

Pro-Youth Neighborhoods and Communities in Tulare County

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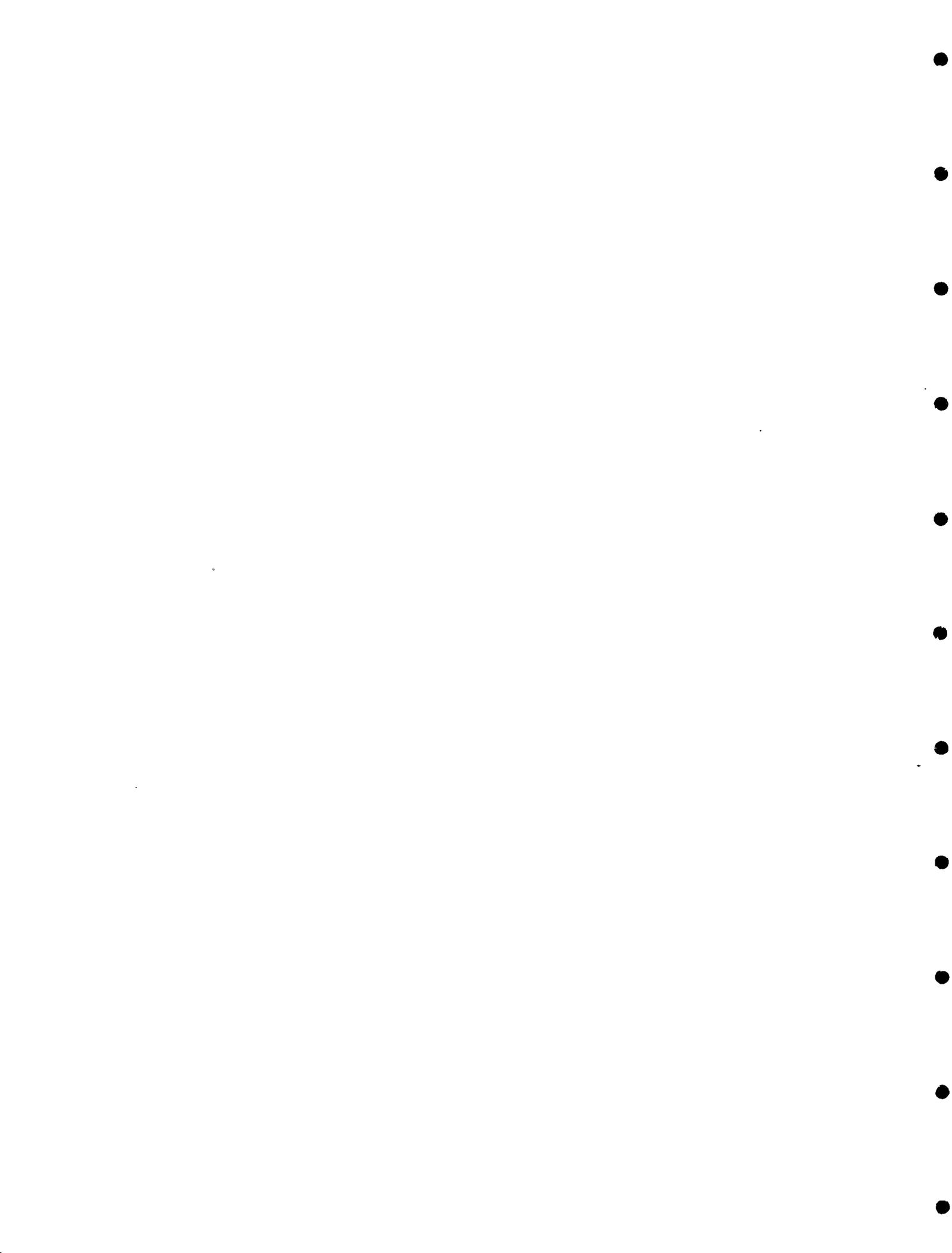
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a framework for
working together
to create gang-free
communities

needs assessment
findings and
recommendations

M. Amos Clifford, MA
Bill Caughron, MA, MFCC
Robyn Flores, MA
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January 1994

U.S. Department of Justice
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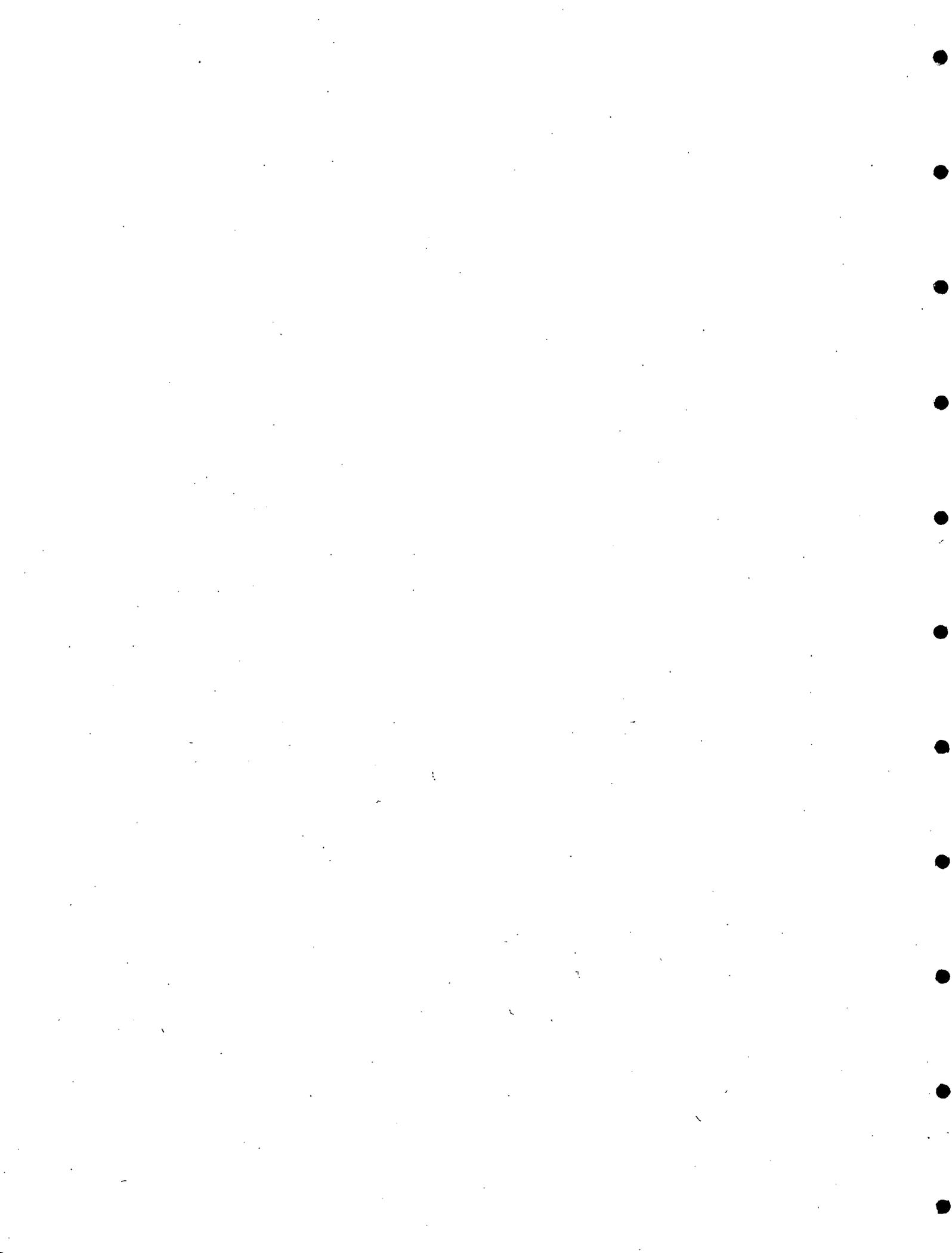
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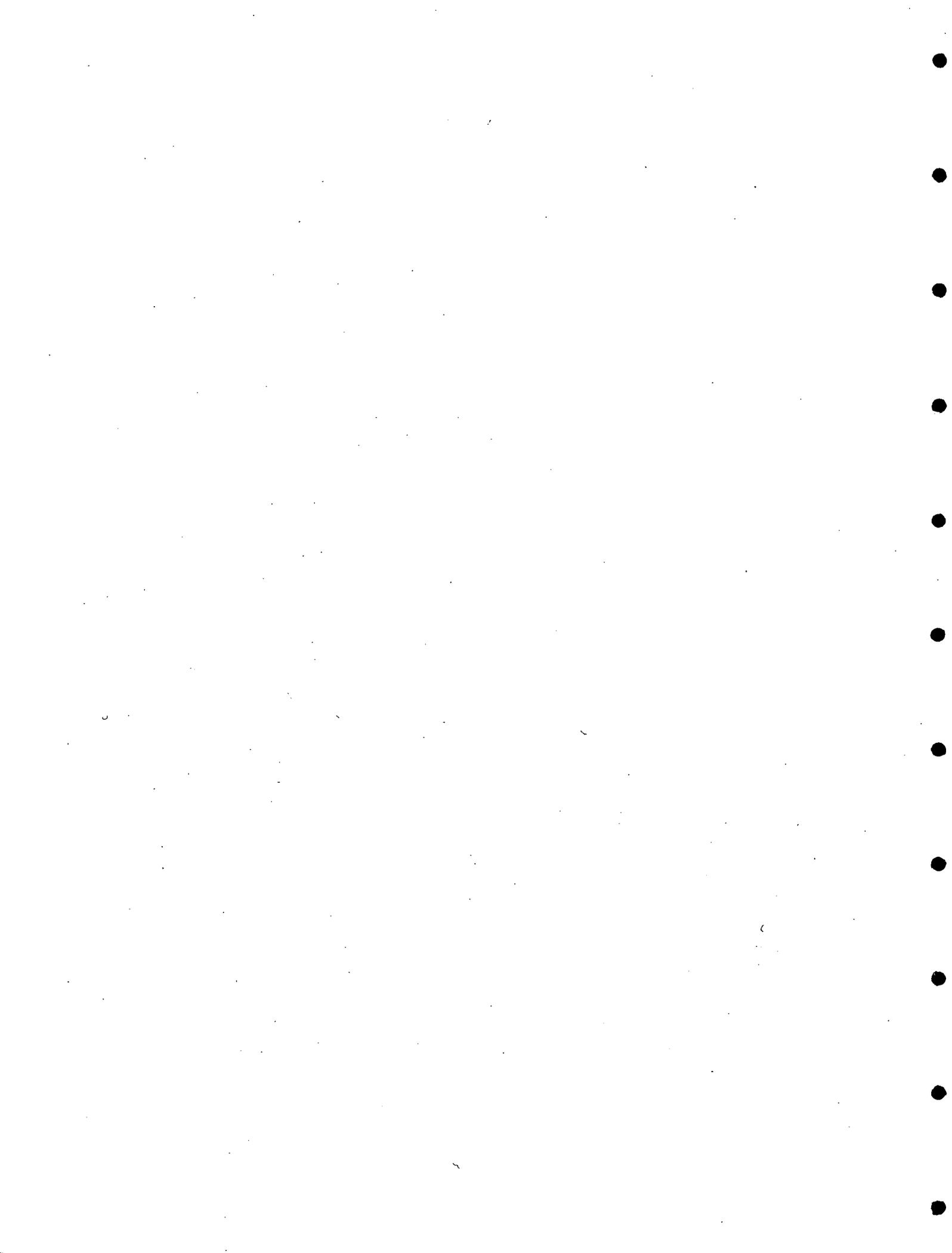




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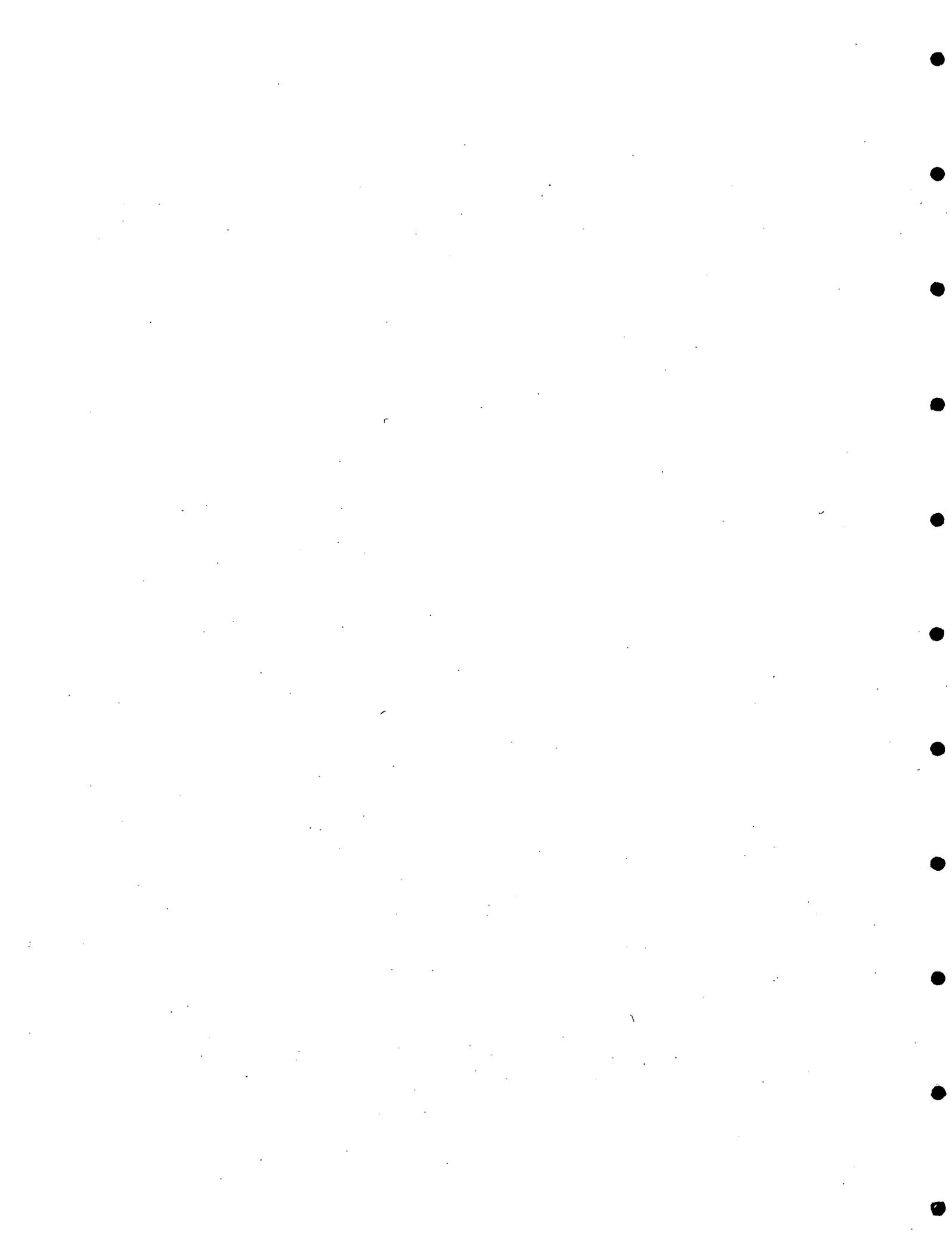
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Foreword



A thousand points of access

People everywhere are expressing their frustration and sense of powerlessness as the quality of life in their communities deteriorates. How can this encroaching despair be overcome?

The key is to provide everyone access to opportunities to serve. People want to become engaged in positive ways with young people. In fact, many recognize that the survival of our culture — the survival of any culture — requires that everyone share in the task of raising our children.

Too often when we think about raising children we are concerned with preparing them to *someday* fulfill a positive role in our society. This focus on preparation is unbalanced; it is concerned with the future, not the present. Engagement, a central concept described in this Framework, is concerned not merely with preparation but with finding a positive role for children *in the present*. How does a child fit in with society today? What contribution is it his or her privilege and duty to make? Answering this question is not the task of a few groups of specialists, such as educators, counselors, or clergymen. As a people, we will find satisfactory answers only when we embrace the wisdom embodied in the African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child."

For this reason, those who manage programs aimed at creating pro-youth communities must re-think how their programs operate. Over time, most programs have evolved to an approach that is now considered normal operating procedure: expert staff provide services to prevent or solve various problems. While this approach is useful, by itself it no longer fits the needs of our society. Programs must now shift from simply providing services toward also creating points of access. These points of access are the doorways through which virtually every adult in a community can contribute in their own way to the task of helping children find ways of belonging. The doorways thus opened must be inviting, attractive, and accessible. They must be diverse, to accommodate the diverse range of values and expertise that exist among adult role models and opportunity providers.

The operational strategies of existing programs must be rewritten. In some cases, this will entail minor changes and subtle operational shifts. But in others it will mean rethinking some of the fundamental premises upon which



programs are built. Program staff may need to develop expertise in building doorways and creating points of access.

The goal of initiatives for pro-youth communities should be to create a thousand points of access, and through these points to engage every adult role model and opportunity provider in the community with the community's young people.

We are currently on the cusp of a crisis. Our response will in many ways define the quality of our lives in the coming years. Crises are important times; they are cauldrons of change, perhaps of growth. They are not necessarily negative. In fact, a crisis often signals the collapse of illusions about how we live and think and act. When our illusions are stripped away, we are left with the opportunity to see with clearer vision.

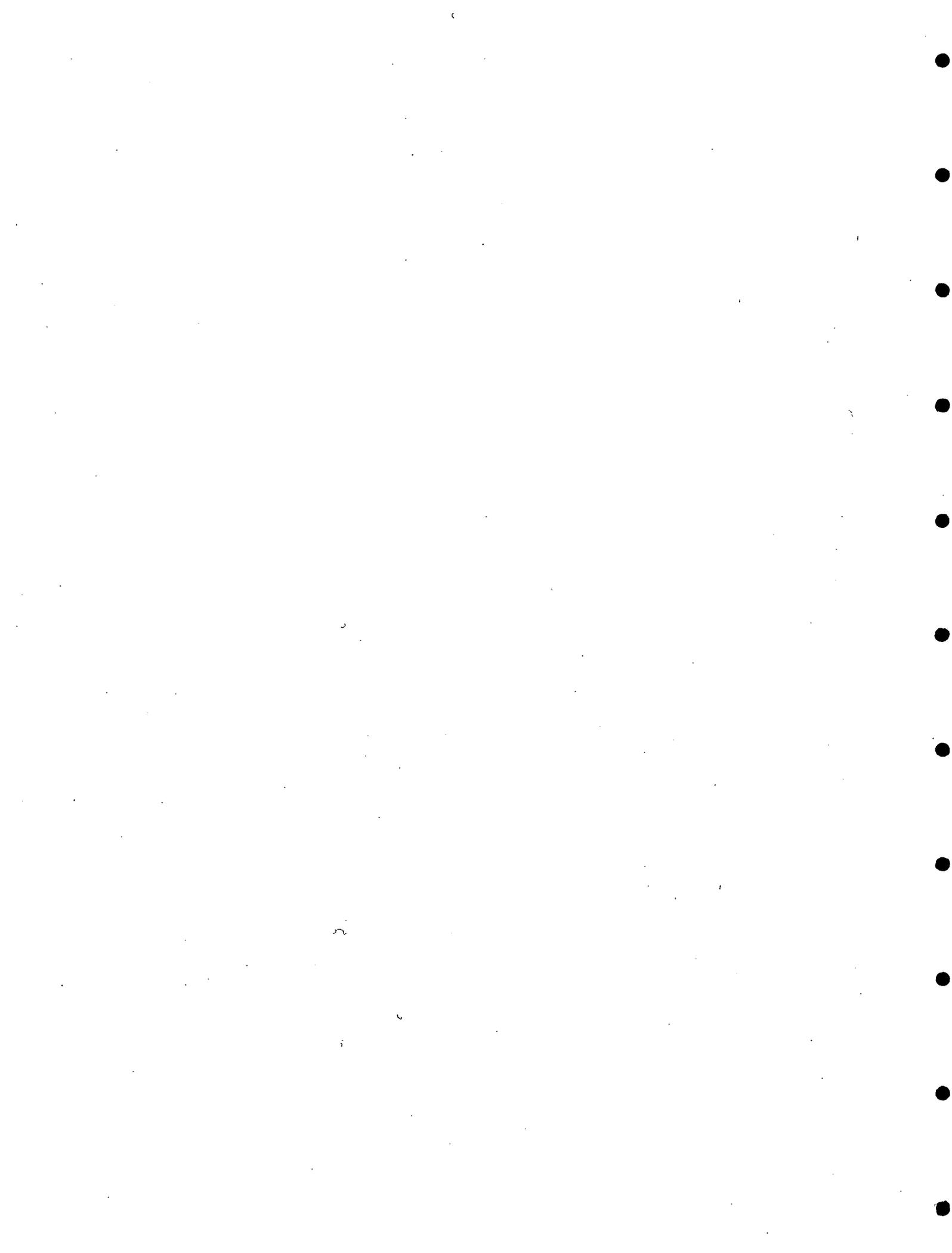
In every crisis the elements of danger and opportunity compete for dominance. The danger we face now is not merely that we might do too little or act too late. It is also that we will not learn from our situation, that we will fail to heed an important message implied in the explosion of gang violence: that something about who we are as a people is broken.

The opportunity before us is to listen and observe with humility. We can afford neither the politics of domination nor the seductive call of righteous rage. These reflect the very consciousness in which gangs thrive. Instead, we must offer an authentic alternative, an alternative with the power to reshape our culture. The potential for that alternative exists within each one of us. It exists as a mode of consciousness that is marked by compassion, by collaboration, and by willingness to set aside turf issues. While working on this document, we observed time and time again fledgling community efforts hampered by old wounds and resentments that prevented the unfolding of the power of collaboration. To seize the opportunity before us, we must move beyond the shackles of interpersonal feuds. The consciousness we will need to succeed will therefore be marked not just by compassion, but also by forgiveness.

In this document we offer the best ideas gathered from throughout the county. Among these ideas are starting points for everyone. It has been a great privilege to work with so many dedicated individuals to compile these ideas. Now let's keep our sleeves rolled up and continue the work.

M. Amos Clifford, Project Director
December, 1993





Introduction



The gang, in short, is life, often rough and untamed, yet rich in elemental social process significant to the student of society and human nature.

Frederick Thrasher
The Gang, 1928

A blueprint for building pro-youth communities

This planning document is a blueprint communities can use to design and implement strategies for both preventing and responding to problems related to gangs.

But it is more than an anti-gang tool. It is also a tool for building a solid foundation of pro-youth opportunities within a community. Gang problems do not exist in isolation from an array of other situations that influence youth. The strategies in this framework will be useful for responding to youth issues other than gangs. In fact, an assumption throughout the framework is that gang problems cannot be solved without also addressing these other issues. While this framework has gang issues as its focus, the reader is encouraged to view gang problems as part of a larger constellation of issues including mental health problems, child abuse, unemployment, non-gang violence, and so on.

There is a certain level of commitment required to understand and use the framework effectively. Reading it will take time. Using it in a group will require taking the time to discuss it and come to a common understanding of what it offers. Some experimentation may be required to apply the planning tools it provides to a specific situation. We encourage the reader to invest the time and energy required for effective use of this framework. The investment will be well rewarded.



Pro-youth or anti-gang?

This framework consistently favors the use of the term "pro-youth" to describe the fundamental aim of gang response efforts. Youth gangs thrive in social climates that include many anti-youth influences. Using anti-youth language tends to reinforce anti-youth attitudes. These in turn reinforce the very social climates that we wish to counter. Therefore, we use, and recommend that others use, pro-youth language.¹

A planning tool

Planning that involves as many local participants as possible—including young people—is critically important to addressing any problem confronting a community. An inclusive process will involve a wide variety of people from different corners of the community. It is helpful for this diverse group to have a simple, common set of words, ideas, beliefs and strategies, so they can "read from the same page." This framework provides the common ground needed for effective planning.

Without a framework, general consensus about these needed planning elements is difficult to achieve. Opportunities may be squandered in arguing, politicking, preaching, monopolizing; giving up due to frustration is a likely outcome. For example, sometimes real-life community planning efforts have become hopelessly stuck, ineffective, and in fact abandoned over discussions whether to emphasize preventing gang-related problems or responding to them with authority and force. Gangs thrive because of turf issues; we must rise above this mentality.

Prevention, intervention, and suppression

Most communities, of course, realize the value of investing in efforts that will prevent gang-related problems in the first place. Likewise, communities also expect quick and effective suppression measures to reduce problems attributed to gangs.

The strategies and activities of this framework reflect the belief that preventing and suppressing gang-related problems are mutually reinforcing responses. They not only coincide, but they also strengthen the likelihood that each other will succeed. That is, prevention activities reinforce suppression, and suppression (using authority and suppression when necessary) is an effective method of problem prevention.

Prevention: This framework suggests that responding to gang-related problems should not focus exclusively on gangs and the problems they cause, but also on the conditions in communities which actually invite gang activity and subse-



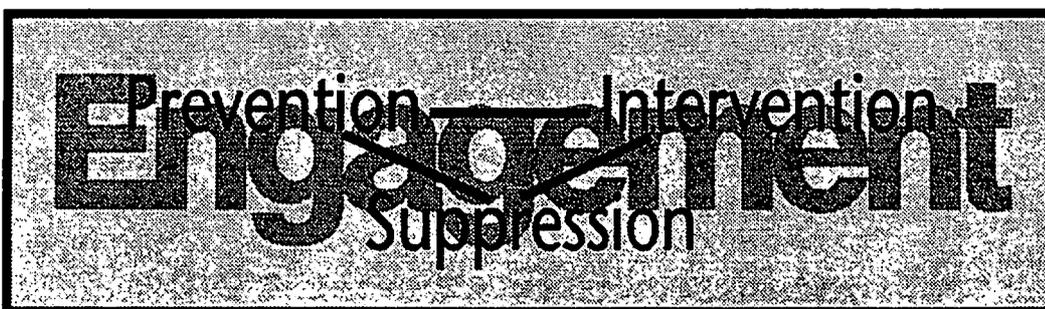
quent problems. Prevention refers to practices intended to strengthen communities and reduce the likelihood that problems will develop.

Intervention: Many young people and families suffer from the influence of multiple stressors. They may not be affiliated with gangs or participants in illegal activities. But the stressful conditions that affect their lives can have a powerful damaging effect upon these families, their members, and communities in which they live. The aims of intervention are to locate these families and help them develop the resources they need to overcome the difficulties they face.

Suppression: Communities should not have to tolerate the illegal activities of gangs. Violence should be categorically rejected. Vandalism, tagging, and intimidation are simply not acceptable. Suppression activities aim to quickly, effectively, and convincingly carry these messages for the community.

Engagement

The term "engagement" refers to a particular quality of relationship. Engaged relationships are the person-to-person element that exist at the heart of efforts to build pro-youth communities. Engagement refers to respectful and authentic relationships between young people the adults who work with them. Adults serve in these relationships as role-models, opportunity providers, and advocates who are willing to take a stand on behalf of the child. Engagement implies that gang response efforts are guided by compassion.



An engaged way of relating provides the context that enables prevention, intervention, and suppression activities to create pro-youth communities.

Engaged relationships are the context in which prevention, intervention, and suppression achieve their greatest impact. When those who accept responsibility for creating pro-youth communities are truly involved and allow their hearts to become connected with their work, high-quality engagement can occur.

Another characteristic of engagement is immediacy. In the day-to-day practical



struggle to meet the needs of our young people, we encounter them in the present. The best opportunity for influencing any situation is to mindfully and strategically engage in that situation when it is happening — that is, as close to the present as possible. The present is the ground upon which we will succeed or fail. Concerns about the future—commonly expressed in strategies whose aim is to prevent something that has not yet occurred—are important, but they have this danger: that when pursuing a better future we will forget to build a quality present. However, basing our concerns in the present does not exclude bringing about a desirable future. The notion of engagement assumes that quality relationships in the present are the most reliable way of bringing about a positive future. That is, prevention must be concerned above all with the here and now.

Compassion for others—including “tough love”—is expressed by actions taken in the immediate moment. (Compassion includes the ability to maintain appropriate boundaries, avoiding overinvolved and codependent.) Focusing on either the past or the future removes us from the critical place in which we can truly be of service, which is the now. This is the essence of engagement. Programs, curriculums and other interventions can be used as substitutes for authentic relationships; they can actually become barriers to meaningful engagement. Programs, curriculums, and other interventions are important. But it is important to remember that they are most likely to be effective when they provide a context in which authentic caring relationships can develop between young people and adult role models/opportunity providers.

This framework is for planning

This framework has been written for use by community members and youth activists representing a wide range of backgrounds, beliefs, professions and responsibilities. It is intended to help planning groups quickly and efficiently get to the point. It offers ideas, language and strategies that help people with different orientations to gang-related problems reach agreements on how to move in a common direction. The framework is not a plan. Its aim is to help communities agree upon how to align resources according to shared principles, strategies, and methods for gang response.

Used properly, the framework will help groups develop a gang response plan for their community. The plan will include statements of goals and objectives. It will be supported by written agreements that specify what each member (agency or individual) will do to help achieve the group's goals and objectives. These agreements will detail the strategies and methods to be used, and describe the settings in which they will be employed. The plan will indicate how progress will be measured.



The framework is a tool. It cannot substitute for a quality planning process. Frederick Mathews of Toronto Youth Services succinctly states, "The process by which the program is developed will be the message of the program." For this reason, it is critically important that community gang response planning actively and respectfully includes young people—including young people who are affiliated with gangs—as valued and knowledgeable contributors. Otherwise, to apply Mathews' principle, the message of the program will be that young people are not expected to have meaningful roles in the community. A gang response program cannot succeed when that is part of its message.

New programs, or aligning existing resources?

Many communities have succeeded in establishing new programs to help keep young people out of gangs. Some of the strategies recommended in this framework are derived from these programs. But this framework is not primarily about establishing new programs. It is aimed more at finding ways to align existing resources. No agency can address all youth issues. Each can only address a small fraction of the vast array of challenges we face. When agencies and programs do not apply their resources according to a shared vision, their ability to have impact upon the program is reduced. This framework is a tool to help each organization find a way to work together with other organizations, while still pursuing its unique vision.

The community

Throughout this framework references are made to "the community." Rather than defining "community," we recognize that its meaning will differ according to the perspective of the reader. For a group of parents, the community may simply refer to an immediate neighborhood. For the District Attorney's Office, the community may refer to the entire county. Gang members do not restrict their activities to a particular location; in fact some gangs are known to prefer to travel to cities other than those in which they live to commit certain types of crimes. Moreover, gangs will travel to other communities to retaliate against other gangs.

In general, community groups should use the notion of community that is most sensible to them. However, it is helpful to remember that each community is part of a larger community. The condition of the larger community affects the condition of the smaller communities it contains (and vice versa).



Overview of the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities

Definition of "gang"

The first important question a problem-solving planning group must answer is, "What is a gang?" Literature and policy documents reviewed by the Tulare County Gang Response Project offered many conflicting definitions. Experience suggests that a planning group may be initially handicapped by the task of agreeing on an acceptable definition.

A definition was developed by participants of the Tulare County Gang Response Project. Planning groups are strongly encouraged to adopt this definition early and without changes. This will allow progress toward planning for solutions to begin at the very first gathering. While local groups may wish to create their own definition, by staying close to the one offered in this framework they will help to ensure that gang response efforts in Tulare County are strengthened by sharing this important foundation.

Characteristics of gang members

Although the purpose of this document is to provide a planning process for addressing gangs as a community rather than individual issue, a brief overview generalizing the characteristics of gang member is provided. An understanding of these characteristics will help communities develop strategies that are powerfully relevant to the types of circumstances and needs that influence gang members.

Risk factors

Scholarly research and key informants repeatedly point out certain circumstances that enhance the probability of gang problems. These are referred to as "risk factors." The greater the number of risk factors present in a community, the more likely it is that a gang problem will emerge. Gang response efforts may find it useful to adopt goals specifically aimed at reducing one or more risk factors.

Principles and foundations

A basic set of principles and foundations for engaging gang-related problems is described. These general concepts are provided to help a problem-solving group, representative of diverse perspectives, identify ideas for which broad agreement exists.

**Strategies, settings, and activities**

A set of suggested strategies, settings and activities are presented. They represent actions and opportunities (consistent with the stated principles) for responding to gang-related issues when and where they surface. These concepts are not intended to represent a tightly designed, inflexible prescription for a community to follow. They are instead examples that can stimulate brainstorming or be adapted to the unique circumstances of the neighborhood community to which they are applied.

Planning and evaluation resources

Worksheets are provided to help groups work through the details of planning in a step-by-step sequence. Survey forms are provided that can be used to measure the perceptions of young people about gang activities in their communities and schools. The information from these surveys can be compared to that found in the Tulare County Gang Response Project Needs Assessment to assess how gang activity in local communities compares to the county as a whole. Once a local survey has been completed, the data from it can be used as a baseline measure against which future surveys may be compared. Changes in students' perceptions regarding gang activity is a recommended method by which community based pro-youth groups can evaluate progress.



Definitions and Principles

Definition: What is a Gang?

A gang is an organization of two or more individuals who form an allegiance for a common purpose, which has a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, and engages individually or collectively in violence and/or criminal activity that results in one or more of these effects:

- a) Intimidation, especially fears about personal safety, disruption of daily activities, special security precautions, avoiding certain areas, or loss of commercial business
- b) Violence to persons, including assaults and homicides
- c) Violence to property, including tagging and other forms of vandalism
- d) Other crimes, including theft, robbery, extortion, or drug trafficking/distribution
- e) Site or area takeovers, such as parks, streets or neighborhoods, apartment complexes or private houses, business such as bars or clubs
- f) Systemic effects, on organizations and institutions such as changes in activities, policies, work procedures, personnel training, regulations or ordinances as well as installation of new programs and personnel and associated budgetary needs

Types of gangs

Several methods exist for classifying gangs. These methods share the idea that not all gangs are alike. They differ in how they are organized, the type of leadership structure they have, the types of activities they engage in, and who joins.



One of the simpler classification systems can be applied to gangs in Tulare County. According to this system, gangs are organized either as cultural resources or as business enterprises.² These two schemes may be referred to as "Cultural/Ethnic" and "Instrumental," respectively. The table below contrasts the characteristics of these two classifications.

Cultural/Ethnic Organization

- Functions as a "cultural resource"
- Membership tends to be ethnically restricted
- Horizontal structure
- Violence for symbolic purposes (respect, honor, loyalty, revenge)
- Identification with a specific community or neighborhood
- Status associated with service to gang and displaying courage

Instrumental Organization

- Oriented to making money
- Membership may include several ethnic groups
- Vertical structure
- Violence for instrumental (business) purposes (profit, territory, rip-offs)
- Migratory, travel for profit
- Status and power gained through ability to operate profitably

In Tulare County there is the assumption that most local gangs are ethnically organized. We found little evidence to conclude otherwise. However, there are indications that some gangs may be evolving toward a more instrumental orientation. For example, members of the Oriental Troop in Visalia have been observed cooperating with African-American gang members in conducting drug sales. Are their enterprises tied to Los Angeles area gangs—gangs that are instrumentally organized for the purpose of distributing cocaine and other drugs? We were not able to determine if this is the case. But if it is, it may represent the beginning of a trend toward new types of gang-related problems.



Selected Characteristics of Gang Members

An accurate understanding of common personality characteristics of gang members can help those who are developing programs to respond to gang members. The list below is intended for this purpose.

We recognize the risk in creating a list such as this: it tends to reinforce the notion that all gang members are alike. They are not. Gang members are individuals, and as such they are each unique. However, there are some tendencies common to those who elect to join gangs. These tendencies are present in greater or lesser degree in many, if not most, gang members.

It is self-defeating to use this list to stereotype gang members—to support the conclusion that “they are all like that.” A pro-youth community recognizes and values the uniqueness of each its members.

Perception of poor life chances

Gang members believe that opportunities for them to achieve their highest goals are limited by circumstances. Poverty, racism, lack of jobs, ambivalence and failure in school, and family traditions or history can all contribute to this perception. When a particular goal is suggested to these youngsters they may discount it, believing that “No matter what, that is not a goal that is available to me.” Programs that claim to offer pathways to achieving pro-social goals should be based upon the realization that the alternatives they offer must be authentic, persistent, and accessible over a very long period of time. Moreover, young people should feel rewarded for their participation; there should be some aspect of the program that is immediately meaningful or enjoyable.

Fearful, anxious, guarded

Often the experience of those who become gang members leads them to conclude at an early age that their needs are not important to others or to society. In fact, they may observe others being victimized, taken advantage of, robbed, or assaulted. These observations may begin at an early age and take place repeatedly. In many cases, the future gang member will be a victim of a predatory individual. The resulting worldview tends to emphasize predator-prey relationships. The young person lives in constant fear of becoming prey. The defiant attitude commonly observed among gang members may in many cases serve as camouflage intended to scare away potential predators. The unfortunate program implication of this is that methods that rely upon fear of future consequence to dissuade young people from



gang involvement have little chance of succeeding, since competing fears—oriented to immediate and concrete dangers—are stronger.

Lack of a competent adult champion

Young gang members are unlikely to have meaningful relationships with adults who consistently act as advocates for their needs. The adults who are chosen by gang members as role models are often incompetent individuals by at least some important measures. This leaves young gang members in the vulnerable position of having to fend for themselves. Membership in the gang may help solve this dilemma.

Competitive, survival-of-the-fittest worldview

In disadvantaged segments of society, those who thrive are those who compete successfully for scarce resources. A child in these circumstances may learn early that he cannot compete successfully according to the pro-social rules and norms accepted by those in authority. Rather, he learns to compete with little regard for the rights and aspirations of others. He develops a "scarcity mentality," a model of perceiving the world as a place where there is not enough to go around. Those who are able to dominate and defeat others earn "respect." Respect enhances one's survival chances and helps to create new opportunities to improve upon one's life chances.

Gang affiliation is a choice

Not all young people with the characteristics listed here join gangs. Those who do usually do so after considering the available alternatives and weighing their choices. They have decided that their life chances will be enhanced by gang membership. Some join early and leave the gang in their early 20's, when they feel their life chances are better without gang involvement. Some young people do not join a gang until late in their teens or when they are in their early 20's. They postpone membership because they prefer to keep their options open. While delaying joining, they are constantly assessing whether operating as an individual or as part of a small "crew" is working for them. This characteristic suggests that those who are most at risk of becoming gang members can sometimes be influenced by appealing real-life events demonstrating other avenues offering better life chances.

Deviant values and ethics

Societal functioning requires agreement upon certain basic values, such as the sanctity of human life. Ethics spring from these values and are the guidelines



for social behavior. There has been a general weakening of agreement in society regarding values and ethics. Gangs have established a deviant set of values and ethics. A gang member may value loyalty, honor, and courage and be prepared to defend these values at great personal risk. However, the values of the gang do not encompass a vision for the greater good (beyond the good of the gang). There are few ethical restraints against victimizing others or committing acts destructive to the community or society.

Social skills used as weapons/strategies

Some gang members develop considerable charm, charisma, leadership and communication skills. These skills may be used in quite a cynical fashion. The aims are to manipulate others into believing a falsehood, carry out an action that will benefit the gang or the gang member, or choose not to take actions that will have a detrimental effect upon the gang or gang member. For this reason, counselors and others who work with gang members benefit from being able to accept sometimes being "conned." Eventually they will develop the ability to detect the difference between when an encouraging response is sincere or cynical.

Violence seen as normal way to resolve conflicts

Rather than viewing violence as a last resort, it may be viewed as the method of choice for resolving conflicts. Other approaches to conflict resolution may be actively discouraged by peers. In some cases, negotiation, accommodation, and similar interactive skills may be absent. Conflict resolution training and education may benefit some gang members. Moreover, those who work with gang members are always at some risk of being attacked and can also benefit from learning to use effective conflict diffusion and resolution techniques. Programs should provide adequate security measures to protect staff and property.

OK to fight and lose, not OK to not fight

Fighting is a normal, respectable behavior among gang members. It is common both within gangs and between gangs. Within a gang, fighting occurs to test courage, ability, and to establish and maintain rank. Combatants generally forgive each other and return to an amiable relationship quite quickly, often in a matter of minutes. In conflicts between gangs, members who do not fight are seen as unworthy, unreliable, and a poor risk. They rapidly lose status within the gang and may become an object of derision and even of physical attacks. In controlled settings where gang members are present, this can be countered by enforcing a strict no-fighting rule. Program strategies that offer ways in which respect, rank, trust, loyalty and honor can be demonstrated and maintained without fighting may be helpful.



Constant exposure to abusive social context

In some gangs communication among members is characterized by put-downs, insults, and other abuse, invariably framed in the crudest language. This kind of communication may be pervasive and unbroken for many hours at a time. Interestingly, this type of communication may temporarily cease when members have access to certain drugs, such as marijuana, which have a calming influence upon them. Program rules that forbid "capping" (insults) and other derogatory communication should be strictly enforced.

Preoccupied with basic needs; unlikely to focus on higher-order concerns

Some programs aim to influence gang-involved youth through techniques derived from psychotherapeutic practices. These include strategies such as decision-making, values clarification, group problem-solving, and so on. Techniques such as these are perceived as irrelevant by individuals whose day-to-day concerns are very basic in nature: safety, food, shelter, and so on. Programs reaching out to gang members may need to begin by establishing a sense of security and trustworthiness. The dangers involved in leaving the gang and embracing alternatives are real. Security should be established as prerequisite to use of strategies derived from psychotherapeutic practice.

Strongly influenced by peers

Gang members who appear completely unreachable when among a group of peers may be much more responsive when approached individually. It is helpful to work individually with gang members, or in very small groups. For this work to succeed, a strong relationship is essential in which authentic alternatives to gang membership are modeled. However, an early sign of success may be a period of "divided loyalties" in which the individual is torn between competing desires to stay immersed in the gang or to pursue a more pro-social alternative. This conflict may last for a very long time, and may be characterized by dishonesty with both the gang and those who have engaged the young person. The ability to remain committed to the young person even after being repeatedly "burned" by him or her may be a prerequisite for success.



Risk Factors

The concept of risk factors is similar to the characteristics of gang members concept detailed previously; the difference is that risk factors apply to communities and families, rather than to individuals.

Risk Factors are the circumstances or conditions which tend to be associated with high levels of gang activity. The risk factors listed here reflect patterns of circumstances frequently commented upon by local community members and law enforcement officials. They are remarkably congruent with the observations of scholars and researchers concerned with gangs.

In general, gangs arise when some combination of the following community circumstances exists:

Economic risk factors

- Opportunities for young people to enter the workforce are few or absent.
- There is high unemployment in the community.
- There is a high incidence of poverty in the community, resulting in scarcity of and associated competition for resources.
- There is high demand for a supply of illegal drugs (or other illegal goods) in the community, creating a profit-making opportunity for organized criminal groups.

Cultural/Social Risk Factors

- Quality of life is measured primarily by possession of or access to material comforts. Notions of internal growth and development are not a major influence.
- The community lacks effective and appropriate consequences to impose for criminal behavior.
- There exists much prejudice and related oppression of various groups.
- Young people are not provided opportunities to practice, and be recognized for, behaving as responsible adults.
- There is lack of consensus for clearly defining moral and behavioral expectations.

- There are few supportive resources to assist young people in overcoming mental health, social, and other difficulties.
- Newly immigrated ethnic minorities have joined the community, and compete with other resource-poor groups for scarce jobs and other resources.

Individual/family risk factors

- An older sibling, other close family member, or other role model is in a gang.
- A parent is involved in gangs, or is an ex-member of a gang.
- A parent is in prison, or has served time and developed an association with a prison gang.
- The young person becomes negatively involved with police at a young age.
- Behavioral problems develop in school, especially when problems are already obvious in primary grades.
- Poverty
- The family lives in a gang-dominated area.
- The child has difficulty succeeding in school.
- The family uses violent approaches to conflict resolution/discipline.
- Parents are poorly organized or suffer from mental health problems.
- Parents lack adequate family management and child rearing skills.





Guiding Principles for Building Pro-Youth Communities

"With all the kids I know who make it, there's one thing in common: an individual contact with an adult who cared and who kept hanging in with teen through his hardest moments. People talk programs, and that's important. But when it comes down to it, individual, person-to-person connections make the difference... Every kid I know who made it through the teen-age years had at least one adult in his life who made that effort."

—Barbara Stagers, M.D.³

Pro-youth program planners may benefit by addressing and adopting a set of fundamental principles as guiding beliefs the group (representing their community) has about gangs and responses to gang-related problems.

The principles proposed below are based upon the suggestions of the Gang Response Project's Framework Committee, reviewing gang-related research literature, interviewing numerous professionals involved in gang response, and suggestions from community planning groups.

There is no single, magical solution (panacea) to problems related to gangs.

There has been an historical cycle in which magic bullets have periodically been proposed for responding to youth crime and delinquency. These have invariably failed. Moreover, when they fail there is often a backlash against reform efforts in general. The backlash usually takes the form of "get tough" policies. Eventually, recognition dawns that the get tough policies also fail. The public becomes frustrated and searches for a solution. In this climate of frustration, the public becomes receptive to panacea-type proposals. Thus the cycle begins again.⁴

A coordinated, community-wide effort of diverse community members is essential.

No single group can influence the entire array of circumstances in which gangs thrive. No single agency or profession is likely to have the breadth of knowl-



edge and perspective needed to respond effectively to gangs. Working together in a way that aligns resources according to a common plan is essential. Solutions emerge when each pro-youth activist is connected to the whole through relationships with others. Networking and collaboration should be not just an additional task, but an integral part of the consciousness of administrators, managers, line staff, volunteers and other activists.

Reduce racism and promote appreciation of multiculturalism.

Racism is almost invariably a component of gang activity. Social acceptance of prejudice at any level promotes the continued propagation of racism. While there are many aspects of culture, all ethnic groups must agree upon in order for a society to function cohesively, there is still a great deal of latitude for constructive expression of unique cultural traditions, roles, and rituals. The history, mythologies, and beliefs that become components of the identity of peoples must be honored and respected; to do otherwise is to disrespect not just the culture but the individuals whose identities are shaped by it. These traditions are sources of strength for children, families, and communities.

Prefer methods that encourage strong linkages between young people and adult role models, opportunity providers, and advocates.

Programs, curricula, and youth centers are most likely to be effective when they serve to introduce young people to role models and opportunity providers. Opportunities are provided by other people—adults and peers who can serve as role models, mentors, guides, coaches, employers, and teachers. The main purpose of a program should be to facilitate high quality person-to-person contact that results in authentic and helpful relationships. Thus programs function as bridges between young people and adult community members, and must appeal to both.

The quote at the beginning of this section speaks to the importance of advocacy. Who will watch out for the needs of child? A near-universal finding of researchers who have investigated why some children succeed against the odds is that in every case these children had a positive relationship with an adult (usually outside the immediate family) who acted as an advocate for the child.

Prefer including gang members to excluding gang members.

Members of gangs should be included in all planning activities. But much more is required. The community as a whole should organize opportunities for membership. Membership is achieved through meaningful involvement in the life of the community. Opportunities should be perceived by gang members as inviting, accessible, and desirable.

**Base gang response efforts upon a pro-youth attitude.**

Most young people are law-abiding, honest, caring, and responsible. Often, defiant posturing is a thin veneer defending an inner core of vulnerability and need. Communicating a positive, supportive attitude toward youth is essential and often yields very positive results.

Clarify expectations.

It is increasingly unclear what values unite our society. Even small planning groups can help overcome this by formally agreeing upon a set of core values. Consensus on core values should be published—that is, shared with community. The task of negotiating, articulating and expressing values may be difficult, but is nevertheless worthwhile.

Ensure access to a variety of consequences for misbehavior.

It is important to be able to incarcerate gang members when appropriate. But in some cases incarceration may contribute to gang-related problems instead of eliminate them. Incarceration is, in fact, viewed by some young people as a normal part of a career path, endowing one with enhanced status. Many first offenders can be influenced by less punitive responses than incarceration, such as diversion to community service or other community-based alternatives. Communities should develop a wide variety of correctional options in addition to incarceration.

Non-violence; non-support for violence.

Violence is epidemic in society. A tolerant attitude toward violence is widely expressed in popular culture. Public policy supporting easy access to weapons, release from incarceration of violent offenders to accommodate non-violent offenders, violence in movies and music—these are just a few of the many pro-violence influences that exist. Wherever possible families, communities, and organizations should clearly establish a policy of zero tolerance for violence. This does not mean opposing conflict. Conflict is often a necessary part of creative efforts to solve social problems. Therefore, the “Zero Tolerance for Violence” principle must be balanced by the next one listed.

Promote development of skills and social support for peaceful conflict resolution.

Many young people simply lack the skills to resolve conflicts non-violently. These skills include the ability to avoid and/or diffuse potentially violent situa-

tions. Youth workers, teachers, and community members can all benefit from improving their capacities for promoting and facilitating non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. It is particularly important that adults model a compassionate, assertive ability to engage in potentially violent situations and effectively diffuse them through application of conflict resolution methods.

Avoid making a big deal about gangs. Recognition can accelerate the processes by which gangs eventually do become a big deal.

Youth gangs of the variety found in Tulare County thrive on public recognition. Gang members often keep clippings of press articles that feature their criminal exploits. The identity of the gang may be strengthened when its name gains wide public recognition. This should be avoided when possible. It is important that the news media and gang educators be sensitive to this.

Activities for responding to gang-related problems should include a balanced combination of prevention, intervention, and suppression.

Prevention attempts to influence present conditions in order to reduce the chances that gangs will develop in the future. Intervention includes attempts to identify potential gang members at as early an age as possible, and to divert them into activities and circumstances that will improve their chances for finding a pro-social pathway to community membership. Suppression uses all available legal means to stop gang activity. In a pro-youth community all three are present in balanced proportions.

Build gang response programs upon a foundation of carefully articulated theory.

A description of the theory or philosophy upon which programs are built should be carefully documented. The assumptions underlying the theory should be examined and when possible tested against scholarly research and evaluation literature. For example, an educational program may be based upon the theory that people act foolishly because they lack knowledge of certain important facts. This theory is built upon the assumption that knowledge is an important influence upon behavior for all people. Much scholarly research exists related to this assumption.

Prefer methods that are flexible and adaptable.

The nature of the challenges faced by youth sometimes changes rapidly. So does the availability of resources to support pro-youth initiatives. Programs should therefore prefer operational methods that can be easily modified to keep pace with changing conditions.





Develop measurable goals for gang response efforts.

There are many potential ways to measure trends in gang membership and associated problems. The Tulare County Gang Response Survey is one option. One or more key indicators should be chosen and periodically measured to help assess whether a community is making progress.

Evaluate progress.

Programs should develop simple evaluation plans by which progress toward meeting measurable goals can be measured.

Include a broad range of constituents in planning and implementing gang response initiatives.

No single organization, group, or entity acting alone can succeed in creating a powerful pro-youth climate in a community. Many types of resources must be included in program development. Gang members are a constituency of the community and represent a potential resource. Parents are also an important resource, as are local businesses, churches, city government, service clubs, schools, and other groups. When key constituents are not included in planning, they may feel excluded and access to their resources may be reduced.

Gang issues cannot be managed separately from other social issues that affect young people.

Gangs arise from within a complex web of interrelated circumstances. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, violence, racism, child abuse, inadequate parental supervision, poor access to health care, and many other factors contribute to the social conditions in which gangs flourish. These conditions are increasingly pervasive in all segments of society. Pro-youth communities will result when all these factors are addressed in a systematic, coordinated fashion.

Foundations for Effective Gang Response



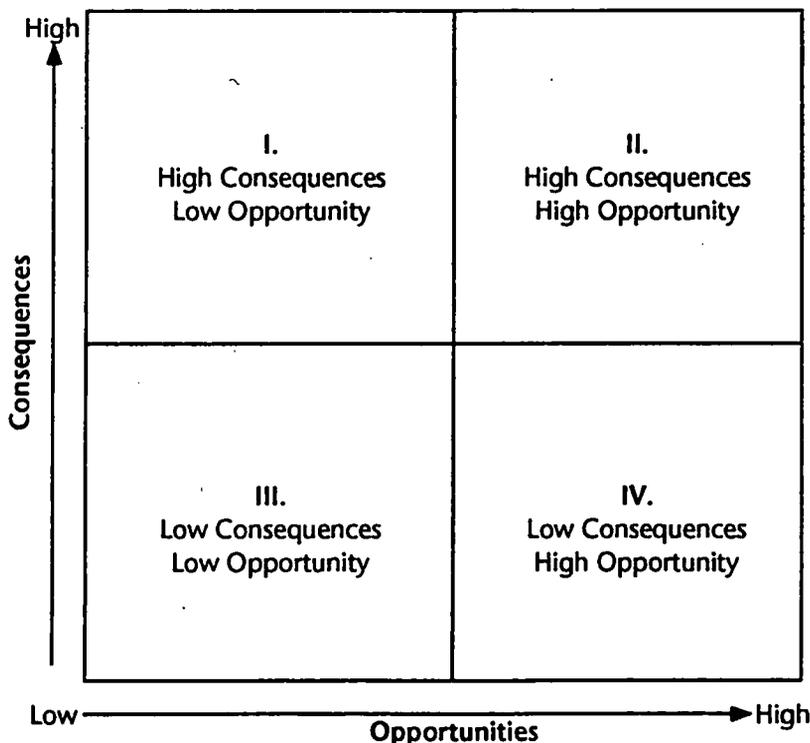
Three elements form the essential foundation of gang response efforts.

Opportunities: Simple access to lasting, meaningful and desirable opportunities for membership in the community and for developing wholesome relationships

Consequences: Timely, undesirable, and meaningful consequences for misbehavior without loopholes, preferential treatment, or delay

Engagement: The person-to-person element of gang response efforts. Engagement refers to caring relationships that engage every community member in a network of mutual support and encouragement (see page 3).

These elements are each important, but the *relationship between them* is equally important. Opportunities without authentic engagement may be ineffective. A community that is able to impose consequences but unable to offer adequate opportunity courts disaster. When opportunities and consequences are both absent, gangs become a powerful force damaging the very fabric of the community. The relationships between these influences are illustrated below:





Quadrant I

In the first quadrant is a situation where positive opportunities are scarce and the likelihood of consequences (punishment) for misbehavior strong. Social policy that supports this situation relies heavily on a belief that fear of punishment is by itself a strong deterrent to misbehavior. This combination may provide some short-term deterrence, but as a long-term approach it offers little chance to succeed. Its attitude is anti-gang unbalanced by pro-youth. However, it represents a very common community response to gang-related issues in California.

Quadrant III

This combination of consequences and opportunities essentially guarantees the likelihood of serious gang-related problems. With little opportunity to behave in ways that a community finds acceptable, and little to no consequences for behaving in unacceptable ways, this is a formula that spells disaster for any community hoping to be free of gang-related problems.

Quadrant IV

While the community provides opportunities for some young people to participate in positive activities, and invests in developing wholesome relationships between youngsters and adults, the option of punishing unacceptable behavior is not strongly emphasized.

Quadrant II

This is the goal. This represents the most promising combination for a community that is truly pro-youth and therefore most likely to be free of gang-related problems. Opportunities to succeed while developing wholesome relationships are effectively complemented by the community's clearly stated standards for behavior and capacity for swift and meaningful responses to willful misbehavior.

An instant needs assessment

Most pro-youth activists will be able intuitively to form a rough estimate of where their community falls within the four-quadrant grid above. By assessing how a community combines the elements of opportunities and consequences, planners can begin to identify the general direction in which they hope their strategies will lead.

For example, in a Quadrant I community, development of new alternatives may be identified as the priority response of the community.

In a Quadrant III community, it is desirable to expand the range of opportunities available to young people.

In a Quadrant IV community, the community should explore ways to enhance its ability to impose consequences for misbehavior.

The Quadrant II community is in the best position to establish a pro-youth social climate. It is most likely to be able to mount an effective response to gangs.

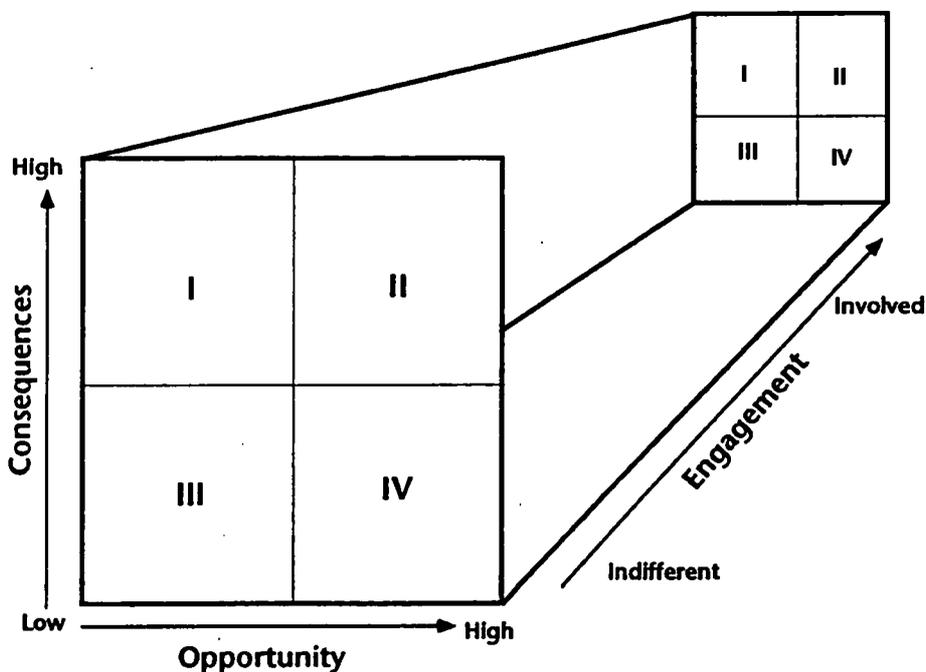
Consequences and opportunities are just two of the three foundations of effective gang response. Engagement is the third. Even when community is able to occupy Quadrant II, its members must still consider the dimension of engagement.

Engagement and the four quadrants

Engagement may be described as ranging from *indifferent* to *involved*.

Indifferent refers to communities in which quality connections with adult role models and opportunity providers are rare. Even in Quadrant II communities, where many programs and activities exist, indifference is possible if these programs and activities are substitutes for authentic relationships. It is critical to remember that programs should serve as contexts in which authentic, engaged relationships can develop.

Involved refers to communities that offer many meaningful, accessible, and immediate bridges between young people and opportunity providers.





Strategies, Settings, and Engagement Activities

In this section six strategies are defined. The methods for applying each strategy within each setting are referred to as engagement activities. The relationship between strategies, engagement activities, and the settings in which they are applied is important.

Engagement activities appropriate for implementing each strategy within each setting are suggested in this framework. The activities suggested for a particular strategy within a particular setting (for example, in square "A1" in the grid on the previous page) are often unique to that setting. Moreover, it is possible to misuse an activity by applying it in a setting for which it is not suited.

Strategies

Chances of succeeding in creating a powerful pro-youth context are greater in any community when many of its members work together to simultaneously employ multiple strategies in several settings.

This section suggests six engagement strategies. Within these strategies there are opportunities for active and effective involvement by every member of the community. The strategies are:

- **Suppression**
- **Community mobilization and planning**
- **Strengthening organizations**
- **Strengthening the family**
- **Providing opportunities**
- **Proactive policy development and advocacy**

Suppression

Communities and their residents suffer in the presence of violence, intimidation or criminal activity. Suppression refers to law enforcement activities intended to suppress such illegal behavior.

Suppression approaches are those by which gang members are arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced. In some cases, lengthy prison sentences are in the best interests of the community. Tactical patrols by police gang units, vertical prosecution, intensive supervision and vertical case management by probation departments, legislation targeted at gang members, and interagency task forces involving criminal justice actors are examples of this strategy. Also included are the development and implementation of information systems that help law enforcement agencies track gangs, gang members, and their activities.

Suppression is primarily the responsibility of law enforcement and the criminal justice system. However, assistance provided by community members is essential. This can occur through efforts such as Neighborhood Watch, the reporting of suspected gang activity, and participation in interagency planning efforts.

Community mobilization and planning

Community mobilization is the process of bringing together the resources of the community to address a common cause. It means mobilizing participants from every conceivable corner of the community—including gang members themselves.

Community mobilization and planning strategies must be broadly inclusive. They should not be restricted only to those with obvious community responsibility and authority for addressing gang-related issues such as law enforcement, social service agencies and school personnel. Success is most likely when parents, grandparents, students, ministers, business owners and other private citizens are also actively recruited and involved.

Effective community mobilization involves careful planning. It is important to support community mobilization efforts when they emerge, to avoid the possibility that they will degenerate into an impulsive and desperate process of crisis intervention. Effective planning begins with clearly defining what mission or purpose the community has come together to accomplish. From this beginning point, goals and objectives can be negotiated, and resources can be developed to meet these goals and objectives. The members of the community are often the primary resources. When a meaningful role is found for each community member enthusiasm grows. Communication, facilitation, flexibility and optimism are crucial to the planning process.

The mobilization efforts of community groups may benefit from guidance by an





impartial facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to foster communication and keep the group organized without usurping leadership roles that more appropriately belong to members of the group itself.

Strengthening organizations

Strengthening organizations is the process by which organizations— businesses, agencies, neighborhood groups, churches or schools— develop their internal capacity to respond to gangs. It includes assigning specific personnel to work on gang issues; developing gang-response policies and procedures; and developing the resources to implement those policies and procedures.

For example: a school district becomes concerned about campus security and responds by developing a safe schools plan. Another example: a hospital increases security staff and remodels access to emergency medical facilities to discourage invasion by large numbers of gang members. In both examples, policy decisions must be made and resources allocated to support them.

Organizational strengthening strategies are enhanced when the organization is also involved in community-wide efforts, such as those previously described under *Community Organization*.

Strengthening the family

When families are in crisis or simply in difficult circumstances, they will move in one of two directions: things will get worse, or things will get better. Family strengthening strategies are those that help families better their circumstances.

When these strategies are effective, family members can be sustained by hope and optimism. The appeal of gangs will not be reinforced by the sense of hopelessness and "no way out" that characterizes families in chronic crisis.

This strategy involves reaching out to youngsters and their families in a compassionate and supportive way. The focus should be on providing opportunities that the families themselves define as needed. These opportunities should be geared toward helping families better their circumstances. This is the most consistently stated recommendation found in the literature of pro-youth programs.

Examples of services and activities intended to strengthen the family include crisis intervention, the teaching of parenting skills, temporary shelter, counseling, diversion programs, and most traditional social work and referral approaches, among other types of services. Services must be culturally relevant to and valued by those they are intended to benefit.

Providing opportunities

This refers to creating ways in which young people can become meaningfully involved in the life of the community. Meaningful involvement is synonymous with making a contribution. Young people want to do their part for society—usually represented by a microcosm of society, such as a sports team, school club, church group, civic organization, workplace, or neighborhood. They become frustrated when opportunities to do so are absent. Gang membership may be one way in which young people solve the problem of how to contribute to their community. Employment, volunteer service, mentorships and internships, political activism, or pursuit of personal artistic or athletic interests, are potential channels through which pro-youth opportunities can be provided.

Opportunities can be provided through innovative educational approaches that link schools more closely with business, community-based organizations, and other groups. However, schools do not bear sole responsibility for opportunity provision. A community-wide commitment, involving parents, business, government, civic organizations, and other groups is necessary to create a truly pro-youth environment of opportunity. School sites are often an excellent location for providing services, but other locations are also important.

Opportunities should be wanted as well as needed. Young people should share the task of defining and creating these opportunities. To be successful, opportunities must be accessible; that is, they should be easy to locate and to become involved in. Participants should be confident that the opportunities are authentic, not temporary, and likely to connect to future opportunities that are equally meaningful.

Planning to provide opportunities will most likely succeed when those for whom the opportunities are intended—the community's young people, including its gang members—are legitimately involved in the planning process.

Proactive policy development and advocacy

The term "policy" refers to laws or ordinances adopted by a governmental body. Policy development is important because policies often determine what resources will be made available and how they will be used.

In formulating policies which address gang-related behaviors, the emphasis can be either reactive or proactive. Reactive policies attempt to correct problems that have already come into being. Proactive policies attempt to create conditions that maintain or improve upon desirable conditions.

Policies that aim to solve one problem may end up inadvertently contributing to another. For example, federal drug suppression policies have inadvertently





helped create a situation in which violent street gangs can control very lucrative drug trafficking businesses. Another example is the policy decision to increase the use of incarceration as a deterrent to many kinds of crime. Among the damaging effects of this policy have been: diversion of a vast portion of public funds to prosecuting and warehousing criminals with little detectable deterrent effect; reduction of community-based alternatives to incarceration (such as probation); and increasing the membership, power, and influence of prison gangs. The task of developing policies that are truly wise and constructive is complicated by these kinds of "hidden costs." The hidden costs may not become apparent until several years after the policy has been in place.

The advocacy function of this strategy involves working with policy makers to assess which policies will have truly pro-youth effects. It includes assessing and evaluating existing policies, and when necessary making recommendations for their modification.

Settings

Engagement with young people occurs in specific settings. The way in which a strategy is implemented in one setting may be entirely impractical or inappropriate in another setting. Moreover, many settings consist of various subsettings. The settings and subsettings used in this framework are described below.

Community members are genuinely concerned about local problems, including those involving gangs. They know that the taxes they pay are used in part to respond to community problems stemming from gang-related activity. However, very few citizens know how or where they can become involved in solving gang-related problems.

This section is intended to broaden the scope of community participation by identifying the settings where ordinary citizens are normally found. This will increase their opportunities to become involved in campaigns for pro-youth communities. The settings addressed in the framework are:

School	Employment/Business/Worksite
Law Enforcement	Community-Based Agencies
Family	Criminal Justice/Judicial System
Community	The Gang and its Members
Neighborhood	

This list of settings is not complete. It is a reduced version that is intended to

make more manageable the planning task of selecting settings in which to apply the strategies and engagement activities recommended in this framework.

Engagement activities

The following pages illustrate how communities can take action. They identify concrete engagement activities that implement the six strategies within each setting. Resources are available in most communities to implement at least some of these activities.

The list of strategies offers many potential points of entry through which virtually any community member can become involved in pro-youth initiatives. Agencies that provide leadership for pro-youth initiatives are encouraged to identify activities that they can use to reach out to new constituencies within their communities. Effectively involving constituencies who were previously not involved will rapidly expand the scope of resources available to pro-youth activists.





Schools

Suppression—Schools

The goals of suppression strategies on school campuses are to preserve a safe and secure environment and to remove students and visitors who threaten the security of other students and staff. Suggestions include:

- Establish an anonymous "Gang Reporting Hot Line" or "Safe Schools Line" for use by students. The hot line may be most effective when it is specifically for a single campus. Schools that choose this approach should collaborate with law enforcement officials when making plans for the hot line.
- Have on campus safety officers or youth development officers who are sworn police officers. An important role for these officers is to establish cordial relationships with young people, based on normal (not problem-centered) interaction. The activities of campus police officers do not need to be restricted to campus. Many young people report that their fear of assault is highest when they are en route to school or returning home. Increased law enforcement visibility (or other forms of adult supervision) may be helpful in some neighborhoods when students are leaving for school or returning home.
- Visitor screening and security alert codes: Schools are becoming more adamant about identifying every visitor. Policy guidelines should be established in this regard. When there is an indication that a visitor may be a threat to safety, code phrases spoken over the intercom can alert staff. Codes are most effective when staff have received training in how to respond when a security risk exists.
- Adequate supervision: Increase the amount of adult supervision. On large campuses, staff mobility is also important. Some campuses provide golf carts for deans and others who are called upon to respond to troublesome situations. Consider equipping supervising staff with walkie-talkies.
- Graffiti Suppression: Immediate removal of graffiti hampers communication among gang members. It interferes with turf claims and with challenges to other gangs. Photograph or sketch graffiti prior to removal. A record of graffiti can be useful for evaluating gang response efforts, tracking gang activity trends, and investigating crime.
- Facilities: Increasing or decreasing lighting at night may help deter vandalism and other crime. Construction materials and paints that repel

graffiti are available. When contracting with architects to design school campuses, specify a design that maximizes supervision capacity and contributes to safety in other ways.

- **Boundaries:** Several boundary management techniques are used. These include fencing campuses, closed campus policies, declaration of "drug-free zones" around campuses, conducting weapons sweeps (or, more extreme, installing metal detectors) and similar approaches.

Community mobilization and planning—Schools

When community planning efforts related to youth issues are in progress, school personnel should be visible and active participants. In many communities, schools may initiate community planning processes. Work with consultants who are skilled in community organization and planning processes. A goal will be to expand the range of constituents involved in planning processes. Another goal will be to develop new forms of partnership between the schools and the community.

An excellent place to begin is by including various constituencies from throughout the community in the process of developing a "safe schools" policy (see below).

A model for community mobilization is the "Healthy Start" program. In Tulare County, this program is in operation in Lindsay. It brings under one roof a diverse group of agencies to serve the health needs of students and family members. Intake processes are streamlined. Staff of participating agencies can work together to formulate a comprehensive plan for assisting the family.

When a crisis situation is developing (or has already occurred) at a school campus, consider including leaders of various community groups in resolving the crisis.

Strengthening Organizations—Schools

Schools must develop clear policy and procedural guidelines. Using the term "safe schools" to describe the policy will probably yield more satisfactory results than using the term "gang suppression." The safe schools policy should include several elements:

- Clear guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. This includes language, clothing, and other actions
- Provision for creating a "safe schools team," led by a designated individual who is responsible for managing the team and developing its operational methods





- Description of the processes by which programs related to school safety are formulated, developed, and evaluated
- Provision for a range of consequences that are enforceable, meaningful, and immediate

There are many other points a safe schools policy may cover. Dress code is an important policy concern. For example, the Inglewood School District's Policy (1990) prohibits "any apparel, jewelry, accessory, notebook or manner of grooming which, by virtue of its color, arrangement, trademark or any other attribute, denotes membership in such a group that advocates drug use or exhibits behaviors that interfere with the normal and orderly operation of a school."

Also important for strengthening the school organization is the provision of training for staff. This training should go beyond gang awareness and recognition. A comprehensive training program would also include development of conflict resolution/mediation skills; teaching a philosophy of engagement and the skills to support it; overview of the communities comprehensive pro-youth strategy; and, when appropriate, multicultural appreciation training.

Strengthening the family-Schools

It is important for schools to continue their efforts to strengthen the family. Strong working relationships with parents will help. Parents are motivated to participate as partners with the school when they understand what's in it for them. School programs aimed at strengthening the program should target family's needs as defined by the families being served.

Examples of family strengthening approaches include: the "Special Friends" or Primary Intervention Project; Head Start programs; parenting classes; well-designed parent communications that keep parents informed of safe schools practices and opportunities; and counseling programs on school campuses that give emotional support to students.

Providing opportunities-Schools

Schools are seen by some gang members (and by many non-gang-involved students) as a relatively safe place to be. Extracurricular activities can be developed to appeal specifically to students who might not normally become involved in standard extracurricular events. Friday Nite Live is often cited as exemplary in this regard.

Curriculum-based approaches can play a part in creating a safe school environment. Gang-specific curricula, such as Project Y.E.S. and Mission SOAR are



available (although extensive evaluations have not yet been released). Develop curricula to help very young students learn conflict resolution skills. Cooperative learning strategies, infused in every area of curricular study, can be invaluable in helping students develop pro-social relationship skills.

Schools may be able to develop greater racial tolerance by encouraging celebrations of diversity. For example, Cinco de Mayo celebrations or observations of Black History Week may help reinforce the self-esteem of some students. Relatively recent arrivals, such as Southeast Asian groups, should be encouraged to develop celebrations of unique aspects of their heritage.

Involving parents in education is seen as a crucial gang response strategy. The challenge of successfully involving parents of high-risk students is well-known. To succeed, schools will need to understand and adopt appropriate marketing techniques. These techniques will be based upon understanding what parents value, and shaping programs to be congruent with parent values. Suggested program models include: reshaping PTAs and PTOs to provide services to parents, such as continuing education; recognizing parents in honors programs; promoting family activities at school campuses; creating cooperative learning approaches in which parents are intrinsically involved as part of the students' learning groups; involving parents in training sessions for peer helpers and similar groups; creating community service programs that give students opportunities to earn credit for voluntary service; and creating opportunities for parents to serve as off-campus resources through mentor and similar programs. Another suggestion is to schedule activities with consideration for important family rituals, such as family dinnertime.

Parents who want to become involved in school activities sometimes report that they have felt discouraged by what they perceived as hostile, defensive, or unwelcoming attitudes held by school staff. This is compounded for immigrant parents, who may not be able to communicate effectively with school staff at sites where staff competent in the parents' languages are not available.

Peer support programs can be helpful. "Natural Helpers" is an approach widely used in Tulare County and elsewhere. A "Warm Line" staffed by trained peer helpers can also be a useful support program.

Proactive policy development and advocacy—Schools

Schools have traditionally been active advocates for pro-educational political measures. This advocacy must be extended to encompass youth issues in general, and criminal justice issues. The relationships between the juvenile justice system, education, mental health services and social services are



profound and far-reaching. Other social policies, such as those that result in allocating an ever-larger portion of tax dollars to prisons that have no rehabilitative function, result in stiff competition with schools for limited public funds.

It may be helpful for school administrators to join multi-disciplinary coalitions or committees concerned with formulating joint recommendations regarding public policy.

Evaluations of various juvenile delinquency prevention, early intervention, drug abuse education, and similar efforts exist. They are too often overlooked by policy makers. School personnel in charge of pro-youth campuses or safe school programs must be responsible to seek out, review, and understand the implications of program evaluations. In order for evaluation findings to have a useful impact it will be necessary to educate key policy makers about them.

Law Enforcement Agencies



Suppression—Law Enforcement⁵

- Aggressive use of the Street Terrorism Act helps law enforcement agencies coordinate their efforts with the prosecution efforts of the District Attorney. In general, efforts to improve the investigative process are recommended. Use of the Street Terrorism Act is strengthened when officers also cultivate positive personal relationships with gang members. These relationships can help improve intelligence about gang operations.
- Establish a comprehensive database and information system to track gangs, gang members, and their activities.
- Develop intelligence systems to stay informed of the organizational characteristics of gangs. This should include type of gang structure, leadership, gang rituals, cultural beliefs, and roles within the gang.
- Develop guidelines for determining when an individual is a gang member; when a group is a gang; and when a crime is gang-related. These guidelines should reflect a balanced position that avoids prematurely or incorrectly classifying individuals as gang members, while also ensuring that gang-related activity is accurately and quickly identified as such. Denial and over-reaction can both be detrimental to effective gang suppression.

Community mobilization and planning—Law Enforcement

Police agencies and community based organizations both have much to gain from networking with each other. This networking will be most effective when it includes joint planning. When law enforcement leaders participate with community based organizations in planning, a deeper commitment to working together may evolve.

While police agencies are primarily concerned with law enforcement, there is widespread agreement among officers that suppression and law enforcement are not enough. Consequences must be balanced by positive opportunities for young people. Coordination with community-based agencies can provide opportunities for police officers to influence how opportunity providers shape their programs. Coordination is strengthened when written interagency agreements exist. These agreements can be purely philosophical in nature, or they may include detailed information about how the agencies will cooperate on specific tasks. Roles, responsibilities, timelines, and resources can all be included



in interagency agreements. We suggest that these agreements include a statement that all parties to them endorse this *Framework* document.

There is some concern that a potential for vigilantism currently exists. By adopting pro-active community organization methods, police agencies may be able to prevent this from occurring. What is needed is to develop ways in which citizens can help enforce laws without resorting to vigilante methods. There is a need for creative collaboration between citizens, law enforcement officials, and judicial representatives to develop guidelines to help citizens become involved in ways that are constructive, effective, and helpful.

Strengthening organizations—Law Enforcement

We urge law enforcement agencies in Tulare County to formally endorse this framework document. Because law enforcement agencies generally use the statutory definition of gang, the department's endorsement letter may include language specifying the statutory definition will still be used by the department.

- Create a gang response unit within the police department. Place it under effective leadership. Allocate sufficient resources to the unit.
- Provide specialized training for all officers. Provide in-depth specialized training to officers in the gang response unit.
- Consolidate gang control functions—intelligence, prevention, enforcement and follow-up—within the gang unit.
- Rotate assignments so each officer on the force gains gang experience to help reduce internal competition for resources and foster cooperation among various units.

Strengthening the family—Law Enforcement

- Neighborhood watch programs help families increase their sense of security. The existing neighborhood watch model should be re-examined to assess how it can be updated to help address concerns families have about gang activity in their neighborhoods.
- Parents who have had the opportunity to establish working relationships with individual officers are supportive of approaches that assign officers to specific neighborhoods.
- Law enforcement forums that allow residents of specific neighborhoods or areas of town to meet with law enforcement representatives can be helpful.

- When a child has been arrested, the arresting officers should arrange to meet with the child and his or her parents. In many cases this will foster positive relationships between parents and police officers. In general, the more information parents are given the more empowered they will feel.

Providing opportunities—Law Enforcement

Several examples exist in Tulare county of how the police are involved in providing positive opportunities. In Visalia, the Police Activities League has been reaching out to young people. The police have also played important roles in establishing and maintaining the youth centers in many community centers.

- The "Thunderbolt" first-offender diversion program is universally praised, but almost never funded. We strongly urge law enforcement agencies to reconsider the priority of this program.
- Ride along programs for citizens are encouraged.
- The Citizen's Academy recently piloted in Visalia is a promising way to involve more citizens as effective allies of law enforcement.

Proactive policy development and advocacy—Law Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies should develop broad strategic guidelines for gang response. These guidelines might include long-term goals and objectives. They will guide the efforts of the gang response unit within the department.

In the course of gathering information for this document, we noticed that many law enforcement officers shared the belief that current public policies emphasizing imprisonment without rehabilitation or community placement alternatives have hidden costs that are beginning to cripple our society. One of these costs is that prison gangs are strengthened and their members eventually released to the community. If law enforcement associations were to raise their voices in favor of a more balanced approach they might have a positive influence on moving toward a more balanced public policy.





Community-Based Organizations

Suppression—Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations should develop effective measures to suppress gang activity at program sites and activities. A policy of zero tolerance for violence, and security measures to enforce this policy, are recommended. Other suggestions include:

- Adopt dress codes similar to those adopted by schools. This will show solidarity with schools and reinforce their efforts.
- Establish and communicate clear behavioral expectations. Provide young people with written "behavioral expectation cards."
- When possible, schedule activities for youth during daylight hours, and require parents to provide transportation away from the activity as soon as it is ended. When activities must be scheduled during nighttime hours, increase supervision.
- Increase lighting inside and outside the building.
- Increase parking area supervision. Restrict access to areas within the facility where supervision is more difficult.
- Invite local law enforcement agencies to provide training by gang specialists for agency staff.
- Work with neighbors—other businesses and residents in the vicinity of the organization's facilities—to develop ways to coordinate pro-youth and anti-gang activities.
- Remove graffiti and repair vandalism damage immediately.
- Work with law enforcement, probation, and judges to identify how the agency can serve as a resource to young people who violate the law.
- Work with school administrators to identify how the agency can serve as a resource to young people who violate school policies or rules.

A pro-youth approach is to find ways to positively involve gang-affiliated youths in programs and activities. This will be facilitated by separating individuals from other gang members, and involving them in activities with non-gang members. Take care to avoid mixing charismatic gang leaders with high-risk

youth who may be susceptible to recruitment.



Community mobilization and planning—Community-Based Organizations

The key here is to form a system of coordination among community organizations that will support the individual missions of those organizations while simultaneously providing positive linkages among them. Turf battles and competition can be overcome when recognition exists that we must all work together for any single agency to succeed.

- Assign staff to community organization tasks. The role of these staff will be to help diverse groups find ways to work together. To be effective, staff will need to be organizational development consultants and community organization facilitators.
- Formally adopt the *Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities* as a resource for guiding program planning and development. The usefulness and success of the Framework depends entirely upon its being adopted in this manner by at least one organization in each community. An extension of this recommendation is to agree to accept primary "torch bearer" responsibility for promoting the Framework within a specific community. This is a crucial role and without it the Framework will almost certainly lose relevance.

Strengthening organizations—Community-Based Organizations

In the past, strengthening organizations has often been synonymous with obtaining increased funding. Calls for more staff, more facilities, and more programs have been accompanied by the promise that these additional resources would help solve pressing problems. This promise is becoming more difficult to sell; evaluations generally do not support claims of effectiveness and competition for government funding has increased while actual funding has decreased. A new approach is recommended: rather than focusing on program or agency growth, focus on leveraging the resources of the community. Agencies are encouraged to develop alliances with many other groups, to create service opportunities for volunteers, and to approach the task of program design from a holistic perspective that realizes no agency operates as an island. Specific recommendations include:

- The heart of any agency is its staff. Staff selection, development, and supervision are critical aspects of program operations. Staff development refers not just to developing technical skills and expertise, but also to encouraging the development of inner resources of perspective, compassion, and wisdom.



- Designate an individual to develop gang expertise, provide or arrange training for other staff, and maintain linkages with other organizations.
- Formally review the organization's mission statement to verify that it provides a foundation for a generally pro-youth approach. Include young people (and gang members) and their parents in the review process. Have a brief, memorable mission statement that is prominently posted where it can be reviewed by staff and other constituents.
- Work with other agencies. Participate in community-wide pro-youth councils. Allow the recommendations of these councils to have a prominent role in shaping the manner in which the agency and its programs operate.
- Develop and implement evaluation procedures to evaluate the effects of the agency's activities. These procedures can have two primary purposes: to help maintain and improve the quality of the program, and to help determine how to use resources most effectively.
- Periodically review scholarly research and evaluation of programs similar those operated by the agency. When evaluation findings indicate that the approaches being used are not effective, cut your losses: abandon these approaches. When evaluation findings suggest that stronger effects are possible through other methods, redesign the program to incorporate these approaches. Provide adequate staff training to support program changes.

Strengthening the family-Community-Based Organizations

Include parents and young people in strategic planning processes, to ensure that program goals, objectives, and operational methods are congruent with the needs of the people the program serves. In many cases where parents have been included in planning processes, agencies have learned that their approaches have been substantially off-target. This is valuable and important knowledge that can empower agencies to become significantly more effective.

Programs and agencies that serve non-English speaking parents must develop the capacity to communicate effectively with parents. Using children to translate for the parents and program staff is not reliable. Moreover, parents become frustrated, feel powerless, and may become depressed when they cannot communicate directly with program staff.

Programs that provide direct services to young people are encouraged to include the entire family. For example, family-based approaches to counseling are often more effective than approaches that involve only the young person.



Many parents would like training in effective disciplinary methods, in recognizing and responding to signs of gang involvement or other undesirable behavior, and in developing a positive family environment. However, even motivated parents are unlikely to attend classes (an important exception is court-ordered parents, an alternative worth exploring). Training and guidance can be offered through other channels, focusing on existing groups. Neighborhood watch groups are often very receptive to training.

Providing opportunities—Community-Based Organizations

Develop linkages with many adults who are potential role models or opportunity providers. Find ways to connect these individuals with young people, through mentoring, internships, and similar roles. Establish a database that can be used to quickly connect young people with adults based on shared interests. Screening and training volunteers are important issues; Big Brothers Big Sisters is an organization that has dealt with these issues and that may be able to provide some guidelines for other agencies.

A complementary approach is to develop ways in which young people become resources to the community. Counseling programs could include a community service component, for example. Other examples include Sequoia SSTARs, youth corps, and working in soup kitchens and similar organizations.

In general, the most meaningful opportunities are those in which young people form a positive bond with a caring and accessible adult role model or opportunity provider. Strategies that allow one-on-one involvement are preferable to strategies that address young people only in group settings.

Activities that remove young people from their normal settings and challenge them to develop new internal resources can be helpful. Outward-bound type wilderness programs are an example of this approach.

Proactive policy development and advocacy—Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations can contribute to pro-youth policy development by becoming more involved in legislative processes. To this end, program managers can:

- Prepare formal briefings on program activities and needs of program constituents, and periodically present these briefings to legislators or legislative staff.
- Local control of program planning is often complicated by categorical



funding and other influences that result in planning restrictions being imposed by state or federal agencies. When these restrictions prove problematic, pro-youth activists can work with local advisory boards, county administrators, and legislators to develop and propose alternatives.

- Periodically hold discussions in staff meetings about public policy and how policies affect the work of the agency. It may help to invite city council members or other policy makers to make presentations to staff. Elicit suggestions from staff about what changes to existing policies they would recommend. Summarize these suggestions and mail or fax them to policy makers.
- Participate in local advisory boards, town hall, and similar meetings.

Communities



Suppression-Communities

An interagency gang suppression task force, perhaps modeled after the Interagency Narcotics Enforcement Team (INET) could strengthen gang suppression efforts in many communities, particularly those in non-incorporated areas of the county. This would facilitate sharing gang-related intelligence between agencies. Additional ideas include:

- Neighborhood watch or similar programs should be widely promoted in all communities.
- Assigning police officers to specific beats was frequently recommended by participants in the Gang Response Project's planning process.
- Some departments allow parents and other citizens to participate in "ride along" programs.

Graffiti suppression programs are considered essential for suppression. These programs include point-of-sale restrictions of paints and markers, graffiti removal by citizens (sometimes organized through neighborhood watch or similar programs); and removal by juvenile offenders who are ordered to do so by the juvenile court. Gang suppression activists can develop and publish guidelines regarding construction strategies and materials appropriate for discouraging graffiti. Surveillance programs can be helpful for identifying and prosecuting taggers.

Community mobilization and planning-Communities

The presence of individuals whose job is to facilitate community mobilization will greatly strengthen the ability of communities to develop multifaceted pro-youth initiatives. While it is unusual for agencies to fund community organization positions, precedents do exist. For example, the Tulare County Alcohol and Drug Division followed up a year-long master planning process by contracting with a consulting firm to continue working with communities to help them implement the recommendations of the master plan.

Strengthening organizations-Communities

Organizations should include community members in their strategic planning processes. These include formulation of mission statements, goals statements,



and objectives; review of evaluation plans and findings; and ensuring the membership of governing boards is in fact representative of the community groups served.

Strengthening the family—Communities

In areas where gang activity is high or where students fear assault, parents can organize to provide walking escorts. Inexpensive FM transceivers (walkie talkies, available at Radio Shack for \$25; range approximately 2 blocks) may be helpful for parents who participate in patrols. They can be used to stay in touch with someone who is near a telephone and who can call the police if help is needed (portable cellular phones may soon become a more widely affordable option).

Providing opportunities—Communities

A very popular opportunity provision activity is creation of youth centers. Our recommendation is that youth centers be places where young people can connect with adult role models and opportunity providers. When considering creating a youth center, we recommend carefully assessing the amount of money that will be required to build, furnish, and maintain the center. Excessive facility overhead can cripple programs by reducing the amount of funds left over for operations. Remember that it is people who can become constructively engaged in helpful relationships that will make the biggest difference. On the other hand, a powerful argument in favor of community centers is that they provide a focus for the activities of community members, and are easily identified as places through which resources can be channeled and activities planned.

Electronically-controlled signs (marquees), such as those used by Caltrans, could be placed in areas where there is a lot of cruising activity. These signs could provide information regarding alternative activities for youth. This strategy presupposes that alternative activities have been organized and that they are well-supervised.

Proactive policy development and advocacy—Communities

Zoning ordinances have been used in some areas (but not in Tulare County) to encourage creating jobs for young people. The most frequently cited example is prohibition of self-serve gasoline stations, which creates more entry-level jobs for young people.

Cruising is considered by many individuals to contribute to gang-related problems. One suggestion is to consider policy tying the impact of cruising on air quality to permits to cruise. Perhaps cruising permits could be sold, allowing a

specified number of circuits; proceeds could be used to support pro-youth activities and programs.

A suggested area for policy development is working toward legislation that would allow for weapons checks (similar to seat belt checks) to be held in communities.

Legislation to restrict access to handguns by minors and sales of certain types of weapons that have no sporting use was advocated by many participants in Tulare County Gang Response Project. The proliferation of guns of all kinds, and easy access to these weapons by children, is widely believed to be a major factor contributing to the rise of violent crime.

Another factor frequently mentioned is violence on television and in movies. There is currently some congressional pressure for entertainment media to accept more responsibility in this regard.

The issues of handgun control and entertainment media regulation present difficult constitutional issues. These issues are intrinsically related to gangs and, more broadly speaking, to how our culture is responding to the task of raising young people.





Families

Suppression-Families

A frequently suggested approach is to hold parents responsible for the misbehavior of their children. While this may prove effective in some cases, in many it is simply unworkable. Parents may be disorganized, overwhelmed, and unskilled at parenting. Punishment may simply increase the stress in the family with little detectable benefit. Moreover, this approach would place additional burdens on already overwhelmed court and probation resources. Concrete issues must be answered, such as who supervises parents who are sentenced to community service hours, and what sanctions are to be imposed when community service is not given. In addition, gang response project staff were not able to find research to support the theory that sanctions against parents will result in their children actually changing behavior.

Many parents feel confused about how to discipline young people. There is a perception that parents are subject to arrest if they ever spank or otherwise use physical force as a means of discipline. These parents have asked for guidance regarding what they can do to discipline children. A recommendation of this project is that Child Protective Services develop and disseminate written guidelines describing what forms of discipline are acceptable and what forms may result in CPS involvement.

It is helpful for parents to be involved in Neighborhood Watch groups. It is also helpful for parents to personally know a police officer; again, the idea of assigning police officers to neighborhood beats is appealing.

Community Mobilization and Planning-Families

Neighborhood watch is one of the most effective means for mobilizing families. However, families can do much more.

Communities can become powerfully mobilized when these circumstances co-exist: an undesirable condition exists (for example, a park has been taken over by a gang); one or more individuals decide to take action; and a critical mass of the community supports their action. An example from Southern California involved several families cooperating to spread fresh manure (donated by a local landscaper) throughout a local park. A gang that had taken over the park quickly vacated it. These families then established a series of neighborhood events at the park. In actions of this type, usually a single individual provides

leadership. Sometimes it is helpful for this individual to receive some coaching from experienced community organizers. Other suggestions include:

- Participate in community-sponsored family activities
- Seek to develop mutually supportive and protective relationships with neighbors
- Become and remain familiar with the community's gang prevention and response plans

Strengthening organizations—Familles

Parenting classes have been used, where parents of children arrested for gang activity have been ordered by the court to complete a series of classes on gang awareness and parenting skills.

Organizational strengths within families include:

- Clear policies (rules) about what behaviors are acceptable and not acceptable
- Parents who are well-informed about youth issues, and who can recognize and respond to early signs of drug use, gang involvement, educational difficulty, and emotional stress
- Effective communication among family members
- Effective means for consistently enforcing policies
- Resources to provide opportunities for family members
- Connection to a supportive network of individuals beyond the immediate family who can lend assistance when needed

Poverty, chronic illness (physical or mental), illiteracy and many other factors can seriously weaken the family. Programs that address these issues are valuable allies in gang response efforts.

Strengthening the family—Familles

Any program that helps families develop the organizational strengths listed above will contribute to creating pro-youth families and communities. When parents are struggling with misbehaving children—especially teens—it is important that community resources be available to assist them. Family counseling from private therapists is not affordable for many families, but non-profit organizations are able to provide some help. In Tulare County, organizations such as Turning Point, Porterville Youth Inc., Family Services, Tulare Youth





Service Bureau, and Real Alternatives for Youth Organization help meet this need. In addition, churches can expand their already considerable role in this regard.

Specific suggestions from participants in the gang response project include:

- Parenting education provided in native language
- Programs specifically for Asian families to help parents understand what resources exist to help them and how they may use these resources
- Workshops provided *in neighborhoods* and tailored to address current neighborhood concerns (e.g. graffiti, vandalism, take-overs, crime, violence). Provide a series of workshops on gang issues.
- Involve parents in planning and providing youth activities. Link parents with children other than their own, extending the number and variety of contacts young people have with adults.

Providing opportunities—Families

One general approach to providing opportunities is to create incentives for families to do things as a family unit. For example, businesses can offer family discounts whenever at least one parent (or grandparent) and child do things together (for example: discounts on ticket prices for entertainment events). Incentives could be created for employees who participate in many family activities. Families can strengthen each other by including neighbor's children in family activities and field trips.

Proactive policy development and advocacy—Families

Policy development in families consists of developing and clearly communicating well-defined limits for children's behavior. According to child development specialists, these limits should be neither too harsh nor too lenient, and they should change over time to keep pace with developmental growth in children. Their enforcement must be fair, reasonably consistent, and delivered in a caring manner.

This constellation of requirements for proactive policy development is very difficult for many families to meet. It requires parents to have a combination of thinking skills, life skills, and emotional resources that many parents simply do not have. Organizations that specialize in strengthening families can be of great service in the area of helping families develop and live according to proactive, pro-youth family policies.

Neighborhoods



Suppression-Neighborhoods

Programs based upon the Neighborhood Watch concept can assist law enforcement in their efforts to suppress illegal behavior of gang members (Neighborhood Watch as it presently exists is not adequate for responding to gang activity, and needs further modification). These groups can cooperate with law enforcement programs and provide a source of information and communication. For example, they can serve as "gang watchdogs" for their area and report suspected gang activity. This approach is most likely to be effective when neighborhood residents have a working relationship with specific officers, such as neighborhood beat officers or community relations officers. Officers should work with neighborhood residents to develop guidelines and provide training regarding how to accurately recognize and safely report suspected gang activity. One-time training is not enough; meetings should be held at regular intervals to reinforce these projects.

Neighborhood residents should take responsibility for painting over graffiti. Local groups can pool resources to purchase paints and brushes which can be kept on hand for immediate response to new graffiti.

In collaboration with a local youth agency or law enforcement officers, neighborhood residents can meet with gang members to express their concerns about gang activity and to work toward conflict resolution and developing a pro-youth environment in the neighborhood.

It is important to clearly define what the role of residents is in suppression, to prevent residents from resorting to vigilantism. Police agencies have an opportunity to play a pro-active role in this regard.

Community mobilization and planning-Neighborhoods

An excellent publication titled *Twenty Things You Can Do to Reduce Drug and Alcohol Problems in Your Neighborhood* contains many suggestions that are appropriate for addressing gang problems. Here is a summary of these ideas.

Fundamental facts about neighborhood change

1. The police cannot solve all the problems in your neighborhood.
2. Outside "experts" cannot solve all the problems in your neighborhood.
3. Money cannot solve all the problems in your neighborhood.



4. You don't have to risk your life to clean up your neighborhood.
5. A handful of people can create a neighborhood full of change.

Activities for neighborhood change

1. Walk around your block every day.
2. Make a map of your neighborhood.
3. Pick up dangerous garbage.
4. Get acquainted with the police.
5. Communicate with absentee property owners and landlords.
6. Use the telephone to call for assistance.
7. Remove graffiti.
8. Remove abandoned cars.
9. Replace broken street and park lights.
10. Stop inappropriate use of your neighborhood park.
11. Interrupt automobile drug deals.
12. Stop drug problems on abandoned property.
13. Interrupt public and underage drinking.
14. Start a neighborhood trash clean-up campaign.
15. Start (or join) a local Neighborhood Watch.
16. Start a Neighborhood Patrol.
17. Start a Neighborhood Safety Committee.
18. Have neighborhood parties and celebrations.
19. Develop a neighborhood support system.
20. Create a Drug Free Zone in your neighborhood.

The book from which these ideas are summarized gives many suggestions for how to implement each idea effectively, sensibly, and safely. It is available from the Resource Center of the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. Call 1-800-879-2772 and ask for publication number ADP 93-569.

Strengthening organizations-Neighborhoods

There are several types of organization within each neighborhood. Gangs are themselves one type of organization. Neighborhood improvement groups, such as Neighborhood Watch, are another type of organization. It is worth noting that as organizations, gangs are generally much more effective than are Neighborhood Watch and similar groups. One reason for this is that gang members invest signifi-



cant time in the gang and in establishing and maintaining relationships with other members of the organization. Neighborhood groups can learn from this. With some effort, neighborhood groups can become significantly more effective as organizations than gangs are. When a neighborhood organization is effective, efforts to implement the ideas in the previous section will be greatly strengthened. Neighborhood groups can become more effective by following the steps that almost all truly effective businesses and organizations follow:

- Include as many concerned parties as possible. The residents of the neighborhood will form the core of most groups. But don't overlook neighborhood-based businesses, churches, schools and PTA's, daycare centers, and city departments concerned with neighborhood parks, streets, and utilities.
- Clearly define the group's purpose.
- Set goals for the group.
- Plan specific activities that will help the group reach its goals.
- Develop an organizational structure that will help to monitor progress, support activities, identify new needs and opportunities and resolve problems. A strong organization has solid communication channels in place and well-articulated roles for all of its members.
- Periodically evaluate progress, reassess goals, and modify or develop new activities.

To accomplish this, individual neighborhood members must be willing to be committed to the group, to accept leadership responsibility, and to contribute time and resources. It is often helpful (but not essential) to have an outside facilitator experienced in organizational development and community mobilization assist with bringing the group together and with starting the planning process.

Strengthening the family-Neighborhoods

Pro-youth neighborhoods work when they are also pro-family neighborhoods. The ethic of neighbors helping neighbors is a cornerstone of every viable culture. How can neighbors cooperate to lend strength to each others' efforts to raise healthy and pro-social children? Here a few ideas:

Parents from various families on the same block or in the same neighborhood can meet and discuss what behaviors they wish to encourage or discourage in their children. They can come to agreement about how to work together as a community on the task of child rearing, remembering the proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child."



Adults can agree to develop engaged relationships with children from other families, recognizing that the unique nature of the relationship between parents and their own children sometimes makes it very difficult for children (especially adolescents) to be open to the guidance their parents would like to give them. Research about what works for helping young people succeed consistently points to the important role of relationships between the young person and a caring adult who is not a member of the immediate family. Often neighbors play this role.

Neighborhood groups can organize and host classes, discussions, and training workshops on parenting methods. The topics need not be limited to issues such as child discipline, but can also include conflict resolution, gang awareness, and other topics. Neighborhood groups that network with local youth agencies will usually find it possible to arrange classes of this nature.

Parents can agree to schedule neighborhood activities and meetings at times when they do not interfere with family time, such as dinner.

A brief informational bulletin can be periodically published by the neighborhood organization. It can highlight positive achievements of the organization and of neighborhood children, and can help introduce new residents.

Neighborhood groups can sponsor family-oriented events in local backyards or parks, such as barbecues, volleyball or other sports, or block parties.

Providing opportunities—Neighborhoods

There are many ways in which neighbors can cooperate to provide opportunities for children. Three categories of opportunities are opportunities for relationships, opportunities to contribute, and economic opportunities.

Opportunities for relationships: The focus is on engagement, which refers to high-quality relationships based upon authentic, compassionate contact between people. Some approaches are:

- Learn the names of children in your neighborhood. Greet them by name and with a smile.
- Take time for conversations with children in your neighborhood.
- Include children from other families in the activities and outings of your family.
- Help children with projects such as bicycle repairs, school projects, and organizing sandlot sports teams.



Opportunities to contribute: Young people have a natural desire to become involved as contributors to the life of the community. Our society does not readily accommodate this desire; instead, we assume that the time for making a contribution can be postponed until education is complete. Gangs do not make this assumption and give their members meaningful roles within which they can make contributions that the gang values. Neighborhood organizations can create opportunities in many ways. Here are few:

- Include young people in neighborhood group planning processes.
- Ask for their perspectives on the needs of the neighborhood and its youth, and for their ideas on ways to meet these needs.
- Give young people specific tasks to complete on behalf of the neighborhood, such as responsibility to keep a certain area clean or to help remove graffiti. Provide them with the guidance and resources to accomplish these tasks successfully.
- Clubs and sports teams provide ways in which their members can make contributions to the group. Encourage Little League, Scouts, Brownies, or similar groups in the neighborhood.
- Arrange for groups of neighborhood kids to receive training in topics such as peer counseling (or other topics that interest them).
- Encourage young people to organize and host neighborhood activities that include adults and younger children.

Economic opportunities: One of the attractions of gangs is that they provide jobs and income for young people. The fact that this income is obtained illegally does not discourage many young people, who feel excluded from legitimate jobs, most of which pay minimum wage anyway. Neighbors can cooperate to help young people earn pocket change. Odd jobs such as painting, gardening, lawn mowing, and babysitting can be given to local youth. In some cases, adults who would otherwise simply do the work themselves will choose to hire young people instead.

Another approach is to develop mentor-style relationships in which adults coach young people as they enter the job market.

Proactive policy development and advocacy—Neighborhoods

Neighborhood residents often become aware of effects of the local policies in dramatic ways. For example, a local policy may be to turn street lamps in park off at 10:00 P.M. in order to conserve energy and save expenses. But neighbors



may notice that the most costly and destructive gang activity often takes place after the lights have been turned off. In a situation like this there is a natural opportunity to discuss policy.

To have influence on policy, several conditions must exist:

- Someone has to raise the issue.
- The appropriate policy making body must hear what the issue is.
- A proposal must be made regarding possible policy changes.
- Often, those who are advocating the change in policy must monitor the policy making body to ensure that a fair hearing is given to the proposal.

Policies relevant to pro-youth neighborhoods are created by many bodies, including businesses, schools, city government, county government, state and federal government, community-based organizations, and others.

Policy development and advocacy is usually a process of negotiation. It is not helpful in the long run to unnecessarily alienate others; however, it is counter-productive to avoid confrontation and taking strong stands when necessary.

Do not assume that existing public policy is wise or in the best interest of youth and of pro-youth neighborhoods and communities. Often efforts to create helpful conditions through legislation and other policy-making efforts backfire. What is then needed is the vision, courage, and leadership to call for change.

As a general recommendation, we support evaluating the impact of public policy upon neighborhood organizations. Local autonomy and decision-making is essential. However, so is coordination with other efforts. Therefore, we recommend that neighborhood groups study and adopt this Framework as part of their organizations' operational policy.

Businesses/Worksites/Employment

Suppression

- Hire private security to increase supervision and discourage graffiti and to provide security support to employees and customers.
- Form associations to cooperate in eradicating graffiti. Remove graffiti on the same day it appears.
- Train receptionists and salespeople to recognize early warning signs of potential trouble. Provide an emergency communication system, such as hidden security alarms.
- Managers of multi-tenant commercial office or retail buildings can contract with a handyman service or a tenant to promptly remove graffiti.
- Building and landscape design can have an important impact on gangs. Plan for easy visibility and use materials that are either graffiti resistant or easily repainted. Keep a supply of paint on hand.
- Light exteriors and patrol frequently.
- Design entryways and public access areas to enhance security. Specify security concerns when contracting with architects, landscape designers, and interior decorators.

Community mobilization and planning

- Join with other businesses, community-based organizations, schools, and others to work together to create pro-youth communities.
- Offer incentives to groups that develop and implement strategic plans and activities to reduce gang activity.
- Provide meeting space, copy services, and other support to neighborhood groups and organizations seeking solutions to gang problems.

Strengthening organizations

- Develop pro-youth policies.
- Assign responsibility for creating a "pro-youth workplace" to a specific employee.





- Form coalitions and associations with other businesses or organizations. Collaborate to enhance working conditions and security for all employees and customers.

Strengthening the family

- Provide incentives and opportunities for employees to participate in pro-youth activities at home and in their neighborhoods.
- Initiate "shadow days" when employees are encouraged to bring a young person from their family or neighborhood to work with them. Extend shadow days to include any family member.
- Give employees leave to attend school events, sports activities, parent conferences, and other pro-youth, pro-family functions.
- Provide "brown bag" lunchtime seminars and discussions for employees. Address topics of concern to employees: parenting, personal and home safety and security, conflict management, setting limits, managing family meetings, gang awareness, building neighborhood coalitions, and so on. Invite speakers to present at or facilitate these meetings.
- Highlight and reward positive accomplishments of employee's families.
- Establish company traditions that include families, such as monthly potlucks.

Providing opportunities

- Proactively recruit and hire young people.
- Provide mentorship, volunteer, and apprenticeship opportunities for youth.
- Work with juvenile court judges to develop community service opportunities.
- Sponsor youth activities, such as little league teams.
- Adopt and sponsor a youth-oriented organization, perhaps funding or hosting a specific service or event.
- Adopt and sponsor a pro-youth neighborhood organization.
- Adopt and sponsor a specific school.
- Malls and downtown associations can sponsor youth-oriented activities that get young people positively involved with the community and the business sector.

- Develop business/education partnership programs to develop relevant, up-to-date educational and vocational curriculum.

Proactive policy development and advocacy

- Establish rules and guidelines for acceptable behavior in the business place.
- Retail outlets can establish rules for customers, especially youth. Rules do not have to be overly negative and can be framed in pro-youth language, recognizing that young people are important customers. Print these rules on cards and give them to young people who frequent the business. Personal and friendly contact is recommended when distributing rules. Explain what the consequences will be when the rules are broken. Contact parents of youths who are troublesome; sending a letter home is often effective.
- Rule making can become very powerful when associations, such as downtown merchant groups, agree to cooperate in establishing a uniform set of rules. Business may improve if the rules and consequences are fairly enforced and result in creating an atmosphere of increased security.





News Media

Suppression

- When covering gang violence, be aware that naming gangs strengthens the identity of the gang within the community and increases fear. Gangs thrive on fear. When asked what recommendations law enforcement agencies might have for media regarding gang coverage, one police officer said, "If the media simply stopped giving the names of the gangs their reports are about, it would help a lot."
- Avoid glorifying gangs by displaying photos or tapes that feature gang members acting in flippant or defiant manners that vulnerable or disaffected young people may want to emulate.
- When danger to the public clearly exists in gang-controlled areas the news media can help keep the public aware.
- Informational pieces on crime avoidance and prevention are helpful.

Community mobilization and planning

- News media representatives can join coalitions engaged in planning gang response initiatives or developing activities for pro-youth neighborhoods.
- Provide information to the community regarding pro-youth activities.
- Feature grass-roots community-based efforts to reduce gang activity.
- Inform the community of what resources are available through community-based organizations and the juvenile justice system. Help community members understand where there are "holes" in the system and how they can help.

Strengthening organizations

- Develop a policy regarding how to report on gang members. The policy should consider the impact of reporting on gangs.

Strengthening the family

- Feature positive family-oriented events.
- Feature information on family traditions.

Providing Opportunities

- Feature opportunity prevention activities, such as mentoring programs. Discuss how these are an alternative to gang involvement.
- Include, when appropriate, a "Who to Contact" or "For more Information" line with coverage of pro-youth, pro-neighborhood activities.
- Train writers/editors to recognize language that may inadvertently help the gang position itself as a viable opportunity for disaffected youth.
- Encourage local pro-youth activists to write guest editorials or columns that encourage others to become involved in creating pro-youth communities.

Proactive Policy Development and Advocacy

- Periodically present analyses of policies that impact efforts to create pro-youth communities.
- Encourage guest articles from local policy analysts.





Needs Assessment



Purpose and Methods

The needs assessment was intended to achieve four goals:

- A. Understand scope of gang activity and trends in gang-related problems.
- B. Provide baseline data against which data gathered in the future may be compared. This will help with program evaluation efforts.
- C. Develop standardized methods for gathering data (e.g. the survey).
- D. Help develop consensus regarding the scope and seriousness of youth gang phenomena in Tulare County.

The findings of the needs assessment are reported in this section. After a brief discussion of methods, and instructions on how to interpret data, general conclusions are presented. Following these general conclusions are summaries of the perspectives gained from the various data collection procedures. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are given for each of the specific pilot communities.

Information was gathered through five methods:

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted by project staff. Standardized question-and-answer protocols were developed to guide these interviews. Respondents included health professionals, gang members, youth workers, parents, educators, law enforcement officers, judges, and others.

Community forums

Community forums were conducted. Participating groups included parent



groups, neighborhood watch associations, health professionals, gang task force meeting participants, patrons of a main street restaurant, and law enforcement officers. The data from these forums are not reported separately, but are reflected in the key informant summaries and community-specific recommendations.

Student Gang Awareness Survey

A survey was developed and administered to students, emphasizing those in the 6th and 11th grades. Some students from grades 9, 10, and 12 responded also; these were enrolled in continuation and alternative schools and juvenile hall.

Review of archival data

Archival data were available from the Probation Department, Sheriffs Office, local police departments, local community surveys related to assessment of health needs, news media reports, and other sources.

Direct observation of gang-affected neighborhoods and communities

Project staff accompanied gang-detail officers on tours of three communities, receiving a first-hand impression of how these experienced officers view local gang phenomena.

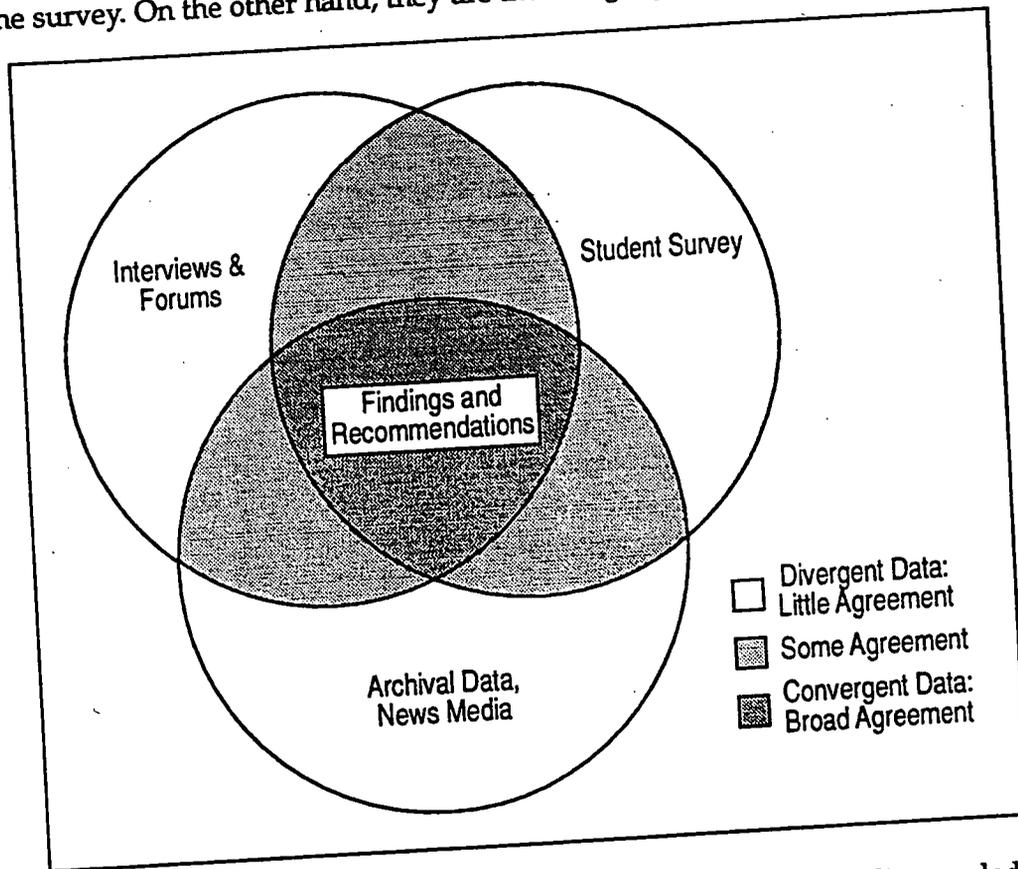
Interpreting Data

It is important to understand that no single method of collecting information is likely to yield a reliable picture of the current gang situation. This is why several methods were used. Each method has certain strengths, and data gathered from each method is subject to certain limitations. What was sought was convergence: that is, when all sources of information are considered together, in what areas does strong agreement emerge? The conclusions of this study are based upon convergence of data from the sources previously listed under "Methods."

It would be an error, therefore, to rely upon one source of information. The student survey is the source most likely to be misused in this way. We strongly discourage this.

This point deserves some emphasis. For example, data from the survey, which

due to their numerical nature may appear most "objective," may be correctly criticized as compromised due to lack of control of randomization procedures in selection of the survey sample. This is a valid criticism. In fact, these data cannot be presented as representative of Tulare County Youth as a whole. They must be described as applying only to those students who actually responded to the survey. On the other hand, they are the first gang survey data systematically



collected in Tulare County to date, and their value should not be disregarded. Rather, they should be interpreted only within the context of the information gathered through other sources. In this regard, it is important to note that the findings of the survey are remarkably congruent with the perspectives of key informants and community forum participants.

Staff noted that for each key informant they interviewed, two or more additional informants were identified, each of whom could potentially contribute valuable data. It was possible to interview only a small percentage of those who could have contributed. There was much more agreement than there was disagreement among those who were interviewed.



Conclusions of Needs Assessment

Problems

- A serious gang problem exists in Tulare County. This problem has been incubating for several years. It has grown dramatically in the last three years. However, gangs have not yet become an overwhelming threat to general quality of life in most Tulare County communities.
- The number of gang members appears to be increasing. The number of gangs appears to be stable or decreasing.
- The activities of gang members are becoming more defiant, violent, and problematic in general.
- The seriousness of gang activity is not related to the size of the community. Smaller communities are likely to have fewer gangs, but the disruption experienced in small communities as a result of gang activity is similar to that experienced in larger communities with more gangs.
- While youth gangs are at present somewhat disorganized, a potential exists for them to become more organized. The release of gang members from incarceration in state institutions (especially Corcoran), is often cited as a potential source of leadership. Other sources are families who move to Tulare County from metropolitan areas and families who immigrate from Mexico or Southeast Asia and who have ties to relatives who are gang-involved. It is widely assumed that better leadership will result in more severe gang-related problems.
- There are some indications that a few gangs are evolving toward an instrumental structure (that is, are becoming organized primarily for the purpose of engaging in criminal behavior). As these gangs learn to operate profitably, they are able to increase their weapons arsenals. The numbers and varieties of weapons confiscated from gang members and suspected gang members has increased dramatically, especially in the last year. Moreover, many respondents to the student survey indicated that they were aware of students who were in possession of guns on campus quite frequently. Easy access to weapons is a very disturbing component of youth gang problems.
- Most gang violence is perpetrated upon other gang members. Therefore, the most likely victims of gang violence are gang members. However, as gang membership grows more non-gang members are becoming victims of gang

violence. When non-gang members are victimized, public support for gang response efforts increases.

- While gang problems are serious, there are other youth problems that pose equal or greater challenges. These problems affect youth who are in gangs, and youth who are not in gangs. They include (among other issues) youth unemployment, general discipline problems in school and other public settings, child abuse and neglect and their sequelae, and absent or incompetent parental supervision and influence.
- The trend during the last three years has been toward increased seriousness in the frequency and nature of crimes committed by young people. Violent crimes have increased significantly. For a growing percentage of young people (and adults) violence appears to have become the method of choice for conflict resolution.
- While suppression strategies are important, gang response in Tulare County has overemphasized these approaches and underemphasized prevention and early intervention methods.
- Meaningful consequences for criminal behavior have been very limited; the only viable long-term option has been commitment to CYA.
- The ability of the juvenile justice system to cope with juvenile crime is severely hampered by a lack of resources. There are too few probation officers, too few juvenile hall beds, and too few alternatives for placement of offenders.
- Schools, businesses, and agencies are poorly prepared to respond effectively to gang activity. There is a lack of policies to guide the responses of staff, and staff are inexperienced and often intimidated by young people who are perceived as capable of violence.
- Responses to gang activities are complicated in some cities by racial and ethnic tensions.
- Gangs in Tulare County are most often organized along racial and ethnic lines.
- School-based programs are relatively undeveloped. Only one gang-specific curriculum exists (Project Y.E.S., available through the Tulare County Office of Education) and while it appears to be a good product it is a first-generation curriculum lacking rigorous evaluation data to assess its effectiveness.
- Engagement strategies for parents—that is, strategies that enhance awareness, provide practical solutions, and offer viable opportunities—are not available in most communities.





- Youth gangs in Tulare County are currently more culturally-centered than instrumentally centered.
- Gang response initiatives in Tulare County generally lack evaluation components. While anecdotal evidence suggests that these efforts are of some benefit, there are few empirical data to help assess how effective they are at achieving their goals.

Opportunities

- A wide array of resources have been developed to counter the influence of gangs.
- These resources include community centers, each of which encourages volunteer involvement from adults who can serve as mentors, teachers, opportunity providers and role models; and who can generally encourage and communicate compassionate affection for young people.
- There is wide acknowledgement among community members and law enforcement officials that gangs present a significant challenge worthy of a vigorous collaborative response.
- There is a consensus that not one discipline can succeed alone. Partnerships among many agencies, clergy, private business, and other groups have been formed and continue to develop comprehensive response strategies.
- Each community studied has an active and influential group of members who are eager to mount a pro-active response to youth gangs and other youth issues. These groups have much in common with each other. They have been learning from and encouraging each other.
- Funding to reopen the Robert K. Meyers Youth Camp has been secured.
- School personnel in each city studied by this project expressed strong commitment to using their resources for responding to gang problems.

Recommendations

- Responses to gangs should be guided by a common framework which encourages innovation while aligning diverse resources so that they are working toward the same general goals and guided by the same broad principles.
- There is broad consensus that more emphasis should be placed upon prevention and early intervention. Early intervention refers both to working with younger kids and involving first-offenders in consequences that are alternatives to either incarceration or non-supervision.

- Each community has a unique set of circumstances and resources. Gang response initiatives should be shaped by these circumstances so they fit the community. Because resources to support new programs are limited, program models should be evaluated before they are adopted to ensure they are a good fit for the community.
- Gang issues should not be addressed separately from other issues affecting youth. While needs specific to gangs must continue to be identified and addressed, it is important that they be viewed in the context of the entire constellation of other issues that negatively affect youth.
- A county-wide organization should be established to oversee the continued development and implementation of the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities.
- The Thunderbolt Program is frequently cited as an exemplary and effective early intervention strategy. It should be given higher priority for funding and should be broadly reinstated.
- School sites are logical places to reach kids. For many young people, the hours spent at school are perceived as the safest hours of the day. Some gang members enjoy the school site as a respite from the constant insecurity and guardedness experienced on the street. Pro-youth initiatives, involving many agencies and located on school campuses, can be a very positive strategy. The "Healthy Start" approach (currently implemented in Lindsay) is a model worthy of emulation.
- The booklet *Street Gangs in Tulare County* is widely used. It should be updated and expanded to include more suggestions for how community members can become involved in countering the effects of gangs. Concepts from the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities should be included.
- Parents are seeking more information. Resource materials for use by agencies, neighborhood watches, PTOs, and other groups should be developed. They should emphasize practical, family and neighborhood-level activities for safety and for creating a positive climate for youth.
- In general, public education materials should shift from an emphasis on gang awareness (although this is important) to greater emphasis on practical strategies and activities.
- All prevention and intervention programs should evaluate the extent to which their modes of operation promote engagement (as engagement is defined in this document). This should extend to establishing qualifications





for staff. While "street smarts" and professional training are both valuable hiring criteria, the ability to engage with young people and adult opportunity providers should be considered even more valuable.

- In some communities, not one but several youth centers have emerged. This is a trend that should be supported, provided the community has adequate resources to do so. Small centers that develop unique personalities, that are accessible to young people from the neighborhood who lack transportation, and that enjoy the personal support of local merchants and neighbors can be ideal settings in which engagement strategies can emerge.

Needs Assessment Data



Key Informant Interviews

Law Enforcement Officers

Overview of gang problem:

Gangs have a long history of development in the prisons. Law enforcement agencies began seeing gangs as a major emergent issue in Tulare County in the mid 1980s. The influence of prison gangs is now a factor in many communities, including in Tulare County. Officers sometimes witness juveniles becoming victims of the gang culture established by adults in the criminal justice system.

A goal of many gang kids is to be "the baddest of the bad;" more violence at younger ages earns the high regard of peers. Gangs in Tulare County are distinctly divided among racial lines. Gang members can sometimes be identified on the street by the colors and clothing they wear. As gang activity has increased, police agencies have had to shift more resources to suppression, reducing resources available for prevention and intervention. Graffiti is a frequent problem as are calls for investigation of suspicious persons.

Organizational responses to gang problems:

If we continue to only be reactive to gang problems, we will never catch up. We need proactive responses at early ages. What is needed is a comprehensive community response guided by a common set of principles. This must develop in Tulare County before the situation develops to the point at which recovery becomes very difficult.

One response is to try to avoid exacerbating gang problems by giving them public recognition. However, this creates a public relations problem if the public interprets police reluctance to attribute crimes to gangs as denial that gangs exist. It is important to have good communication with news media, and that media report gang-related information in a manner that is factual and non-sensational.

Most departments have assigned an officer to serve as gang expert. Databases have been developed that help track gang membership and activities. In some



cases, this information can be used under the Street Terrorism Act to increase the severity of sentences when gang members are convicted of crimes. In Visalia, the traffic unit was reassigned to gang suppression. There is more training on gang issues in general.

The officer on the street becomes demoralized when there are no real teeth in the criminal justice system. Yet in many cases, CYA serves as an intensive training program for gang members. Police would like to see a wider range of consequences made available.

Types of gang activities and crime:

The most frequent type of local gang activity is drug dealing and assault. Most assaults are on other gang members. Conflict between ethnic groups is common. There are some drive-bys, but in Tulare County gang members have not yet become bold or sophisticated enough to succeed in creating the type of damage and harm that drive-bys can potentially create.

There are many more weapons on the streets now than there have been in recent years. There are many modified rifles and shotguns. A common weapon is a sawed-off .22 that can hold 15 rounds in the magazine. Not every gang member carries a gun, but they all have fast access to guns.

Robberies and auto theft are common gang activities. Gang rape occurs; usually the victims are teenage girls who are regular associates of gang members.

Trends in gang activities and crime:

Violence in general is increasing. This is not restricted to gang members, but fear of gang members has made the public more defensive. Citizens are becoming overwhelmed. Some are tending to not call police because they have the perception that police are also overwhelmed. This creates the danger that vigilante type activity will emerge.

Recommendations for gang response:

- Develop a computerized database of gang members and activities that can be accessed by all law enforcement agencies, the probation department, and the district attorney.
- The activities of police must be complemented and supported by community-based agencies and citizen efforts to give kids positive alternatives.
- We must respond vigorously and proactively now. If we delay the problem could easily escalate and we could lose the upper hand.
- We need more teeth in the juvenile justice system. We should not be



releasing violent youths to the streets immediately after they have been booked.

- However, sending youths to prison simply postpones and makes worse the problems faced by police. The juvenile justice system needs more community-based alternatives for reaching these kids. Community groups can help by becoming more involved with kids.
- Community groups need to work with the police. We should plan together and find ways to work together. A county-wide network of people and leaders who want to reduce juvenile crime should be developed.
- Do not treat gang members disrespectfully. Respect goes a long way. When you give them respect they are more likely to take your way out when you offer it. Hold them accountable; create an inconvenience for them. Don't talk their talk—use proper language. Make working with youth a priority. Small town advantage: officers get to know all the kids, and know the situation. Make a habit of separating the kids from the gang before talking to them.

Gang Members

Reasons for joining the gang:

Family and friends are in the gang. Many gang members have known gang members since childhood; they admired the respect that older gang members had. Some kids joined to gain respect. The gang is like one big family. Safety is an important reason for joining the gang; a large group provides security and if you are threatened or attacked you have many people backing you up. Gang members have better access to drugs, parties, and sex. It is also easier to make money from illegal activities, especially drug sales.

Types of gang activities and crime:

Enjoyable activities reported by gang members include partying, music, dancing, drugs, and sex. Camaraderie is also very important. Crimes include fighting, fighting with weapons, drive-by shootings, and burglary. House burglaries are common. Auto theft is a common activity. Drug use and drug dealing are assumed to be a normal part of gang life.

Ways of gaining respect, establishing reputation:

Gang members said they gain respect in the following ways: "Don't back down from fights." "Be crazy, be hard." "Don't think twice, just act." "We admire O.G's (original gangsters) because they have been through everything and they have survived. They are respected by everybody in the neighborhood."



Qualitative comments regarding gang membership:

"It's like a family. I feel good, like when there is a hassle I have 100 people backing me up. I get respect. I feel powerful."

Recommendations for preventing or responding to gangs:

"Gangs are like a disease; you catch it and you can't get rid of it. Everybody is catching it."

"Work with the little kids. Try to get to them before they get into gangs."

"It helps to have something to do, especially in the evenings. There isn't much to do. If we had something else to do we might not get in so much trouble."

"What is there for kids to really get behind, to believe in? The gang is it."

"A lot gang members want to get out of the gang, but it's hard to get out. It's dangerous. If we knew that we would be safe we would probably get out of the gang."

Educators

Overview of gang problem and effects at school:

There is a sense that schools are not as safe as they used to be. However, while educators agree with this in general, some fear that this concern is exaggerated by many parents.

Schools are being affected by many more incidents of violence. Many more weapons are being confiscated on campus, especially knives. They are large knives. There are more guns on campus. Staff are sometimes intimidated. They don't know how to respond to kids who are extremely challenging and defiant. Kids are proud of gang membership; many freely admit to it.

There are many more "wannabes" on school campuses than there are gang members, but sometimes the wannabes are more dangerous. In general there are more behavior problems overall, not necessarily from gang members, but there is a relationship between these problems and gangs. New students who move in from outside the area are sometimes more gang-involved.

Kids are not consequence-oriented so they do not understand the dangers of getting into the gang.

One of the reasons kids are drawn to gangs is that the gang provides a family atmosphere they don't have at home. In some cases parents are not adequately organized or motivated to provide children with the guidance and supervision they need.

Organizational responses to gang problems:

Safety is a big concern on school campuses. Many organizational responses have the goal of increasing student and staff safety.

Examples include: hire private security officers; assign staff to supervision teams with radios; adopt dress codes restricting colors, baggy clothing; include an anti-gang component in the curriculum taught by DARE officers; use security codes over the intercom to alert staff of danger; increase staff mobility; provide golf carts to staff so they can quickly travel across campus to sites of disturbances. Schools are becoming much more aggressive in watching for and identifying visitors. Staff are also being trained to understand gangs and how to respond to gang activity. Removal of graffiti within 24 hours of its appearance is a standard policy at most sites.

Schools are also developing positive avenues for student involvement. For example, some schools are providing alternative activities during lunch period. Gang members and other students see schools as a safe place, as a respite from the tension they experience when they are not in school.

There is interest in developing policies and procedures for safe schools in general. These policies will address gangs. Some educators recommend involving parents, students, community members in policy development. Schools are experimenting with other ways to form linkages with parent groups, helping them learn how to prevent children from joining gangs.

Types of gang activities and crimes:

- Fighting, threats and intimidation both on campus and when students are in route to and from school
- Possession of weapons
- Graffiti and vandalism
- General defiance toward teachers and other authorities
- Disruptive behavior in classrooms and common areas
- Break-ins
- Drive-by shootings (so far only a few have occurred at local schools)

Recommendations of educators for school/community efforts to prevent or respond to gangs:

- Shift balance from suppression to intervention.





- Identify specific behavior that should be discouraged and come to agreement about exactly where to draw the line. Provide staff with guidelines on when and how to intervene.
- Identify as early as possible kids who are at risk of joining gangs; troubled kids can be identified in kindergarten, by first grade at the latest. Concentrate programs at K-8th grade levels.
- Conflict resolution training is important for both staff and students. Conflict resolution should be a part of the standard curriculum.
- Strong parental education, involvement, and support component is necessary at all ages and grades.
- Schools need to develop better translation capabilities.
- Develop "safe schools" policies. Include parents, students, business, agencies, and other stakeholder groups in the policy development process.

Parents

Overview of gang problem:

Parents are very concerned about what is perceived as a growing gang problem. Many feel helpless and are afraid for themselves and their children. Parents tend to perceive gang violence as being directed largely at non-gang-involved citizens. There is general concern that both parents must work and this reduces supervision of children; most parents feel they do not have a choice in this regard.

Asian parents are often dependent upon children to translate, to provide transportation, and to help manage basic needs. This creates a very stressful and confusing situation for these parents. Many are not aware of what services are available and how they may gain access to these services.

Effects of gangs upon personal security and choices:

Parents are more afraid, more worried about children. Worried about what kids wear. Some families have installed home alarms, have increased lighting, and have added security doors. Several reported that they now avoid certain places in the evenings. Some parents have restricted children's walking routes, play areas outside, and times allowed outside.

Specific gang problems:

Parents report vandalism, graffiti, intimidation, car vandalism, large groups of kids in neighborhood intimidating neighbors; threatening and challenging demeanor in even casual encounters with between adults and young people. In some areas parents are afraid to leave home because of burglaries, or afraid of drive-bys if children play in wrong areas.

Recommendations for preventing or responding to gangs:

Virtually every parent group agrees that what they need most is gang awareness training. This training should include: how to recognize when kids are involved in gang; how to recognize gangs in the neighborhood; and drug and alcohol awareness training. Parents feel that there is a need for more safe activities for kids. Neighborhood watch is a program that parents feel good about. Parents should get to know their neighbors. The PTA structure is not being used effectively to respond to these issues.

- Parents want more authority to discipline children. They are afraid of CPS. They want to know what is acceptable and what is not. Many parents would like published guidelines or training in this regard.
- Help parents understand how the system works and how to gain access to services—especially Asian parents. This may help to prevent tragedies.
- Provide parent education for all parents of 8th graders.
- Incorporate gang awareness into high school orientation.
- It turns parents off when those whom they must deal with don't understand their language and culture; translation capability is often inadequate. Efforts should be made to improve upon this situation.

Judicial System (DA, Judges, Probation)

Overview of gang problems:

Gangs are a serious, growing problem, but other problems are still more serious; for example, child abuse. There is a lack of sentencing alternatives. Kids are aware that the system lacks teeth. Some gang members are very dangerous, very violent, and it is important to get them off the streets. Violence is becoming more common, more serious. Gangsters show us that we are on the edge of a collapse of culture.

Officers and probation officers feel less secure. They are now carrying guns for protection. They feel they do not have enough resources to provide adequate supervision of probationers.

Organizational responses to gangs:

Work with community organizations to develop more sentencing alternatives. The DA's office is implementing the street terrorism act, and will provide training to local police departments in how to appropriately use the provisions of the street terrorism act. Most agencies have assigned individuals to be gang specialists.





Special sentencing conditions or other judicial responses for gang members: When the street terrorism act is properly managed, it can be used to enhance sentences of gang members who are convicted of crimes. Judges are using a range of other conditions, such as: alternative work hours; graffiti removal assignments; boot camp; CYA; participation in services of community centers; counseling; parenting classes; and court-ordered attendance at gang counseling groups provided by the Probation Department's Gang Specialist.

Recommendations for gang response:

Community members must work together with law enforcement. Community groups can develop alternatives for involving young people, including sentencing alternatives. More neighborhood watch groups should be formed, and the neighborhood watch concept should be updated to help parents develop block-by-block strategies for responding to gang activity. More community involvement is needed in setting limits for kids; we need to realize that we are all in this together and adults should be able to confront and discipline any child who is misbehaving. More boot-camp type facilities or character building experiences might help. There should be wide agreement upon the principle of "zero tolerance" for violence. More prevention is needed. More energy should be going into early identification and intervention programs, such as Thunderbolt.

Continue to develop and refine gang information database. The database needs to be better organized and access to data simplified.

Many requests are made for probation to talk to groups about gangs. Probation would like to be more involved to provide preventive education. The department wants to work together with police so together they can provide a comprehensive, balanced approach to working with gangs.

Ongoing, updated training in gang issues should be provided to staff.

Political Leaders/Public Officials

Overview of gang problem:

The public is becoming increasingly concerned about safety in general. The juvenile justice system lacks the teeth it needs to back up law enforcement. There are no interim incarceration options at present. The perception is that gangs in our area do not operate as large dope rings or organized crime; they are mostly juvenile offenders who get together and form gangs.

Organizational responses to gang problem:

Constituencies want action to make communities safer, but most requests are for tax-funded approaches and more police to take care of the problem. This is not likely. The public must become more active, and not be passively dependent



upon public services to solve all community problems. Law enforcement and the judicial system are working together to coordinate responses. There is some hope that the Gang Response Project will help with developing new ways for the public to get involved.

Perspective on most serious aspect of gang problem:

Gangs are yet another distraction for our schools, making it even more difficult just to teach kids. The public perception is that our communities are not as safe as they once were, and this negatively affects quality of life.

Recommended further steps:

- Develop more teeth for criminal justice system. Thunderbolt program would be good to reinstate.
- Provide more probation officers.
- Establish positive ways to involve young people; for example, a mentor program. It is important to offer and support programs for youth.
- Develop a proactive community-based approach with school/community partnership. It is important to coordinate efforts.
- Gang program developers should initiate dialogue with kids to learn about their concerns.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for how agencies can work together.

Businesses (hospitals, malls, Visalla Emergency Aid)

Overview of gang problem:

Gangs are a growing problem that increasingly disrupt business. They take resources away from city, from businesses. In hospitals it has become very expensive to deal with vandalism, graffiti, and parking lot security. If gang members are in the area, entering and exiting buildings can be intimidating. Parking lots are areas of concern at night.

Another perspective is that "the gang problem" is not that extensive and has been exacerbated by the news media. The impact at the mall has not been as great as the news media suggests.

Effects of gangs upon business:

There is an increase in emergency room admissions due to gunshot and stabbing incidents. Public insecurity may affect business. Hospitals need to be perceived by customers as a safe place to go. One incident of violence can seriously disrupt business. That is an important reason why businesses are being



very proactive to manage young people. Young people are important customers.

Specific gang crimes and activities:

When security guards are not present, vandalism occurs. People have been intimidated, but not assaulted, by gang-bangers. Not much property damage is noted (other than graffiti).

Responses to gangs:

Hire private security. Remove graffiti immediately. Establish an office at the mall for use by local police force. Increase lighting. Increase security. Train security officers. Establish rules for acceptable behavior, and enforce them consistently, fairly, and without discrimination. A rule card given to kids who visit the mall. When kids are banned from the mall, a letter is sent to their parents. Daily clean-up is required for graffiti in bathrooms. Attitude of management is based on encouraging youth to use mall, provide a safe, family-oriented atmosphere. Some businesses are no longer allowing parking lots to be used by kids as a place to party at night.

Recommendations or future plans for responding to gangs:

It is important that the hospital be considered neutral territory. There are no current intentions of regulating dress for hospital visitors, but disruptive individuals will be confronted and escorted away from the property. Businesses are recognizing the need to look at safety and security policies. A pro-youth emphasis is important for successful business. At the mall, the marketing department supports positive activities for youth, such as the health fair, rollerblade classes, and so on.

Youth Agencies

Overview of gang problems:

Gangs are becoming a major influence in youth culture. Even kids who don't claim affiliation with a gang are showing gang influence in the way they dress and talk. Events sponsored by youth organizations are at greater risk of being disrupted by gang conflict or violence. Facilities are being vandalized more.

Organizational responses to gangs:

Many changes have been necessary, ranging from increased security measures such adding lighting and having staff patrol parking areas, to changes in how program activities are managed. Counseling groups are scheduled to end before dark and parents are required to be there to pick kids up promptly when the group is over. Staff are receiving gang awareness training. New rules emphasizing safety and non-violence have been established.

● *Recommendations for gang response:*

- Programs for teaching community members how to respond to gangs
- Getting community members involved in prevention activities
- Providing more positive activities for young people
- Developing more youth centers
- Teaching kids non-violent conflict resolution





Report on the High School and Sixth-Grade Youth Surveys

Tulare County Gang Response Project • Spring, 1993



Executive Summary

During spring, 1993 the Tulare County Gang Response Project assessed youth from five Tulare County communities enrolled in senior high schools, juvenile facilities, and sixth grade classrooms. The respondents were 359 high school age students enrolled in four high schools, four continuation high schools, and two facilities for wards of the court. Also assessed were 519 sixth grade students in nine elementary schools. Participating communities were Earlimart, Exeter, Farmersville, Tulare, and Visalia.

The questionnaires assessed gang membership, attitudes about gangs and gang members, negative personal experiences from interactions with gang members, impact of gangs on schools and neighborhoods, and assessments of advantages and disadvantages of gang membership. Information was also collected on awareness of guns at school and fear of personal assault.

This report presents county-wide survey results. While some general comparative comments are possible, the sampling procedures used were not adequate to support making specific comparisons of the communities from which the data were gathered.

Most of the findings that follow are based on the responses of only those students who defined a gang as "Kids in a group with a gang name who break laws and sometimes hurt people on purpose." However, questions on (a) awareness of guns on campus and (b) fear of assault on the way to or from school are reported for the total groups of respondents regardless of their individual definitions of a gang.

Findings in the Executive Summary are reported in a somewhat different order than they appear in the main body of the report. The former follows the order in which questions appear in the survey questionnaires, while Executive Summary results are at least in part ordered in terms of the reporter's perception of their noteworthiness.



The respondents were predominantly Hispanic/Latino (46% in 6th-grade and 47% in high school) and white (28% in 6th-grade and 32% in high school). Other racial/ethnic groups represented by less than 10% of the respondents in both groups were Asian, Afro-American, and Native American, plus "mixed" and "other." Boys accounted for 52% of the respondents in grade 6 and 59% at the high school level. As a total group the high school age respondents had a somewhat higher percentage of males because participants from the two juvenile facilities (Juvenile Hall and Mid-County) were predominantly male. Over 8 in 10 respondents in both grade 6 and at the high school level were born in the U.S.A.

Findings of the survey

In the results for the county as a whole, findings are presented separately for regular high schools, continuation high schools, court facilities, and the 6th-grade.

General conclusions

Severity of local gang problems were not related to size of the community. While large communities do have more gangs than small communities, the critical factor in the responses of the students and court facility respondents appeared to be events in their own schools and neighborhoods. In this sense one or two gangs in a small city can cause as many problems for residents as several gangs in a large community. This is the case because gang activities tend to be localized in a particular area or "turf."

The separation of older students into regular high school, continuation high school, and wards of the court revealed differences on a number of assessments of gang activity. The "gang problem" for young people with differing histories of compatibility with traditional schooling is thus partly a function of the different social worlds in which members of each group live. For example, students in continuation schools were three times as likely as students in regular high schools to have been physically assaulted by gang members in their neighborhoods and residents of juvenile court facilities eight times as likely. Only one quarter of regular and one third of continuation high school students saw having a lot of friends as an advantage of gang membership compared to two thirds of court respondents. In other words, social class, adaptation to schooling, and other psychosocial characteristics are closely related to attitudes about, and experience with, juvenile gangs.

Specific findings for the county

- Large majorities of the respondents (88% of regular high school, 74% of continuation high school, 70% of court facility, and 86% of 6th-grade students) defined gangs as groups that break laws and sometimes hurt people deliberately.
- Seventy-eight percent of male and 93% of female regular high school students would never join a gang. Somewhat fewer continuation students (64% of male and 81% of female) gave the same response. Only 21% of court respondents would never join. More than 9 out of 10 students in grade 6 (92.5%) gave this response.
- Three percent of male and no female regular high school students identified themselves as current gang members. Among continuation students 10% of males and no females were members, compared to 49% of court respondents. Only 3% of 6th-graders were currently gang members.
- Eighty-two percent of regular and continuation students and 92% of court respondents knew at least one gang member. A majority of regular high school students (61%) knew a gang member at school, 33% had a close friend who was a member, but only 7% a sibling who belonged. Fifty-two percent of the 6th-grade respondents knew a gang member, but only 8% had an older sibling in a gang.
- In the previous month 40% of regular and continuation students and 51% of court facility youth were aware at least once in the previous month that another student had a gun at school. More than 1 in 5 (21%) of regular and continuation students and 37% of court respondents were aware of a gun on campus two or more times in the previous month.
- Fifteen percent of regular, 11.5% of continuation, and 27% of court respondents had been afraid of being assaulted (beaten up) on their way to school at least once in the previous month.
- Twenty-four percent of regular, 29% of continuation, and 18% of court respondents sometimes felt worried or unsafe at school because of gangs.
- Twenty percent of regular, 15% of continuation, and only 8% of court respondents sometimes felt worried or unsafe in their neighborhoods because of gangs.
- Almost one fourth (24%) of regular, 7% of continuation, and 20% of juvenile facility respondents reported that many or all students at their school who were not in a gang were afraid of gang members.



- Twenty-five percent of regular, 49% of continuation and 60% of court respondents had been asked to join a gang at least once. Ten percent of regular and 18% of continuation students had been asked or pressured more than once. One in five (22%) of 6th-grade students had been asked to join a gang.
- Slightly less than half (45%) of regular, 52% of continuation, and 59% of court youth knew of one or more areas in their town controlled by a gang and where other people were afraid to go.
- Fifty-six percent of 6th-graders indicated there were one or more places in their town or neighborhood where they were afraid to go because of gangs. When asked whether they talked with their friends about gangs, only 20% indicated "never," while 16% did so often or all of the time.
- Eighteen and one half percent of regular, 17% of continuation, and 29% of court respondents had been threatened verbally by a gang member at their school. Eight percent of regular, 24% of continuation, and 35% of court respondents were threatened in their neighborhoods.
- Five percent of regular, 8.5% of continuation, 14% of court respondents had been physically assaulted at school by gang members. Assaults in their neighborhoods were reported by 5% of regular, 14% of continuation, and 41% of court respondents.
- Forty-two percent of regular, 43% of continuation, 41% of court, and two thirds (67%) of 6th-grade respondents reported that their parents warned them about gangs often or all of the time.
- Only 10% of regular, 8% of continuation, 2% of court and 22% of 6th-grade respondents did not know the names of any gangs in their communities.
- Almost two thirds (64%) of regular, 47% of continuation, and 20% of court respondents saw no advantages in being a gang member. The most frequently checked advantages for all three groups were "have fun, party" and "have a lot of friends." Different expectations among the three groups are illustrated by responses to the latter ("friends") which was endorsed by 24% of regular, 35% of continuation, and 67% of court respondents.
- Relatively few respondents in any group perceived no disadvantages in joining a gang (9%, 17%, and 16%, respectively). The most frequently endorsed disadvantage was "get into trouble with police, maybe go to jail" (about 70% of respondents regardless of group) "Get hurt, maybe killed" was selected by 80% of regular, 68% of continuation, and 61% of court

respondents. "Get into trouble at school, maybe get expelled" was checked by 72%, 54%, and 56%, respectively.

- Regular high school students identified activities of gang members as follows: eighty percent or more cited wearing gang colors, painting graffiti, fighting with other gangs, drinking, and stealing; from 70-80% identified selling drugs, taking drugs, and annoying or frightening people; while between 60-70% checked picking fights with people not in gangs and protecting their neighborhoods and other gang members. Positive or neutral alternatives such as "hang around and party" were rarely endorsed.

Rodney Skager, Ph.D.
September 18, 1993







REPORT ON THE HIGH SCHOOL AND SIXTH- GRADE YOUTH SURVEY, SPRING 1993

TULARE COUNTY GANG RESPONSE PROJECT

Rodney Skager, Ph.D.

Regular high school, continuation high school, juvenile wards of the court, and 6th-grade students in five Tulare County communities were surveyed in spring, 1993 as part of the Tulare County Gang Response Project. Each of the five communities participating in the Project was selected by a county-wide project advisory committee because it was considered representative of other similar communities in the County.

The survey questionnaires

The survey questionnaires were designed to assess student awareness of, and attitude toward, activities of juvenile gangs in their own schools and neighborhoods. In addition to asking respondents whether they were, or would like to be, members of gangs, the survey assessed various ways in which gangs might have been threatening or disruptive to the respondents in their schools and neighborhoods.

Two forms of the questionnaire were developed. The longer version was designed for senior high school students and the shorter and simpler version for students in the 6th-grade. The questionnaires were administered anonymously in the schools to representative groups of students. Senior high versions were also administered to respondents in two juvenile facilities. Students did not record any information on the questionnaires that could be used to link responses with the individual who produced them. Scoring and data entry were conducted by evaluation staff.



Characteristics of the participants

Information on participating schools and court facilities as well as characteristics of survey respondent pool as a whole is provided in this section of the report. The information on respondents includes distributions by race/ethnicity, grade level, gender, and native vs. foreign born.

Participating schools agreed to select representative groups of students for the survey. The role of the evaluation staff with respect to the actual sampling procedure was advisory rather than directive. Differences between response frequencies of students in different communities may in part reflect variations in sampling procedures adopted by local school districts.

Participating schools

The schools or court facilities participating in the survey are listed in the following table along with the number of respondents from each and the percentages of the total samples they represented.

Sixth Grade			Senior High		
School	N	%	School	N	%
Cherry	52	10.0	Kaweah	30	8.4
Crowley	67	12.9	Delano	55	15.3
Earlimart	54	10.4	Exeter Union	41	11.4
Farmersville	51	9.8	Juvenile Hall	30	8.4
Ivanhoe	58	11.2	Redwood	47	13.1
Mineral King	70	13.5	Sequoia	28	7.7
Mountain View	33	6.4	Tulare Union	46	12.8
Royal Oaks	67	12.9	Turning Point	19	5.3
Wilson Exeter	67	12.9	Valley	20	5.6
			Mid County	43	12.0
Total	519		Total	359	

Three hundred and fifty-nine high school students attending four regular high schools, four continuation high schools, and two court facilities participated in the survey. Earlimart high school students attended Delano High School, while Farmersville students were assessed at Exeter Union High School. There were 189 regular high school respondents. A total of 97 respondents were enrolled in one of the four continuation schools (Kaweah, Sequoia, Turning Point, and

Valley). The two court facilities, Juvenile Hall and Mid-County, contributed 73 respondents. Finally, nine elementary or middle schools enrolling 519 respondents in the 6th-grade also participated.

Distribution of respondents by grade level

While the younger sample was restricted to grade 6, respondents in the high schools and court facilities were enrolled in 9th- through 12th-grades as follows: 8.2% in 9th-, 19.4% in 10th-, 58.9% in 11th-, and 13.5% in 12th-grade. A majority of the respondents were thus enrolled in grade 11, and about three quarters in grades 11 and 12 combined.

Gender breakdown

Boys accounted for 52.3% of the respondents in grade 6. In the senior high school sample 59.1% were male. The moderate over-representation of males at the high school level is mainly accounted for by the two court facilities in which slightly over 85% of the respondents were males.

Racial/ethnic distribution

The number and percentage of respondents identifying themselves as members of each of five ethnic groups, mixed ethnicity, or "other" are listed in the following table for the 6th-grade and total high school age groups.

Group	Sixth Grade		Senior High	
	N	%	N	%
Asian	25	4.8	28	7.8
Black	8	1.6	5	1.4
Hispanic/Latino	237	45.9	167	46.8
Native American	10	1.9	6	1.7
White	146	28.3	115	32.2
Mixed	54	10.5	24	6.7
Other	36	7.0	12	3.4
Total	516		357	

Forty-six percent of the 6th-grade and 47% of the senior high samples identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino. Twenty-eight percent of the former and 32% of the latter were White. All other groups accounted for less than 10% of the respondents.





Native vs. foreign born

Over 8 in 10 respondents in both 6th-grade (84%) and senior high (81%) samples were born in the United States.

Findings

This section reports results on the senior high school and 6th-grade respondents for the county as a whole. At the high school level these findings are reported separately for regular high school, continuation high school and court facility respondents.

Definition of gang

The first question asked for the respondent's definition of the word "gang." This question was asked primarily in order to cull out respondents who held a conception of gang different from the one used this project.

Q1: When you hear the word "gang," what does it mean to you (check one)?

	Regular High	Cont. High	Wards of Court	Sixth Grade
Kids who hang out together for fun and don't cause any harm	2.1%	4.1%	4.1%	5.3%
Kids who are in a group that sometimes gets into trouble, but who don't mean to harm anyone	10.1	8.2	6.6	6.6
Kids in a group with a gang name who break laws and sometimes hurt people on purpose.	80.4	74.2	69.9	84.8
Adults in big criminal gangs like the Mafia	2.1	4.1	9.6	-
Something else (explain)	5.3	9.3	8.2	3.3

Note: Question numbers in the text refer to the high school version of the questionnaire.



The alternative representing the project definition of "gang" was selected by substantial majorities of students for each of the four groups. Surprisingly, a higher percentage of 6th-grade students (85%) endorsed the third or "correct" alternative than was the case for any of the three groups of high school age respondents, although students in regular high schools were closest at 80%.

Results for most of the questions that follow are based only on those respondents who selected the third alternative to question one. Total groups of respondents are used for two questions that do not refer to gangs. The latter assessed awareness of guns on campus and fears of being assaulted while traveling to and from school.

Likelihood of joining a gang

The second question asked about the respondent's personal relationship with gangs, including whether he or she had been, or currently was, a member of a gang. As noted above, the percentages for this and other questions, unless otherwise stated, refer only to those respondents who selected the third or "project" definition in question 1.

Q2: Choose the one statement that best describes how you feel about gangs

	Regular	Continuation	Court
I will never join a gang like that.	86.2%	70.8%	21.6%
I might join a gang like that someday.	3.3	2.8	5.9
I have already decided to join a gang like that.	1.3	1.4	0.0
I used to be in a gang like that, but not anymore.	7.9	18.1	23.5
I am a member of a gang like that.	1.3	6.9	49.0

Almost 9 out of 10 regular high school students reported that they would never join a juvenile gang compared to 71% of the continuation and only 22% of the court facility respondents. Among regular high school students 8% had been in a gang, but only 1% were currently gang members. In contrast, 18% of the continuation and 24% of the court respondents had been gang members, while 7% of the former and virtually half (49%) of the latter were currently members of gangs. Gang involvement was thus infrequent among regular high school



respondents, more frequent among continuation students, but very common among Wards of the Court.

While it is not surprising that as many as half of the court respondents were in gangs, the number of continuation school students who were former or current gang members was notably higher than for students in regular high schools.

Criteria for assigning students to continuation schools vary with local district policy, although students with low academic ability or specific learning disabilities ordinarily are enrolled in special education programs. Students of normal academic ability go to continuation high schools because of a variety of behavioral problems in the regular school environment. Though the problems are by no means all associated with discipline, it is not surprising that the percentages of current or former gang members were somewhat higher in continuation high schools.

Most students identifying themselves as current gang members were likely to be males. To check this assumption, question 2 was broken down by gender for regular and continuation high schools. (This analysis is not included for the virtually all male court respondents.)

	Regular HS		Continuation HS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Will never join a gang	77.9%	92.8%	64.1%	81.3%
Might join a gang someday	5.9	1.2	2.6	3.1
Have already decided to join a gang	2.9	0.0	2.6	0.0
Used to be in a gang	10.3	6.0	20.5	15.6
Am a member of a gang	2.9	0.0	10.3	0.0

Three percent of male and no female regular high school students in Tulare County identified themselves as current gang members. Ten percent of male continuation high school students identified themselves as current gang members, and there again were no female gang members.

Sixth grade students were asked, "Do you want to be a member of a gang?" Ninety-two and one half percent answered "No", 4.4% said "yes", and 3% indicated that they already belonged to a gang.

Problems with gangs in school or neighborhood

Questions 3 and 4 asked whether the respondents had personal problems with gangs in their schools or neighborhoods.

Q3: How much of a problem are gangs for you at your school?

	Regular	Cont.	Court
Not a problem for me or no gangs at school	7.2%	29.2%	18.0%
I know they are there, but not afraid or bothered	68.4	63.9	72.0
Sometimes I am worried or feel unsafe	23.7	5.6	10.0
I worry so much it interferes with my activities	0.7	1.4	0.0

Slightly over two-thirds (68%) of regular high school students were aware of gang members at their school, and 24% were at least somewhat concerned about the problem. Virtually all of the latter, however, worried or felt unsafe only "sometimes" (less than 1% reported that worry about gangs interfered with their activities). Fewer continuation and court respondents were concerned (7% and 10%), only about 1% of continuation, and no court respondents, were so worried that it interfered with their activities. Considerably more continuation high school students did not see gangs as a problem (29%) than regular high school students (only 7%) or even court respondents (18%).

Twenty percent of regular high school, 15% of continuation, and 8% of court youth were concerned about gangs in their neighborhoods. Only 2-3% of each group reported that gangs interfered with their lives. Both continuation high school and court respondents were much more likely to come from neighborhoods in which there were gangs (46% and 62%). Over 50% of the regular high school students, compared to 39% of continuation, and 30% of the court respondents, checked the first alternative which included the phrase "or no gangs in my neighborhood."

Q4: How big a problem are gangs for you in your neighborhood?

	Regular	Cont.	Court
No problem for me or no gangs in neighborhood	52.0%	38.9%	30.0%
I know they are there, but not afraid or bothered	28.3	45.8	62.0
Sometimes I am worried or feel unsafe	17.1	12.5	6.0
I worry so much it interferes with my activities	2.6	2.8	2.0



Sixth grade students were asked, "Are there any places in their town or neighborhood where you are afraid to go because members of gangs are there?" Fifty-six percent indicated that there was one or more such places. The 6th-graders were also asked, "Do you and your friends ever talk about gangs that are in your neighborhood or town?" Twenty percent responded "no, never," 64% "sometimes," 9% "often," and 7% "all of the time."

Warning by parents about gangs

Both senior high and 6th-grade students were asked whether and how frequently their parents had warned them about gangs.

Q5: Do your parents tell you how bad gangs are and to stay away from them?

	High School	Continuation	Court	Sixth Grade
Never	23.0%	34.7%	30.0%	7.9%
Once or twice	29.6	22.2	18.0	25.3
Often	19.1	22.2	26.0	28.1
All the time	28.3	20.8	14.7	38.7

Parents of 6th-graders were much more likely to warn their children to stay away from gangs than were parents of high school age respondents. Combining percentages for "often" and "all of the time" on question 5 yields totals of two-thirds (66%) for 6th-grade, almost half (47%) for high school, 39% for continuation, and 30% for court respondents. These percentages do reveal substantial numbers of parents who were concerned about gangs for 6th-grade and regular high school students, but notably fewer in the case of continuation high school and court respondents.

Awareness of gang names

Both high school and 6th-grade students were asked how many names they knew of gangs in their community.

Fewer sixth-grade students knew names of local gangs than high school students, (over 20% did not know any gang names compared to 10% for regular high school, 8% for continuation, and only 2% for court respondents). Seventy-two percent of regular high, 79% of continuation, and 92% of court respondents knew three or more names of gangs in their communities. About 1 in 5 regular high school, over half of continuation, and 4 out of 10 court facility respondents knew names of more than five gangs in their communities.

Q6: How many names of gangs in you town can you think of?

	Senior High	Continuation	Court	Sixth Grade
None	9.9%	8.3%	2.0%	21.5%
One	6.6	2.8	4.0	18.5
Two	21.7	9.7	2.0	17.6
Three to five	40.1	25.0	22.0	42.5
More than five	21.7	54.2	70.0	-

Fear of gangs among peers at school

High school students were asked whether or not other students at their schools were afraid of gangs.

Only a little more than one fourth (26%) of regular high school students denied that any of their schoolmates were afraid of gangs, compared to 62% of continuation and 48% of court respondents. Twenty four percent of regular high school, compared to only 7% of continuation but 20% of court respondents, believed that "a lot of kids" or "almost everyone who isn't in a gang" were afraid of gangs. These and other findings comparing the three groups of respondents suggest that experience with, and concern about, gangs is very much a function of who the respondents are. The sometimes radically different perspectives would not be apparent if the three groups of respondents had not been separated in the analyses.

Q7: Are other kids at your school afraid of gangs?

	Senior High	Continuation	Court
None, far as I know	25.7%	62.5%	48.0%
Yes, a few	50.7	30.6	32.0
Yes, a lot of kids	17.1	4.2	8.0
Yes, almost everyone who isn't in a gang	6.6	2.8	12.0





Invitation or pressure to join a gang

High school students were asked whether anyone had asked or put pressure on them to join a gang.

Q8: Has anyone ever asked or pressured you to join a gang?

	Senior High	Continuation	Court
I have never been asked to join a gang	80.3%	51.4%	40.0%
Yes, once	9.9	30.6	38.0
Yes, two or three times	5.3	8.3	10.0
Yes, more than three times	4.6	9.7	12.0

Eight in ten (80%) of regular high school students had never been asked or pressured to join a gang compared to only a little over half (51%) of continuation and 40% of court respondents. For all three groups the largest segment of students who had been asked or pressured had been asked only once (10% for high school, 31% for continuation, and 38% for court respondents). Eighteen percent of continuation and 22% of court respondents were asked or pressured more than once.

Sixth grade students were asked, "Has anyone asked or tried to make you join a gang?" Twenty-two percent or over 1 in 5 responded that they had been asked.

Guns at school

High school students were asked whether and how often they had been aware that another student at their school was carrying a gun. Results for this particular question are based on the entire sample rather than only on those students who defined gangs as groups of young people who break laws, etc.

Six in ten (60%) of both regular and continuation and 50% of court respondents indicated that they had never been aware in the previous month that another student was carrying a gun at school. The groups differed considerably on the last alternative in that only 4% of regular high school, 7% of continuation, and 21% of court respondents were aware on a daily or almost daily basis that another student was carrying a gun on campus. Again, experience is closely related to group membership.

Q9 : In the last month, have you ever known that another student was carrying a gun at your school (did not have to be in a gang)?



	Senior High	Continuation	Court
Never	59.9%	60.4%	49.3%
Yes, once	27.0	18.8	14.1
Yes, two or three times	11.1	4.2	5.6
Yes, more than three times, (not every day)	5.8	9.4	9.9
Yes, every day or almost every day	4.2	7.3	21.1

Since the question referred to the previous month only, some percentage of the court facility may have responded differently than they would have had they still been in regular schools. However, the question does refer to school and it seems reasonable that this group would have responded accordingly.

Streets or neighborhoods controlled by gangs

High school students were asked whether there were any areas in their community controlled by gangs. More than half (55%) of regular and 48% of continuation high school students did not know of any area in their town that was controlled by gangs. Somewhat fewer (41%) court respondents gave the same response. A little more than one fourth (27%) of regular and 30% of continuation students knew of at least one area. About 1 in 5 in both groups (18% and 22.5%, respectively) were aware of two or more gang controlled areas.

Q10: Is there any part of your town (a street or neighborhood) that gangs control so that other people are afraid to go there?

	Senior High	Continuation	Court
Not as far as I know	55.0%	47.9%	40.8%
Yes, at least one neighborhood or street	27.2	29.6	22.4
Yes, two or more	17.9	22.5	36.7

Court respondents were much more likely (38%) to report knowing that two or more areas of their communities were controlled by gangs.



Fear of being beaten up on way to school

High school students were asked whether they had ever been afraid of being assaulted when traveling to or from school. As was the case for question 9, these results are based on the entire sample.

Q11: In the last month, have you ever been afraid of being beaten up by other kids on your way to or from school?

	Senior High	Continuation	Court
No, never	84.6%	88.5%	73.2%
Yes, once	10.6	3.1	12.7
Yes, two or three times	1.6	5.2	5.6
Yes, more than three times, (not every day)	1.1	1.0	2.8
Yes, every day or almost every day	2.1	2.1	5.6

Relatively small percentages of regular high school and continuation students (15% and 12%) were afraid one or more times in the last month of being assaulted on the way to or from school. Somewhat more court respondents (27%) were afraid on such occasions. Even if relatively small, these percentages are significant given the serious nature of the fear. Daily or near daily fear of assault was relatively rare, however, being reported by only 2% of regular high school and continuation and 6% of court facility respondents.

Verbal threats from gang members at school or in the neighborhood

Senior high school students were asked whether they had ever been threatened verbally by a gang member at school or in their neighborhood. These were simple, "yes" or "no" questions.

Q12: Have you ever been threatened verbally by a gang member while at your school?

Q13: Have you ever been threatened verbally by a gang member in your neighborhood?

	High School	Continuation	Court
Threatened at school	18.5%	16.9%	28.6%
Threatened in neighborhood	7.9	23.9	34.7

Among students in regular high schools 18.5% had been threatened by a gang member at school compared to 8% in their own neighborhoods. Continuation



students were about as likely to be threatened at school (17%), but much more likely to have been threatened in their own neighborhoods (24%). Larger percentages of court respondents had been threatened in both locations (29% at school and 35% in their neighborhoods). Once again, frequency of negative experiences with gangs are definitely related to group membership.

Physical assaults by gang members in school or neighborhood

High school students were asked if they had ever been physically assaulted at school or in their neighborhood by a member of a gang.

Q14: Have you ever been physically assaulted (hit, beaten up) at school by a member of a gang?

Q15: Have you ever been physically assaulted (hit, beaten up) in your neighborhood by a member of a gang?

	High School	Continuation	Court
Assaulted at school	5.3%	8.5%	14.3%
Assaulted in neighborhood	5.3	14.3	40.8

Respondents from court facilities were more likely to have been assaulted at school by a gang member than students in regular high schools (14% vs. 5%) and considerably more likely to have experienced assaults in their neighborhood (41% vs. 51%). Overall, it is clear that schools are safer places than neighborhoods as far as gang assault is concerned.

Advantages and disadvantages of being in a gang

Senior high students were asked what advantages and disadvantages might accrue from being a member of a gang (Questions 16 and 17).

Almost two-thirds (64.5%) of regular, nearly half (47%) of continuation, and 1 in 5 (20%) of court respondents saw no advantages to being in a gang. No more than 1 in 4 regular high school students acknowledged any advantages compared to one-half to two-thirds of the court respondents. Most often checked by the latter were "have a lot of friends" and "have fun, party" (67% in both cases). Court respondents were much more likely to view gangs as a place to get alcohol and other drugs (59% vs. 15% of regular high school students) and to see gangs as a source of money (47% vs. 16%). Continuation high school students were between the other two groups, but generally closer to students in regular high schools than to court respondents.



Q16: What advantages do you see to being in a gang (check all that apply)?

	High School	Continuation	Court
None, as far as I know	64.5%	47.2%	19.6%
Have a lot of friends	24.3	34.7	66.7
Get respect from other people who are not in gangs	16.4	36.1	54.9
Nobody would mess with me (protection)	22.4	29.2	52.9
Get money	15.8	18.8	47.1
Get alcohol, drugs	15.1	27.8	58.8
Have fun, party	23.7	38.9	66.7

Q17: What disadvantages do you see to being in a gang?

	High School	Continuation	Court
None, as far as I know	9.2%	16.7%	15.7%
Get into trouble at school, maybe be expelled	71.7	54.2	56.4
Get into trouble with police, maybe go to jail	79.6	68.1	70.6
Get hurt, maybe killed	82.2	66.7	64.7
Parents would be very angry with me	65.8	40.3	51.0
Commit a bad sin, be in trouble with God	54.6	40.3	51.0
Would lose friends I have now	59.9	50.0	45.1

Compared to the previous question on advantages of being in a gang, far higher percentages of respondents in all three groups checked each disadvantage listed in question 17. Eight out of ten regular high school students and over two-thirds or more continuation and court respondents perceived getting into trouble with police and getting hurt or even killed as disadvantages of gang membership. About half of regular and court respondents thought gang membership might be a sin or that they would lose friends. Parental anger was more important to regular (66%) than either court (51%) or continuation high school (40%) respondents. Perhaps most notable was the fact that relatively few in any of the three groups perceived no disadvantages in gang membership (9% of regular, 17% of continuation, and 16% of court respondents).



Perceptions of gang activities

High school students were asked in question 18 about what kinds of activities gang members engaged in as gang members.

Q18: What kinds of things do you think members of a gang do as a gang activity? (Check all that apply)

	High School	Continuation	Court
Don't do anything, just hang around or party	17.1%	13.9%	31.4%
Paint names and messages on walls	88.2	81.9	84.3
Wear gang colors and gang clothes	90.1	84.1	84.3
Protect their neighborhoods and other members of their gang	64.5	69.4	78.4
Pick fights with kids not in gangs	66.4	48.6	47.1
Fight with other gangs	85.5	79.2	86.3
Steal things	81.6	63.3	80.4
Take drugs	75.7	68.1	76.5
Sell drugs	79.6	73.6	82.4
Drink beer, wine, or liquor	84.2	80.6	86.3
Hassle, annoy, and frighten people	69.7	54.2	62.7
Do good things (help others, work at jobs, do sports, do homework, etc.)	5.9	9.7	9.8
Other	1.3	5.6	11.8
Don't know what gang members do	4.6	2.8	5.9

A composite image of gang members in the minds of Tulare County youth can be drawn from the responses to this question. For example, 80% or more of the regular high school students checked wearing gang colors (90%), painting graffiti (88%), fighting with other gangs (86%), stealing (82%), drinking (84%), and selling drugs (80%). Between 70-80% selected taking drugs (76%) and annoying or frightening people (70%). Between 60-70% checked picking fights with non-gang members (66%) and protecting their neighborhood and other gang members (64%). Positive or neutral alternatives "hang around and party" were endorsed by relatively few respondents.



Responses by court youth gave a similar pattern of responses to question 18. They gave high rates of endorsement to fighting with other gangs and drinking (both (86%). They were more likely to check protecting their neighborhood and other gang members than were regular high school students (78% for court vs. 64.5% for regular high school students).

Does respondent know any gang members?

The last question assessed whether senior high school students knew any gang members. While only one question on this topic was asked of the older students, three questions on the sixth-grade questionnaire were related to this particular topic. These assessed whether (a) any friends or (b) older siblings were in a gang and (c) whether any older siblings wanted to be in a gang.

Q19 Do you know any gang members?

	High School	Continuation	Court
I don't know any gang members	18.4%	18.1%	7.8%
Yes, a close friend of mine	32.9	51.4	72.5
Yes, one of my parents	2.0	4.2	7.8
Yes, one of my brothers or sisters	6.6	8.3	27.5
Yes, another member of my family	18.4	31.9	54.9
Yes, a student in my class	61.2	45.8	72.5
Yes, a neighbor who lives on the same street	24.3	36.1	66.7

The majority of regular high school students (82%) knew at least one gang member. Sixty-one percent cited a student in their class and 33% a close friend. Virtually all court respondents (92%) knew a gang member. These included a close friend or student in their class (both 72.5%). Fifty-five percent of court respondents (vs. 18% of regular and 32% of continuation) had a gang member in their family).

When asked if they knew anyone who was already in a gang, 52% of the 6th-graders replied in the affirmative. However, only 8% indicated that an older brother or sister was in a gang. Four percent reported that they would like to be in a gang and 3% more that they already were members.



Summary

Overall, the county-wide results reported in the first section give a reasonably accurate picture of problems associated with gangs in the perception of 6th-grade and secondary school students. For the older students, the separation of respondents into regular high school, continuation high school, and wards of the court revealed genuine differences. Perceptions of problems associated with gang activity vary depending on which of these reference groups is used. In part depending on the question asked, but still generally true, more problems in school, neighborhood, and community were reported by continuation high school students than by students in regular high schools. Moreover, on a number of questions respondents classified as wards of the court had experienced far more problems with gangs than had either set of high school respondents. For young people, the "gang problem" in their community is in part "in the eye of the beholder." Overall averages across youth with different histories of compatibility with regular schooling would obscure the very real differences among groups that have been identified in this report.

Finally, this report should lay to rest the notion that the bigger the city the worse the gang problem. Rather, the conclusion is merely that there are more gangs in larger cities, not that the problems are significantly less. As long as there are any gangs at all problems experienced by individual citizens (in this case school age children and youth) will be similar regardless of community size. The reason that perceptions of gang problems are relatively unaffected by size of community is presumably that gang activities are by nature confined primarily to a particular locality or "turf" in which the gang operates.



Archival Data



Department of Justice data

These data are presented numerically in Table I, and as percentages in Table II. Table II represents 1988 as a baseline year, and establishes activity level for that year as "100%," or "normal" data. Subsequent years are then compared to this "normal" baseline.

When reviewing these data, remember that they are for arrests. They are not for reported crime incidents or for convictions. To a certain extent, trends in arrests reflect what resources are available to law enforcement agencies, and how those resources are used. For example, when the Tulare County Sheriffs Office suffered budget cuts, arrest rates declined.

These data suggest there has been a recent dramatic increase in arrest rates for some kinds of juvenile crime. The most dramatic increases have occurred in crimes of violence, particularly in homicides and weapons charges.

Table I: Numerical Data, Juvenile Arrests in Tulare County

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Homocide	1	4	2	4	11
Robbery	15	29	24	34	29
Motor Vehicle Theft	91	92	149	127	133
Weapons	37	37	87	90	165
Assault	279	292	356	351	387
Vandalism	83	152	152	151	170

Table II: Comparisons Against 1988 as Baseline Year, by Percent

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Homocide	100%	400%	200%	400%	1100%
Robbery	100%	193%	160%	227%	193%
Motor Vehicle Theft	100%	101%	164%	140%	146%
Weapons	100%	100%	235%	243%	446%
Assault	100%	105%	128%	126%	139%
Vandalism	100%	183%	183%	182%	205%



Table III: Juvenile Hall Bookings (Source: Tulare County Probation Department)

	1988/89	1992/93	Percent Change
Homocide	6	28	+467%
Robbery	18	39	+217%
Assault	106	156	+147%
Weapons	21	87	+414%
Arson	1	12	+1100%

Comparisons of Study Communities with County: This section contrasts the numbers of arrests in the five communities studied by the project, with the numbers of juvenile arrests for "All," meaning all jurisdictions in the entire county. Earlimart is not included because separate data for Earlimart were not available.

Table IV: Homocide Arrests, Juvenile

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All	1	4	2	4	11
Visalia	0	0	1	0	3
Tulare	0	0	0	1	3
Exeter	0	0	0	0	0
Farmersville	0	0	0	0	0

Table V: Robbery Arrests, Juvenile

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All	15	29	24	34	29
Visalia	5	11	6	21	13
Tulare	1	13	11	6	7
Exeter	0	0	1	0	0
Farmersville	1	1	0	0	1



Table VI: Juvenile Arrests for Motor Vehicle Theft

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All	91	92	149	127	133
Visalia	29	27	41	44	36
Tulare	7	12	23	25	20
Exeter	3	5	1	5	1
Farmersville	8	0	1	1	0

Table VII: Juvenile Arrests for Illegal Possession of Weapons

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All	37	37	87	90	165
Visalia	8	8	27	39	63
Tulare	3	3	16	12	25
Exeter	0	0	0	1	0
Farmersville	0	1	0	1	0

Table VIII: Juvenile Arrests for Vandallism

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All	83	152	152	151	170
Visalia	14	54	43	44	71
Tulare	19	19	41	29	33
Exeter	0	7	7	17	0
Farmersville	1	4	1	9	2

Table IX: Juvenile Arrests for Assault

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All	279	292	356	351	387
Visalia	66	85	65	65	56
Tulare	28	29	46	26	56
Exeter	1	1	4	5	7
Farmersville	8	11	9	17	3



Additional Data: Visalia Police Department

Since Visalia is the largest community in the county, a further review of key gang-related data from Visalia is informative. In the table below a percentage change comparison is indicated in the right-hand column. It represents a trend comparison between data from 1990 and 1992.

Table X: Disturbance Reports: Gang-type Crimes (Source: Visalia Police Department)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	% +/-
Drive-by	15	36	24	51	+60%
Discharge Firearm	4	8	11	27	+175%
Vehicle Jacking	1	4	16	n/a	+1500%
Weapons at School	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	+81%

The Visalia Police Department has identified 16 Visalia street gangs, totaling 490 members. According to figures reported in the Visalia Times Delta (Major Crime Drops in Visalia, 10/14/93), 134 guns had already been confiscated in 1993, compared with 58 in 1992. These figures are congruent with testimony to the Visalia Unified School District Board of Education that "we have confiscated more guns this year than in the entire previous history of the district" (Safe Schools Study Session, August 24, 1993).

Observations and Recommendations Related to Study Communities



Earlimart

Overview: Survey data and information from Earlimart residents suggests that, while youth gangs exist, they are small and have few members. Because students attend high school in Delano, it is possible that more gang conflict involving Earlimart students occurs in Delano. There is relatively little graffiti in Earlimart. However, it is not unusual to see the tag "Earla XIV" in other parts of the county. Gang members and law enforcement officers interviewed in other parts of the county shared the impression that Earlimart did have active youth gangs, and that these gangs were involved in drug trafficking and numerous unreported drive-bys.

Any concern residents have about youth gangs is far outweighed by concerns about crime in general. One resident reported four burglaries in a span of six months, and said she was afraid to leave her house because "they know when I'm gone."

There is a perception that the Earlimart area is seen by drug dealers as a place where they can complete their transactions with relatively little risk of being arrested. There has at various times been a significant amount of violence associated with this activity. While we accept the impression of residents that youth gangs are not a major issue, we suggest that the presence of these drug traffickers may indicate that instrumentally-organized gangs (that is, entrepreneurial gangs) may have a foothold in Earlimart.

Law enforcement patrols in Earlimart are limited to one Sheriff's deputy in the general area at any given time, supplemented by the California Highway Patrol.

Earlimart residents have made a concerted effort to provide positive guidance for youth. They are hampered in these efforts by lack of resources and difficulty competing for funding. The Earlimart Youth Foundation has established a ball park and swimming pool. The schools recently adopted a year-round school. Residents feel this is a major benefit to area children, since it helps them structure their time constructively.

Recommendations for Earlimart

Earlimart-area residents are working hard to create a pro-youth community.



They are enjoying significant success. The Sheriff's office shares their frustration at the lack of law enforcement resources for an adequate patrol presence. This frustration exists in practically all rural areas of the county. Steps the community might take include:

- Revitalize the Earlimart Town Council, using the concept of "Pro-Youth Communities" as an organizing principle or cause.
- Develop neighborhood watch or similar groups. Work with the Tulare County Sheriff to determine how members of these groups should respond to observed criminal activity when it is unlikely that police agencies will be able to respond quickly.
- Continue to support and develop the Earlimart Youth Foundation.
- Community members should participate in county-wide networks and planning efforts. Doing so may help the community identify and develop additional sources of funds and other resources.

Visalia

Overview: Visalia is characterized by widespread agreement that gangs are a significant concern. The city is rich in resources for responding to gangs. These include a very proactive police response; several youth-oriented agencies; an active citizen's group whose purpose is to create a gang-free community; school staff and administrators who recognize the impact of gang-related activities upon schools and who are committed to develop safe campuses; and other resources. The intense pride residents have for their city is linked to a commitment to take action to keep quality of life high. But while most residents we spoke to are optimistic that the community will prevail over gangs, some residents feel it is a losing battle. An often cited fear is that Visalia will become "like Fresno." These individuals expressed a general sense of pessimism and conveyed the idea that youth gangs are a symptom of a much larger trend toward general cultural deterioration.

Gang-related crime has increased in many parts of the city. But reported crime is only one indicator. Another key indicator is the reports of parents and children that they often feel insecure when they encounter suspected gang members. It is not uncommon to observe young people, gang members or not, whose demeanor is challenging and defiant. The police department, using a conservative counting method, identifies 16 gangs and 490 gang members in Visalia. These gangs are generally organized along ethnic lines. They are not considered highly organized, nor have they apparently made the transition to what is referred to as "instrumental" gangs, meaning gangs organized primarily to

profit from criminal enterprises. There is one possible exception, which is the Oriental Troop. The Oriental Troop has been involved in drug trafficking that may be connected to entrepreneurial gangs from other locations.

Most gang violence in Visalia is directed at other gangs. Gangs are becoming better armed and the trend has been toward more gunfire, more violence, and more risk. Community members who confront gang members do so at some risk, and there have been a few assaults by gang members upon non-gang members. This has contributed to a growing (and sometimes exaggerated) sense of insecurity among many residents. Many of those whom we interviewed faulted the media for sometimes sensationalizing or distorting gang activity. This is generally believed to contribute to the status of gangs. In general, the community remains reasonably safe in almost all areas, for residents who take reasonable precautions. But the impression persists that the situation could deteriorate at any time.

Graffiti is an apparently intractable problem. While much of it is the work of taggers (who are not youth gang members), its presence reflects the influence of gang culture. Moreover, much graffiti is the work of gang members. Some businesses are suffering considerable expenses from painting over graffiti and from implementing new security measures to deter taggers and vandals.

Among Visalia's assets is a willingness of various agencies and individuals to work together in formulating goals, developing resources, and initiating actions. The police department is to be commended for recognizing that gang suppression is a priority. Moreover, the police department employs preventive strategies as well, through its Police Activities League and other efforts. Visalia Unified School District and Visalia Police Department are closely cooperating to find ways to develop safe campuses and communities.

Another asset of the community is the grass-roots group, Visalians for a Gang-Free Community. This group is well-established and has helped to develop several pro-youth initiatives within the community.

Recommendations for Visalia

- The efforts of existing programs will continue to be strengthened if these programs continue to work together. Formation of a "Pro-Youth Visalia" or similar council can help these programs better coordinate their efforts and align their resources. This council could consist of agencies and individuals committed to reducing gangs and creating opportunities for young people. It could be guided by the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities.





- Community groups concerned about how the news media reports on gang activities should work with media representatives to develop guidelines for reporting on gang activity. For example, one suggestion from law enforcement is that their job would be easier if news reports did not name, and thus enhance the status of, gangs involved in newsworthy incidents.
- Concerns about safety on school campuses are significant. Community members should work with the school district to create a safe schools strategy. While there are many competing funding needs in the school district, developing resources to implement a safe schools strategy should be considered among other funding priorities.
- A program in which the court orders parents of gang-involved juvenile offenders to attend parenting classes has been piloted with some success. This effort, organized by Visalians for a Gang-Free Community, is worthy of further development.
- The graffiti problem could be the focus of neighborhood associations. Neighborhood merchants would benefit from adopting a leadership role for these associations. A general approach would be to keep each association small; define its borders; and work aggressively to immediately remove graffiti when it appears within the association's area. In addition to removing graffiti these associations could sponsor or support pro-youth activities. Visalians for a Gang-Free Community has begun to develop this approach.

Exeter

Overview: There are currently few gangs in Exeter, and not many youth gang members. Those who do exist are well-known to law enforcement officers, who are able to limit the damage they cause. The most frequently mentioned damage caused by gang members is graffiti and vandalism. However, some assaults have occurred and weapons have been confiscated. Moreover, Exeter 6th-graders who responded to the Tulare County Youth Survey on Gangs reported a higher-than-average rate of feeling concerned about gangs. Many indicated that they had also been asked or pressured to join gangs.

The community is united in its response to gangs. The Exeter Youth Center has become a focus for developing opportunities for young people in Exeter. Its promoters have been able to steadily develop the resources needed to create a facility in which a wide variety of programs and activities can be offered. Given the size of Exeter, a youth center is accessible to all young people and is in this regard a strategy that is well-suited to the community. Since the center was started, gang activity has declined. The center has been strengthened by the



addition of very experienced staff and by the many hours of volunteer labor contributed. Moreover, it is not seen a simply a place where "kids can do things," (although that is part of it), but also as a place where local young people can develop connections with adult opportunity-providers and role models.

Leaders of the Exeter effort have taken leadership in building a county-wide network of youth centers. They have consistently encouraged the start-up efforts of other concerned groups, such as the Woodlake Drum and Bugle Corps.

In addition to the center, the schools and the police department have active pro-youth activities, some of which specifically target gangs. Also, an "Exeter 2,000" group exists and is working to continue to enhance the quality of life in Exeter. This quality of life is ultimately the strongest foundation for preventing and resolving gang problems, provided all residents have access to it.

Recommendations for Exeter

- The community center should continue to serve as a focus for pro-youth activities.
- The county-wide networking initiated by local leaders should continue. We recommend that its participants study the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities and assess how this framework may be applied to strengthen their efforts and to align them with other pro-youth initiatives in the county.

Tulare

Overview: Gang activity is a significant concern of many Tulare residents. It has had a significant deleterious impact upon the quality of life in some neighborhoods.

In public, there remains disagreement regarding the scope and seriousness of gang activity in Tulare. But in private conversations, almost everyone we contacted agrees that youth gangs have become a significant concern, especially in the Western part of the city. There has been considerable movement toward the consensus necessary for the community to respond in a truly powerful manner. However, complete consensus regarding the existence or scope of a gang problem has still not emerged.

This is not to say that efforts are not being made, or that existing efforts are ineffective; to the contrary, we found programs in Tulare that other communities would do well to emulate. Tulare residents and officials have taken many proactive steps to respond to gangs. A Tulare Gang Task Force composed of citizens,



agency leaders, and educators has been active and has supported a number of initiatives, include development of the Teen City youth center. Agencies such as the Tulare Youth Services Bureau and C-SET continue to reach out to local young people. The school districts have developed innovative programs linking neighborhood parent groups to gang response activities. A form of expanded neighborhood watch, modified especially to make it relevant to gangs, has been developed and implemented in 14 neighborhoods.

Recommendations for Tulare

- The Tulare Gang Task Force is to be commended for their work. They deserve the continued support of the community. We recommend they use the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities as a foundation for continued planning processes, and that they continue to network with pro-youth groups in other communities to share ideas, strategies, and successes.
- Continue to develop and refine the cooperative programs begun by schools, parents, community agencies, and the police department.
- Continue to support Teen City and the development of other similar programs in other areas of the city.
- Implement the Tulare County Youth Survey on Gangs in a carefully-selected representative sample of 6th-graders and 11th-graders from all segments of the community. Use the data gathered as source of objective information about gangs. This information may be used to help support the development of community-wide consensus about the scope, seriousness, and priority of gang problems.

Farmersville

Overview: There is a significant gang problem in Farmersville. Many younger children identify with gangs, and some entire families have a tradition of gang involvement. Farmersville gangs, and the conflicts among them, are influenced by long-standing feuds which in some cases reach back to family roots in Mexico.

City police officers have excellent knowledge of the precise extent of the problem. The school and police department cooperate closely to respond to gang problems. A "Pre-gang Task Force" meets on a regular basis and works to develop programs and resources on behalf of young people. An appealing aspect of the work of this group is its decision to focus primarily on younger children who are not yet gang-affiliated.



A barrier to working with high-school aged students is that they attend high school in Exeter. There is a widespread perception that Farmersville students are not readily accepted by Exeter students, and this reduces their prospects for successful completion of high school. The drop-out rate for Farmersville students is perceived as being quite high. We were not able to verify this, but we mention it here because the perception is important whether it is supported by data or not. Plans to build a separate high school in Farmersville should help to remediate this problem, but in the two remaining years prior to its projected completion date there is an opportunity to address this important concern.

An appealing pro-youth strategy being planned in Farmersville is to build a multi-purpose structure as part of the new high school. This structure will be designed and located in a manner that makes it useful to the school, but also accessible for a variety of community events. It will have the capacity to function as a youth center.

Recommendations for Farmersville

- The efforts of the Pre-Gang Task Force should continue. We recommend that its participants study the Tulare County Framework for Pro-Youth Communities and assess how this framework may be applied to strengthen their efforts and to align them with other pro-youth initiatives in the county.
- Cultural sensitivity training should be offered on a community wide basis, with the goal of enhancing communication and including even more stakeholder groups in planning processes.
- Student advisory groups may be a valuable asset upon which the community can draw during this critical time when plans are being made for new high school and for pro-youth and gang-response initiatives.



Annotated Bibliography of Selected Gang Literature:

Bodinger-deUriarte, Cristina: *Hate Crime Sourcebook for Schools*. 1992: Research for Better Schools, Philadelphia, PA. Reviews and clarifies hate crime. Reviews causes, and contains checklists to help determine if hate crime is a significant influence within a school or community. Contains an annotated list of recommended resources.

Borbolla, Mel: *Street Gangs in Tulare County*. 1991: Tulare County Office of Education, Visalia. This booklet lists names and affiliations of known gangs and provides basic gang awareness information specifically regarding Tulare County.

Erickson, Erik H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. 1966: New York, WW Norton. A true classic, this book is as relevant today as when it was first published. Describes the psychological, social, and emotional tasks of adolescence. Can be easily applied to understanding youth gang phenomena. Includes searing critique of cultural deficiencies that militate against young people who become caught when trying to negotiate key developmental passages.

Finckenauer, James O. *Scared Straight! and the Panacea Phenomenon*. 1982: Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall. A review of evaluation of Scared Straight! and similar programs based on the Rahway (NJ) State Prison program. The programs largely failed to achieve their goals. This book is most valuable for its discussion of social responses to evaluation. Even credible evaluation data are likely to be rejected if they do not support existing opinions about whether a strategy is effective. Panacea-type programs are those whose promoters claim they are "ideal models that should be emulated in other communities." They almost invariably fail; the reasons why are discussed. Finckenauer also describes what is involved in developing an evaluation plan and in dealing with the aftermath of releasing evaluation data.

Goldstein, Arnold P. and C. Ronald Huff (eds): *The Gang Intervention Handbook*. 1993: Research Press, Champaign Ill. An excellent resource for schools, gang program managers, and law enforcement officers. Contains suggested school policies, civic ordinances, assessment instruments, reviews of various counseling strategies as they apply to gang intervention, and suggestions for evaluators. An indispensable resource. Strategic suggestions contained in this volume are remarkably congruent with those in the *Tulare County Framework for Developing Pro-Youth Neighborhoods and Communities*.



Huff, C. Ronald (ed.) *Gangs in America*. 1990: Newbury Park, CA Sage Publications, Inc. Fourteen scholarly articles on gangs, their members, their organization, community responses to gangs, and policy issues. Excellent, well-researched perspectives that mostly agree, but that also contain revealing areas of disagreement.

Mathews, Frederick. "Reframing Gang Violence: A Pro-Youth Strategy." *JEB-P, Fall, 1992*, pp 24-28. Powerfully advocates adopting a pro-youth stance when responding to youthful violence and gang activity. Describes how "the process is the message" when developing gang programs.

Sanchez Jankowski, Martin. *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*. 1991: Berkeley, UC Press. Sanchez Jankowski reports on post-doctoral research spanning several years. During these years he lived with a variety of gangs in different parts of the county. He suggests that gangs must be viewed as a separate phenomenon than delinquency; and that until they are understood as organizations, appropriate responses are not likely to emerge.

Skolnick, Jerome H. *Gang Organization and Migration—Drugs, Gangs, and Law Enforcement*. 1991, California Department of Justice, Sacramento. Describes in detail the ways in which gangs organize to become drug traffickers. Reviews patterns of migration, organizational structures, and implications for law enforcement. Provides a "Theory of Gangs and Gang Migration." Discusses the limits of law enforcement as a tool for implementing gang-response policy.

Footnotes

1. Laurie Isham, member of the Framework Committee, deserves acknowledgment for her persistent advocacy of this vitally important concept.
2. Skolnick, Jerome H. *Gang Organization and Migration—Drugs, Gangs, and Law Enforcement*. 1991, California Department of Justice, Sacramento.
3. Quoted in: Foster, Douglas: "If the Symptoms are Rapid Increases in Teen Deaths from Murder, Suicide, Car Crashes, Alcohol and Drugs...The Disease is Adolescence." *Rolling Stone*, December 9, 1993
4. We are indebted to James Finckenauer for this insight, which he terms "The Panacea Phenomenon." See: Finckenauer, James: *Scared Straight! and the Panacea Phenomenon*. Prentice Hall, 1982.
5. Many of the recommendations in this section are drawn from Goldstein and Huff, *The Gang Intervention Handbook*, ch. 13.



Tulare County Youth Survey, 1993 Senior High School

This is a survey of what you think or know about gangs in your school and city.

This survey is voluntary. You do not have to answer the questions, but we hope that you will decide to do so. Do not write your name on this form or identify yourself in any other way. If you have decided to participate, begin by answering the questions on this page.

Name of your school: _____

Your grade in school (check one): ___9th ___10th ___11th ___12th

Age in years (check one): ___13 ___14 ___15 ___16 ___17 ___18

Your sex (check one): ___Male ___Female

Which racial or ethnic group do you belong to (check one answer only)?

- ___(1) Asian American (including Pacific Islander)
- ___(2) Black or African American
- ___(3) Hispanic American (Latino, Mexican, Central American, etc.)
- ___(4) Native American (Indian)
- ___(5) White (Anglo)
- ___(6) Mixed Race/Ethnicity (More than one of the above groups)
- ___(7) Other (write in): _

Were you born in this country (check one)? ___Yes ___No

Now go on to the next page.

For questions 1 - 15 check one answer only for each question.

1. When you hear the word "gang," what does it mean to you (check one)?

- (1) kids who hang out together for fun and don't cause any harm
- (2) kids who are in a group that sometimes gets into trouble, but who don't really mean to harm anyone
- (3) kids in a group with a "gang name" who break laws and sometimes hurt people on purpose
- (4) adults in big criminal gangs like the Mafia
- (5) something else (explain) _____

2. Choose the one statement that best describes how you feel about gangs.

- (1) I will never join a gang like that.
 - (2) I might join a gang like that someday.
 - (3) I have already decided to join a gang like that.
 - (4) I used to be in a gang like that, but not anymore.
 - (5) I am a member of a gang like that.
- If you checked (5) write in the name of the gang: _____
- Have you ever wanted to get out of the gang? Yes No

3. How much of a problem are gangs for you at your school?

- (1) not a problem for me or no gangs at school.
- (2) I know they are there, but am not really afraid or bothered by gangs.
- (3) Sometimes I am worried or feel unsafe because of gangs at school.
- (4) I worry so much about gangs that it interferes with my activities.

4. How big a problem are gangs for you in your neighborhood?

- (1) Not a problem for me or no gangs in my neighborhood.
- (2) I know they are there, but am not really afraid or bothered by gangs.
- (3) Sometimes I am worried or feel unsafe because of gangs in my neighborhood.
- (4) I worry so much about gangs that it interferes with my activities.



5. Do your parents tell you how bad gangs are and to stay away from them?

- (1) Never
- (2) Once or twice
- (3) Often
- (4) All the time

6. How many names of gangs in your town can you think of?

- (1) None, I don't know any names of gangs in my town
- (2) One
- (3) Two
- (4) Three to five
- (5) More than five

7. Are other kids at your school afraid of gangs?

- (1) None, as far as I know
- (2) Yes, a few
- (3) Yes, a lot of kids
- (4) Yes, almost everybody who isn't in a gang

8. Has anyone ever asked or pressured you to join a gang?

- (1) I have never been asked to join a gang
- (2) Yes, once
- (3) Yes, two or three times
- (4) Yes, more than three times

9. In the last month, have you ever known that another student was carrying a gun at your school (did not have to be in a gang)?

- (1) Never as far as I know
- (2) Yes, once
- (3) Yes, two or three times
- (4) Yes, more than three times, but not every day
- (5) Yes, every day or almost every day

10. Is there any part of your town (a street or neighborhood) that gangs control so that other people are afraid to go there?

- (1) not as far as I know
- (2) yes, at least one neighborhood or street
- (3) yes, two or more neighborhoods or streets

11. In the last month, have you ever been afraid of being beaten up by other kids on your way to or from school?

- (1) no, never
- (2) yes, once
- (3) yes, two or three times
- (4) yes, more than three times, but not every day
- (5) yes, every day or almost every day

12. Have you ever been threatened verbally by a gang member while at your school?

- (1) No, never threatened at school
- (2) Yes, I have been threatened at school

13. Have you ever been threatened verbally by a gang member in your neighborhood?

- (1) No, never threatened
- (2) Yes, I have been threatened

14. Have you ever been physically assaulted (hit, beaten up) at school by a member of a gang?

- (1) No, never
- (2) Yes, I have

15. Have you ever been physically assaulted (hit, beaten up) in your neighborhood by a member of a gang?

- (1) No, never
- (2) Yes, I have





For the rest of the questions check as many answers as you think apply.

16. What advantages do you see to being in a gang (check all that apply)?

- (1) None, as far as I know
- (2) Have a lot of friends
- (3) Get respect from other people who are not in gangs
- (4) Nobody would mess with me (protection)
- (5) Get money
- (6) Get alcohol, drugs
- (7) Have fun, party

17. What disadvantages do you see to being in a gang?

- (1) None, as far as I know
- (2) Get into trouble at school, maybe be expelled
- (3) Get into trouble with police, maybe go to jail
- (4) Get hurt, maybe killed
- (5) Parents would be very angry with me
- (6) Commit a bad sin, be in trouble with God
- (7) Would lose friends I have now

18. What kinds of things do you think members of a gang do as a gang activity?
(Check all that apply.)

- (1) Don't do anything, just hang around or party
- (2) Paint names and messages on walls
- (3) Wear gang colors and gang clothes
- (4) Protect their neighborhoods and other members of their gang
- (5) Pick fights with kids not in gangs
- (6) Fight with other gangs
- (7) Steal things
- (8) Take drugs
- (9) Sell drugs
- (10) Drink beer, wine, or liquor
- (11) Hassle, annoy, and frighten people
- (12) Do good things (like help others, work at jobs, do sports, study, etc.)
- (13) Other _____
- (14) Don't know what gang members do

19. Do you know any gang members? Use the list that follows to describe that
(those) person(s).

- (1) I don't know any gang members.
- (2) Yes, a close friend of mine
- (3) Yes, one of my parents
- (4) Yes, one of my brothers or sisters
- (5) Yes, another member of my family (cousin, uncle, in-law, etc.)
- (6) Yes, a student in my class
- (7) Yes, a neighbor who lives on the same street as me

Thank you for your help!





Tulare County Youth Survey, 1993 Upper Elementary

This is a survey of what you think or know about gangs in your school and city.

This survey is voluntary. You do not have to answer the questions, but we hope that you will decide to do so. Do not write your name on this form or identify yourself in any other way. If you have decided to participate, begin by answering the questions on this page.

The school I go to is called: _____

My grade in school is (check one): ___5th ___6th

My age is (check one): ___9 ___10 ___11 ___12

I am (check one): ___Male ___Female

I am (check one answer only):

___(1) Asian American (including Pacific Islander)

___(2) Black or African American

___(3) Hispanic American (Latino, Mexican, Central American, etc.)

___(4) Native American (Indian)

___(5) White (Anglo)

___(6) Mixed Race/Ethnicity (More than one of the above groups)

___(7) Other (write in): _____

I was born in (check one):

___The United States (America)

___Another Country

For all of the questions check (✓) only one answer.

1. What does the word gang mean to you? (Check only one answer).

- (1) a group of kids who have fun together, go places together
- (2) a group of kids who do things together and sometimes get into trouble, but don't mean to harm anyone.
- (3) kids in a group that has a name and who break laws and may scare or hurt people on purpose.
- (4) something else

2. Do you and your friends ever talk about gangs that are in your neighborhood or town (check one)?

- (1) no, never
- (2) yes, sometimes
- (3) yes, often
- (4) yes, all of the time

3. Do you know the names of any gangs in your town? (check one)

- (1) no, none
- (2) yes, one
- (3) yes, two
- (4) yes, three or more

4. Are any of your friends or people you know already in a gang?

- (1) no, none of them
- (2) yes, at least one friend in a gang





5. Do you think any of your friends want to be in a gang?

___ (1) no, none of them

___ (2) yes, at least one does

6. Are any of your older brothers or sisters in a gang?

___ (1) no, none or don't have any older brothers or sisters

___ (2) yes

7. Do you think any of your older brothers or sisters want to be in a gang?

___ (1) no, none or don't have any older brothers or sisters

___ (2) yes

8. Do you want to be a member of a gang?

___ (1) no, I don't

___ (2) yes, I would

___ (3) yes, I am already

9. Do your parents tell you how bad gangs are and to stay away from them?

___ (1) never

___ (2) once or twice

___ (3) often

___ (4) all the time



10. Are there any places in your neighborhood or town where you are afraid to go because members of gangs are there?

- ___ (1) no, there are no places where I am afraid of gangs
- ___ (2) yes, there is at least one place where I am afraid to go

11. Are there any gang members at your school?

- ___ (1) no, none or I don't know
- ___ (2) yes, one or two
- ___ (3) yes, a few
- ___ (4) yes, quite a few (10 or more that you know of)

12. Has anyone asked or tried to make you join a gang?

- ___ (1) I have never been asked to join a gang
- ___ (2) yes, I have been asked to join a gang

Thank you for your help!

