuse should be required to submit to drug testing and involvement in substance abuse counseling as a condition of parole.

After successfully completing the first 30 to 90 day highly structured stage, the youth is allowed to return to his home or live with a relative or, if appropriate, to set up an apartment of his own or with another (screened) youth. Youth should be monitored closely using several different methods -- computer phone calls, unscheduled visits by the parole officer assigned to work with the youth. Initially youth should be contacted in-person by a parole officer at least twice per day. In addition he will receive at least three daily computer calls. If a youth is not at home or where he is scheduled to be, the supervisor will initiate a search for him and further appropriate action will be taken. A program youth demonstrate a need for less direct supervision the number of face-to-face and phone contacts should be reduced. During the third stage, paroled youth are expected to maintain regular or normal contacts with their parole officer who functions in a limited and support role. Monitoring and surveillance of the youth's activities should be minimal. Most contacts between the youth and the officer would be at the local parole facility.

The scope and intensity of supervision, services, and opportunities provided are expected to decrease during each of the stages. On the other hand, the system can be reversed. The youth can be transferred back to early stages and even returned to the correctional institution for varying types of serious infractions and criminal behavior. The content of each of these stages of control including criteria and timing for progression to a less restrictive stage should be clearly articulated. The specific bases for and nature of the return to an earlier more restrictive stage should also be made clear and fully understood by the parolee.