

Multnomah County Gang Assessment

Applying the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Comprehensive Gang Model in Multnomah County

Overview

In January 2014, the Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) Executive Committee voted to conduct an assessment of gang activity across Multnomah County. This assessment will be based on the process outlined in Phase I of the federal Office for Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model.¹ LPSCC chose to pursue the OJJDP model to better:

- Define the problem of gang and youth violence in the community
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of prevention and services targeted to gang-impacted individuals
- Build increased cross-agency and community understanding and collaboration
- Position the jurisdiction for federal and state funding opportunities, some of which require that communities complete the OJJDP comprehensive gang model planning process.

The OJJDP Model

The OJJDP model is designed to:

- build collaboration
- assess the youth gang problem
- identify goals and prioritize activities
- develop an implementation plan
- implement activities and system structures to reduce youth gang problems

The OJJDP model includes three separate phases:

- Phase 1: Assessment
 - Provide the community with a thorough understanding of the nature, scope, and dynamics of the problem
 - Lay the groundwork
 - Collect and interpret the data
 - Prepare the assessment report
- Phase 2: Implementation Planning
 - Use the data from the assessment to
 - Clarify and prioritize gang related problems,
 - Develop measurable goals, and
 - Identify activities designed to achieve those goals
- Phase 3: Implementation
 - Develop an administrative structure to support and sustain implementation.
 - Employ a balanced focus on prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry.
 - the intervention team and coordinating logistics and information sharing

¹ National Gang Center. OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model. Accessed at: <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Comprehensive-Gang-Model/About>

- a team-based case management protocol
- a street outreach program
- an evaluation and sustainability plan

Multnomah County's Approach

Phase I: LPSCC is conducting Phase I of the OJJDP model (the assessment) to explore data regarding gang-related and violent crime levels in the community, community perceptions of those activities, and related service gaps. During Phase I, LPSCC's Youth and Gang Violence Subcommittee expanded to include a broader array of stakeholders and is acting in the role of Steering Committee for the assessment. The Steering Committee provides input and guidance to the data collection process.

Phase II: information gathered during the assessment will inform Phase II, the implementation planning process. During Phase II, the Steering Committee will convene for conversations about prioritizing and addressing service gaps through primary and secondary prevention, intervention, suppression and reentry support.

Taking a Public Health Perspective

LPSCC is partnering with multiple agencies to conduct this assessment. Partners providing funding and in-kind contributions include the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, the Multnomah County Health Department, LPSCC, and the City of Portland's Youth Violence Prevention Office. With support and guidance from the County's Health Department, the community is taking a public health approach to completing the OJJDP model. This approach to violence prevention *seeks to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence and consists of four steps:*

1. *To define the problem through the systematic collection of information about the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of violence.*
2. *To establish why violence occurs using research to determine the causes and correlates of violence, the factors that increase or decrease the risk for violence, and the factors that could be modified through interventions.*
3. *To find out what works to prevent violence by designing, implementing and evaluating interventions.*
4. *To implement effective and promising interventions in a wide range of settings. The effects of these interventions on risk factors and the target outcome should be monitored, and their impact and cost-effectiveness should be evaluated.*

By definition, public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. Programs for the primary prevention of violence based on the public health approach are designed to expose a broad segment of a population to prevention measures and to reduce and prevent violence at a population-level.²

² World Health Organization's Violence Prevention Alliance, *The Public Health Approach*. Accessed at http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/public_health/en/

Conducting the Assessment

Between the months of January through June, 2014, LPSCC is focused on completing the first phase of the model, which is designed to provide an understanding of the nature and scope of gang activity and youth violence in the community.

During Phase I, qualitative and quantitative data is being gathered from a variety of sources, including

- Community Perceptions Data: Focus groups, interviews, and surveys are being conducted with community members, organizations with direct experience working with gang-impacted individuals, and gang-impacted individuals.
- Community Resources Information: Information regarding the availability of community-based resources and services that serve gang-impacted individuals. This information will include demographic and geographic service information.
- Quantitative Data: Multiple agencies, including Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, Portland Police, Gresham Police, local school districts, All Hands Raised, have agreed to share data to inform the assessment.

This data will be used to write an assessment report that will summarize gang and youth violence issues in the county. The report will provide a framework for future planning, funding opportunities, and coordination of services to prevent gang activity.

The phase 1 assessment report will be presented to the LPSCC executive committee on July 8, 2014

Tailoring the Model

As the partners in Multnomah County began reviewing and applying the model for this jurisdiction, participants chose to make multiple adjustments to both tools and process. These adjustments allow for increased inclusivity and opportunity for partnership with community-based organizations and groups interested in and involved in services for gang-impacted individuals. Examples of these adjustments include:

- The Multnomah County Health Department has taken a lead role in developing and collecting the qualitative data for this process. Taking a public health perspective in this process has increased the focus on primary prevention, a strengths-based approach to tool development and data collection, and building and maintaining trust and rapport with the community. The Health Department has engaged community health workers to conduct the focus groups, interviews, and support survey completion across the community.
- All OJJDP qualitative data collection tools, including the citizens' survey, community leader survey, and youth-serving agency survey have been adjusted to better meet this public health, strengths-based perspective. The original Gang Interview tool focusing on gang-impacted individuals received specific scrutiny by partners, who shared concerns about questions that were potentially incriminating and retraumatizing to interviewees. The original OJJDP gang interview tool was reviewed by community health workers and the county's STRYVE coalition members, who made recommendations for changes, and revamped the tool to better match the desires of the partners.
- During all data collection activities, steps have been taken to protect and ensure the privacy of individuals sharing information with the project. Project staff have taken this role very seriously. All surveys were conducted anonymously either on-line or on paper copy. No names or personal information was recorded for focus groups or one-on-one interviews of gang-impacted individuals.
- The focus group process was intentionally expanded to include the voices of young people and those who reside within correctional institutions. Focus groups were adjusted to include

questions about exposure to violence and trauma in families, schools, and communities; and time was built in for debrief or reflection in the event that questions triggered intense emotions or memories.