



# The California Cities Gang Prevention Network

Welcome to the California Cities Gang Prevention Network second bulletin! In addition to updating you on a few pieces of news, this month we spotlight the City of Oakland. Like many cities across the nation, Oakland faces increased levels of violence. To tackle this growing problem, the city is mobilizing resources, generating new resources and creating strategies that interweave prevention, intervention and enforcement. This bulletin will feature highlights of Oakland's recent efforts.

## The Challenge

As of mid-October, the City of Oakland recorded its 122nd homicide of the year. Compared to 94 homicides in 2005, there have already been 28 more killings in Oakland this year—and there is reason to believe that numbers will continue to rise. Although law enforcement officials are unclear as to the reasons for these killings, they believe that most are gang-related. In response, Oakland has launched a multi-pronged approach including: the creation of a Community Response and Support Network, a new collaborative peacekeeping project in the cities of Oakland and Richmond, and a partnership between the police department and public health officials to evaluate the existing epidemic of violence in the city, and to redefine the Oakland's approach to violence. The City believes that a blend of enforcement, intervention, and prevention will reduce violence.

## Voters Tax Themselves to Improve the City's Response to Violence

In November, 2004, Oakland voters passed Measure Y, the Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act (VPPSA), which allocates \$19.9 million in funds to expand needed violence prevention programs and increases the number of police officers in Oakland's neighborhoods. This measure intends to provide a comprehensive approach to the severe violence problem by expanding enforcement while at the same time creating more prevention programs. Prevention programs include:

- Youth outreach counselors who will counsel and mentor at-risk youth by providing services and creating employment opportunities;
- Offender/parolee employment training that provides parolee pre-release employment skills training and wage incentives for employers to hire and train young offenders or parolees;
- After- and in-school programs that expand existing city programs and city-supported programs that provide recreational, academic tutoring and mentoring opportunities for at-risk adolescents and children.
- Truancy enforcement programs will be expanded to help keep kids in school.

Under Measure Y, the City's Department of Human Services (DHS) has just released a Request for Proposals for an Oakland Community Response and Support Network (CRSN). The purpose of the Network is to

assist families of homicide victims and other victims of violence. The network, funded at \$540,000 for a two-year period, will provide first response, intensive support services, emergency funds, and mental health and support groups for family and friends of homicide victims.

In addition to creating a CRSN, Measure Y funds will support gang-prevention and intervention strategies. A fund of \$300,000 has been made available to create parent education programs for families with elementary and middle school children and youth at risk for gang involvement. An additional \$380,000 is available in grant funds for programs that provide youth (aged 12-24) who are gang involved or at-risk for becoming gang involved with positive alternatives to gang life. Programs will target neighborhoods most affected by gang violence. Up to four nonprofit organizations or public agencies will be funded for two years for work beginning January 1, 2007.

### **The Oakland Police Department and the Alameda County Public Health Department Team Up to Address Increasing Violence in the Community**

According to the Alameda County Public Health Department, the death rate in Oakland is four times higher than the national rate. In response to this grim statistic, the Alameda County Public Health Department is working with the Oakland Police Department, the Alameda County Coroner's office, and community organizations to release a report which details homicide data within the city between 2002 and 2004. The report will provide law enforcement and community-based organizations with useful data about areas that have high crime rates and what target populations need what types of social and support services.

In addition to this report, the city of Oakland, Department of Human Services and the Alameda County Public Health Department (Violence Prevention Coordinator) are working together to create the Oakland Gang Prevention and Intervention Providers Network. Currently a number of organizations provide services to youth who are gang involved or at risk for gang

involvement, but these organizations do not have a means to coordinate their efforts. The network, which will hold its first meeting in December of this year, and which gives participating agencies the opportunity to work together, intends to:

- Educate the public on gang prevention;
- Identify youth who are at risk for gang involvement and provide services for them;
- Collaborate on best practices;
- Influence policy makers on how to most effectively address the needs of this target population in Oakland.

### **A New Peacekeeping Project in Oakland and Richmond: Former Inmates Involved**

State Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata unveiled a plan earlier this month to implement a \$3 million project to address the growing violence problem in Oakland and Richmond. This plan would create peacekeeping teams, consisting of conflict resolution and grief counselors, to work in some of Oakland and Richmond's highest crime areas. Teams would also include employment specialists to help divert youth, aged 13 to 30, from crime to jobs.

Included among those to be trained in conflict resolution are 50 former convicts who are on parole or probation and who have proven themselves stable and reliable. These former inmates would first enroll in a six-month program that includes a community college certificate and a violence-prevention internship. These individuals will use their experience with gangs and knowledge of the streets to seek out and build relationships with and provide alternatives for troubled youths who are at risk of joining gangs.

For more information or questions about Oakland's efforts, please contact Andrea Youngdahl, our Network's "point person" for Oakland, at (510) 238-6112 or email her at [AYoungdahl@oakland.net](mailto:AYoungdahl@oakland.net).

Oakland's extraordinary commitments and creative efforts to reduce community violence bear close watching. In the months to come, we look forward to

sharing the important and innovative work from each of your fine cities, so do not be shy about sending information to us. We are certain that by uniting and by sharing information—that which is hopeful, that which is not—we will not only reduce the incidence of gang violence, we will help create vital, interactive communities that best support children and their families. And as the project moves forward, we intend to have a strong influence on the local and national conversation about gangs and on state and federal policy.

## NEWSBRIEFS

### Advisory Committee Being Assembled

To access operational suggestions and advice on the critically-important policy and legislative implications of your work, we are forming an Advisory Committee. Numbering about 15 people, those chosen will reflect the project's core segments, namely criminal justice, intervention and prevention services, state policy (both administrative and legislative) and prominent CBOs with a statewide reach (e.g., the California Municipal League). Paul Seave, former U.S. Attorney from the Northern District (Sacramento) and former Director of the Crime and Violence Prevention Center for the California Attorney General's Office and currently Chief Counsel, California State Board of Education has agreed to chair the Committee. The Committee will meet twice a year to:

- Guide and help shape the operational work with an eye to promising practice, the latest research and hopeful strategies;
- Identify policy implications stemming from the Network's experiences;
- Advise on project sustainability and replicability both in California and the nation.

### Site Visits

By December 15, we will have completed our pre-conference visits, which have given us a terrific opportunity to forge relationships, get a sense of what is going on in your jurisdiction, and to discover how this initiative might best serve your needs.

In addition, the California Endowment, a potential funding partner, intends to make site visits to three of your cities this November.

### Reminder

Don't forget that the first meeting of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network will take place January 24th and 25th, 2007, in the San Francisco Bay Area. The training will directly respond to the needs highlighted during our site visits and will incorporate innovative and model practices, strategies, laws, and regulations from other jurisdictions. City leaders will have the opportunity to share obstacles as well as progress along with learning from peers and experts in the field. Time will be allotted for sub-group meetings both to discuss issues of common concern and to forge or refine your city's plan of action. By mid-November we will send you information on training, hotel and travel arrangements, and expense reimbursement.

### Final Note

We will require some basic information from each of you before our first meeting in order to include it in the conference binder. The information requested, at this point, will be relatively brief and basic (e.g., current programming, overall goals, and key partners). This information is extremely important. As many of you are just beginning your efforts, this information will help paint a picture of what is occurring statewide and locally in each of your constituencies. We will begin contacting each of your cities in early November to start collecting this information.

In the meantime, you should feel free to contact your peers. Sharing ideas and support is a key part of this effort. We have included contact information of each city's "point person."

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