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Strategies to Address Gang Crime:
A Guidebook for Local Law Enforcement

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Letter from the Director

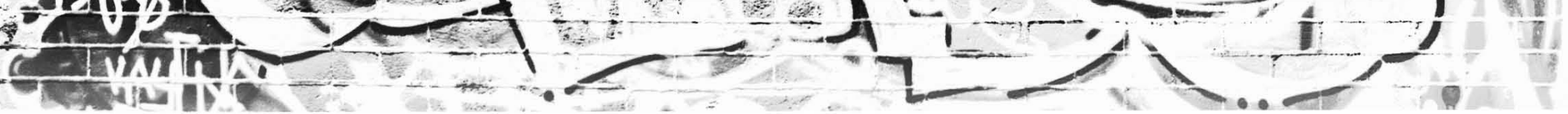
The most successful and sustainable gang-prevention strategies include partnerships among law enforcement, schools, parents, the community, faith-based organizations, and youth. According to the *National Youth Gang Center*, "the most effective response to youth gangs is a combination of interdependent prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies, selected by a community to target its emerging or chronic gang problems, which have been identified by a comprehensive, systematic assessment." To assist law enforcement and their partners in identifying and addressing gang crime, the COPS Office has developed a variety of tools and resources including this guidebook, *Strategies to Address Gang Crime: A Guidebook for Local Law Enforcement*.

Widely regarded in the field for his research on gang activity, author Dr. Scott H. Decker, Professor and Director of the School of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Arizona State University, offers sensible information for law enforcement to use in developing responses to their gang problem. A central premise of this guidebook is that gang problems are local and solutions must be based on improving understanding of the nature of those problems and the immediate underlying conditions that give rise to them. Dr. Decker provides practical guidance on using the SARA problem-solving model process (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment) to help in the development of appropriate responses to gang problems.

We know that the danger of modern gangs is rooted in community-level activity. The gang problem of today is markedly different from what it was 10 years ago, and what it will be 10 years from now. Understanding the factors that contribute to your gang problem will help you frame your own analysis to determine useful and effective measures, recognize key intervention points, and select appropriate responses to make your community safer. It is our goal that this guidebook will help in these efforts.

Carl R. Peed

Director



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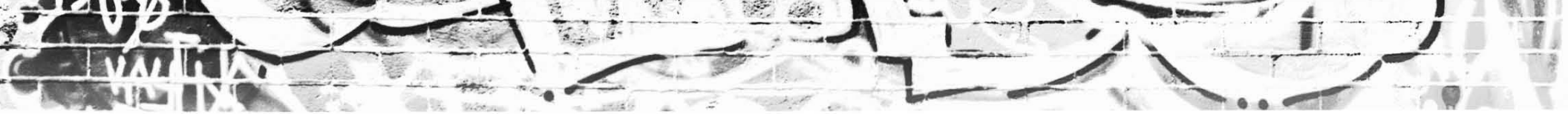

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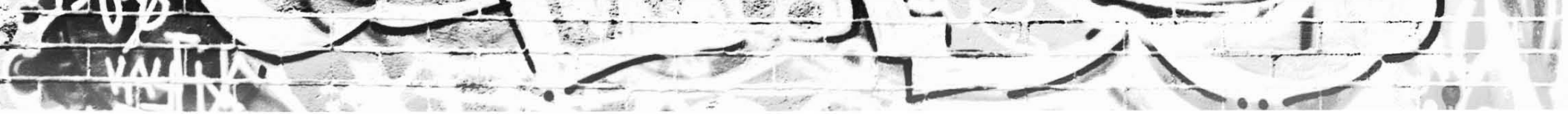


Introduction

Strategies to Address Gang Crime: A Guidebook for Local Law Enforcement provides information about developing and enhancing local law enforcement responses to gangs in their jurisdictions. The focus of the guidebook is on the use of problem-solving strategies to help agencies select the interventions most appropriate for their jurisdictions. In particular, the guidebook describes the SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment), a strategic problem-solving process that local law enforcement can apply to its local gang problem. Growing evidence (Dalton, 2004) shows that applying the SARA model will greatly improve the law enforcement response to gangs and will lead to safer communities.

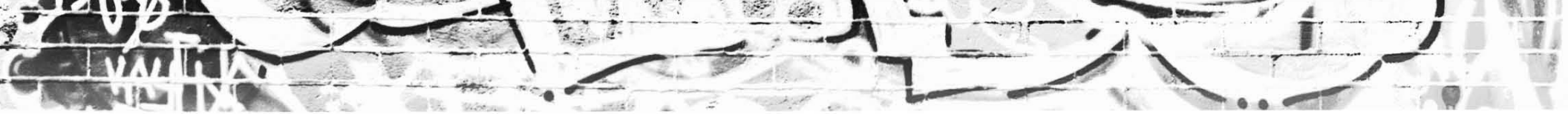
National surveys of law enforcement agencies provide the most widely accepted assessment of the magnitude of the United States gang problem. Unfortunately, not many such surveys existed prior to 1970. The two states with the largest gang population in 1970 (California and Illinois) retained their position in 1998, and were joined by Texas, Florida, and Ohio. This finding of dispersion of gang problems among the states is an important theme in characterizing the changes in gangs over time. Such changes were reflected in the region of gang location, because gangs were located primarily in the West in the early 1970s, with very few gangs in the South. By 1998, the South ranked second among the four regions, and had recorded a 33 percent increase in the number of gangs. A concomitant change occurred in the presence of gangs by city size. While the 1970s gang surveys showed that gangs existed almost exclusively in large cities, by the end of the century gangs were observed in cities of a variety of sizes and regional locations. There is also an increasing presence in the United States of gangs with national affiliations and international ties, such as Mara Salvatrucha (also known as MS-13) and increasing evidence that gangs have ties to organized crime families and even Islamic terrorist organizations. Miller (2001) attributed these changes to seven specific causes:

1. Drug distribution.
2. Illegal immigration.
3. Gang names and alliances.
4. Migration.
5. Government policies.
6. Female-headed households.
7. Gang subculture and the media.

In 1994, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention established the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) and in 1995, the NYGC conducted its first assessment survey of the national gang problem.[1] Of 3,440 responding agencies, 2,007 reported youth gang problems. The 1995 survey revealed 23,388 youth gangs and 664,906 gang members, suggesting that the most recent wave of gang activity is the largest ever experienced in the nation's history. The number of cities with gang problems identified by the NYGC increased dramatically between 1995 and 1996, with 3,847 cities reporting gang problems, though changes in methodology may account for some of the differences. Since that time, the number of cities with identified gang problems has declined gradually to 2,768 in 2000. The trend in the number of gangs has followed a similar pattern, peaking at 30,818 gangs in 1996, and declining gradually to approximately 24,000 in the year 2004. (Egley and Ritz, 2006) The pattern for gang members is somewhat different, however. While the number of gang members rose dramatically between 1995 (644,906) and 1996 (846,428), it did not decline as dramatically from 1996 through 2004 (760,000 members estimated) as did the number of gangs or gang-problem cities. According the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there are currently about 30,000 violent street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs operating in the United States with approximately 800,000 members. This suggests that many gangs are growing in size, even as the number of gangs declines. These changes are also taking place at a time when there is an increasing emphasis on recording gang membership.

Howell, Egley, and Gleason (2002) reviewed the NYGC data from the earlier national surveys of gang prevalence. Their report documents the increase in gangs across the last 4 decades. They describe the pattern of increase as a "cascade" across the years of the surveys. This "cascade" applies to both the number of cities as well as the volume of gang members. In addition, the involvement of gang members in violent crimes was quite dramatic across this time period. Howell et al., (2002) conclude that there are important implications for programs from these findings. Specifically, they recommend that programs be crafted to respond to the specific nature of gang problems in a jurisdiction.

[1]It is important to note that the survey results are based on law enforcement perceptions of the gang problem, and may differ from estimates provided by other groups.



Applying the SARA Model to Local Gang Problems

A central premise of this guidebook is that gang problems are local, even if they have national affiliations, and that solutions based on careful analysis must be crafted in response to a solid, accurate, and complete picture of the local problem. One of the most effective tools for a law enforcement analysis of local problems is the SARA process. This model is well-established in police practice as an excellent tool for developing a local response to problems and continually monitoring the extent to which that response is addressing the problem effectively. It is a versatile tool with broad applicability. A large body of literature discussing the SARA process is available to law enforcement. Boba (2003), Bynum (2001), Clarke and Eck (2003), and Schmerler, Perkins, Phillips, Rinehart, and Townsend (2006) describe the SARA process in logical, step-by-step descriptions. Clarke and Eck (2003) describe the four steps in the process as follows:

1. SCAN—Define the problem carefully.
2. ANALYZE—Complete a detailed analysis of the dimensions of the problem.
3. RESPOND—Generate solutions to remove the underlying causes of the problems.
4. ASSESS—Evaluate the success of such solutions.

The Crime Triangle or Problem Analysis Triangle (Figure 1) is another useful tool when developing a law enforcement response to gang problems. It leads law enforcement to consider the characteristics of offenders, places, and victims or targets in developing an analysis of the gang problem and crafting responses. This environmental criminology based theory states that predatory crime occurs when a likely offender and suitable target come together in time and place, without a guardian present. (Clarke and Eck, 2003) To have a crime, all inner elements of the triangle must be present and the outer triangle controllers (capable guardian, handler, and manager) must be weak or absent. As this relates to gang-related activity, law enforcement should consider how problems (for example, graffiti) are created by opportunities (unsupervised transit lots) to help determine responses (increasing electronic security).

Figure 1: Problem Analysis Triangle. (Clarke and Eck, 2003)

The SARA model has been used successfully in several national-level projects such as Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). PSN was developed in 2001 as a nationwide commitment to reduce gun crime in America. Through PSN, a research partner from a university or a consulting firm works closely with the U.S. Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, and a variety of other community, criminal justice, and social service partners to do a scanning and analysis of gun crime problems. The five elements of a successful gun crime reduction strategy are (1) partnerships, (2) strategic planning, (3) training, (4) community outreach and public awareness, and (5) accountability.

These efforts were preceded by the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) *Locally Initiated Research Partnerships in Policing* (McEwen, 1999) and the *Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative* (SACSI) (Roehl, et al., 2006). In 1995, the NIJ partnership program brought together research partners and local police departments to enhance analysis capabilities in 41 jurisdictions. The NIJ approach enabled police to participate as equals with researchers, sharing responsibility throughout the course of a project, jointly selecting a topic of interest to the department (for example, gang crime), and collaborating on the research design, its implementation, and interpretation of the study findings. The SACSI, a U.S. Department of Justice pilot project, follows five stages: (1) form an interagency working group; (2) gather information and data about a local crime problem; (3) design a strategic intervention to tackle the problem; (4) implement the intervention; and (5) assess and modify the strategy as the data reveal effects. (Coleman et al., 1999)

In another example, the Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative managed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety is a grant program that supports regional and multidisciplinary approaches to combat gang violence through coordinated programs for prevention and intervention (Van Ness, Fallon, and Lawrence, 2007). It encourages cities and police departments to form Local Action Research Partnerships with universities and organizations that can provide strategic, analytic, and research support. The City of Boston and the Lowell Police Department, for example, have partnered with Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government; the City of Fall River works with the Crime and Justice Institute; and the New Bedford Police Department is a partner with Northeastern University.

In still another project, in conjunction with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), NYGC developed *A Guide for Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem*. It has been used in dozens of communities to better understand the nature of the local gang problem. The guide also ties directly into the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, a flexible set of responses to gang problems. Such action research, applied research, or problem analysis research as this approach is variously known, has grown in popularity among members of the research community. Local law enforcement agencies should also be aware of federal resources including the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC), the National Gang Targeting, Enforcement & Coordination Center (GangTECC), and the MS-13 National Gang Task Force, among others.

The four steps in the SARA model (Figure 2) are the organizing concepts for this guidebook: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment.

Figure 2: SARA Problem-Solving Process. (Clarke and Eck, 2003)

Scanning for Gang Problems

Scanning is the first step in the SARA process. During the scanning phase it is important to identify recurring problems that concern the police and the public and to understand their consequences. In this case, gang crime, gang drug dealing, or groups of youths hanging out and disturbing the community may be identified as the problem, but the consequences are wider-reaching and may include such things as disrupted traffic, increased violence, disorder in neighborhoods, or increased public fear of crime. Once the problems and their consequences have been identified and given a high priority, it is necessary to determine if problems are indeed gang-related. After all, not all drug dealing, violence, or disorder problems in a community are caused by gangs. Gang-related problems may call for a different set of solutions than problems that do not have gang activity at their core.

Definitions

It is critical to develop a definition of a gang, a gang member, and gang crime. State statutes may determine this, but in many cases the statutes fail to give meaningful definitions that can guide the formation of local interventions. Different groups have developed different definitions of the gang crime problem and draw on different aspects of gang crime, often making it difficult for collaboration. Forging a common understanding of the gang problem is a key first step in addressing the problem. Without a clear and consistent definition of the local gang membership and gang crime, it is impossible to know the extent of the gang or gang crime problems in a jurisdiction.

It may be useful for local law enforcement agencies to become familiar with the definition of a criminal street gang set forth in U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 521. In brief, this defines criminal street gangs as an ongoing group, club, organization, or association of five or more persons: (A) that has as one of its primary purposes the commission of or conspiracy to commit one or more of the following criminal offenses: a federal felony involving a controlled substance for which the maximum penalty is not less than 5 years or a federal felony crime of violence that has as an element the use or attempted use of physical force against the person of another; (B) the members of which engage, or have engaged within the past 5 years, in a continuing series of offenses described above; and (C) the activities of which affect interstate or foreign commerce.

Using a definition to confirm that there are gang problems in a jurisdiction is another important step in the scanning process. Simply because other jurisdictions have gang problems does not mean they will exist in your jurisdiction, or that the problems in your jurisdiction will look exactly like those in a neighboring city. Understanding the history and diversity of the gang problem in a community can also help to shed light on its dimensions and potentially point the way toward broader solutions. Any gang strategy that is built on a lack of understanding of the nature of the local problem is sure to fail. This is a critical point because the media often create a fear of gang problems by paying attention to a few, isolated incidents that occur in communities. Gang problems are often complex, involving many facets of the community and, as a consequence, it is critical to spend an appropriate amount of time defining gangs, gang membership, and gang crime problems.

Key elements

Though there is disagreement about the exact definition of a gang, every definition of a gang includes five key elements. First, a gang is a group. Some definitions of a gang specify the minimum number of members who meet a number of other criteria. The second element in defining gangs is the use of symbols. Gang symbols can take a number of forms, including hand signs, tattoos, clothes, and certain ways of wearing clothes. Communication can take place through the use of such symbols. The National Gang Targeting, Enforcement & Coordination Center (GangTECC) (www.usdoj.gov/criminal/gangtecc) and the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC)(www.fas.org/irp/agency/doj/fbi/is/ncic.htm), can assist local law enforcement agencies in identifying their specific gang problem.

Third, to be defined as a gang, a group must have existed for a fixed period of time because many confederations of young people form over a single time-bounded issue, only to disband. Most gang definitions require that the gang exists during a prolonged period, generally a year or more. Fourth, local definitions of gangs may include turf, or gang-identified territory, as a crucial element of the definition, although the federal criminal code definition of criminal street gangs has no such requirement. Many contemporary gangs claim some territory as their own, either because it is where the gang began or where most of the members live. The fifth element in defining a gang and distinguishing it from other groups is the commission of a crime, a key feature of gang activities. Often, but not always, the kinds of crime that gangs engage in involve the organized distribution of drugs, trafficking in firearms, and the commission of acts of violence.

It is not as difficult to define a gang member as it is to define a gang. The best indicator of who is in a gang often comes from self-identification or self-reports, which have proven to be quite valid as indicators of membership. A number of other symbols and behavior can be used to distinguish gang members from nonmembers. Many police departments keep detailed records of the names of gang members, but there can be shortcomings in police files as information becomes dated, is based on misinformation, or fails to reflect changes in individuals' gang affiliations. Asking gang members and neighborhood residents, especially other youths or teachers, to identify gang-involved people is another way to determine who is in a gang. Although citizens who have been victimized or have witnessed a crime may be reluctant to assist police efforts because of fear, real or perceived, of retaliation. These fears can be minimized by strengthening the ties between police and the community and educating community residents about witness intimidation. (Dedel, 2006)

The company an individual keeps can also be a key to establishing whether an individual is involved in a gang, though this is not a foolproof method. Gang members often bear the symbols of their gang affiliation in the form of tattoos and affect a distinctive method of dress and demeanor that more clearly distinguishes them from their nongang peers. Through the influence of popular culture, however, especially clothing in the movies, music videos, and magazines, gang styles now enjoy widespread popularity across a broad range of youths.

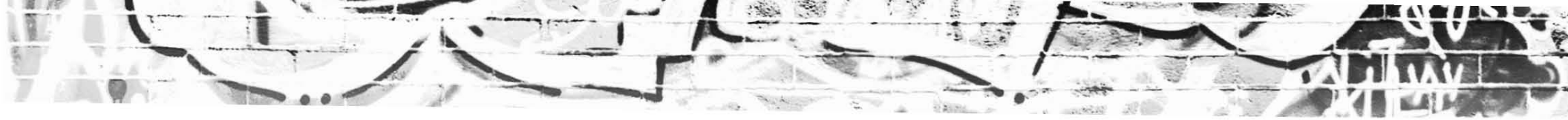
Ask questions

To scan for the nature of the gang problem in your community, you may wish to ask yourself and your agency the following questions.

1. What is your definition of a gang, a gang member, and gang crime? Is this definition built into your Records Management System (RMS)? Are officers trained in how to apply this definition? Many jurisdictions have a check box on their RMS forms to indicate whether a crime involved a gang member. This can be useful both in defining the gang problem and measuring the effectiveness of gang responses.

2. How do you track gang crime? Does your department track the crimes committed by gang members? Do you separate crimes committed by gang members for any special analysis?
3. What sources of information about gangs are available to you? Do schools, social service groups, the juvenile court, or hospitals track such information? Are other sources of law enforcement data (local, state, or federal) available to you? If your agency participates in the NYGC surveys (Egley and Ritz, 2006) what do those data tell you about the nature of the gang problem in your community? If your agency does not participate in the NYGC surveys, you can access the questionnaire and use it as the basis for scanning to better understand the nature of your local gang problem.
4. How many gangs are in your jurisdiction? How large is their membership?
5. How long have gangs been in the area?
6. How well organized are the gangs in your community?
7. Do the gangs have leaders?
8. What are the different roles in the gangs?
9. What are the ages of gang members?
10. What is the racial/ethnic composition of gangs?
11. Are there separate gangs for girls? Do girls belong to male gangs?
12. Do gangs migrate to your city from other cities? Do gangs in your city imitate or copy those in other cities? (see Maxson, 1998)
13. What is the role of the prison and prison gangs in street gang activity?
14. Do gangs affect management of the local jail?
15. Does immigration affect your gang problem?
16. Are gang members involved in the local and wholesale drug market? Do gangs control drug sales?
17. Are gang members involved in the retail and wholesale gun market?
18. What are the predominant crimes in which gang members engage?
19. What is the role of violence in the gang?
20. What are the major sources of disruption caused by gangs? Where do these disruptions take place (neighborhood, school, jail, malls, public gathering places, for example)?

Not all of these questions are appropriate for all jurisdictions and, indeed, answering all of them may take too much time or provide too much information to formulate an effective response. But it is important to consider the broader dimensions of the gang problem in initially scanning the local environment for the nature of the gang problem. Keeping the broadest scan of the local gang problem, with input from a number of sources, would be the best way to not ignore a significant part of the gang problem. The focus can always be narrowed as the analysis shows more information about the nature of the problem.



Analyzing the Gang Problem

The second step in the SARA process—**analysis**—is the most crucial, but the least likely to receive enough attention and time. Too often, the pressure to rush from identifying a problem to implementing a solution creates a circumstance where the solution that is crafted is borrowed from another jurisdiction or is implemented hastily without a fuller understanding of the problem. Such solutions are less likely to succeed than those that are created from a deeper analysis of the gang crime problem in a jurisdiction.

Analysis can take many forms. A good way to begin the analysis of a problem is to construct an inventory of how specific gang problems are dealt with and the shortcomings and assets of each approach. One way to do this is by consulting the gang and crime-related resources on the web site of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (POP Center), which receives funding support from the COPS Office. Many police departments have outstanding research capacity within their own crime analysis divisions. Not all police departments are fortunate in this regard, and some may need to turn to other sources of expertise such as universities or consulting firms.

Analysis issues

A number of analysis issues are important to keep in mind. These include the following:

Identify and understand the events and conditions that precede and accompany the problem. T

he police understand better than anyone that many crimes have an intricate series of connections to other crimes, individuals, locations, and circumstances. The more this context of crime is understood, the better a comprehensive response can be crafted. In this context, it is also important to understand the areas of crime that are related to gang crime, particularly gun violence. An excellent resource is the COPS Office Problem-Oriented Guide for Police (POP Guide), *Gun Violence Among Serious Young Offenders.* (Braga, 2007) Much gang violence has a retaliatory character, and if the police understand the nature of an earlier shooting, they may more readily be able to prevent a subsequent retaliatory shooting.

Identify the relevant data to collect and the sources of those data

Law enforcement data will provide a picture of the most criminally active part of the gang problem and may miss a larger group of individuals who are just beginning their involvement with gangs and may be appropriate targets for prevention or intervention. When law enforcement data are used for this purpose (whether from computer aided dispatch [CAD], RMS, or detective notes) it is important to assess the validity of those identifications and whether they accurately and reliably reflect gang membership. It may be appropriate to work with schools, juvenile court, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (OJJDP, 1999), recreation centers, and other groups that serve youths to obtain a fuller picture

of the local gang problem. If the only data source used comes from law enforcement, it is likely that responses crafted from that information will have a suppression orientation and ignore many important prevention or intervention components. For example, as Curry and Decker (2003) show, law enforcement estimates of the number of girls in gangs is much lower than that obtained when students are sampled. To use only one source of data—law enforcement in this instance—would be to miss a substantial part of the overall gang problem. Many projects have obtained useful information by interviewing active gang members, a practice described by Decker (2005) in the COPS Office POP Guide, *Using Offender Interviews to Inform Police Problem Solving*.

Find out what is known about the gang problem both in your jurisdiction and in nearby jurisdictions

Develop partnerships with, and talk to, other law enforcement, criminal justice, and social service agencies to obtain different perspectives on the nature of the gang problem. Partners may include other local police departments, schools and school principals, community and faith-based groups, and social service agencies.

Construct an inventory of how the specific gang problem is being dealt with and the shortcomings or assets of each approach

Develop a catalog of all gang reduction and response efforts taking place in your community and examine the extent to which these efforts are recommended as best practices. On the Internet, the web sites of the COPS Office, the POP Center, the NYGC, and the OJJDP are particularly helpful. There also are a number of academic reviews of what works in responding to gangs including Curry and Decker (2003), Decker (2003), Klein and Maxson (2006), Klein (1995), and Spergel (1995).

Develop as narrow a scope of the problem as possible

Dealing with gun crime committed by gang members returning from prison is much more manageable than attempting to deal with all violence in a city. The more specifically the scope of the problem is defined, the more manageable the intervention will be, and the more likely it is that the effects of a strategy or intervention can be documented. The COPS Office POP Guides are an excellent resource for identifying well-specified problems with suggestions for tackling them.

Develop a working hypothesis about why the problem is occurring

Law enforcement develops working hypotheses or theories about cases every day. When the information in an investigation is incomplete, steps are taken to attempt to draw a profile of offenders or motives or criminal practices. The use of the problem analysis triangle (Offender/Victim/Location) can also be important here. It may be useful in this stage of the analysis process to use storyboards or large diagrams that show the relationships between causes and

effects, identifying each with the appropriate source of data and the agency that would be responsible for responding to the problem. Examples of such hypotheses might include, "Drug dealing is a major conduit for smuggling illegal weapons into the neighborhood of interest," "After school is the time for the highest level of juvenile victimization," or "Gang membership is attractive to neighborhood youths because of perceived opportunities to make money."

Identify the data to use

Identifying the data to use in the analysis step is important once questions about local gangs have been created by the scanning process. Such data need to be linked closely to the questions raised above. Possible sources of information could include data from the following groups:

- The juvenile court records of gang membership.
- Schools (teacher, administrator, and student perceptions of gangs, gang-related incidents in schools).
- Emergency rooms (gunshot and other wounds, presence of gang tattoos).
- The Computer Aided Dispatch system, especially calls for shots fired.
- The Records Management System, particularly if a gang identifier is in the system.
- Jails and prisons (especially the gang status of returning offenders).
- Supplemental Homicide Report data maintained by the FBI as part of the Uniform Crime Report.
- The reports and data collected by research partners as part of Project Safe Neighborhoods.
- The Firearms Tracing Data maintained by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.
- Child fatality review panels that review the deaths of minor children in Class A counties.
- Other federal initiatives, which can be accessed at Helping America's Youth, a White House-sponsored program. This excellent resource allows easy access to information about every federally funded program in a particular ZIP Code, city, or county; organized by nature of intervention, target groups served, and the extent to which the service offered fits a best practices model.
- The NYGC's annual National Youth Gang Survey of law enforcement agencies that discusses the extent of youth gang problems.
- Intelligence from school resource officers, gang unit officers, intelligence unit officers, and juvenile court representatives.
- Interviews with gang members and other offenders. For a description of the utility of such an approach, as well as ways to use such information, see Decker, 2005.

Analytical tools – next steps

Collecting information is the first step in this process; organizing and analyzing the information is the next crucial step. A variety of useful analytical tools can be used in developing a gang strategy, including several forms of statistical analysis. Every gang problem-solving analysis should start by describing the problem and its extent. Once established, more sophisticated analytical tools can be used.

Advanced statistical analysis can depict the strength of relationships between variables of interest, whether groups are the same or different in some trait or characteristic, or the relative contributions of a combination of variables that might explain certain behavior. There might be interest in an analysis that shows the number of homicides with multiple victims that involve gang members as perpetrators compared to nongang members as perpetrators. Or it might be of interest to partition the increase in a city's gun assault rate to depict the proportion of the increase that is accounted for by high-powered weapons, gang members, or other factors.

A network analysis tool can visually depict relationships between groups and individuals. This lends itself very well to an analysis of gangs and gang members, as McGloin's (2005) recent research on gangs in Newark, New Jersey, demonstrates. This COPS Office publication highlights the unique utility of network analysis in the resultant problem analysis and stresses the important role of an academic research partner.

A tool that is becoming increasingly common in law enforcement problem-solving analyses is the Geographic Information System. This analysis tool allows individuals interested in crafting a response to their gang problem not only to see the location of various forms of gang crime, but also to see the locations of other criminogenic commodities or risky behaviors. A final means by which data can be collected for analysis is through the use of focus groups. Focus group interviews are conducted among individuals believed to have some special knowledge or familiarity with a problem or issue. The Crime Incident Review process of Project Safe Neighborhoods, published by the Office of Justice Programs (Klofas et al., 2006), can be an excellent resource in this regard.

A useful way to transition from the analysis phase to the response phase is through the use of a logic model. A logic model is an attempt to depict graphically the links among a problem statement, activities to address that problem, output measures (i.e., process steps), and outcome measures (i.e., the impact of the intervention). One very useful aspect of such tools is that it forces participants to think in concrete terms about what they want to accomplish. "Reductions in gang crime" is a goal that most people interested in responding to the gang problem would put at the top of their list, but what does this mean? All forms of gang crime, or subsets of the gang crime problem? The Generic Logic Model (Figure 3) can assist law enforcement agencies in developing their own logic models (OJJDP).

Generic Logic Model

Use the text in each block to guide your development of a project-specific logic model

PROBLEM	SUBPROBLEM(S)	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUT MEASURES	OUTCOME MEASURES	
				Short Term	Long Term
The problem is defined in relation to OJJDP's mission and must be one of the following: 1. Juvenile delinquency. 2. Youth victimization. 3. Improving systems/programs to address either problem 1 or 2 above.	This is the specific problem that the program/initiative will address. What is the problem or issue that the program/ initiative is designed to address?	The general listing of the program efforts (events and actions) conducted to achieve its objective(s). What will the program do? For example, does your program offer direct prevention or intervention services to youth or families, conduct needs assessments, or provide training or technical assistance?	These are measures of the program/ initiative's process or implementation. The data demonstrate the implementation of the program/ initiative's activities. What did the program produce? Measures commonly include the numbers of youth and/or families served, number of service hours completed, and numbers of hours of training provided.	These are quantitative measures of the initial results of the program. They are typically measured as of the end program. This typically includes changes in knowledge, attitudes, and awareness. How, and how much, have participants (for participating entities) changed by the end of the program/initiative?	These are quantitative measures of the longer results of the program. They are measured 6 to 12 months post program. This typically includes changes in behaviors, practices, decision-making. They may also include changes in social conditions (e.g., local arrest rates). How, and how much, have participants (for participating entities) approximately 6 to 12 months after participating in the program/initiative?
Goal(s) The goals must be defined in relation to OJJDP's agency-level goals which are : 1. Prevent and reduce delinquent behavior and victimization. 2. Promote public safety by encouraging accountability for acts of delinquency. 3. Address juvenile crime and victimization by supporting effective programs and practices.	**Objective(s)** A Specific and measurable statements regarding what the program/initiative will accomplish, what will the program achieve?				

Figure 3: OJJDP Generic Logic Model. (OJJDP, 2008)

It is critical to *identify relevant stakeholders* as part of the analysis phase. If the gang problem is related to nuisance crimes in and around convenience stores, it is imperative to involve store owners in the design and implementation of responses. The stakeholders identified at the analysis stage can be not only law enforcement, they must include the broad range of groups and individuals who "own" a share of both the problem and the solution. Such groups might include social service agencies, schools, faith-based groups, community leaders, Neighborhood Watch programs, law enforcement, juvenile probation, probation and parole, corrections, and city licensure and regulatory agencies.

Responding to the Gang Problem

Once a problem has been identified and analyzed, the next step is to develop a **response**. One of the biggest challenges in using any problem-solving model is to not rush ahead and skip the scanning and analysis stages of the model. Similarly, it is important not to fall into the common trap of using an agency's existing responses. Most agencies have a traditional set of responses (their toolkit, so to speak) that they rely on for responding to most problems. The commonly used phrase, "if you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail" certainly applies in this case. An explicit goal of the problem-solving model is to break away from the limitations of prior practices and implement new responses to problems, responses that are tied closely to the nature of the problem.

One practice that many jurisdictions have found effective is to hold regular accountability meetings in which action steps are identified and a specific individual (not a role like "sergeant" or "coordinator") is assigned to the task. That individual assumes ownership for moving the response ahead and is required to report on progress at subsequent meetings. In this context, it is also useful to develop a report card for the response that can inform decisions about whether following a particular course of action or an identified response is on target or should be altered or abandoned in favor of another.

A big challenge to any response intervention is coordination. In many instances, law enforcement and social services struggle to work together effectively, but some law enforcement units may not cooperate fully with each other. A stakeholder or champion who can oversee coordination will be essential to the success of any strategy.

Prevention, intervention, suppression

A large body of literature on gang responses provides many models and alternatives for responding to gang problems. (Spergel, 1995; Klein, 1995; Curry and Decker, 2003; Decker, 2003; Klein and Maxson, 2006; OJJDP, 2000) Most of these responses use a common framework to fit the nature of responses to gangs into categories, including **prevention, intervention,** and **suppression**. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Response Pyramid (see Figure 4) describes characteristics of the gang problem, its magnitude, and a suitable category of response. (Wyrick, 2006)

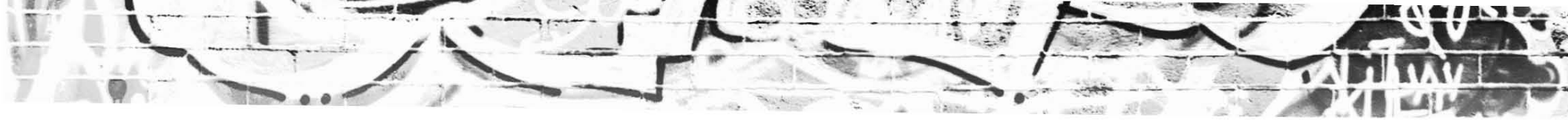


Figure 4: Response Pyramid. (Wyrick, 2006)

This figure illustrates several relevant points about gang intervention strategies:

- First, the success of the strategy depends on having all elements of the response present: prevention, intervention, and suppression. An integrated model has the best chance for success.
- Second, as the pyramid illustrates, different stages of the gang problem can be present in communities at the same time and need a variety of responses.
- Third, the number of individuals at each stage of the problem differs, with the largest number of individuals in need of prevention, a smaller number who are targets for intervention, and the smallest segment of the problem needing suppression.

If a community chooses to engage only in suppression, it would not have much effect on the overall gang problem because the gang problem is larger than suppression can affect, suppression resources are not large enough to cover all the needs of youths at risk or involved in gangs, and every gang member, gang, or gang crime prevented today is one less to suppress—at a much higher cost—tomorrow.

Prevention

Prevention has been a component of responses to gangs for at least a century. The goal of prevention is to stop youths from joining gangs. Prevention responses, therefore, are targeted at the largest segment of the problem: youths at risk for gang membership and youths in the general population, often in elementary or middle schools.

There are two kinds of prevention—primary and secondary—and each is important to a successful gang prevention effort. *Primary prevention* refers to efforts that target the whole community, particularly communities that have high rates of gang membership or violence. Such efforts typically target the risk factors that affect the majority of youths and families in the community and are the broadest response to gangs because they reach the largest number of individuals. Schools, local government, faith-based organizations, and law enforcement or community groups may deliver such efforts.

Secondary prevention is targeted at youths who display the early signs of gang membership or other problem behaviors that indicate that they are at high risk for involvement in gangs or gang crime. These individuals often receive the highest priority for intervention because they are vulnerable to the influence of the gang without having actually joined the gang. As with primary prevention, faith-based and other community organizations are important partners in reaching, mentoring, empowering, and diverting youth who would be otherwise headed toward gang involvement.

Wyrick (2006) recommends that secondary prevention include three basic components: (1) meaningful alternatives to gang membership; (2) effective support systems including family, community, and school; and (3) accountability on the part of the juvenile for his or her behavior. This applies not just to violations of the law, but includes appropriate forms of conduct at recreation centers, schools, on playgrounds, and at social events. Alternatives to gang life must include activities that turn the time and attention of juveniles at risk for joining the gang to other alternatives for fun, hanging out with their peers, and the chance to interact with role models. The following are programs aimed at achieving these goals.

Helping America's Youth. A valuable resource that can help communities identify appropriate prevention and intervention activities is the federal Helping America's Youth initiative. More than 180 programs that had been carefully evaluated for implementation and impact are included in the *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth database*. The information covers program design, risk factors, target group, evaluation design, outcomes, references, and contact details.

National Youth Gang Center (NYGC). Another useful source of information for identifying gang prevention and intervention programs is the NYGC. Its web site identifies a number of publications that local communities and police departments can use to match their gang problem with potential programmatic interventions. The NYGC's *A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem* can help communities assess the nature of their problem and find resources that provide a foundation for defining and developing interventions. The NYGC also recommends using a grid (Figure 5) to monitor the planning, implementation, and performance of prevention, intervention, or suppression activities. The goals will change from community to community, depending on the nature of the gang problem, and there will be multiple goals and multiple objectives for each goal.

Goal 1:

Objective 1:

Activities	Target Population	Responsible Agency	Existing Program/ Resource	Required Program/ Resource	Short-Term Activity (6 months)	Long-Term Activity (1 year)
School-Based Information about Gangs	6-8th graders	Local Law Enforcement	G.R.E.A.T., DARE	Classroom Instruction	X	

Figure 5: Prevention Grid.

School-based gang prevention. The Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program is one of the best-known school-based prevention programs. Developed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in conjunction with local police, the program consists of a series of lessons for students that include skill development to help them resist gangs and gang membership, avoid involvement in crime, and learn of the dangers associated with crime and gangs. A detailed evaluation found that the program was effective in developing positive attitudes toward the police and negative attitudes toward involvement in gangs and crime.

A related school-based intervention is that of the school resource officer (SRO) program. Unlike G.R.E.A.T., SROs are not employed specifically to respond to gangs. Their goal is to increase overall school safety, improve relations between students and the police, and provide additional first responders to school-related problems. An excellent description of the roles, responsibilities, and activities of the SRO is in Finn et al., 2005.

The St. Louis Consent-to-Search Program. In 1964, the St. Louis (Missouri) Police Department developed an innovative prevention program in response to an increasing problem with gun violence. The Consent-to-Search Program (NIJ, 2004) called for a specially trained squad of police officers to visit the homes of juveniles believed to be at high risk for involvement in violence, either as victims or perpetrators. The squad took referrals from neighbors or parents, and at a later stage in the program used information about gang members and the individuals who associated with juvenile arrestees as the basis for identifying homes to approach. Officers would gain the permission of a parent or guardian to search the juvenile's room and confiscate firearms, weapons, or contraband that was found. In return, they would offer a signed form that promised not to prosecute the juvenile for firearms possession. In Phase I of the program, 98 percent of parents consented to a search and weapons were found in 50 percent of the searches, with more than 500 guns seized in an 18-month period. That said, the program appears to be a promising attempt to remove guns from juveniles who are at high risk for becoming offenders or victims. It could be targeted at gang members, as well.

Intervention

Intervention is a key component of successful gang programs and are most effective when paired with prevention strategies. Intervention strategies may take a variety of forms, involve a variety of groups, and target a variety of stages of gang membership. Intervention targets youths who are at the fringes of gang membership, the early stages of membership, or at a stage of membership where they can be pushed out of the gang. Intervention is especially important because of solid research finding that most gang membership is short-lived, typically less than 3 years. (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993) In addition, gang members engage in crime more often and are involved in more serious crime than individuals who are marginal gang members or are not members of a gang. Gang membership begins gradually, sometimes taking months or years; therefore, intervening in the early stages of membership or just before membership could reduce the time spent in a gang, delay or prevent involvement altogether, or reduce the frequency or seriousness of offending.

As was the case with designing prevention initiatives, a planning grid (Figure 6) will help when designing intervention strategies.

Goal 1:

Objective 1:

Activities	Target Population	Responsible Agency	Existing Program/ Resource	Required Program/ Resource	Short-Term Activity (6 months)	Long-Term Activity (1 year)
Street Outreach	Fringe Gang Members, Siblings of Active Gang Members	Social Service Agency	New activity	Trained Street Outreach workers	Contact active gang members	Intervene with family members of gangs

Figure 6: Intervention Grid.

Outreach

One of the oldest forms of gang intervention has been the use of detached workers or street outreach workers. In a street outreach program, individuals who are not employed in the criminal justice system make contact with youths in neighborhoods with high levels of gang crime and gang membership. Historically, social service groups, neighborhood organizations, and the faith community have provided such services. These contacts provide prosocial contacts with youths, engage youths in prosocial activities, and link youths to services and social systems. Outreach work can take a variety of forms. The principles remain basically the same regardless of where the program is housed, whether street workers are used, or what the goal of the intervention might be. A common form of outreach is crisis intervention, a short-term response to social, personal, or neighborhood crises.

Perhaps the best recent example of outreach is the **Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Program** in Chicago. Spergel (1995; 2006) noted that the program was based on the idea that the gang problem is defined not only by the delinquent or criminal behaviors of gangs and gang members, but also by what community institutions do or do not do to prevent and control the problem. Another example is the **Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach** program of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (OJJDP, 1999) that works with at-risk children and youths ages 6 to 18 to provide an alternative, socially positive setting by attempting to integrate them and gang-involved youths into club activities. This model is still being used in Project Safe Neighborhoods sites as well as in the four OJJDP funded Gang Reduction Program sites.

One of the most compelling forms of intervention has the support of the medical community: treating the violence problem in the community before more victims end up in hospital emergency departments. Several interventions are worth noting:

Teens on Target, an Oakland, California, program, is aimed at changing attitudes about guns and violence and reducing youth injuries and deaths. It includes a peer visitation program that provides adolescents recovering in a hospital trauma center from violent injuries with information about homicide statistics, recidivism rates, and personal experiences to try to dissuade them and their friends from retaliating against those who injured them (OJJDP, 1999).

The **Child Development-Community Policing** model in New Haven, Connecticut, brings police officers and mental health professionals together to provide each other with training, consultation, and support. It also provides direct interdisciplinary intervention to children who are victims, witnesses, or perpetrators of violent crime, including the use of emergency rooms and hospitals as sites for recruiting people for a violence-reduction strategy. (Marans and Berkman, 1997)

The **Trauma Intervention Program** in St. Louis, Missouri, is part of the city's Strategic Approaches to Community Violence Initiative. It is an emergency room intervention piloted to address the high level of gun homicides in certain city neighborhoods. The goals of the program include forming a medical team-police partnership, cross-training police and emergency personnel, and improving the chain of custody of evidence gathered at violent events. Most ambitious, however, is the goal of providing crisis-intervention services to victims of violence, reaching out to them in their neighborhoods, and intervening with their associates in emergency room waiting areas and in their neighborhoods. (Decker et al., June 2005)

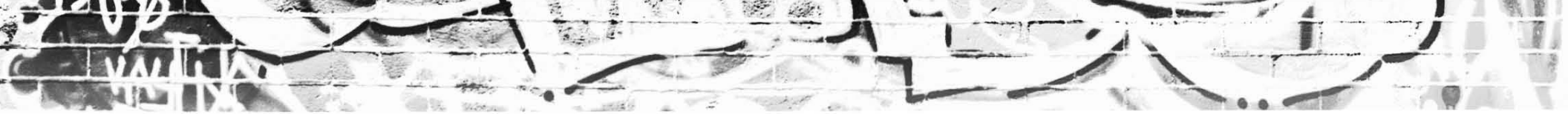
Several facts are clear from these interventions. First, a considerable number of gang members are victims of violent crime and end up in emergency rooms and hospitals. Second, the costs associated with these injuries are considerable and are seldom reimbursed through insurance, thereby placing a considerable burden on health care, insurance companies, and the public. Third, gang members who are victims of violence may be at their most vulnerable and therefore receptive for hearing a message and receiving services designed to deter them from further involvement in violence.

Partnering with other community groups

In many communities, the only nongovernment institution left intact is the faith and volunteer community. Gang intervention strategies can often meaningfully integrate such groups into mentoring, tutoring, and job training and placement efforts, as well as recreational alternatives to involvement in street gangs.

Targeted deterrence and prosecution

Offender Notification Meetings. Building on the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy of targeted deterrence and prosecution, the "lever pulling" approach—now known as Offender Notification Meetings—is directed toward recent parolees. The strategy's purpose is twofold: first, it sends a specific deterrence message to high-risk individuals that gun violence will not be tolerated; second, it tells them about local services that could help them succeed in creating a better, more productive life that may enable them to stay out of prison. (McDevitt and Decker, et al., 2006) In Chicago, Papachristos (2001) and his colleagues designed an intervention that is similar to the PSN Offender Notification meetings. These sessions convey information to recent parolees about a policy of zero tolerance for gun crime, particularly by felons. The message is delivered by a panel of law enforcement, prosecution, and parole supervision representatives, along with drug treatment and job placement professionals, and community advocates. The goal is to provide a balanced message to parolees to make them aware of the penalties for gun possession by felons and other prohibited persons at both the federal and state level. Evaluation results suggest that recent parolees, a group at high risk for offending, commit significantly fewer violent offenses compared to matched individuals who do not participate in Offender Notification Meetings.



Evening Reporting Centers. One of the peak times for delinquency and youth victimization occurs during the after-school hours until early evening and juveniles who are on probation especially need supervision during this time. In response to this problem, Orange County, California, developed and is using an intervention called the Evening Reporting Center. The program is widespread in California, as well as in other parts of the United States, including Cook County, Illinois (Juvenile Delinquency Alternatives Initiative). The program consists of staff at designated locations working intensively with youths from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily, providing educational, vocational, recreational, and life skills. This program works on a relatively short duration, with youths reporting to the centers for an average of 21 days. The early results for the Cook County Evening Reporting Center, for example, were encouraging, with very low rearrest rates.

What Doesn't Work. Gang summits and truces specifically addressing gang issues are broadly conceived but have few evaluation results to support their use or to show that they have lasting value. Often, they are declared by outside groups who hope to use them to end violence and gang membership. Indeed, in many instances Klein (1995) reports that these efforts have backfired because gangs and gang members use the recognition they receive to enhance their status and reputation in the community. In the end, symbolic gestures are often just that, symbols that result in well-publicized public displays but little else. Gun buyback programs are another example of efforts that make an immediate splash but produce little in the way of substantive long-term reductions in crime or gang membership. There is no better source for jurisdictions to consult than the Klein and Maxson (2006) volume. It underscores the role of community and prevention in responding to gangs.

Suppression

Suppression is the best-known and most frequently used gang intervention strategy, but even law enforcement groups regard it as less effective than many prevention and intervention strategies. This contradiction reflects the lack of other resources in most communities, making the police the institution of last resort and the only group consistently available to respond to the problems of gangs and gang crime.

As was the case for designing prevention and intervention responses, a strategic planning tool, such as shown in Figure 7, should be used to design suppression interventions.

Goal 1:

Objective 1:

Activities	Target Population	Responsible Agency	Existing Program/ Resource	Required Program/ Resource	Short-Term Activity (6 months)	Long-Term Activity (1 year)
Gang Warrant Enforcement	Active gang members with felony warrants	Local Law Enforcement	Police Warrant Squads	One squad of trained officers	X	

Figure 7: Suppression Grid.

Prosecution and corrections

Suppression is not limited to law enforcement; it also involves prosecution and corrections.

Targeted prosecution. Efforts to deal with gangs have expanded considerably during the last decade and have occurred primarily through vertical or targeted prosecution. Many state-level prosecutors, such as in Cook County, Illinois, and Los Angeles, California, have developed specialized prosecution teams that deal only with gang cases. These organizational responses reflect the complexity of prosecuting many gang cases, as well as a frustration with gang crime in general. Such units typically have reduced caseloads, increased specialized investigative support, and resources for victims to encourage them to testify. Victim and witness intimidation is a major concern in such programs, as discussed by Dedel (2006).

Illegal gun possession prosecutions. Another prosecutorial approach that has gained prominence is the coordination of illegal gun possession prosecutions through regular meetings of local police, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agents, and local, state, and federal prosecutors (Decker and McDevitt, 2006). Every gun arrest and gun case in the jurisdiction is reviewed to determine if the offense involved a violation of the Gun Control Act (GCA), and if so, the whether the exercise of federal jurisdiction was warranted.

Directed patrol/crackdowns. By far the most common response to gangs has been by directed patrol or police crackdowns. The long-standing federal involvement in Weed and Seed programs could facilitate such interventions because of their emphasis on increasing patrol presence early in the intervention, to be balanced later by seeding efforts. Weed and Seed is a community-based strategy sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violence crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in designated high-crime neighborhoods across the U.S. The strategy involves law enforcement "weeding out" violent criminal and drug abusers, with community based organizations and public agencies collaborating to "seed" human services including prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood restoration programs. Without prevention and intervention efforts, however, suppression efforts cannot be as successful.

Promising results from the use of directed patrol can be found in the experiences of hot-spot policing against guns. The Kansas City Gun Experiment (Sherman and Rogan, 1995; Sherman, Shaw, and Rogan, 1995) was the first of a series of studies to document that problem-oriented policing coupled with a focus on gun violence hot spots could reduce crime. The Kansas City Police Department was able to seize more guns and reduce gun crime dramatically in the target area, while no such changes were observed in the control area. Residents were aware of the increased gun patrols and police presence but they did not develop negative attitudes toward the police. This project can be seen as a foundation for many of the larger scale, strategic problem-solving, gun-focused interventions that followed in the next decade. Such interventions include the Boston Gun Project (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 2007), the 10-city Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (Coleman et al., 1999), and Project Safe Neighborhoods. These interventions

share several elements in common including a commitment to a data-driven process, the use of strategic problem-solving tools, a focus on short-term interventions to reduce homicide, collaboration across a team of criminal justice and noncriminal justice groups, and implementation and evaluation of the strategy.

The process in Boston's Operation CeaseFire was oriented around several principles that came to be known as "Kennedy's Rules" after the principal investigator, David Kennedy. At each stage of the development of an intervention, several questions were asked:

1. How big of an impact can we anticipate from our intervention?
2. How long will it take to achieve that impact?
3. Is the intervention feasible?
4. Do we want to engage in the intervention?

One common thread across these suppression interventions was the focus on offender accountability through a process known as "lever pulling." That process sought to find a lever or means by which offenders could be held accountable. Those levers could include crackdowns on street-level drug trade (as was the case in Boston) or gambling (as was done in Lowell, Massachusetts), the threat of federal prosecution (as in Offender Notification Meetings in Chicago, Indianapolis, or St. Louis), or restriction of liberty (as in probation meetings in Detroit or Kansas City).

Another strategic problem-solving response to violent crime that emerged from these experiments has been the development of Most Violent or Chronic Offenders Lists. (Bynum and Decker, 2006) The lists are compiled by law enforcement and prosecutors with the goal of identifying the most violent individuals at large in a community, to achieve the most efficient reductions in violence, to enhance officer safety, and to increase the chances that when they are confronted by the police, the individuals will be apprehended. In addition, such lists have been used as part of other lever-pulling efforts such as warrant sweeps, probation and parole crackdowns, and enhanced neighborhood sweeps and surveillance.

One intervention that emerged from the Boston Gun Project was Operation Night Light, a collaborative project that began in 1992 as an informal collaboration between probation officers in the Dorchester, Massachusetts, District Court and police officers in Boston's Anti-Gang Violence Unit. The goal of the program was to ensure that probationers were meeting the conditions of their probation sentences, including observing curfews imposed by the court. The intervention stemmed from an analysis that showed probationers were at high risk for reoffending and that their reoffending was most likely to occur in the early evening hours. Operation Night Light initially paired one probation officer with two police officers as backup to make surprise visits to the homes, schools, and workplaces of high-risk youth probationers during the hours of 7 p.m. to midnight. The result was a significant reduction in crime among probationers who were under such surveillance. While the spread of such programs is not tracked, it is believed that more than 20

jurisdictions across the United States have instituted some form of police/probation partnership and may others are considering their use. (Reichert, 2002)

In one example, Boston's Operation Night Light became the basis for the development of a Night Watch program for juvenile probationers in St. Louis, Missouri. The goals of the program were to reduce juvenile victimization and offending, particularly after 7 p.m. The procedure is similar to that in Boston and since 2000, more than 10,000 home visits have been conducted annually, with the majority of probationers found to be in compliance. An independent evaluation (Curry and Decker, 2005) found that both the seriousness and frequency of juvenile offending were reduced while juveniles were under surveillance.

A number of jurisdictions, particularly in California, have turned to civil gang injunctions as a response to gang problems. This strategy requires a considerable standard of proof, with law enforcement and the prosecutor bearing the responsibility for collecting evidence and documenting gang membership and activity. Once such information has been presented to a judge, a civil injunction may be granted that forbids local gang members from engaging in a number of acts, including associating with other gang members, selling drugs, talking on cellular phones, and driving through a particular neighborhood. Once an injunction is granted against individuals, law enforcement can enforce the provisions of the injunction and when individuals are found to be in violation, they can be held civilly, without the need for the expense or delay involved in a criminal trial. Maxson and her colleagues (2004) found that slight improvements in neighborhood safety could be noted following the implementation of such injunctions. Interestingly, they also found that the presence of such injunctions was associated with a decrease in fear of crime in neighborhoods where such injunctions had been implemented.

In their study of police department gang task forces across America, Katz and Webb (1996) found that politics and the public seemed to be more important pressures in the creation of such task forces than the simple presence of gangs. They also found that antigang units operated in a more autonomous manner than most units in the police department, and that this often led to problems of oversight and supervision of the members of those units. The lack of integration into other aspects of the police department inhibited their ability to reduce gang problems. Such units could be improved to the extent that they were less reactive to gangs, more dependent on problem analysis and better integrated with other units in the police department.

Technology

The growth of technology in law enforcement has been important to the police response to gangs. The Orange County (California) Gang Incident Trafficking System (GITS) combines traditional crime mapping with intelligence and gang crime reporting. The GITS provides additional functionality with a component that can evaluate the effects of interventions. The system, for example, provided important analytical information that helped redirect gang interventions in Orange County by finding that adult gang members were far more likely to be involved in violence

than juvenile gang members and that adult gang members accounted for a much larger share of arrests for violence than did juvenile gang members.

GangNet® and California's Cal/Gang® are browser-based investigative, analysis, and statistical databases for recording and tracking gang members and their activities. The databases give law enforcement agencies a tool for identifying individuals involved in gangs—their names, street names, addresses, known associates, gang hand signals, vehicles, and tattoos—to facilitate agency work on gang-related cases. Cal/Gang system can be accessed by law enforcement officers in counties throughout California, while GangNet is used in many states and in Canada. As with any information system, it is only as useful as the quality of data entered, the review of the integrity and timeliness of the data stored in the system, and the ability of the analyst to ask appropriate questions and link the data to other data systems. Of course, these databases are only as good as the data that are entered in them. Unfortunately, there are no national standards to govern these databases. Huff (1998) has documented the fact that such databases can have a negative impact on communities.

Assessing the Gang Problem

The final step in the SARA process is **assessment**. We live in a world that is increasingly dependent on accountability. It simply is not enough for the police or other groups to say "trust me, we know this works" without independent verification. The public demands more from public safety providers, thereby increasing the mandate for more assessment of intervention programs.

An assessment is a five-step process:

1. Determine whether the plan was implemented (a process evaluation).
2. Collect pre- and postresponse qualitative and quantitative data because a response that does not change the level of gang crime could hardly be called successful.
3. Determine whether broad goals and specific objectives were reached by comparing the baseline of information developed before the response was implemented with the results of the program.
4. Identify new strategies needed to augment the original plan.
5. Conduct an ongoing assessment to ensure continued effectiveness. The program is not a one-time exercise. The assessment, for example, can identify new programs or determine if certain aspects of the program are no longer valid.

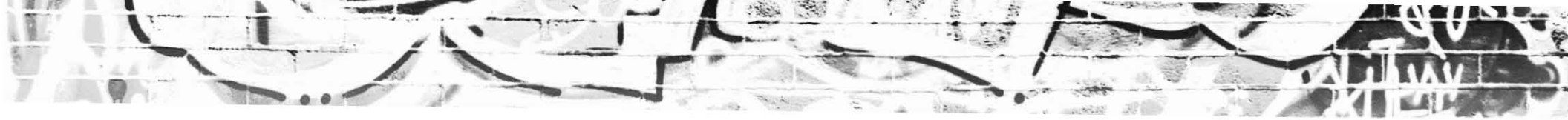
A first step in the assessment process should be to determine whether the blueprint for the intervention was implemented as planned. Evaluators refer to this as a process evaluation, an assessment of the process of implementing the response. It is obvious that if a bridge was not built according to the blueprints or a reading program failed to

introduce several key elements, they could not be successful. The same is true in law enforcement, and a number of process evaluations have shown that in many instances the full strategy was not implemented, was not implemented according to plan, or somehow got diverted along the way. It is important to collect data about gang crime in assessing the impact of a response. After all, a gang response that does not change gang crime could hardly be called successful. It is important to have a baseline of information about the problem before the response is implemented, so that results from after the program can be compared. In addition, it is useful in geographically based interventions to have a control area that did not get the response, in order to see if changes that result were due to the program, or other influences felt throughout a jurisdiction.

The following are potentially useful measures of the effectiveness of responses to gang-related problems (www.popcenter.org):

- Reduced recorded crime and disorder incidents related to youth in public places
- Reduced calls for police service related to youth in public places
- Reduced costs for repairs of damages due to vandalism
- Reduced amount or size of graffiti
- Increased length of time graffiti-prone surfaces stay clean
- Reduced public fear and perceptions about the amount of graffiti
- Reduced visibility of drug-related activity in public places
- Reduced youth gun homicides
- Reduced youth gun assaults
- Greater perceptions of safety among neighborhood youth, other community members, and local merchants.

To conduct an assessment, local law enforcement should engage a research partner in a manner similar to those mentioned earlier in the section *Applying the SARA Model to Local Gang Problems:* Project Safe Neighborhoods, the NIJ's *Locally Initiated Research Partnerships in Policing* (McEwen, 1999), and the *Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative* managed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety. (Van Ness, Fallon, and Lawrence, 2007) As with an analysis, the best assessments are done by using multiple sources of data including information from the police, schools, citizen surveys, public health, jails, and the overall community.



Conclusions

A number of common principles should be kept in mind when the applying the problem-solving process to gangs. These principles include the need to regularly assess and monitor responses to determine their implementation and impact. It may be more important to understand our failures than successes in this regard. The reality is that most responses to problems do not succeed, at least in their first design. As a consequence, it is important to document the process of designing and implementing a response so that the responding jurisdiction—and others—can be more successful in the future.

Impediments to success

Responses do not succeed for a number of reasons. The program design, for example, could be faulty. A response may have been designed to accomplish one thing, but the problem really called for another type of response. For example, a city may be having a problem with truancy and implement a reading program as a response, but improving reading may not address truancy. Or there may be a problem of gun violence and retaliation between rival gangs. An after-school mentoring program for kindergarteners, no matter how well intentioned, is not likely to affect this problem.

Similarly, many responses lack a logic model that links the response to the problem. The logic model and grids identified earlier in this document (prevention, intervention, suppression) help a jurisdiction develop an understanding about why gang problems exist, identify law enforcement's existing points of vulnerability for interrupting gang activity, and determine available resources and who is responsible for marshalling those resources. A related problem often encountered is the lack of focus or a focus that is too broad. Targeted interventions are much more likely to be effective than generalized ones. Another problem common to many responses concerns the level of intensity or "dose size" as it has come to be known. The intensity of a response must be sufficiently large to affect the problem. Adding 10 or 12 new police officers to a city of 500,000 residents would not reduce crime by much. Similarly, an overtime patrol of 4 hours a week might not be sufficient to ameliorate the problem of gang violence. Responses also need to have sufficient time to work. The reality of gang problems in most American cities is that they did not arise overnight, and will not be addressed successfully in a very short period. It is important, therefore, that responses are given sufficient time to work. Some responses that have proved successful did not achieve early results, but being patient proved to be a sound decision.

Law enforcement must respond to the immediate environment of crime. If there is a rash of shootings, kidnappings, or residential burglaries, local law enforcement is obligated to respond. Many of these demands, however, occur outside the target area, do not involve gang members, and can divert attention from the long-term goals of reducing gang crime and gang involvement. In some instances, a well-intentioned intervention is not well-grounded in the nature of the local gang problem. Community meetings can often produce interventions that are not targeted at the more significant

gang problems facing a community. These are but a few of the reasons that the target populations at greatest risk for victimization and offending are not reached. This is another example of how a logic model can be used to maintain program focus in the midst of the constant disruptions (crime spikes, politics, community demands for action) that often occur.

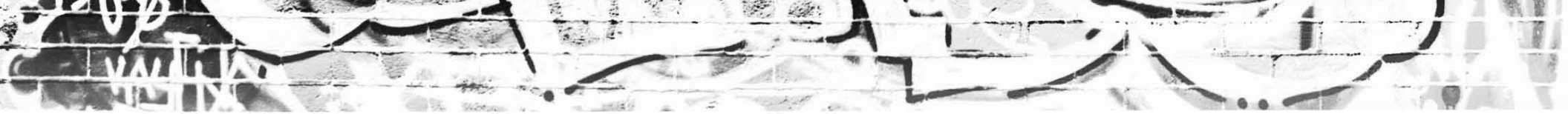
Implementing successful programs

Asking the following questions, not only at the start of a response but regularly (perhaps monthly), will prove useful in keeping a response focused, which is a key to success:

1. What are you trying to change and how are you trying to do it?
2. What needs to happen for you to do that and when must it occur?
3. Who is to be responsible for specific activities?

The goal of asking such questions is to change the course of a response that is unsuccessful and help it achieve the desired outcomes. It is also critical, therefore, to develop project milestones and expectations. Here again, using a logic model and the prevention, intervention, and suppression grids can help to maintain focus. The gang problem, as with other crime problems, is highly dynamic. The gang problem of today is markedly different from what it was 5 years ago, and what it will be 5 years from now. It is important to avoid developing a fixed image of a problem that does not change as the problem changes.

This guidebook has stressed the importance of having an updated, accurate understanding of the local gang problem in a jurisdiction and using such an understanding to guide and change prevention, intervention, and suppression programs. Such activities are the cornerstone of the SARA model which requires careful analysis before creating interventions. The failure to understand the nature, dynamics, and dimensions of the local gang problem can lead to errors not only when developing interventions for gangs, but also in other significant areas of public policy that affect gangs—families, housing, employment, schools, and neighborhoods. If we do not understand the local gang problem, we are likely to make errors in policy, practice, and programming. Such errors may take the form of interventions that fail to address the local problem, or worse, may make the problem worse.



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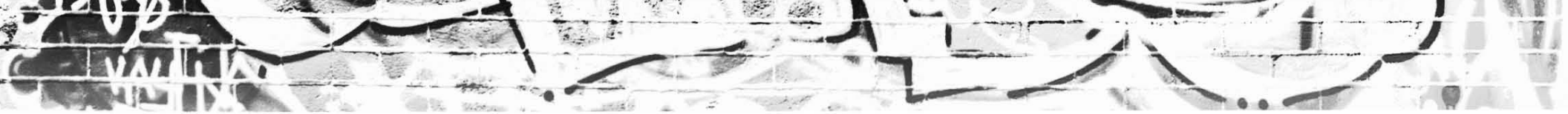

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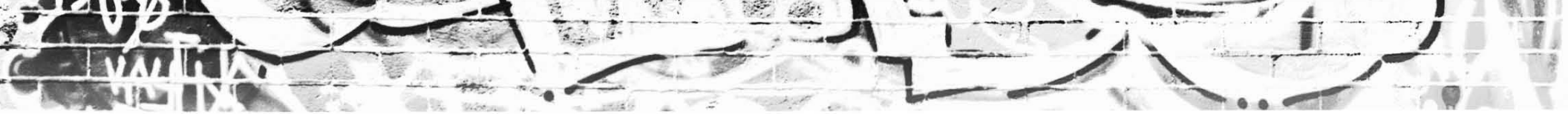

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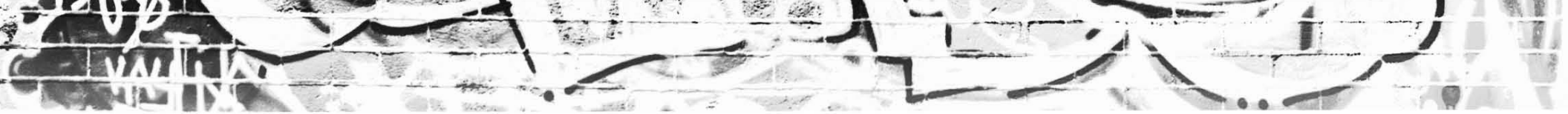

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Access point for U.S. Department of Justice webcasts, satellite broadcasts, and podcasts covering current issues.
www.DOJConnect.com

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
www.bgca.org

Cal/Gang®
www.sra.com/services/index.asp?id=582

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (POP Center)
www.popcenter.org

City of New York Department of Correction, Gang Intelligence Unit
www.nyc.gov/html/doc/html/about/giu.shtml

Dr. Michael Carlie, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminality, Missouri State University.
A list of gang-related information sources.
http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/Resources/related%20sites.htm

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Uniform Crime Reports
www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm

Florida Gang Investigation Association
www.fgia.com

GangNet®
www.sra.com/services/index.asp?id=582

Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.)
www.great-online.org

Helping America's Youth
www.helpingamericasyouth.gov

(Illinois) Gang Crime Prevention Center
www.gcpc.state.il.us

Information about gangs
www.GangsOrUs.com

Massachusetts: Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative (2007)
www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopssubtopic&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Funding+%26+Training+Opportunities

Multimedia website
www.streetgangs.com

National Gang Center
www.nationalgangcenter.gov

National Gang Crime Research Center
www.ngcrc.com

National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC)
www.usdoj.gov/criminal/ngic/

National Gang Targeting, Enforcement & Coordination Center (GangTECC)
www.usdoj.gov/criminal/gangtecc/

National Youth Gang Center
www.iir.com/nygc

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office)
www.cops.usdoj.gov

Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice
www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org

Project Safe Neighborhoods
www.psn.gov

Sonoma State University, Criminology & Criminal Justice Studies Department
www.sonoma.edu/ccja/info/default.shtml

U. S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
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