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COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH AGENCY

Technical Assistance Manual

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University of Chicago

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Final responsibility, however, for the contents of the manual must rest with me.

C. Kane

COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH AGENCY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 1987, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, entered into a cooperative agreement with the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, to conduct the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program. The scope and seriousness of the problem were analyzed from both an organizational and community prospective. Model intervention strategies, and manuals for their implementation, were developed for the various agencies and organizations which are involved with youth gangs.

This manual has been prepared to assist community-based youth agency policymakers, directors, and their staffs to craft and institute a community-wide response to gangs. It calls for a problem-based response which is driven by the critical characteristics of the youth gang, its membership and its criminal activity in the target area. Called for as well is a thorough discussion of what should be done and how it should be done. This must take into account the project's finding that five key strategies should prevail: community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, suppression, and organizational change and development.

This manual describes how to assess the nature and extent of the target community's youth gang problem - and how to determine if such a problem exists at all - and then lays out a course of action the community-based youth agency can follow to develop an effective response to the youth gang problem and to engage others in the community to implement that response.

The community-based youth agency, with ties to the community, young people, and the justice and service systems, is in a position to mobilize the community and orchestrate a broad-based coordinated response to gang-prone and gang-involved young people who range from early adolescence to young adulthood. Therefore, it is proposed the community-based youth agency take a leadership role in identifying or enabling the identification and definition of the gang problem. To do so, the agency is urged to work with local officials, justice system representatives, school personnel, business people, other agencies, community groups, parents, and youth themselves. These same groups should remain active in the planning and delivery of a cohesive anti-gang strategy.

The community-based youth agency itself must make a range of services available to youth and their families: outreach or street work, intake, case management, group activities, education, employment, family support, and victim assistance.

Finally, the manual urges agency directors to carefully select and train staff to work with gang youth and to advocate an evaluation component be part of any initiative so the

impact of programs can be measured and the work of programs documented and shared with other communities. Discussed also is the need for additional funding if any new program is to be implemented.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Program Mission and Background
- ▶ Purpose of the Manuals
- ▶ Overview of the Community-based Youth Agency Manual
- ▶ Problem Statement
- ▶ Discussion of Terms and Issues
- ▶ Approach to the Problem
- ▶ Summary

Program Mission and Background

There has been an increase in the youth gang problem and the need for information and guidance.

Criminal youth gang activity represents a serious threat to the safety and security of local citizens and impedes positive youth development. In recent years higher levels of youth gang violence and gang member-related drug trafficking has been reported in an increasing number of neighborhoods, high schools, public housing projects, correctional institutions and other social contexts throughout the country.

In response the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Justice Department entered into a cooperative agreement with the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago in October, 1987 to conduct the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program. This program is a four stage Research and Development process: Assessment, Prototype/Model Development, Technical Assistance, and Testing.

This technical assistance manual is part of a four stage research and development process.

Three of the four stages have been completed. Stage 1 included a comprehensive review of the research and program literature on youth gangs, a survey of programs in 45 cities, selected site visits, conferences, and special studies. During Stage 2 gang suppression and intervention models were produced for police, prosecutors, judges, probation, corrections, parole, schools, employment, community-based youth agencies, grassroots organizations. Additionally, separate manuals for comprehensive planning and for community mobilization were developed.

Twelve manuals have been produced.

Stage 3 involved the creation of 12 technical assistance manuals which provide guidelines to implement the policies and procedures presented in the models. The ten agency manuals specify both organizational and community perspectives for dealing with the youth gang problem. The other two manuals outline specific procedures and processes of planning a comprehensive community approach to youth gang suppression and intervention. (See Appendix A for a list of documents.)

The program models and technical assistance manuals were based on the findings of the initial project assessment stage as well as extensive consultations with policymakers, administrators and practitioners at local and national levels. Two regional conferences were held with policymakers and administrators from 16 cities who contributed to the development of the final version of the manuals.

Purpose of the Manuals

The purpose is to present a set of guidelines to reduce youth gang crime.

The purpose of the technical assistance manuals is to present detailed steps for the control and reduction of youth gang crime, especially gang-motivated violence. The manuals seek to provide governmental authorities, criminal justice organizations, social agencies, and community groups with strategies which encourage gang-prone and gang-involved youth to terminate criminal activity and participate in legitimate social, academic, and employment pursuits.

Broad preventive policies which deal with larger social issues such as poverty and racism, housing, education, jobs, and health care are addressed only on a limited basis in the manuals. Key issues of family breakdown, violence in the media, and the proliferation of sophisticated weapons need to be directly addressed as they contribute to the youth gang problem. They are dealt with here mainly as conditions within which special organizational policies and procedures and community mobilization must be developed.

Administrators and policymakers are the primary audience.

Local administrators and policymakers are the primary audience, but the manuals should also be useful to other officials and personnel concerned with the problem,

including agency supervisors, front-line workers, and community volunteers.

The manuals are not intended to serve in the place of more general models and manuals dealing with delinquent or troublesome youth in the criminal justice and human service fields; they are intended as a supplement to them. Even so, the manuals should be of value in dealing with youth crime more generally. This is so because the youth gang problem can be viewed as part of a larger set of crime and delinquency and youth socialization problems.

Overview of the Community-based Youth Agency Manual

This manual has been written to guide community-based youth agency personnel, citizens and professionals from communities with documented gang problems through a series of steps which will result in the design and implementation of a multi-faceted gang suppression and intervention program. It is based on the belief that no single agency or organization can deal appropriately with the problem of youth gang crime. Rather, only a comprehensive sustained community-based approach holds promise of being effective. A key participant in this approach is the community-based youth agency; many such agencies are already providing a number of services which could benefit gang youth. Participation of certain community-based youth agencies in the intervention strategy also makes sense because of the established ties many of these agencies have to the communities they serve. They are close to the residents, their needs and their problems, and should understand the dynamics of their communities. Some youth agencies already reach out to gang youth and their families. They are, therefore, ideally situated to assume a leadership role or assist in mobilizing the community and generating opportunities for youth.

Specific guidelines are provided in this manual for identifying policies and procedures to reduce and control the youth gang problem. This manual emphasizes the critical importance of assessment of the problem, balanced strategies, goals, objectives and consensus on definition of the problem and what to do about it. The means for implementation of recommended policies and procedures are

Purpose of this community-based youth agency manual

Components emphasized in this manual

indicated mainly for community-based youth agency administrative and supervisory staff. Selection of operational staff, training, and evaluation guidelines are suggested.

Problem Statement

The gang problem has changed and grown more serious in most regions of the country.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, more criminally oriented and better organized gangs or cliques have become prevalent in many urban communities. More young people from diverse backgrounds and settings are joining gangs to meet social and economic needs not satisfied through existing institutions, e.g., family, school, and employment. The youth gang has become an alternative mainly anti-social institution for an increasing number of youth.

Poverty and social disorganization are key conditions contributing to the problem.

Why youth gangs have developed and become more criminal and complex organizations is not clear. The type and severity of youth gang problems may be largely a response to two conditions, *poverty* or limited access to social opportunities and *social disorganization*, i.e., the lack of integration and stability of social institutions including family, school and employment in a local community.

Certain factors exacerbate these two social conditions to produce varying gang subcultures and systems. They include:

- ▶ large and rapid population movement of low income minorities into a community;
- ▶ intergenerational gang traditions;
- ▶ defects of social policy and coordination of service delivery at local and national levels;
- ▶ institutional racism;
- ▶ insecurities of certain working and middle class populations "threatened" by newcomers; and
- ▶ the growth of criminal opportunities.

Examples are the following:

Under different community conditions, different types of gang problems appear to develop.

Violent youth gang subcultures often develop when gang-affiliated African American and Hispanic youth move from central cities to smaller cities and suburban areas without

adequate social, family, economic, and educational supports. Violent gang subcultures may also develop when new waves of poor immigrants from Mexico, Central America, the Pacific Islands, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Korea, Philippines and other Asian countries arrive in urban communities. The newcomer groups are often met with hatred and resentment, sometimes manifested in physical attacks. Gangs may form and become rapidly entrenched, first as defensive, and then as offensive groups.

Furthermore, in ghetto, inner city African-American and Hispanic communities, a limited criminal opportunity system often develops. Gangs in these communities may change from status-oriented, conflict groups and assume a highly predatory, criminal-gain character. Over time, sophisticated instrumental rather than traditional or status-oriented youth gangs may develop, with special interest in drug trafficking and other economic criminal activity.

There are variations in the gang problem by race/ethnicity, class and newcomer status.

In some communities across the country, particularly in the western states but increasingly elsewhere, the influx of low income and working class Pacific-Islander and Asian groups e.g., Tongan, Filipino, Hong Kong, Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Cambodian, has resulted in other varieties of youth gang problems. Second generation youths, born in this country or who arrived as pre-teens, may seek protection, prestige, and income through gang membership. Some of these gangs adopt African-American or Hispanic gang patterns; others become closely connected to traditional ethnic-based, adult criminal organizations. Criminal activities can include home invasions, business extortion, robbery, rape, intimidation and a range of racket activities.

These newcomer youth gangs, and the Asian communities upon which they prey, are difficult for local law enforcement, schools, and community organizations to penetrate or influence because of cultural, communication, and trust problems.

Growing economic, social and cultural pressure can contribute to the development of youth gangs.

Some blue-collar or middle class communities are characterized by growing economic, social and cultural pressures as well as by increasing family or personal disorganization. Some of these formerly stable, predominately white communities have become centers for

youth groups with a "nothing to lose attitude." Youth gangs or their equivalent such as Satanic, Stoner, punk rocker, hate, Neo-Nazi, or racist Skinhead groups may participate in a wide range of loosely organized criminal acts, characterized by perverse and negative behavior, including vandalism, drug use, homosexual assaults, and even homicides.

Additionally, in certain stable, lower middle class communities, whether African-American, Latino, Pacific Islander, Asian, white, or Native American, the gang problem may assume a more organized and usually less violent character. Youth may become relatively more involved in extortion, car theft, burglary, robbery, sophisticated drug trafficking, and various lucrative quasi-racket activities which are not necessarily conducted in the "home communities." Legitimate business and criminal interests may be relatively well integrated.

Furthermore, specialization of criminal youth gang patterns by race and ethnicity seemingly exists. Economic, social and cultural factors may, in fact, be the cause. Thus, some African-American youth gang or clique members may be heavily engaged in street level crack-cocaine trafficking; Mexican-American youth gang members may be relatively more involved in violent turf based activity, and Asian gang members may be more mobile and closely related to adult crime organizations involved in crimes such as extortion, robbery, and international drug trafficking.

However, these youth gang subcultures also exist side by side, interact, integrate with, or succeed each other over time. In some communities youth gangs are inter-racial and inter-ethnic.

Violence projected by the media may exacerbate the problem.

In spite of the many and changing varieties of gang subcultures which can be found, a common denominator among them is that most of these groups are comprised of youth who share somewhat similar values and a keen sense of personal failure and low self-esteem. For many gang youth, violence has become an acceptable way of life, partially sanctioned by the larger society. Violence is seen on nightly newscasts, in the movies, on evening television and Saturday morning cartoons, and encouraged by certain

"rap" stars. Violence is projected as a means of resolving authority, low self-esteem and race/ethnic problems.

Discussion of Terms and Issues

Key components of the problem are the youth gang, youth gang member and the gang incident.

It is important to accurately identify key components of the youth gang problem in order not to exaggerate, deny, or mythologize them. This is necessary to develop appropriate policies and procedures to deal with the different or varying street gang problems and subcultures encountered. These components are: 1) the criminal youth gang, 2) the youth gang member, and 3) the gang incident.

Gang-motivated violence is the key but not exclusive concern of the manual.

The central focus of the manual is control and reduction of gang-motivated violence. We are not primarily interested in highly organized drug trafficking by groups concerned only with profit, although there are often important connections between these associations and the youth or street gang. However, we are concerned with drug trafficking or predatory youth cliques to the extent they participate in, depend on, and influence the development of violent gang activities.

Youth gang members engage increasingly in both violent status-related as well as entrepreneurial or predatory criminal activities. If a youth group engages primarily in criminal entrepreneurial activity and participates periodically in serious violence, it falls within the scope of our concern.

Our concern is also with differences between emerging and chronic gang problem communities and the need for prevention and especially early intervention services.

1. Criminal Youth Gang

This is a group often comprising both juveniles and young adults who engage in a range of social and anti-social behaviors. Cliques or members engage repetitively or at times spontaneously in violent, predatory, and criminal gain behaviors. The criminal youth gang may be located within a neighborhood or across neighborhoods and even cities. It may be loosely or well organized with established rules of conduct. The youth gang may have a name, turf, colors, signs, symbols and distinctive dress. The youth gang often

promotes mutual support among members and conflict with competing gangs or established authority.

The traditional youth gang is turf based and status-oriented, but other kinds of gangs have also developed.

Many of these groups are traditional turf based gangs. Traditionally, the primary function of the youth gang has been to establish or protect the group's reputation and status within a framework of shared or communal values. This continues to be true for many youth gangs today. Some youth gangs, however, do not display colors and are not primarily concerned with social status, but are more gain oriented and more rationally organized.

2. The Youth Gang Member

The focus of concern is the youth gang member 12 to 24 years of age.

While the criminal youth gang includes some youth who conform primarily to conventional norms; most, however, engage in a range of criminal behaviors.

Most gang participants are in the age range of 12 to 24 years. Some pre-adolescents as well as persons into their 50s have been reportedly engaged in gang activities. However, the most serious and violent gang activity tends to be committed by older adolescents and young adults. Some gang members may join for period as short as a day, a week, or a month; others are members for years. Some members move from low to high gang status, from less serious to more serious criminal gang behaviors, and vice versa, sometimes in different gangs.

Fewer females than males are gang members.

Far fewer females than males join youth gangs, although with the increase in number of gangs throughout the country more female members are probably involved in serious youth gang activities than in an earlier era. Available evidence indicates, however, that females usually join gangs later and leave earlier, and are usually involved in less violent or serious criminal behavior than males. About 9 times as many males as females are arrested for gang crimes according to several studies. Less than one percent of gang homicide offenders are female.

Attention needs to be directed to high risk female gang members.

Female members typically are in groups affiliated with male gangs. Sometimes females are integrated directly as members into the gang proper, and are less frequently

involved in independent all-female criminal youth gangs. There is some recent evidence that females have assumed leadership roles in certain gang or criminal group activities, such as drug trafficking, in a few cities. Special attention needs to be directed to high-risk female gang members who are likely to be physically and sexually victimized, or who induce or facilitate male gang member assaults against other gangs.

Traditional gangs may have different type of members: identifiable leaders, core, regular, associate, soldier, peripheral, wannabe, floater, veteran or old-head. The presence and definition of these categories of gang members, however, may be quite variable across the country. Of special interest, for purposes of control and prevention are two categories of gang youth: 1) the more serious, hardcore, often older gang youths, and 2) the younger, high risk, often less committed gang youths.

Different types of gang members should be carefully identified.

Agencies need to carefully identify gangs and gang members. This process should depend on use of *multiple* criteria such as gang member self-identification, statements by reliable witnesses, verification by a second independent agency source, prior police records and the youth's regular association with a known gang member. Participation by the youth in certain serious gang-motivated criminal incidents such as drive-by shootings must ordinarily precipitate a gang member identification process for gang suppression and intervention purposes.

3. The Gang Incident

A gang incident is the unit for classifying and reporting an event as a gang crime, especially for law enforcement purposes. Reported gang incidents become the basis for determining whether a gang problem exists and assessing its scope.

Different definitions of the gang incident exist.

The gang homicide is usually the key and most reliable measure of the seriousness of gang crime. However, identification of gang incidents, e.g., homicide, assault, or robbery, is neither a simple nor a standard procedure. Two different procedures or variations of them, are currently employed to determine whether a gang incident has occurred

and should be recorded for law enforcement, and, consequently, public policy purposes.

- Gang-Motivated

The gang-motivated definition focusses on the nature of the criminal act.

In this procedure, a criminal act is defined as a gang incident if it grows out of gang motivation, interest, or specific circumstances which enhance the status or function of the gang. Examples include: inter-gang violence, gang retaliation, turf protection, intimidation, robbery, recruitment, or other criminal activity which affects the gang's reputation or interests as a whole. One or more members of the gang may be involved as a suspect, witness, offender or victim in these circumstances. In classifying the incident, focus is on the nature of the specific situation in which the illegal act occurs, such as a drive-by shooting or yelling a gang slogan in the course of the crime.

Crimes such as burglary, car theft, prostitution, and drug trafficking by a gang member are problematic because it is hard to determine whether the act is gang-motivated. Many criminal acts serve individual member needs unrelated to gang interests. On the other hand, seemingly individual or self-serving crimes by gang or aspiring gang youth may be gang-motivated. For example, a youth may be required or feel compelled to commit a particular property or person crime because of pressures by the gang.

- Gang-Related

The gang-related definition focusses on identification of the criminal suspect as a gang member.

This procedure is based on the characterization of a crime or delinquent act as a gang incident when the suspect, offender or victim is a gang member, regardless of gang motivation or circumstances. Usually any serious criminal act, especially of a violent, predatory, or drug trafficking nature, in which a gang member is involved, can be classified as a gang incident. For example, the crime of a gang member who steals from a store - even though that act has nothing directly to do with his gang membership - would be classified as a gang-related incident. (See Appendix B for a discussion of mixed situations and erroneous classification of group delinquency as gang crime.)

The narrow gang-motivated definition avoids excessive labelling.

- Which Definition to Use

The argument in favor of using the gang-motivated definition is that it focuses sharply on the circumstances of the incident rather than the identification of the individual as a gang member. It may be more precise and valid than the gang-related definition. It withstands court challenges better. It also avoids excessive labelling or exaggeration of the gang problem.

The counter argument is that the gang-motivated definition minimizes the actual scope of the gang crime problem. It encourages organizational or community denial of the problem. A key assumption of the proponents of the gang-related definition is that a gang member is likely to engage in a wide range of serious crimes because gang membership predisposes him or her to do so. Evidence for this argument is not substantial, however.

Police and prosecutors generally believe that it is desirable to identify gang members and their activities as completely as possible. Police are particularly concerned that the full range of criminal activities of the gang member be available for efficient tracking and investigation purposes.

The gang-related definition may be more useful to criminal justice officials.

We recommend a procedure that avoids excessive labelling of youth but ensures protection of the community. A gang-incident procedure should be devised which records and distinguishes between gang-motivated and non-gang-motivated crime committed by the gang member. All serious criminal incidents by repeat gang offenders should be clearly "flagged" on criminal justice computer systems. An effective computerized information system permits use of either or both procedures to track gang-motivated incidents and gang member crime.

4. Gang Problem Contexts, Chronic and Emerging

Emerging and chronic gang problem contexts may require different suppression and intervention approaches.

With the growth and spread of the youth gang problem, a two-fold categorization of the problem context has come into use: Chronic and Emerging. Our manuals stress the differences in these contexts as a basis for the development of distinctive strategies, policies and procedures for gang suppression and intervention. Simply put, a more preventive

or early intervention approach may be required in the emerging gang problem context, while a more elaborate and formalized suppression, intervention and prevention approach may be necessary in the chronic context.

- Chronic Gang Problem Context

The gang problem has had a longer history and is usually better organized and more severe in the chronic context.

Such an organizational or community context is characterized by persistent or periodic crises of major gang member violence and sometimes related drug trafficking extending over a five to ten year or more period, or even decades. Youth gangs are usually better organized in such communities which are often located in larger or older cities. These contexts are likely to be found in impoverished, ghetto, or transitional areas or ports of entry of inner cities, although they are increasingly found in smaller cities and suburban communities.

- Emerging Gang Problem Context

The gang problem is recent, less well organized, but sometimes very serious in the emerging context.

This organizational or community context is characterized by less well organized and persistent but at times serious forms of gang violence and gang member drug trafficking. The gang problem has usually been present and/or recognized for about five years or less. To some extent, the development and spread of the problem may be traced to the influence of new settlers or gang crime entrepreneurs for example, drug traffickers, from chronic problem cities or contexts. Youth gangs in emerging problem areas tend to be fewer in number and most often evolve out of local delinquent, sometimes social groups under deteriorating economic or social situations for minority, newcomer, or socially isolated populations.

The distinction between the concepts of chronic and emerging gang problem communities, however, are not sharp. Indicators related to the onset of the problem, its duration, degree of gang organization, severity of gang violence and related gang member drug trafficking, as well as the appropriate response to the problem(s) are not neatly categorized by the terms "chronic" and "emerging".

Emerging gang problem communities may develop into chronic; and chronic gang problem communities may go

through periods of sharply diminished gang activity before the problem re-emerges. Different parts of a community or jurisdiction may be characterized by different stages or degrees of severity of the problem at a given time.

5. Variability of Gang, Drug Trafficking and Crime Problems

It is important to understand for policy and program purposes that youth gangs involved in gang violence are not necessarily involved in drug trafficking. Some communities which have high levels of youth gang violence may have relatively low levels of drug trafficking; other communities with high levels of drug trafficking may have low levels of youth gang activity. Drug trafficking may succeed, or serve either to diminish or increase, patterns of youth gang violence.

High levels of general crime and gang crime are not necessarily closely associated.

Finally, high levels of general criminality in a community do not necessarily indicate high levels of gang activity. Some cities with the highest levels of youth homicide and drug trafficking may have relatively limited youth gang activity.

6. Prevention

Secondary prevention is included in the manuals' perspective.

The focus of this and the other technical assistance manuals in our Research and Development program is on issues of intervention and suppression in contexts where the gang problem is clearly present. Here, prevention refers mainly to secondary forms of prevention, or early intervention, which reduces the likelihood that highly gang-prone or the younger gang member will commit or continue to commit gang crimes. This is to be accomplished through effective controls, direct treatment or services, and provision of legitimate opportunities. In our conception, prevention requires change and development both by the individual youth as well as his or her social environment.

Most youth from low income and social problem ridden communities are not involved in delinquent gang activities. Finally, we note that a simple prevention model which emphasizes exclusive concern with younger youth may be unsuccessful. Such a model does not take into consideration system effects, including the influence of older youth on

"wannabe" or younger youth. All key components of the problem need to be systematically addressed.

Approach to the Problem

Different strategies of suppression and intervention have been identified.

The manuals specify five major lines of action or strategies: *community mobilization, opportunities provision, suppression, social intervention, and organizational change and development.* These strategies must be combined in different ways depending on the problem context, the specific mission of the organization, and the kind of youth targeted for special attention.

Community mobilization is critically important.

1. Community Mobilization

Community mobilization is necessary in socially disorganized communities. Social disorganization, which contributes to the development of criminal youth gangs, may be characterized by the inability of legitimate institutions such as home, school, and employment, to adequately socialize youth. It may also be characterized by the fragmentation of criminal justice or community service delivery systems, within and across communities.

Both local and federal interests must be mobilized for the development of collaborative community and interagency activities directed at the control and reduction of the youth gang problem. In times of restricted local community resources, agency consortium efforts are essential. These should include the full and productive use of local, state and federal resources, application of moral and political pressures, and participation by the local citizenry. (See also General Community Design and Community Mobilization manuals.)

2. Opportunities Provision

The opportunities provision strategy focuses on the importance of education, training and jobs for high risk gang-prone and gang member youth.

The provision of additional social opportunities, i.e., the development of a variety of targeted educational, training, and employment programs, is the second most important component over the long term for the reduction and prevention of the youth gang problem, particularly in chronic contexts. The schools need to provide remedial and

enriched educational programs for gang-prone and hardcore gang youths.

Education, training, and jobs are especially critical for older gang youth still in gangs who are not in school but who are at "positive risk" at a certain point in their social maturation for leaving the gangs, or for decreased participation in criminal gang activity. A key objective of these programs should be developing socially-competent youth, whether in or out of school. (See School and Employment manuals.)

3. Social Intervention

Social intervention is based on an "outreach" and linkage approach of gang youth to the conventional society.

Youth serving agencies and grassroots community groups must "reach out" and act as a link between gang youth and the conventional world. Staff or adult volunteers of these organizations must develop meaningful relationships with these youth. Community-based youth agencies should facilitate access to pertinent opportunity systems and exercise social controls which contribute to socialization of gang youth. Special efforts are also required to coordinate services for these youth. (See Community-based Youth Agency manual.)

4. Suppression

The strategy of suppression is defined in broad social control terms and requires more than the involvement of criminal justice agencies.

Social control procedures, particularly those of criminal justice, but also of community-based agencies, are essential for community protection and the prevention and reduction of the problem. Youth gang suppression involves not only law enforcement but a variety of other agencies and community groups in the targeting, monitoring, supervision, and if necessary, restraint of gang offenders. It also requires the anticipation, prevention, and limitation of the effects of gang crime in particular situations to protect both youth participants and the community.

Criminal justice strategies must also include community mobilization, social intervention and opportunities provision.

However, arrest, prosecution, imprisonment, and close supervision of gang youth are insufficient unless joined with other community-oriented strategies to achieve long-term impact on the problem. This means that community-based agencies and local groups must accept and collaborate with criminal justice agencies in patrol, surveillance, and certain information sharing under conditions which protect both

youth and the community. Police, prosecution and other criminal justice agencies must develop a variety of social intervention, opportunities, prevention and community involvement programs to supplement their primary goal of suppressing gang crime. (See especially Police, Prosecution and Probation manuals.)

Furthermore, policymakers, administrators and practitioners in the criminal justice system have a special responsibility to withstand pressures from the public and other units of the justice system to carry out an exclusive strategy of suppression to deal with the youth gang problem.

5. Organizational Change and Development

Organizational development and change focuses on better use of internal agency resources to deal with the youth gang problem.

Finally, the above strategies need to be appropriately organized based on the nature and scope of the problem in the community and the mission of the particular organization. Organizational development and change require better use and reallocation of available resources within agencies and neighborhoods. Common definitions, improved communication, resident involvement and coordination within as well as across agencies and communities are also required.

Both community mobilization and organizational development strategies whether in emerging or chronic gang problem contexts, should be closely interrelated to create efficient and cohesive system arrangements for dealing with the gang problem.

Targeting

Targeting of certain communities, gangs, and gang members is necessary to make the best use of limited resources for dealing with the problem.

To conserve resources and most effectively deal with the youth gang problem, it is important to target certain communities, organizational contexts, gangs and gang members or gang-prone youth. Special emphasis on community mobilization is required in both emerging and chronic gang communities. Opportunity provision must also be emphasized for chronic problem communities and contexts.

Neighborhoods and organizations, particularly schools, experiencing serious gang problems, should be priority targets for suppression and intervention efforts.

High gang crime neighborhoods, certain types of gangs and gang members should receive priority attention.

Certain youth gangs or gang-like groups clearly committed to violent and serious criminal activity should receive priority attention. This is to avoid unnecessary labelling and widening the net of gang delinquency and crime through inappropriate criminal justice and community-based agency attention. It is also to concentrate resources on the heart of the presenting problem.

Key targets of community agency and grassroots attention should be leadership and core gang as well as high risk gang-prone youths.

Finally, individual youth should be targeted in the following order of priority purposes:

✓ *first, leadership and core gang youths--to disrupt gang networks, protect the community, and facilitate the reintegration of these youths through community-based or institutional programming into legitimate pursuits;*

✓ *second, high risk gang-prone youth who are often younger or aspiring gang members who give clear indication of beginning participation in criminal gang activities -- to prevent further criminal gang involvement through early intervention, preferably community-based services, and*

✓ *third, regular and peripheral gang members--to generally address their needs for control and intervention services.*

Finally, a caution! The policies procedures and steps recommended in the manuals should be viewed as promising but as yet not systematically researched through field testing.

Summary

Summary

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Justice Department, entered into a cooperative agreement with the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, to conduct the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program. The scope and seriousness of the problem was analyzed from both an

organizational and community perspective. Models or prototypes were developed. Technical Assistance manuals were created which focussed on the implementation of policies and procedures in emerging and chronic gang problem communities and contexts.

The manuals address the gang problem in terms of critical characteristics of the youth gang, its members and the way the problem is defined. Focus is on controlling, reducing, as well as preventing gang-motivated violent and serious criminal youth gang activity. The mission of suppression and intervention is specified as requiring five key strategies: community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, suppression and organizational change and development. Key targets of a program should be gang leaders and core members as well as high risk gang-prone youth.

Specific guidelines are provided in this manual for identifying policies and procedures to reduce and control the youth gang problem.

I.S.

CHAPTER 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE GANG PROBLEM FROM A COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

*Describe your own agency's
experience with gangs*

- ▶ Getting started - look at your own agency first
- ▶ Expanding the scope of the assessment
- ▶ Back to the drawing board

Getting started - look at your own agency first

The key to designing a successful intervention strategy lies in the completeness and accuracy of the problem the strategy purports to address. Simply put, the better one understands the issue one wants to address, the more able he or she will be to develop an effective approach to resolving that problem.

Getting started, though easy enough to say, may be hard to do. The easiest and most logical starting point for the community-based youth agency is with itself.

- ▶ What does the agency know about gangs already?
- ▶ What experience does it have working with gang members?
- ▶ What has been learned from that experience?
- ▶ Has that knowledge been factored into the agency's planning and program development process?
- ▶ How does the agency's board of directors feel about serving gang youth?

Answers to these questions must be sought - even if it requires extra effort - for a program which is meaningful to youth from the community to be designed and implemented.

Seek board and director support

Collect information from your own agency first. Doing so, however, assumes the support and cooperation of the agency's board and director. If they are not aware of and in support of -- or at least not open to looking at -- the agency becoming more involved in working with gang youth, this is something which will need to be addressed before the problem assessment stage is initiated.

Obtaining a board's and a director's support might be accomplished through a series of discussions to confirm the

existence of a gang problem in the community and explain why it's important to work more with gang youth -- for instance, because doing so is consistent with the agency's mission, or the agency's already serving some gang members, or the community's gang problem will only grow worse if action is not taken. In the very least the person who raises the issue should have a basis for doing so; often at this point that rationale will be more supported by anecdotes or observations of one's own clients than by hard data.

Collect data to find out who comes to your agency

Once the board's and director's support have been obtained, the data already available in the agency which describe gang vs non-gang youth and the services they receive should be collected. In most agencies this information will be available in client files. The following information should be collected for gang and non-gang youth:

- Age
- Sex
- Race/ethnicity
- Contact with criminal justice system (arrested vs adjudicated vs on probation vs on parole)
- Gang affiliation
- School performance and behavior
- Agency services the youth receives or received in the past
- Family structures
 - parents in the home
 - siblings in the home
 - other family members in the home

What services appeal to gang youth?

If staff resources are limited this can be a good assignment for a trusted volunteer or intern. Once collected, the data need to be analyzed to decide what it may be saying about the youth the agency is presently serving, or the services they are being provided. Questions to consider are:

- ▶ Do gang youths differ from non-gang youths in the program or who should be in the program for any of the variables? If so, how?
- ▶ Do gang youths seem to be drawn to a particular service or do some services seem more relevant to them than other services?

Characteristics of the youth served

- ▶ Does the agency keep any data which would indicate what effect the services it provides may be having on youth served? That is, has the behavior of youth changed? If so, is there a difference between gang youths and non-gang youths?
- ▶ Is there a group of youth who are gang members but do not come to the agency for services?

As the agency's relationship with, or lack of service to, gang youth begins to emerge, it might be helpful to meet with program and administrative staff and discuss the data that's been gathered. Together they can provide important information:

Existing services and their effects

- ▶ How long has the agency been working with gang youths (assuming they are being served at the present time)?
- ▶ What type of gang youths do they work with?
- ▶ Do staff feel prepared to work with gang youths?
- ▶ Do some staff feel more comfortable than others about working with gang youths?
- ▶ Have staff observed changes in gangs or in the community? If so, what?
- ▶ Do staff believe their work with non-gang youths makes some difference in the lives of those youths? If so, what? Can they assess the results of their work? If so, how?

This too might seem like a lot of work. In reality this is information which could probably be obtained during a several hour long staff group meeting. And the return to the program and the youth it serves will be substantial.

If the agency works with or has access to gang youths, input should also be sought from the youth themselves:

- ▶ Why did they join the gang?
- ▶ What do they get out of being in the gang?
- ▶ How do they spend their free time?
- ▶ What would divert them from the gang?
- ▶ What is their opinion of the agency's services?
- ▶ What other services or assistance would they like to see provided?
- ▶ Do they have jobs?

*Reach out to gang youth already
in the program for data*

- ▶ How are they doing in school?
- ▶ Who are their role models?

This information too can be collected through informal discussions. Remember you are not conducting a research study but trying to get a feel for these young people's needs and what is prompting their involvement in a gang.

Parents too are an important source of information. They can speak of their beliefs about gangs, their son's or daughter's behavior, and their own concerns. They can also contribute to the "big picture" by giving some history of their coming to the community, their own experiences growing up, and their ability to provide for and supervise their children.

Some parents may be reluctant to talk with staff; with them it may be necessary to consider why they would be resistant and devise a strategy -- such as visiting them in their home -- to invite their point of view. Once again, this is not a research study. The information collected from even a small number of parents may be very valuable so don't be discouraged from approaching parents because the task seems to be a big one.

*Reaching out to other
organizations*

Members of the agency's board might also have useful information or offer a different perspective on the problem or the agency's possible approach to it. A round table discussion with the board might be useful in eliciting those views and also broadening the board's knowledge of gangs.

By this time the agency's director and staff should have developed some understanding of the agency's role in working with gang youth. At this point it is appropriate to approach others in the community who work with or relate to gang youth and learn more about their response to gangs in general and youth gang members in particular. Among these individuals should be neighborhood residents.

Don't forget to thank people for their assistance and to give them feedback at an appropriate point in time.

Expanding the scope of the assessment

Interviews with key players

If a community has a youth gang problem, that problem will have surfaced in many ways. In the very least it will have come to the attention of the local police and, probably, to local school administrators and teachers, local businesses and mental health board persons. Government leaders, particularly in emerging gang contexts, may or may not yet acknowledge the existence of the problem or even be aware that one exists. Similarly, unless youth who are arrested are being identified as gang members and their gang-related crimes described as such in arrest reports, prosecutors, judges and probation personnel might not understand the magnitude of the gang problem in their communities.

Personal contacts are important

Information is best collected from these representatives through in-person or telephone interviews. Though time-consuming and sometimes difficult to schedule, personal contacts generally result in more information being shared because the participants have a chance to discuss some issues rather than simply answering a question. They also are a starting point for establishing what will hopefully be on-going contact. This is not to say, however, that useful data and information cannot be collected by using a written survey. It just indicates a preference for personal contact over a less personal approach.

Many gang youths are young adults

It should also be noted, as indicated above, that not all gang members are "juveniles." There are greater numbers of gang members in their late teens and early 20's than in an earlier period. To develop a comprehensive gang intervention strategy therefore it will be necessary to gather information from organizations that serve or handle juveniles, adults or both. This effort should include not only information relevant to the nature and scope of the problem but to the resources available to active gang members or gang prone youths. The primary focus of the youth agency should be gang members who are under 21 years of age and, when possible, between 21 and 24 years since these young adults are also at significant risk of committing or becoming victims of gang violent crime. This means that most youth agencies seeking to serve gang youth should focus on youth older than those presently in their programs.

*Contacts with other agency and
community organization
personnel*

Who is to be contacted and how they are to be interviewed should be considered before subjects are contacted. Generally the agency director should send a letter to other agencies and community organizations announcing the interviews and requesting assistance and copies of any written reports on gangs the organization has completed. The executive or program director of a community-based youth agency might be the primary contact with chief executives of organizations which are sensitive to protocol.

Interviews should be conducted with the person in the organization who knows the most about gangs. If that person is not the chief executive of his or her organization, the individual who is in charge should be contacted first. In some instances this will be little more than a courtesy contact. In others the chief executive may have an interesting and valuable perspective on the youth gang problem because he or she has a different level of responsibility than a line staff worker or a supervisor.

Know what you want to ask about

Whoever is contacted, it is important that the interviewer be clear about what he or she is hoping to learn. Most people are willing to provide information if they understand what is wanted and why. Emerging problem communities usually haven't yet articulated and described their youth gang problem; in these areas the interviews may indirectly assist other organizations to develop an understanding of gangs and the youth gang problem to use in formulating a collective strategy to reduce gang violence and recruiting.

*Dealing with reluctant
interviewees*

A few people, such as storekeepers or neighborhood residents, may be reluctant to participate in an interview or survey. They may have had a bad experience with gang members in the past and not want to risk a recurrence. They may feel their position will somehow be compromised or that information they share will be misused or not held in confidence. If possible, it may help to determine why the individual is resistant; his or her concerns can then be addressed directly and, if appropriate, assurances given.

Information to be collected...

The following information and data should be collected from all key organizations and community groups with information about gangs in the agency's jurisdiction. In a perfect world each of these organizations would have an

automated information system and have extensive data at their fingertips which could be sorted to answer a variety of questions. The agency should not be discouraged if only limited statistical information is available. Anecdotal information can also be very helpful in describing a problem and crafting a response.

As you go through the process of collecting and analyzing don't lose sight of why you are doing so -- to better define the problem so an appropriate and effective response can be crafted and implemented.

Police

...from police

The following questions should be raised with key police officers:

- ▶ How does the department define a gang?
- ▶ How many gangs and gang members are there in the community the agency serves?
- ▶ How does the department define a gang incident?
- ▶ How does the department define a gang member? Does it distinguish between different types of gang members?
- ▶ Can the department profile gang members by age, sex, race, type of criminal activity?
- ▶ When were gangs first observed in the community? What crime problems are associated with gangs?
- ▶ What changes have there been in the number of youth gangs or criminal activity associated with youth gangs in recent years?
- ▶ Has the department prepared any written reports on gangs?
- ▶ Where are gang youth referred for services? for education? for jobs or employment assistance?
- ▶ What do police see as the role of the community-based youth agency in responding to youth gangs?

Prosecutor

...prosecutors

The following should be asked of personnel in the prosecutor's office:

- ▶ Does the prosecutor have any data on the number of gang members prosecuted?

- ▶ On cases involving gang incidents? The results of prosecutions?
- ▶ Do youth gang members or cases receive any special treatment? If so, what?
- ▶ What does the prosecutor see as the role of the community-based youth agency in responding to youth gangs?

Judge

...from judges

The following questions should be addressed to selected judges in juvenile and adult court:

- ▶ What experience does the judge have handling the cases of gang youth?
- ▶ Does the judge have a particular philosophy or approach to gang youth?
- ▶ Is the judge involved in local community youth activities?
- ▶ What does the judge believe is the role of the community-based youth agency in responding to youth gangs?

Probation

...from probation

The chief adult and juvenile probation officer or assistant, should be asked:

- ▶ How does the probation office handle the cases of gang youth?
- ▶ Are these youth offered any special services?
- ▶ How many gang youth from the community are on probation?
- ▶ What per cent of gang members successfully complete their probation?
- ▶ How does this compare with non-gang probationers?
- ▶ Where are gang youth referred for social services, education and employment assistance?
- ▶ What should be the role of the community-based youth agency in addressing youth gangs?
- ▶ Could probation work more effectively with the community-based youth agency? If so, how?

...from schools

Schools

The school official should be asked whether:

- ▶ They have noticed any evidence of youth gang activity (i.e., graffiti, students wearing colors or representing, fights between opposing groups, recruiting, students drawing gang signs on their books, gang related drug use or dealing, etc.)
- ▶ Teachers or other staff members have reported problems with youth gang members or gang-related incidents?
- ▶ The school has a policy regarding gangs? If so, what is it? How successful has it been at stemming gang-related problems?
- ▶ How should the community-based youth agency work with the schools to address the youth gang problem?

Other agencies and businesses

...from other agencies and businesses

The following questions should be raised:

- ▶ Do they have contact with youth gangs or youth gang members? If so, what do they do?
- ▶ What success have they had stemming gang violence or drawing youth away from gangs?
- ▶ How can businesses work more closely with the community-based youth agency?

...from grassroots groups

Grassroots organizations (i.e., citizens groups, churches, local store keepers, former gang members, gang members)

They should be asked:

- ▶ For a description of the organization's purpose, activities and membership composition.
- ▶ Whether they concerned about gangs? Why or why not?
- ▶ What their perception of gangs is (i.e., size, activity, membership, positive, negative views?
- ▶ Whether they are interested in working with a community-based youth agency?

What other resources or services are needed?

All agencies and organizations should not only be asked where, if at all, they refer gang youth for services but also if

those services seem to have been helpful. They should also be asked what other resources and services are needed for these young people.

Back to the drawing board

Collect demographic data

By this time a considerable amount of information will have been collected. Some questions will have been answered and many others raised. Before trying to analyze what that information may be suggesting, some basic demographic data needs to be collected from the US Census Bureau, local library, city planning department, e.g. population, income, education, and perhaps, housing data. Census data can also be used to calculate rates and to compare the characteristics of the community with those of other communities which may or may not be having problems with gangs. Local universities, criminal justice planning agencies, and public housing authorities may also have important information to contribute to a complete description of the youth gang problem.

The challenge now is to sort through what's been learned and determine if the community has a chronic or an emerging youth gang problem. Try to understand the motivations for gang violence and determine as best as possible the motivation for gang violence:

- ▶ Is it racially motivated hate?
- ▶ Is it economics?
- ▶ Is it self-defense, retaliation, or protection of turf?
- ▶ Is it related to newcomer groups or a particular racial group?

As possible motivation for the gang problem are considered, thought should also be given to determining how long the problem has been in existence. Is it a recent phenomenon or one of long standing which has recently become acute? Also, are the programs offered by the community agency relevant to the problem which exists now?

Emerging cities are experiencing considerable change

As previously noted, youth gang problems, sometimes of a serious nature, including gang violence and drug trafficking may have recently emerged in changing or increasingly economically depressed low income communities. A few

older gang-wise youth may have moved into such communities from chronic problem communities to trigger the gang problems. In general such areas may have comparatively better access to educational, employment, and recreational resources than chronic gang problem communities or cities. The community may be fairly well organized and better prepared to pull together to deal with the youth gang problem.

Chronic cities have longstanding gang problems

The chronic gang city or community has been identified as an inner city, highly impoverished and/or disorganized community or suburban area. The relative numbers and severity of gang problem youth and families are much greater in comparison to emerging problem communities. Gang crime and drug trafficking are well established and have been endemic, with acute phases, for decades. Many in the community are discouraged, hopeless and resigned to the fate of victimization, violence, drug trafficking, illness, poor housing, and unemployment. Membership in gangs may be generational, although many siblings and other families in these areas have children who lead conventional lives and become productive and successful citizens.

It is also important to note that communities themselves change as the problems which confront them change. Therefore no intervention can be fixed or ascribed to a particular or single strategy. Those responding to a community's gang problem must be prepared to be flexible and adjust their approach as circumstances vary.

Assess agency resources

The final step in the assessment process is to inventory and assess the resources the community-based agency has to have in order to deal with gang youths.

- ▶ What services are presently in place?
- ▶ Can these be extended to gang youths?
- ▶ What services are available from other agencies?
- ▶ Can collaborative agency services or approaches be developed?
- ▶ Is the agency prepared to reach out to newcomer populations: Are their barriers to doing so?
- ▶ Is it possible to develop new services targeted to gang youths?

- ▶ Is the community-based youth agency the best provider of those services?
- ▶ Are there gang turf problems which might impede youth accessing gang services?
- ▶ What additional funding is needed and for what purpose?

ASSESSING THE TARGET POPULATION'S NEED FOR SERVICES

Defining and limiting those gang youth requiring special services

Having looked at and described the gang problem from the community's and the youth agency's perspective, it is appropriate to turn now to the service needs of those youths who are targeted for assistance. It is assumed that a community-based youth agency will already be providing a number of services to youths and members of their families who live in the agency's geographic service area, e.g. runaways or teenage parents or other neighborhood youth.

Though all youth need access to opportunities and services, gang youths are particularly in need of outreach education and employment if they are to leave the gang. Linking gang youths with these opportunities, and then providing on-going support so they stay in a school program or on a job, is very costly and time-consuming. Therefore, it is necessary to define and limit those youths who will require special intervention as part of an anti-gang initiative, i.e. gang-prone, gang member or adjudicated gang youths.

Even as the target populations is narrowed to youths at the core of the gang and those showing some commitment to the gang, it is important to remember that youth who are not in the gang -- but subject to recruitment -- merit attention as well. While these youths are not the specific focus of this manual they should not be overlooked -- nor their service needs minimized -- because some may find themselves involved in gangs at some future time.

It should also be noted that youth may identify themselves as gang members -- or deny gang involvement -- to access services or opportunities they see as desirable. Therefore too much emphasis should not be placed on providing certain services "for gang youth only."

Gang and gang-prone youth should be targeted

A gang-prone youth for our purposes is a 12 to 16 year old who meets four or more of the following: associates regularly with gang youth; has family members in the gang; wears gang colors, uses symbols, or flashes signs; performs poorly in school or is out of school and unemployed; has one or more arrests; and uses drugs. A gang member or committed gang youth is a 12 to 24 year old who has been arrested for a gang crime, is on probation, has been in detention or corrections, or is on or has been on parole for a gang offense.

These definitions are subject to modification in a particular community to accommodate the unique circumstances of that community and allow for maximum flexibility in developing an intervention strategy. As definitions are varied the community should distinguish between those youth who are more committed to the gang -- and generally older -- from those who are less involved with the gang and most readily diverted to alternate life styles. The former generally warrant more concentrated service while the latter may not. Even so we caution against labelling youth to determine service eligibility, because such youth's behavior can -- and does -- change.

The mix of gang youth served depends on community need and agency resources

The actual mix of committed gang members vs gang-prone youth served will vary according to whether the community has an emerging or chronic problem and the community-based youth agency's and the neighborhood's resources. It will also vary depending on the problems the agency is intending to address -- at community and the individual youth levels -- as well as the agency's stated mission. Generally, in cities or communities with emerging gang problems, more gang prone youths will be served. In cities or communities with chronic gang problems, more arrested and adjudicated youths will be served. In either context it is anticipated that the highest risk youths will be served within the limits of agency resources to provide effective social development experiences.

Mainstreaming

It is also important to remember that youth at different ages and levels of maturity have different needs so interventions should be individualized as much as possible. Furthermore, based on agency resources, the severity of the gang problem and the need to protect non-gang youths in the program,

gang youth should be mainstreamed, to the extent possible, in the fullest range of program activities available.

Summary

The foundation of an effective gang intervention strategy is a thorough assessment of the gang problem. This includes an analysis of objective and subjective information which is collected from the agency, those who work directly with youth or have responsibility for enforcing laws or providing services to youth and their families. It also includes a review of the services available to youth and their families, a determination of the nature and type of problem confronting the community, and an analysis of the difference between services to gang and non-gang youth.

CHAPTER 3: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLANNING

- ▶ Goals for the community served
- ▶ Objectives for the community-based youth agency

Once the problem has been described as completely as possible, target population identified and that group's needs determined, goals and objectives should be set.

Goals for the community served

Goals are long range benefits

Goals are long-range benefits an agency hopes to achieve in relation to community needs and concerns. Typical goals of a youth gang program are to reduce the incidence or prevalence of youth gang crime and to increase the capacity of gang member or gang-prone, especially high risk youths, to obtain and hold jobs or succeed in school, at the same time protecting and benefitting the community.

Objectives for the community-based youth agency

Objectives are desired outcomes of the activities the agency expects to undertake. As such they shouldn't be confused with the activities themselves. Objectives speak to "ends" while activities are concerned with "means." Therefore objectives are the criteria used to determine if a program has been effective. Objectives can also be thought of as statements about what the agency intends to specifically accomplish or the changes it expects to bring about. As such they are one of the bases on which a program is evaluated.

Objectives state the changes you want to bring about

Objectives should be more specific than goals and reasonable. They should also reflect an understanding of the problem to be addressed and the population to be served. For instance:

- ▶ How much can gang youths improve their school performance?
- ▶ Is it reasonable to expect youths who have been very active in a gang to stop having any contact with other gang members overnight?

Feasibility of objectives

It is unreasonable to assume youths with a history of criminal activity particularly gang-related violence will change their behavior immediately. Agencies should be encouraged:

- ▶ If gang youths show improved behavior or reduced criminal activity,
- ▶ Fewer confrontations with other youths,
- ▶ More adherence to program rules, interest in non-gang activities,
- ▶ Improved school attendance and performance, etc.

Some of these objectives could be measured by the number of times youths who participate in the program are arrested for gang related or violent offenses or adjudicated delinquent while in the program or for a certain period of time following their successful termination. Exact numbers will depend on the baseline data.

INTERVENING WITH GANG YOUTH

- ▶ Multi-faceted problem-based approach
- ▶ Strategies in chronic vs emerging gang problem cities
- ▶ Working with gang youths
- ▶ Program Components: Issues of Implementation

The next step is to describe a plan of action which, when implemented, will lead to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives set for the institution.

Multi-faceted problem-based approach

Complex social functions of youth agencies

Youth agencies perform a variety of functions and fulfill a number of social needs for the young people, and families they serve:

- ▶ They provide a safe place for youngsters to go and feel accepted for who they are;
- ▶ They make available adults who will listen, guide, teach and correct while showing they care;
- ▶ They offer youths an opportunity to learn and test and figure out more about themselves, how they relate to others and how they can contribute to their communities

They provide various means whereby youths develop self esteem, realize their talents, learn self-discipline, grow up to be decent human beings, and contribute in various positive ways to their community's development.

Gang youths have many needs including supervision

Gang youths need supervision to hold them accountable for their behavior and opportunities to obtain the education, skills, conventional attitudes and behaviors and realities to survive and support themselves in society. They also need to be recognized when they perform positive acts as individuals not as members of a gang. Obviously, the community-based youth agency cannot, on its own, provide 24-hour social control or supervision for a severely delinquent gang member; nor should it.

Supervision or holding gang youths accountable for their behavior is the responsibility of all those institutions and adults, including family, who work with and relate to them. Hopefully, as the gang youth learns to assume more responsibility for himself and to adhere to rules, the burden to oversee gang youths will decrease.

Strategies include social intervention, opportunities provision, supervision, and community mobilization

The youth agency is not the only organization responsible for creating opportunities for gang youths, providing them with access to those opportunities and the means to take advantage of them. The youth agency is a partner of the school, employer, criminal justice system, grassroots organizations, the youth's family, other agencies and community residents. All must work together to challenge gang youths when they engage in unacceptable behavior or fail to meet expectations. They must also acknowledge the good things the individual gang youth does.

The community-based youth agency has the primary role in organizing and providing social intervention services. Socialization of youth and services to their families is the stated mission of most such agencies. Further, if the agency has strong ties to the community -- residents, local businesses, neighborhood organizations, the area police precinct, perhaps the city council representative -- the agency may also take a lead role in mobilizing or significantly contributing to the mobilization of the community to recognize, describe and respond to the youth gang problem.

Strategies in chronic vs emerging gang problem cities

Gang youth in both chronic and emerging cities need social intervention, opportunities provision and supervision. Both types of communities need to be mobilized to take action. The strategies emphasized in each however will differ.

Emphasize community mobilization and opportunities provision in chronic cities

In cities with chronic gang problems the community-based youth agency will probably focus much of its effort on mobilizing the community to bring its problems -- which reach beyond gangs to include a number of social issues -- to the attention of local officials and on working with those officials to remedy those problems, and or advocating with established institutions of behalf of gang-involved youths. Since a large number of youths in cities with chronic gang problems will already be gang members, the primary focus of any services or intervention will be youth who have joined the gang and, within that group, special attention should be paid to the hard core or more serious offenders who can still be initiated in the community.

Emphasize social intervention and community mobilization in emerging cities

In cities with emerging gang problems, where there is probably a base of services and the community's deterioration is not significant, high-risk gang youth will receive considerable attention through provision of a variety of intervention services to prevent their entry into or further commitment to the gang and to strengthen the existing service and support networks. A small number of arrested and adjudicated gang youths will be addressed, as should gang-prone youths, through opportunities provision. Community mobilization, though less central than in chronic cities, will still be important in emerging cities to avoid the community's further deterioration.

Gang youth pose a threat

Working with gang youths

Gang youths differ from other delinquents, runaways, or other problem youth with whom community-based youth agencies might have experience in a number of ways. Perhaps most important is the threat gang youth pose to other youths and neighborhood residents who are intimidated, fearful of being victimized, or who inadvertently are harmed as rival gang clash with one another.

While those who work with gang youths must be aware of their potential for violence and take appropriate precautions to maintain the safety of all concerned, they must also establish positive relationships and treat them with respect. Many have joined the gang for status they could not otherwise achieve; therefore they must also understand they can earn respect and social status through constructive activities as individuals rather than as a part of a gang.

Gang youths need clearly defined limits which are consistently applied. Some are experienced con artists, able to charm or talk their way out of being held accountable for their acts. Others feel they can "beat" the system because it is not coordinated or because they can intimidate many people.

Gang youth need limits and hope for the future

At the same time, gang youth like most people, need to feel they have a stake in the future, that the years ahead hold promise of happiness and prosperity, that they will be able to obtain and keep a job which will enable them to support themselves and their families and to be respected citizens who make a contribution to the community.

Program Components: Issues of Implementation

Community-based youth agencies provide a range of services to youths. Most, if not all, of these should be available to gang youths and their families if they live in the agency's service area. Special attention however needs to be paid to the needs of newcomer groups and those who are socially isolated. These services intervene in the youth's life and provide him with the means and opportunities to leave or avoid the gang.

Concerns in serving gang youth

The actual mix of services offered will depend on 1) the nature of the gang problem the agency wishes to address, 2) the social and cultural needs of the target population, 3) what the agency hopes to accomplish, and 4) the resources the agency has to achieve what it intends to do. Special consideration should also be given to make sure the program it is taking on is consistent with its stated purpose.

It is important that the agency take care not to underestimate the cost of serving gang youths and their families. Such

youngsters are often very difficult to deal with, requiring considerable staff time and attention. Similarly their family members often need a range of collaborative services. Therefore a single staff member or team will only be able to provide intensive intervention with a limited number of youths and their families.

The agency should not expect to produce immediate dramatic results from a special program to address the youth gang problem. It may take six months to a year to establish and "debug" a program, then another year or two before measurable results can be shown program-wide. Therefore a program of at least three years in length should be planned at the outset. In chronic problem cities a five-year program would be appropriate.

The following program components should be in place in emerging and chronic gang problem communities, either under the auspices of the community-based youth agency or some other organization.

There are eight key components

Eight key components have been identified: 1) outreach or street work; 2) intake; 3) case management; 4) group activities; 5) education; 6) employment; 7) family cooperation and support; and 8) victim assistance. Two of these components -- education and employment -- are deemed so important that separate manuals have been developed for those who specialize in these fields. Though some of the eight components will receive greater emphasis in emerging gang cities and others in chronic gang cities, all should be present to some extent in both contexts.

The meaning of "outreach"

Outreach or street work: This means reaching out to communicate with and/or provide services outside the usual range of contacts and venues the clients. Outreach has two purposes. It is a means of getting out word of an agency's programs to the agency's target population. If they understand what the agency is offering, gang-prone youths may contact or accept referrals to community-based youth agencies. Many gang youths are not likely to come to these agencies for assistance.

Outreach workers also need to seek out youth and engage them on their own "turf" -- street corners, parks,

playgrounds, schools, bowling alleys, fast food restaurants. The sites may already be known to the agency. If these places are not known to the agency already, the police can identify or suggest locations.

Regular contacts with police are important and should be helpful

It is a good idea to inform the police what agency staff will be doing and why. A meeting with key police personnel -- such as the heads of patrol and the youth gang or youth division units -- can provide workers with valuable information which they can use in approaching gang members. Such a meeting is strongly recommended.

Follow-up meetings will be useful; these can be periodic or scheduled on a regular basis depending on the organization. Formal structured meetings are advisable in cities with large police departments where workers are less likely to have contact with police in other forums. Should appropriate contacts and working arrangements with the police not be developed, conflict may be anticipated.

Building trust

Since gang youths are often reported to be suspicious of authority it may take outreach or street workers a surprisingly short period of time to establish sufficient trust, and the youth to accept, service referrals. Trust will be built by the worker listening to youths, getting to know them as individuals, and allowing youths to develop an understanding of the worker and his purpose. This does not mean that the worker should reinforce or accept the values put forth by the gang. To the contrary, the worker should be clear that he or she does not approve of gang violence and will work with police, if necessary, to curtail such acts.

In emerging gang cities or areas outreach workers may primarily emphasize engaging youth to facilitate referrals to services or to draw the youth into the community-based youth agency.

Brief counseling assistance and contacts with families will also be required in chronic cities where considerable attention should be paid to diffusing tension and possible retaliation between rival gangs. This is best done by stable outreach teams working in an assigned area. This gives the team the opportunity to build a rapport with the neighborhood and the different gangs which are active in a

particular community and to learn of and respond to potentially violent situations before they occur. A specific worker may also have to be assigned to or matched with a particular youth gang.

Intake: It is important to assess the needs of each gang youth individually. The scope and depth of that assessment will vary based on why the community-based youth agency come into contact with the youth, the referral source, what the youth expresses, the nature of his relationship with the worker, the services the agency offers, and the resources available in the community. Since resources are limited it is important not to automatically recommend all gang prone or gang member youths participate in all aspects of an agency's program.

Assessing youth needs and the agency's ability to serve him

It may take some time by an outreach worker to obtain information needed to assist the gang youth. At a minimum the information covered during intake, whether at the agency or on the street, should include basic descriptive information about the youth (i.e., name, age, race, ethnicity, sex, school status, some information about the youth's family) and his or her criminal and school histories. The agency should assess the youth's need for educational support or employment assistance as well.

In cities with chronic gang problems, it will be important to determine whether or not a youth is on probation or parole to ensure regular contact with his or her probation or parole officer will be arranged.

Collaboration with other organizations to deal with gang youth is necessary

Community-based youth agencies in both chronic and emerging gang cities should generally obtain releases from the parents of juveniles to allow the agency to discuss substantive information about the youth with school personnel, other providers and probation or parole staff. The purpose of these releases, which should be time-limited, should be clearly explained to the youth and his or her family.

The case manager should advocate for youth

Case management: Following the intake and assessment of the youth's needs a case plan should be developed. The level of detail included in the plan will vary from agency to agency. At a minimum that plan should include a

description of the proposed intervention over a particular time period. The outreach worker, his or her supervisors and a case manager may be involved in the development of the plan. To ensure the plan is implemented and needed services and access to opportunities from both the community-based youth agency and other organizations in the area are provided, a case manager may need to be assigned to work with the youth and his or her family.

Depending on the agency's structure the case manager may or may not be involved with the delivery of direct youth outreach services. At a minimum, the case manager should be expected to advocate on behalf of the youth and his or her family with the school and various government agencies to obtain needed services and access to opportunities. This is an important task because many people are not aware of the services they can receive or how to go about obtaining those services. Further, even if someone knows about and wants a particular service, they may be discouraged by "red tape." As they are assisted through these processes youth and their families should learn to access such services and to advocate for themselves as well.

Employment opportunities are important

In chronic problem cities, where employment of gang youths should ordinarily receive greater emphasis than in emerging cities, case managers may also be involved in developing jobs and working with businesses. The case manager should be expected to contact other agencies with or on behalf of the youth to make and, later on, follow up on referrals.

Prior to making any referrals it is recommended the case manager visit those agencies to which he or she will be making referrals. These visits give the manager a chance to "check out" the provider and also prepare the manager to more fully explain the service to the youth and respond to his or her questions. Visits are a good way to inform others of the agency's programs. Visits are also a good way to identify services which may be relevant to gang youth but not offered to them.

Both the referral agency and the youth should be held accountable

If the youth is on parole or probation it is the youth worker or case manager who should maintain regular contact with the parole or probation officer. He or she should contact the officer and arrange to meet or talk on the phone regularly.

That initial contact is also a time to relate what the officer can and cannot expect from the agency. Some agencies will not release any information about clients; others involve outside organizations in regularly scheduled client staffings. At least some contact between the agency and the parole or probation officer is essential if efforts with and on behalf of the youth are to be coordinated and effective -- both in holding the youth accountable for his or her actions through supervision and in ensuring the provision of quality services and the provision of needed social opportunities.

Group activities: One problem common to many gang youths is an inability to resolve conflicts with others without resorting to intimidation or violence. Many gang and gang-prone youth have not learned to communicate their needs or to achieve them without conflict and intimidation. Too often gang youths believe they can bully or intimidate others into deferring to them.

Activities should teach the youth to resolve conflicts without violence

Agency sponsored or supervised group activities for different age groups should be conducted to:

- 1) draw youth into the program,
- 2) solidify agency or worker positive relationships with others,
- 3) give youth a chance to learn how to work in concert with others, who may be different from them, and
- 4) allow gang youth to develop some feeling of competence by experiencing success through personal effort and ability.

The choice of activities include team sports, outward bound type experiences, art, music, or community service. Most important is appropriate group composition and group work skills.

Developing social skills a key objective

Whatever the activity, it is important the youths who participate learn to interact positively with others in the group. Problems or conflicts may arise and need to be resolved. As this happens it may be important to stop the activity and work with the group to find a solution. Staff therefore should have good group problem-solving skills. Staff also need to remember that the activity is not an end but a vehicle for teaching social skills.

Grouping, timing and use of sufficient supervisory adults are important

Often these socialization skills can be learned by gang youths from other non-gang peers. Group activities, unlike some of the proposed program components, ideally should be open to gang, gang-prone and non-gang youths as well. This will not only help in the building of new skills but also positive relationships with non-gang youths and affords an opportunity for non-gang norms outweighing gang norms and thereby promotes change in the behavior and attitude of gang youths. It also avoids segregating gang youths even within the programs and the development of potentially harmful labels. But these activities need to be carefully prepared and managed.

Separation of youths affiliated with different gangs, separation or control of highly volatile youths, an understanding of current gang situation, and the involvement of additional supervisory adult or agencies are appropriate.

Cultural pride should be emphasized

Since gang members are often from minority populations, activities which allow youths to learn about their culture -- through art, music, dance, drama, guest speakers, trips to museums or cultural centers, and celebrations of ethnic heritage -- should be made available. Such activities need not be on a large scale, and may initially be more acceptable to younger youths. Parents, community residents and volunteers can be asked to teach customs to the youths or to assist in planning, supervising and directing youths in staging age-appropriate events. These activities can give young people a feeling of accomplishment as well as an opportunity to learn new skills and information and take pride in their heritage.

The youth agency should offer to assist the schools in various ways

Education: Education is one of the cornerstones of a successful gang intervention effort because gang youths -- like all youths -- must master basic skills if they are to achieve status and be able to support themselves when they are adults. In emerging cities community-based youth agencies should work closely with school administrators and teachers to communicate the value of an education to youth and to teach them the information and problem-solving skills, such as reading and math, they will need in the future.

To be most effective the community-based youth agency will need to be seen by the school as an ally. This does not mean that the agency would never disagree with the school; it does mean, however, that school personnel should believe agency staff understand the problems schools face and have an interest in working with them to address those problems. It also means that agency staff must recognize and understand how much is being asked of schools today, and that as demands have increased -- especially in communities with chronic gang problems -- resources have often diminished.

Before approaching the schools, agency staff should consider how the agency might assist and work with teachers or school administrators to help them in their work with gang or gang-prone youth. Most obvious among the various ways for the agency to work with the school is the mutual acceptance of gang youths as in need of an education and possible support services.

Youth agency workers should understand the perspective of school personnel

In preparing to work with the schools it may be helpful for agency staff to "put themselves in the shoes" of school personnel.

- ▶ How would they feel if they were asked to control and teach 35 - 40 students each day when many needed individual attention or had no interest in learning because they held no dreams for the future?
- ▶ What would they do if the school itself could not provide even basic, let alone special, materials to work with students?
- ▶ How willing would they be to contact parents if parents rarely responded to their calls for assistance or to come in for conferences?
- ▶ What would they do if they training prepared them to teach but not to handle difficult situations and the school administration clearly frowned on teachers who turned to others for assistance?
- ▶ What if each guidance counselor was assigned 300 students and the social worker and psychologist came only one day a week?

The school principal should be contacted first and informed of the agency's interest in working with school personnel.

The agency representative should stress that gang youths and gang prone youths will not join gangs if they have literacy and math skills and the social abilities to compete ultimately in the workforce. They will be less likely to leave schools and more able to compete in school and later in the workforce. The challenge therefore is to maintain and educate these youngsters in the schools while not disrupting the education of others or threatening the safety of teachers or fellow students.

The youth agency should work closely with the schools and neighborhood residents including parents

The worker might offer to share his or her knowledge of gangs with teachers as part of an in-service or teacher staff meeting. The worker can then offer to meet with teachers -- either individually or in small groups -- to discuss individual youths and ways they can be maintained in the classroom. The agency should be willing to recruit volunteers and assist in training tutors to help youths who need remedial assistance. Since most schools will not have the staff to supervise these activities the agency can help by recruiting and working with neighborhood volunteers including parents to take on some of these duties.

The agency worker can also assist school administrators in expanding the role of the school in the community by making the school building available for afterhours meetings or perhaps opening the school gymnasium for after school sports activities. The agency may also need to enlist the assistance of community residents in supporting the school principal as he or she proposes expansion of the school's role to the school board. Often such a proposal will be met with resistance so arguments for its acceptance need to be developed and objections of others anticipated, carefully considered, and countered persuasively.

Since parents can play an important role in encouraging their children to remain in school it is in the school's interest to involve parents in school programs, both to inform them of the school's efforts to educate young people and to stress the relationship between sound education and future success. Agency staff should support the school in recruiting parent participation in various school projects, parent patrols, and staffing after school activities to engage youth who might otherwise not be inclined to participate in school functions or academics.

If the school resists efforts to work with the agency in creating a positive learning environment for all youths, the agency should nevertheless persist constructively and in continuing both to support and change the school. Most teachers will agree to meet with parents about the school performance of their children. Agency staff can accompany parents and seek information about problems their children are experiencing and what can be done to resolve them.

Community-based youth agency staff should see these efforts as an opportunity to build their credibility with staff of the school while encouraging school personnel to be flexible in their handling of gang youths. After all, youths who are not in school are, too often, unsupervised and more likely to commit delinquent acts. Perhaps more important, the youth who is not in school is falling even further behind his or her classmates.

The school, therefore, must be assisted to seek and institute new and/or improved approaches to these youngsters, and to involve members of their families so they see the relevance and importance of an education. Chief among these is individualized instruction, the use of age- and ability-appropriate materials, emphasizing basic skills development and reinforcing progress made.

In emerging contexts -- where in-school problems are less marked -- the youth agency may urge remedial assistance, in-school disciplinary sanctions, teacher institutes on gangs, and a clear gang policy communicated to all youth. Staff may often participate in the development or delivery of prevention programs or suggest modifications to existing curricula to more directly address gang issues. In cities with chronic gang problems a broader-scale approach will be called for. In these cities, where youths are more committed to the gang and more youths are likely to have dropped out of school, an alternative high school and GED program will probably be needed. Such efforts favored by the youth agency and the community should be organized in concert with the school system, preferably under its auspices, to facilitate the return of youths, as appropriate, back to their "home" school as soon as possible.

Employment: Employment is another cornerstone of a successful gang intervention program. Youths who feel they will not be able to find and hold jobs will be more likely to turn to the gang or criminal activity for financial support. Youth agencies can help by encouraging schools to teach youth marketable skills and supporting school efforts to develop work study and job training programs, particularly for youth in their mid-teens.

If the community is served by a job service agency the community-based youth agency should work with that agency to learn how to prepare youths for referrals, promote the creation of a job orientation program, and how it may otherwise assist the job program to achieve its goals. This may involve working with employers of gang youths so they know what to expect from these young people and how to handle problems. This assumes an employer is willing to extend himself or herself to assist a gang youth. More employers will do so if agency staff are available to support the employer and reinforce good working habits with the youth. Periodic visits to the work site, and regular meetings with program youth and employers will encourage businesses to employ these troubled youth.

In emerging and chronic cities job readiness programs and job banks should be available to direct younger gang-prone youth to jobs. In chronic cities older, more committed gang youth will need more intensive intervention, including orientation to the world of work, vocational training and job development, placement and follow-up.

When gang communities do not have a job service program available to them, the community-based youth agency may need to take steps to initiate such a program or even to start a small business itself. The local chamber of commerce or business association should be approached regarding participation in an employment program. The availability of federal funding to subsidize wages, tuition, training program or staff time should also be explored. Contacts should be made with state, federal and local agencies with responsibility for employment, education, justice, and other human services. Here too the youth agency should assist the job service program to incorporate knowledge of gangs into recruiting, training, placement and follow-up activities.

Community-based youth agencies may want to consider the development, sponsorship and collaboration with other organizations or business enterprises in regard to employment and training opportunities to gang youths. Various projects, such as graffiti removal, housing rehabilitations, cleaning services or food preparation, can be initiated and later spun off, preferably to local residents including former gang members.

Agency workers serve as critical role models in reinforcing good work habits and the value of having a job. Workers should take advantage of opportunities in informal conversation with youths to talk -- not lecture -- about work and why it's important to them, and to model for gang youths the behaviors of a good employee. Youths who identify with and want to be like individual staff members will learn from their example as well as from spoken words.

Family support: As noted in an earlier section gangs are most often found in low income disorganized communities. Many gang youths come from families with a tradition of gangs and few personal and financial resources. Thus working with the gang member but ignoring his family may be a mistake. It decreases the likelihood the gang or gang-prone youth will avoid further gang involvement or joining the gang at the outset.

The community-based youth agency should contact the youth's family and provide support services to other family members. Such services include advocacy with government agencies, referral to job and education programs, assistance with housing, and teaching of parenting skills. Families headed by a confident, competent wage earner will be more likely to influence and supervise their youth.

Since families of gang or gang-prone youths may not be well organized or highly needy themselves, it is likely that parents will not respond to calls from agency workers to show more interest in their children, assert more control over them, and become a positive role model. In those cases agency staff need to establish a personal rapport with the family through regular personalized home visits. Even when the parent(s) may resist, staff should continue to drop

by their homes to say hello and advise them of their son's or daughter's progress. The worker should also make an effort to participate in events, such as church functions, which the family might attend to get to know them in a less formal setting.

The sponsoring of family outings or other family-oriented activities may engage families and offer an opportunity for the bonding of family members. Family mentors -- to act as coaches to parents -- might be considered as well.

Victim assistance: While not a service to gang youths per se, victims of gang crime should not be overlooked, the community-based youth agency should consider the impact of crime on its victims. Young people--both gang and non-gang members who are crime victims--should be given the opportunity to discuss their feelings about the victimization. They can also benefit from the presence of an advocate to provide them with information and emotional support as police investigate the crime.

Young adults: Especially in chronic cities agencies may find that one group of gang youth -- those between 18 and 21 years or older -- are in need of services but no agencies are available to work with them. This group may therefore pose special problems. Assistance may be sought from adult education programs as well as state agencies which offer services to adults. As with younger gang members advocacy will be essential to facilitate access to and provision of the services which may be available. Remember that being streetwise does not mean one understands how to negotiate complex systems which are supposed to have been designed to help those in need.

Summary

An effective gang intervention strategy must provide opportunities for gang youth and their families. As such it should be multi-faceted, flexible enough to adjust to the needs of individual youth and, therefore, able to draw on one or more of a number of program components: outreach or street work, intake, case management, group activities, education, employment, family support, and victim assistance. Different components, as well as the balance

between intervention and suppression, will also vary as the intensity of the problem varies between cities with emerging gang problems and those with chronic gang problems.

CHAPTER 4: COORDINATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Coordination with the justice system
- ▶ Coordination with other organizations
- ▶ The agency's organizational response

Coordination with the justice system

Gangs pose a threat to the safety of community members. To minimize the risk of harm and identify youth with whom to intervene before major problems arise, the agency needs to work in partnership with local law enforcement. Depending on the structure of the police department this may involve coordination with a gang unit, youth division, community relations section, local precinct or district. In the very least, the agency should work with members of the youth division because these officers will have the most contact with juveniles.

It's a good idea to ask how the police department is organized during the assessment visit. This is also an opportune time to ask who should be contacted for additional information or to exchange information in the future. When the agency begins considering the implementation of a specialized gang intervention program the police should be contacted and invited to participate in shaping the program. Those police who have the most knowledge of and commitment to working with the gang problem should also be involved in developing a response to it from the outset.

The early involvement of police should, therefore, help in forming a program which best targets the problem. It also yields two other benefits: 1) it builds a rapport between police and the agency as each learns the others strengths and weaknesses and, hopefully, creates mutual respect; and 2) it defines the roles each will play in working with gang youths so future ambiguities are minimized.

Community-based youth agency staff should be aware that police are likely to view gang youths differently than agency staff do. Police may be more concerned about controlling gang youths than helping them. They may be negative about agency attempts at working with gang youths. Youth agency

staff may believe that the police have made the gang problem worse by promoting and taking inappropriate action such as random sweeps. On the other hand, there have been numerous instances where police have organized activities for young people, thereby showing an interest in helping them and in controlling their criminal behavior.

Nevertheless the police have valuable information and insights which will help the agency develop a more effective program and, therefore, their input should be welcomed. Once the special program is underway police should be invited to participate in regular meetings with agency personnel to discuss specific youths and any gang patterns police or agency workers might have observed. Agency staff should not always expect police to come to them. Much can be learned by meeting police on their "turf" or by going on ride-alongs with officers.

Don't assume police -- or others -- will understand the mission or the services of the community-based youth agency. Since the work of such an agency may seem vague or unfamiliar to police, the agency's liaison to the department should be clear about what the agency can and will do as well as what police will be able to expect from the agency. Inviting officers to visit the agency or participate in certain agency activities may help further their understanding of what the agency does.

Similarly agency staff need to work closely with representatives of other components of the justice system -- to seek and accept referrals, to advocate for, and to pursue opportunities for gang youths. If adjudicated gang youths are to be served, probation officers will need to be involved in the program's development and operation. Agency staff can share their knowledge of gangs, learn more about the justice system, and offer recommendations for making the system more relevant to gang youths and better able to accomplish its goals, including community protection. Youth agencies can also help judges and prosecutors understand and develop policies as well as make youth agency resources available.

One issue which will need to be raised and discussed early on is the sharing of information. Specifically, the

community-based youth agency and justice system agencies will have to define the phrase "need to know" since it is often on a "need to know" basis that specific information is shared. In doing so the team should clarify who will have access to what information and at what times, what information can be shared without a formal or legal release of information to protect a youth's right to privacy, and the legitimate uses of information.

Coordination with other organizations

The likelihood of significant amounts of funding being made available to a community for additional services to gang or gang-prone youths is not high. While some services clearly require more money -- or that funds be diverted from one part of a budget to another -- some do not. Sometimes changes can be made in an agency's policy which will facilitate service delivery. Other times training of staff can make them more effective with a particular target population. To make sure the organizations which work with gang and gang-prone youths are doing as much as they can with the resources they have available, those organizations should meet on a scheduled basis. A larger group, consisting of all the organizations concerned with gang youths including grassroots organizations, may only need to meet monthly or bi-monthly while those agencies with a more active role - such as the schools, police and community-based youth agency - would meet more frequently.

If such a group has not been formed the community-based youth agency should contact several of the prospective members, including the local unit of government, to determine the level of interest in forming such a group. The community-based youth agency should make every effort to encourage key units of local government to address the problem through appropriate types of support.

Once the group is convened its purpose should be clarified. As different organization are likely to have different and sometimes conflicting agendas, this may take awhile. Even so, it sets the stage for the group's future work. It should give group members a better understanding of each other's concerns and the limitations they or others have placed on

their respective organizations. The latter is important because these limitations are sometimes accepted as "givens" when in fact they can be removed or changed to improve the organizations response to gang youths.

Having clarified the group's purpose and the roles of individual members the group should identify actions which need to be taken by the group itself or individual members and then set a timeline for accomplishing each. Progress toward each should be reviewed at subsequent meetings. Having a purpose and things to do will keep the group focused and members committed to attending and participating in meetings. It will also help to have a chairperson and someone who keeps a record of decisions.

In large communities the types of groups might be appropriate -- one comprised of managers and those who set policy and the other comprised of persons with line or supervisory duties. Each has a different and valuable perspective of youth gangs and the ways to respond to them.

The agency's organizational response

Sometimes organizations inadvertently adopt policies or procedures which make full use of their services difficult for the target population, particularly gang youths. For instance:

- ▶ Some agencies require parents to accompany adolescents on their first visit to the agency; for youths whose parent(s) work or are not motivated to support their youngsters, meeting this requirement might be difficult.
- ▶ Many schools have policies which call for the suspension of students who violate certain rules.
- ▶ Judges sometimes impose unreasonable expectations of gang youths, making attendance at certain agency events contingent on improving grades, and staying away from other gang members (including those who live in the youth's neighborhood), may be setting the youth up for failure.
- ▶ Avoiding gang activity is, of course, essential.

It is important, therefore, for the community-based youth agency to review its existing policies and procedures once it

has determined how it will work with gang youths and to assist other organizations in the community to do the same. The purpose of this review is to determine whether any of these policies or procedures are unrealistic and therefore will inhibit the proposed approach to gang or gang-prone youths from succeeding.

Staff should ask if each policy is relevant to gang youths. If the answer is yes, staff should ask if the policy will limit a youth's participation in or potential benefit from the program. If so:

- ▶ Should the policy be changed or is the underlying rationale for it so strong that it offsets any possible alienation of the youth?
- ▶ If revision of the policy is warranted, what should that change be?

Other aspects of the organization should be reviewed as well.

- ▶ Does the staffing plan, the agency's hours, or its location limit or effect the target population's use of the program or the program's ability to accomplish its purpose?
- ▶ If so, are these subject to change? How?

Once existing policies and procedures and other potential barriers to service provision have been reviewed, staff should, in light of the proposed intervention, ask whether any new policies or procedures are needed -- either to affirm the agency's commitment to the program -- such as adding a section to the agency's mission statement -- or to facilitate consistent handling of foreseeable problems. For instance, since gang youths often have access to guns, a policy about weapons, which include making a report to the police, and effective procedures to implement it are required.

- ▶ What about fighting with other program youth or drug use?
- ▶ What sanctions can be applied without totally jeopardizing the youth's involvement in the program?

Although gang recruitment, display of gang colors, gang signing, and intimidation of other youths should be clearly and firmly prohibited, the patterns of gang influence and activity should be recognized. This may mean, at times,

that communication with gang influentials has to be established and persons, areas or situations in the agency facility or outside carefully targeted for special attention or intervention.

Administrative issues need to be considered as well.

- ▶ What type of case notes should be kept?
- ▶ Who will have access to those notes?
- ▶ Do any confidentiality laws apply?
- ▶ How will a youth's right to privacy be protected?
- ▶ What will the youth and his family be told about how the agency will use information it has about them?

These are often difficult issues to resolve. Some may require the involvement of an attorney. One of these will be the agency's potential liability in the event a program participant or staff member is injured while involved in any agency activity.

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

- ▶ The need for community involvement
- ▶ Building a coalition
- ▶ Coalition "care and feeding"

The need for community involvement

A community's gang problem cannot be solved by one organization working on its own. Neither the police, the schools, the community-based youth agency nor any other organization has the resources or the authority to address gang members, gang-prone youths and the conditions which foster the growth and development of gangs on their own. Similarly, no organization which has been formed to meet the needs or address the problems of a community will ever have enough paid staff to get the job done. Therefore it is essential that both the organizations with an interest in gangs and gang violence work with each other and the residents of the communities affected by gangs become involved in the fight against gangs.

That joining together to mount a coordinated approach to gangs will not just happen. It needs to be planned and organized to ensure all the players are identified and invited

to participate and, if they regret or refuse to be involved, persuaded about the importance of the task at hand. The process of urging, prodding, persuading, inviting, directing, and reinforcing is part of mobilizing or organizing the community and all its component parts to address an identified problem.

As suggested above, if no organization has accepted the challenge of pulling together the various -- and sometimes divergent -- groups and agencies which work or have contact with gangs or gang youth, the community-based youth agency should consider assuming that role. Doing so would be particularly appropriate if the youth agency already has a track record working with other organizations and has ties to community residents. The youth agency would therefore need to spend less time establishing credibility and building trust. It would also be better positioned to form a coalition.

Building a coalition

Organizations come together where they have common interests or needs in regard to their goal achievement. As the community-based youth agency gathers information about the nature and extent of the gang problem in its service area and the resources available to address it, agency staff will identify the concerns of organizations and citizen groups about gangs. Staff should also be gaining an understanding of the various perspectives different groups hold and the reasons they are interested in gangs. They should therefore be kept in mind as the youth agency convenes a meeting to discuss the youth gang problem and formulate a plan to confront that problem. If possible a particular individual should be identified to undertake or coordinate the "leg work" associated with the staffing of the coalition.

Prospective participants should be mailed a letter of invitation which clearly states the purpose of the meeting, its date, time, location and expected duration. The convener and chair of the first session should also be stated as should the writer's intent to follow up with a phone call to confirm the invitee's participation. If the community-based youth agency believes someone from another organization - such as the police chief or mayor's representative - would have more "drawing power" with the invitee an early alliance with that

individual might be considered and, if appropriate, arranged.

In setting the meeting time and place, be sure to give invitees sufficient time to place the meeting on their calendars and to hold the meeting in a convenient location. Staff might want to contact the key participants before announcing the date just to ensure their attendance and confer regarding the meeting agenda. If people are reluctant to meet in a group, one-to-one meetings may be warranted to raise concerns and carry common issue or possible areas of conflict from individual to individual. This may help ease fears of a set-up or convince perspective attendees their time will be well spent.

The first meeting should be chaired by whomever called for the meeting. Prepare and follow an agenda which includes a discussion of the gang problem and what the convener hopes to accomplish and allows each attendee sufficient time to share his or her views. Assuming participants are interested in meeting again a date, time, place and tentative agenda for the next meeting should be set. (It may be a good idea to elect a temporary chairperson rather than for a particular person to assume that role without a mandate from the group.)

At the second meeting the specific problems or issues to be addressed should be described and the mission or purpose of the group agreed upon. Depending on the number of members, either the group as a whole or committees should then develop strategies to achieve the groups purpose. This may be a relatively simple task or one which takes more time and study. At a minimum, the group should seek to put in place the services and access to opportunities described in previous sections of this manual. The coalition might also elect to address some of the conditions which give rise to gangs. Clearly this would take a longer-term effort as well as the cooperation and resources of others beyond those in the coalition.

Coalition "care and feeding"

Coalitions do not succeed without considerable effort on the part of members involved. All must be prepared to make

compromises, to not always have their way. Sometimes this is not easy. Often individual members do not feel they are being heard, or that their point of view is reflected in a particular decision; they may even threaten to pursue a different course of action, which may be counter to the overall strategy of the coalition.

Seeing to it that coalition members are heard and feel they receive fair and equal treatment from fellow coalition members requires time and effort outside of regularly scheduled meetings. Tact and openness in dealing with members, as well as respect for those with a different point of view, are also important. Key coalition members should be contacted before and after meetings to check in and to keep the work of the coalition on track. Committee chairs should also be contacted to monitor the work of the committees and, perhaps, discuss problems or concerns the chairpeople might be having. Thus it is important that agency staff have good problem-solving skills.

Clearly, the larger the coalition, the more time it will take to keep coalition members feeling connected and apprised of the work of their colleagues. If much work is being done in committees, it's a good idea to take and promptly circulate minutes to all coalition members. Committee chairs should also meet regularly to coordinate the work of their committees.

Ensuring not only that community residents attend but participate in coalition meetings will take additional effort as well. Some community residents may be intimidated by the positions held by other coalition members. Others may have little or no experience as a member of a community coalition. Therefore more time needs to be spent with these individuals to ensure they understand what is going on, what their role is, what they are expected to do and, if necessary, how they can do it. If community leaders have not emerged holding one or more community meetings -- evenings or weekends when those who work can come -- may be a first step toward gathering community support and determining the community's point(s) of view.

Summary

An effective gang intervention strategy is more than the provision of a number of services which are organized to address the problems or needs of certain gang youths. That strategy must also take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the organizations which work with or relate to gang youths and their families and of the community itself. These should all be assessed and barriers to effective service delivery removed, and all key persons should be committed to the success of the project. This includes building a support base of citizens, neighborhood organizations, business and churches as well as engaging those organizations -- such as schools and police -- which are generally associated with youth, and involving all of them in the development and implementation of an effective anti-gang strategy.

CHAPTER 5: STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SELECTION AND TRAINING

- ▶ Staff selection
- ▶ Use of volunteers
- ▶ Staff and volunteer training

A program's success depends on the ability and commitment of its staff and volunteers. Therefore, staff and volunteer selection and training are critical.

Staff selection

The following procedure is recommended to build a strong, viable staff team:

1. Identification of skills
2. Development of job descriptions
3. Talent search
4. Hiring procedures

Identification of skills: The first step is to take a close look at the jobs to be done. The functions and responsibilities of each position should be described. If you have no experience with the particular job, consult the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. It has a complete list of occupations with job descriptions.

In general, staff who work directly with gang youths should: be interested in helping gang youths to develop socially; be knowledgeable about gangs; possess relationship skills based on acceptance of youth, yet setting appropriate limits; be a good communicator; be aware of and have the ability to use community resources on behalf of gang youths; and be a positive role model. Maturity, friendliness and a quick intelligence are important. It is also important that gang members be able to relate to and identify with staff; hiring former gang members who can establish appropriate rapport with gang youth may be helpful. In doing so, however, care must be taken to avoid hiring someone who is still committed to the gang life. Previous experience working with gangs or troublesome youth, living in the community

with gang members, and the ability to work flexible hours may be important. Talented and qualified persons who were never gang members and who may not be from the community should not be ruled out of consideration, however.

Development of job description: Job responsibilities and required skills should be defined thoroughly and clearly. They should include enough information so that the reader will get a clear picture of the job. Points to be addressed are:

- ▶ Job title
- ▶ Salary, wages, and fringe benefits
- ▶ Job functions and responsibilities
- ▶ Required qualifications
- ▶ Experience and education
- ▶ Statement about equal opportunity employment
- ▶ Any other pertinent information that relates to the job

Talent search: The selection process works most effectively when information on job openings is widely advertised.

Where do you find qualified people? After clarifying skills, first look within your own agency for talent. Next, send job descriptions to:

- ▶ State employment services;
- ▶ Trade journals;
- ▶ College placement offices;
- ▶ Graduate schools of social work, psychology, and sociology;
- ▶ Community, minority, and city-wide newspapers;
- ▶ Radio and television (if you have the resources);
- ▶ Individuals who might have contact with qualified people.

Look for people who fit the job you are offering and have a commitment to helping gang youth rather than people who will settle for any job. If the job requires a minimum time commitment or evening or weekend work this should be made clear at the outset to applicants.

Hiring Procedures: Once you have identified needed qualifications, developed job descriptions, and started the talent search, procedures for hiring staff will need to be developed. A decision then needs to be made regarding who will screen resumes and interview candidates. At a minimum, the person who will supervise the new staff member should participate in the interviewing and hiring process. It may be appropriate for other staff from the agency who will work with gang youth to be involved in the interview process as well. The first step is to review tasks and skills necessary for each position.

All candidates should be examined in light of specific job qualifications and organizational demands, and their past work experience and skills. Having candidates fill out an application, bring a resume, or both is a good way to assess their past work experience, educational background, and writing skills. You should have in mind some minimal qualifications, so that you can screen out candidates who do not qualify. Once this is done, interviewing can begin.

Prior to the interview, complete a list of questions to be asked that will help in assessing candidates qualifications, job skills, and personal background. Try to ask the same questions of each applicant, so that you will have a basis for comparison. Ask questions about gaps in employment history or education and ask applicants how they might handle confrontations with gang youth or other relevant situations.

Hire the person who best fits the needs of the organization and position.

Use of volunteers

Since resources will be limited the community-based youth agency will want to expand its pool of responsible adults available to work with and on behalf of gang youth by recruiting volunteers. Volunteers should also be viewed as program staff. They need to be carefully screened, trained, and supervised to ensure they perform as outlined in their job description. Volunteers who do not do their "jobs" should, if necessary, be terminated.

Use of volunteers as well as interns from local colleges is important for other reasons as well:

- 1) it is a way of involving members of the community;
- 2) it provides people with limited skills or knowledge in this field with an opportunity to learn and gain experience;
- 3) it brings a more diverse group of people into the program to work with youth in a variety of areas to perform a range of functions, some of which may not be easily completed by the agency's staff;
- 4) it demonstrates to gang youth that a range of people care and are concerned about them for altruistic reasons.

Staff and volunteer training

Once hired, staff and volunteers must be thoroughly trained. Training will enhance the knowledge and abilities that staff bring to the job.

Orientation: Orientation should focus on agency mission, procedures, policies, and program goals and objectives. These topics should be thought out in advance, and to the extent possible, written documentation should be made available to staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers should know that opportunity provision -- the provision of and access to school and job resources -- is a key part of an overall approach to the reduction of gang crime and violence. It would be helpful to discuss the specific rationale behind an opportunity provision strategy as a tool to reduce gang crime and violence. The role of the other agencies should be discussed as well as procedures for collaboration and sharing of information regarding gang youths.

In addition, program structure and process should be thoroughly summarized to give staff and volunteers an overview of program design and their specific role in program implementation. All job descriptions should be summarized and discussed at this time.

Trainees should be encouraged to ask questions, share opinions, and give input regarding the development of rules for gang youth participation, how to handle rule infractions (use specific examples and vignettes), and behavioral expectations. This will increase the likelihood that rule

enforcement will be timely, fair, and consistent. Finally, specific documentation and record-keeping requirements should be summarized. Field records are especially important for supervisory purposes. Also explain how record-keeping will serve as a basis for later testing program effectiveness.

Gang and community work specific training: Staff and volunteer development training should take place during the first months the worker(s) are on the job and periodically thereafter. Training must also focus on general information on gangs. Where can this information be found? First, readings that give a good overview of gangs. Next, consult outside experts (police, probation, parole, school, corrections, professors, or agency staff) and invite them to participate in a training seminar on gangs. Also the findings of a comprehensive community assessment of the local gang problem are a good source of information. The following information should be included in a training seminar on gangs:

- ▶ Gang history and understanding of gangs and gang subculture
- ▶ Causes of gang formation
- ▶ Factors which motivate individual gang members
- ▶ Differences among the culture of gang members
- ▶ Methods of identifying and confronting institutionalized racism
- ▶ How to identify gangs; to include gang symbols, language, attire, graffiti, and methods of gang recruitment in the particular community
- ▶ Current patterns of intergroup rivalry and violence in the community
- ▶ Nature of gang crimes; to include violence, property crimes and drug use and trafficking
- ▶ Establishing appropriate communication and productive relationships with gangs
- ▶ How to collect information on gangs and gang structure; to include how to tell who is a leader, hard-core, or fringe member
- ▶ Methods of crisis intervention and gang mediation
- ▶ General methods and techniques of gang suppression and intervention; the limits of strict suppression and simple counseling approaches

- ▶ Other agencies and organizations in the community essential to the worker's job.
- ▶ How to relate to criminal justice personnel.
- ▶ Conflict resolution techniques
- ▶ Personal safety instruction

Summary

Not all persons are equally able to work with gang youth. To do so successfully requires both special training as well as a particular temperament. Therefore the careful recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers -- since few programs will be able to operate on the desired scale without such individuals -- is essential. Training too, at the outset and during the course of a staff member's or volunteer's association with the program, is vital as well to ensure proper preparation for the job. All staff should remain advised of trends and new ideas and to learn from others working in the field.

CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION

Relatively little tested knowledge exists about what specific intervention will reduce gang violence or deter youth from participating in a gang. It is essential, therefore, that the strategies employed by the community-based youth agency and the other members of the community coalition document all phases of the intervention and keep data which will track and measure the impact of specific types of intervention on the behavior of gang and gang prone youths.

The community-based youth agency should be willing to participate in an evaluation because:

- ▶ it will yield information on the program's effectiveness and determine whether the program components should be expanded or changed;
- ▶ it can be used to argue for more funding; and
- ▶ it will be a source of valuable information for other agencies which are just beginning to develop youth gang intervention programs in their communities.

The specific data to be collected will vary by organization. At a minimum, data should be collected which relates to the objectives of the intervention strategies.

Descriptive information should be collected about the gang youth served. This will not only provide a description of the youth but ensure they are part of the program's target population.

If a key objective is to reduce criminal activity by gang youth served, it will also be necessary to collect information at the outset and while the youth is in the program about his or her criminal activity. Doing so will necessitate a close working relationship with the police.

Involvement of an objective third party evaluator - such as a local college or university faculty member - in the early stages of the program will help in identifying all the data elements to be collected and establishing a system for data collection.

Summary

Since relatively little is known about the effect of particular strategies on the activities of gangs it is important that any programs which are instituted be evaluated. Ideally this would be done by objective parties who become involved with the programs at the "ground level."

CHAPTER 7: FUNDING

No concerted attempt to reduce gang violence or limit gang activity in a particular community can take place without adequate funding. While it is possible to re-direct certain existing resources and services and to train existing staff to work with gang youths, no meaningful expansion of effort can be sustained over the long haul without some additional funding or allocation of funding for services to the target gang youth population. Therefore new sources of funding must be sought for an anti-gang initiative.

A number of possible funding sources exist -- federal, state, and local units of government; foundations; corporations and businesses; local churches and individuals. Historically, governmental sources have been the biggest and longest-term funder of those services and programs for gang youths. The Federal Register and Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance are good sources of information about federal funding sources. Information about state funding sources is available directly from state agencies with statutory responsibility for particular services -- such as employment, education, criminal justice and child welfare -- and from the state-published register. Foundation and corporate sources can be researched using the Foundation Directory which is available from the reference department of most public libraries.

Many major cities have special libraries -- such as that related to the Donors Forum in Chicago -- which provide information to non-profit organizations in their fund-raising efforts. Newsletters and digests of state and national associations and networks often identify possible funding sources as well. And, of course, local businesses and community residents may be in a position to make cash, in-kind, or other contributions to a gang intervention program. Local fund raisers, which not only generate revenue but increase the community's awareness of an agency's services, may also be an option.

Summary

Though it may be possible to revise policies and procedures for little or no additional cost and also to allocate existing resources for new agents, it is unlikely that a community-

based youth gang agency will be able to significantly expand services to gang members r gang-prone youth without additional funding. Possible sources of such funds include private and public sources.