

LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATING COUNCIL

Action Plan to Reduce Youth and Gang Violence: *Ensuring Effective Coordination, Oversight, Community Engagement & Measurable Outcomes*

January 2011

In September 2008, LPSCC's Executive Committee adopted a nationally-recognized, comprehensive approach to reducing youth and gang violence. The approach recognizes the equal importance of enforcement, intervention and prevention strategies in reducing youth and gang violence, as well as the need for close coordination among the local governments and agencies responsible for implementing these strategies and the active engagement of communities most affected by youth and gang violence.¹

LPSCC has a critical role to play in Multnomah County's violence reduction strategies by providing effective coordination and oversight and by supporting community engagement in the development and implementation of these strategies. Due to LPSCC's effectiveness, widespread acceptance and longevity, the Council can also ensure a sustainable process to promote long-term, balanced strategies that many jurisdictions across the country, despite short-term successes, have been unable to maintain. And, in light of LPSCC's commitment to data-driven policymaking and evidence-based policies and practices, the Council can assure the development of outcome measures that track the county's progress in reducing youth and gang violence.

LPSCC's Executive Committee has discussed the active role it played in overseeing and coordinating gang and gang violence strategies in the late 1990s as part of a Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (STACS) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, Portland's Youth Gun Action Team (YGAT) and other agencies, organizations and communities throughout Multnomah County. The Executive Committee has also recognized that, in recent years, LPSCC has not continued to fully perform this critical role. As a result, LPSCC's staff was asked to develop this Proposed Action Plan for the Committee's consideration at its November 2, 2010 meeting. The following proposed actions are based upon the Executive Committee's attached statement of its comprehensive approach to reducing youth and gang violence in Multnomah County, as well as LPSCC's prior experience overseeing the STACS Initiative.

¹ A copy of the Executive Committee's statement of this approach, "A Proposal for a Comprehensive and Coordinated Response to Gang and Youth Violence," is attached.

Seven Proposed Actions

1. Establish a new Working Group on Youth and Gang Violence to ensure the coordination of current violence reduction strategies and the development of new evidence-based strategies.

LPSCC's primary function is to coordinate the development and implementation of public safety policies and strategies in Multnomah County. The Council has performed this function in part by establishing an organizational structure of working groups made up of participating agencies and organizations and affected stakeholders and communities.

The effectiveness of Multnomah County's youth and gang violence reduction strategies across the county will be greatly enhanced by a working group charged with the responsibility of coordinating the implementation of these strategies and the development of new ones. The working group should include representatives of the agencies, organizations and communities involved in or affected by these strategies. To ensure its responsiveness and effectiveness, the working group should be limited to 15 members, and will report to the Executive Committee on a regular basis as determined by the Committee.

The Working Group on Youth and Gang Violence should carry out its functions in conformity with the Executive Committee's approach set forth in the attached "Proposal for a Comprehensive and Coordinated Response to Gang and Youth Violence."² In light of LPSCC's membership in the National Network for Safe Communities (see <http://www.nnscommunities.org/>), the Working Group should utilize information and data on evidence-based strategies and practices developed through the National Network and share information and data on Multnomah County's experiences with the Network's members.

2. Designate the Director of Portland's Office of Youth Violence Prevention as the Chair of LPSCC's Working Group on Youth and Gang Violence.

Based upon the experiences of over 50 jurisdictions in the National Network for Safe Communities, it is essential to the effectiveness of the Executive Committee's oversight role and the Working Group's coordination functions to assign a dedicated staff member to lead the Working Group and report regularly to the Executive Committee. To ensure continuation of LPSCC's earlier successes in overseeing and coordinating Multnomah County's youth and gang violence reduction strategies, the original vision for Portland's Office of Youth Violence Prevention was to play a central role in coordinating

² See note 1, above.

Multnomah County's ongoing violence reduction efforts on behalf of LPSCC. Therefore, the Director of that Office is the logical choice to lead this current effort.

To provide the Director of the Office of Youth Violence Prevention with sufficient time to lead this effort, the Executive Committee should consider allocating an appropriate amount of funds from LPSCC's budget to relieve the Director of some of his current administrative duties. To promote closer coordination and communication with LPSCC, the Executive Committee should also consider co-locating the Director or his Office with the offices of LPSCC's staff.

3. Support the development of an OJJDP Gang Assessment

In order to qualify for certain federal funding through the US Department of Justice, a local jurisdiction must complete a Community Gang Assessment, which, as specified by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), helps jurisdictions evaluate (a) the level and extent of gang involvement in serious and violent crimes and (b) factors in the community that may be contributing to local youth joining gangs. In addition to satisfying a requirement for federal funding, the assessment would also guide and inform Multnomah County's short-term and long-term response to gang violence.

LPSCC and its partner agencies should conduct this assessment by retaining a consultant to lead the process in Multnomah County. Because a large portion of the data and information needed to write this report are already available, the process should be completed within three months of retaining the consultant.

4. Ensure the active engagement of those communities in Multnomah County directly affected by youth and gang violence.

During its STACS Initiative and as part its stated approach to addressing youth and gang violence,³ LPSCC emphasized the importance of actively engaging communities directly affected by youth and gang violence in the processes of identifying of the communities' problems, needs and assets and of overseeing the development and implementation of evidence-based strategies. In September 2008, LPSCC's Executive Committee proposed that representatives of the Coalition of Communities of Color perform this function.

Whichever group or groups are chosen to perform this function now, the choice of the group(s) should be made by or be acceptable to the affected communities. Furthermore, an individual selected by the group(s) should serve on LPSCC's Working Group on Youth and Gang Violence.

³ See note 1, above.

5. Require the development and implementation of measurable outcomes for all youth and gang violence reductions strategies in Multnomah County.

LPSCC is committed to data-driven policymaking and evidenced based policies and practices in all of the work it does. Therefore, the Executive Committee should promote the use of measurable outcomes for all the enforcement, intervention and prevention strategies to reduce youth and gang violence in Multnomah County.

While “outputs” like “number of cases” or “number of contacts with youth” may be relevant to operational efficiencies, such measures are not outcome measures that can be used to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of violence reduction strategies. Numbers of shots fired, aggravated assaults and homicides, for example, are the outcome measures that can be used to determine the effectiveness of enforcement and intervention strategies. Recidivism and successful program completion, for example, are outcome measures for determining the effectiveness of intervention and prevention strategies.

A critical step in the development of countywide outcome measures is the establishment of consistent definitions of “gangs,” “gang violence,” gang-related incidents,” “gang-affected youth” and other terms used by affected agencies and organizations throughout the county. Subject to its periodic oversight and input, LPSCC’s Executive Committee should delegate the development and implementation of these kinds of outcome measures to the Working Group on Youth and Gang Violence.

6. Establish a regular schedule for the Working Group on Youth and Gang Violence to Report to LPSCC’s Executive Committee.

To ensure that LPSCC’s Executive Committee continues to carry out its oversight and coordination role effectively and that this process of developing and implementing violence reduction strategies remains sustainable, the Executive Committee should establish a regular schedule for the Working Group and its Chair to report to the Committee. While the Working Group will no doubt determine the content of many, if not most, of its regular reports, members of the Executive Committee should feel free to request reports on specific subjects of interest or concern and on recent developments involving youth and gang violence.

7. Endorse the following initiatives led by Mayor Adams

At the Executive Committee's October 12, 2010 meeting, Mayor Adam requested the Committee's support of the following actions;

- (a) reestablish Portland's Youth Gang Anti-Violence Team (YGAT), probably with a different name;

(b) establish a single phone number that gang-involved and gang-affected individuals or their families or supporters can call in order to be matched with services and support; and

(c) create and enforce exclusionary zones at gang hot spots.

Conclusion

If LPSCC's Executive Committee chooses to resume a more active role in coordinating and overseeing strategies to reduced youth and gang violence throughout Multnomah County, it should result in the following benefits:

1. Greater coordination, if not integration, of operations, programs and services among participating justice agencies, community organizations and local governments in Multnomah County and, in particular, between operations in West and East County;
2. The opportunity for line staff and managers of the affected agencies and organizations across the county to keep elected leaders and policymakers on the Executive Committee informed of ongoing youth and gang violence reduction strategies so those officials, and the colleagues they inform in turn, can provide high-level leadership, budgetary support and policy guidance, which should strengthen and improve these strategies and ensure a sustainable intergovernmental structure to support the strategies; and
3. Confidence of those officials in current evidence-based strategies so, in the face of the kind of tragic events and media attention that have occurred over recent months, they are able to resist the temptation to "reinvent wheels" at the operational level and, instead, (a) highlight and intensify effective current strategies and (b) perform the proper and critical roles of policymakers described above.

LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATING COUNCIL

A PROPOSAL FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED RESPONSE TO GANG AND YOUTH VIOLENCE

Introduction

Over the past several decades, **three strategies have typified local governments' responses to gang and youth violence: suppression, intervention and prevention.** Suppression strategies typically involve specialized police and prosecution gang units that target the illegal behavior of active gangs and gang members with targeted and aggressive law enforcement tactics. Intervention efforts also focus on active gangs and their members, frequently in conjunction with suppression strategies and usually through outreach, corrections and social services. Prevention strategies generally focus on youth, families and communities at risk of becoming involved in gangs (e.g., siblings of active gang members) with programs such as mental health and addiction treatment, education services, and job, life skills and employment training.

A substantial body of rigorous empirical research and practical street-level experience now confirms **what works and what doesn't work** with regard to these three strategies:¹

- Suppression strategies are critical to interrupting cycles of gang violence and retaliation and responding to violent incidents by apprehending and prosecuting perpetrators. However, with the exception of incapacitating violent offenders through lengthy state and federal prison sentences, **suppression strategies alone don't work to significantly reduce gang activity or youth violence over the long run.** To achieve such reductions over time, suppression strategies must be coordinated with intervention strategies like community outreach and correctional supervision and prevention strategies that focus on youth at risk of joining gangs.
- Local efforts to reduce gang and youth violence have frequently been disappointing because they have emphasized **short-term tactics at the expense of long-term strategies** by focusing primarily on the latest neighborhood "hot spots" and gang rivalries, for example, rather than measurable outcomes with statistical significance such as violent crime rates in affected communities measured over substantial periods of time.
- Successful efforts to reduce gang and youth violence adopt a **comprehensive, three-pronged approach that coordinates suppression, intervention and prevention strategies** in pursuit of common, well-defined, long-term goals and outcomes.

¹ See, e.g., the "Selected References" at the end of this proposal.

- The most effective efforts have also incorporated the insights of **public health professionals and epidemiological analysis** in strategic planning and development processes as part of a comprehensive, three pronged approach.
- Efforts to reduce gang and youth violence have been unsuccessful without **the support of affected communities** through their meaningful participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of gang and violence reduction strategies, thereby ensuring that these strategies are culturally appropriate and address problems of real concern to the affected communities.
- Most local efforts to reduce gang and youth violence are unsuccessful in achieving measurable, long-term results due to the lack of **a formal organizational structure**, which ensures
 - a proper balance and coordination among suppression, intervention and prevention strategies,
 - strategies and operations that focus on common goals and outcomes,
 - participating agencies and community organizations are held accountable for achieving common goals and outcomes,
 - meaningful participation by the affected communities and stakeholders and
 - sustainable efforts that persist in addressing gang and youth violence on a long-term basis, rather than tactical responses that are intermittent and temporary.

A Proposal

This proposal is based upon (1) the foregoing empirical research and practical experience, (2) a history of balanced, comprehensive and community-based approaches to public safety by Multnomah County and cities in the County, (3) the many accomplishments of Multnomah County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) and (4) the opportunities for coordination and collaboration presented by the co-chairmanship of LPSCC by Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzmann and Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler. Accordingly, **efforts to reduce gang and youth violence in Multnomah County should include the following components:**

- **A comprehensive, three-pronged approach** that balances and coordinates suppression, intervention and prevention efforts by city and county agencies in Multnomah County;
- **Policy and planning guidance and oversight of these efforts by LPSCC** through a Working Group established by the Council and made up of representatives of participating agencies, affected communities and key stakeholder organizations;

- **A partnership between LPSCC’s Working Group and the Coalition of Communities of Color** to ensure (a) the support of affected communities, (b) coordination and balance among suppression, intervention and prevention strategies and (c) the development of strategies, polices and operations that are culturally appropriate and that address problems of real concern to those communities;

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