

NATIONAL GANG CENTER

NEWSLETTER



Building Credibility in **Street Outreach**

As an important component of comprehensive gang control strategies, street outreach programs across the United States seek to reach out to marginalized youth and young adults who may be involved in delinquent or violent gang behaviors. Most current street outreach programs have not been

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"Changing Course" provides principles to help practitioners and policymakers make decisions based on the best available evidence to prevent kids from joining a gang.

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Building Credibility in **Street Outreach**



Summit panel members pictured from left to right: **Victor Gonzalez, Guillermo Cespedes, Candice Kane, Joe Mollner, Tyrone Parker, Eleuthera Lisch, and Angela Wolfe**

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evaluated, and there is still no consensus regarding the most successful best practices for street outreach programs. To discuss the intricacies of outreach programs, OJJDP recently convened a panel of outreach program practitioners at the [Third Annual Summit on Preventing Youth Violence](#). The panel discussed emerging best practices in street outreach based on panelists' experiences in implementing outreach programs.



Street outreach workers, also known by other titles such as gang outreach workers and gang interventionists, play an integral role in gang violence reduction initiatives. Although numerous outreach programs have been implemented differently, the broad purpose of the outreach worker encompasses advocacy and mentoring, conflict resolution, and crisis response. The role of a street outreach worker includes engaging gang members as clients; assisting them and their families

in accessing needed social and education services; reducing clients' bonds to gangs as well as their participation in gang-related conflict and violence; and being a positive adult role model in a mentoring relationship with gang members.

Outreach work is not a 9-to-5 job. It takes grit, passionate dedication, and strong commitment to the community and to the targeted population outreach staff work with. Formerly incarcerated individuals returning to their communities, who may have a past in gang involvement, make powerful change agents, with immense capacity to connect with gang-involved youth and their families. However, the risk of hiring former gang members or ex-offenders can present significant challenges to the credibility of an outreach program and its perceived trustworthiness for law enforcement.

The summit panel discussion focused on this central challenge for street outreach programs that is evident across divergent programs: building program credibility which includes developing effective cooperative relationships with law enforcement. Summit panelists provided a number of suggestions that can be summed up as follows:

- 1. Begin with a structured program:**
This includes well-defined goals,

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Gang Graffiti Resources:

Across the United States, graffiti is often prevalent in gang-ridden communities. Although it is not always gang-related, this form of vandalism defaces property, can lead to violence among gangs, and causes a certain level of uneasiness for citizens. Its impact has resulted in many communities establishing graffiti abatement programs. Successful abatement programs include collaborative efforts among a given community and its public works division; the police department; community development; and parks, recreation, and community services, all with the goal of eliminating graffiti vandalism.

The Graffiti Hurts® Program hosts a comprehensive Web site, which aims to educate individuals about the consequences of graffiti in their communities.

**For more information about
the Graffiti Hurts® Program**

CLICK HERE!

<http://www.graffitihurts.org/>

In August 2011, Purdue University researchers presented homeland security and law enforcement officials with applications that enable cell phones and other portable devices to translate the meaning of gang graffiti. The system uses image analysis algorithms to analyze the graffiti, while also identifying the GPS coordinates. This project was introduced as GARI (Gang Graffiti Automatic Recognition and Interpretation). To learn more about GARI, see the following article:

<http://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/general/2011/110818DelpGraffiti.html>

G.R.E.A.T. Officer SPOTLIGHT



Officer Mark Bennett

Why We Have G.R.E.A.T. Communities

Being a sworn officer for the Metro Nashville, Davidson County, Police Department as a school resource officer assigned to our schools, teaching the Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program for 13 years to thousands of students in our community, I have seen first-hand the positive benefits of this program.

G.R.E.A.T. has been a powerful life skills gang and violence prevention program and has been successful in the reduction of delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership. Our communities have been strengthened by the presence of this program in our schools. As

important as the life skills, nationally accepted education standards, and evidence-proven effectiveness of the G.R.E.A.T. Program are, what connects this program to the heart of every community is that it is taught by our uniformed law enforcement officers: men and women of this country who are committed to making a difference in our children's lives.

I have always said that whenever you bring a uniformed officer and children together in a structured environment for the purpose of

**Read
more
about the
G.R.E.A.T.
Program**

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SPOTLIGHT

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communicating needed information and learning from each other, you cannot go wrong.

You cannot begin to imagine the lifelong personal relationships that I have built, not only with my present students, but with those who have graduated from the G.R.E.A.T. Program. High school and college students have returned to our schools to visit or as teachers, counselors, or support staff, or they introduce their young children to me as I walk down the aisle in a store or mall. Some blow their horns at me in traffic while I am in my patrol car, and they scream, "Hey, Officer Bennett, it's me, 'So-and-So,' do you remember me?" They then proceed to tell me something positive that is going on in their lives to let me know that I had a part in making that happen.

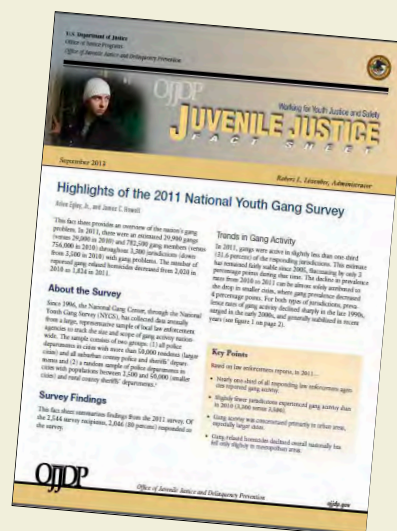
I have also had students who have gone through the G.R.E.A.T. experience and not made the best decisions. But in the majority of those encounters, they still come over to me or allow me to come to them. We embrace and wish each other well and I let them know, "If I can be of service, you know how to find me." Also, I have attended funerals of past students who were victims to violence. In those cases, I was always greeted with a warm embrace by parents and/or loved ones who knew my connection to their children.

My personal experiences are just a small portion of what the G.R.E.A.T. Program is about, but this is not about me or Nashville. It is about the collaborative commitments from officers, parents, elected officials, police departments, and school districts to give our children the tools needed to help them stay and/or become violence- and gang-free. This is what will produce great citizens and the reason "Why We Have G.R.E.A.T. Communities."

For more information on the G.R.E.A.T. Program, please visit <http://www.great-online.org>.

Highlights of the 2011 National Youth Gang Survey

CLICK
HERE
TO READ



The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has published "[Highlights of the 2011 National Youth Gang Survey](#)." This fact sheet presents findings from the National Gang Center's [National Youth Gang Survey](#), which collects data from a large, representative sample of local law enforcement agencies to track the size and scope of the national youth gang problem. The fact sheet discusses trends in gang activity, factors influencing local gang violence, and anti-gang measures.

- Highlights of the 2011 National Youth Gang Survey: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/242884.pdf>
- National Youth Gang Survey Analysis Page: <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Survey-Analysis>



Coming in March 2014:

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model Training

Sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), NGC will be offering team training on the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model. The training dates and locations will be announced soon on the National Gang Center Web site. Interested communities should plan on sending a team composed of the project coordinator; a representative from the lead agency; and an agency representative from law enforcement, probation, social services, and schools. The team members should be key policymakers/ agency heads from agencies who will be involved in an assessment of the community's gang problem and the ultimate implementation of the Model. Teams should be limited to five people.

Representatives from the National Gang Center, who provide technical assistance and training to sites that are implementing the Model, as well as representatives from sites that are currently implementing the Model, will provide

the instruction/facilitation. The format will be general sessions, individual team roundtable discussions, and practical exercises. For information on the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, see <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Comprehensive-Gang-Model>.



Did You Know?

The mission of OJJDP National Training and Technical Assistance Center (OJJDP NTTAC) is to promote the use of evidence-based practices by providing practitioners with innovative training and technical assistance to meet the diverse needs of children in the juvenile justice system.

The OJJDP NTTAC delivers, brokers, and promotes the highest-quality training and technical assistance to the juvenile justice field and its related criminal justice initiatives by utilizing a vast array of training and technical assistance resources funded through the OJJDP and its partners. To learn more about NTTAC, see <https://www.nttac.org/index.cfm?event=aboutNttac.homepage>.



Building Credibility in **Street Outreach**



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a target population of clients based on a thorough community gang assessment, policies and procedures for outreach staff, and a system of documentation for case management of clients and other program operations. Work with law enforcement partners to develop a standardized vetting process when hiring outreach staff. Clarity of program purpose, transparency of program operations, and ethical principles consistent over time set the foundation for a respectable and reliable program.

2. Establish clear roles and boundaries for both outreach staff and law enforcement:

It is just as important for outreach workers to build trust with clients and community as it is to build an effective working relationship with law enforcement. Discretion is key. Predetermined procedures are essential. Outreach staff should stay out of case investigations. Conversely, outreach workers are not confidential informants; law enforcement officers should not try to garner investigative information about clients from staff. When information sharing is relevant to client case management, crisis response, or safety issues concerning an outreach worker, the outreach supervisor should coordinate contact between police and staff.

3. Provide training for outreach staff and cross-training for law enforcement:

Outreach is intense and demanding work requiring a broad array of skills. Support outreach staff with professional development training in their roles, responsibilities, operational procedures, and skills needed for the occupation. Likewise, training for law enforcement officers is also beneficial. When officers are aware of what street

outreach is, the purpose it serves, and the value it provides, they are more likely to want to cooperate with the street outreach program.

Commitment, structure, and ethical behavior are essential elements to building a credible street outreach program. As with any other program of prime importance, however, is the ability of program staff to articulate program purpose and deliver services promised.



- The Third Annual Summit on Preventing Youth Violence:
http://www.ojdp.gov/newsletter/243534/sf_1.html
- Panel members pictured on page 1, from left to right:
 1. Victor Gonzalez, Houston Mayor's Anti-Gang Office:
<http://www.houstontx.gov/antigang/>
 2. Guillermo Cespedes, City of Los Angeles Office of Gang Reduction & Youth Development:
<http://www.grydfoundation.org/>
 3. Candice Kane, Cure Violence:
<http://cureviolence.org/>
 4. Joe Mollner, Boys & Girls Clubs of America:
<http://www.bgca.org>
 5. Tyrone Parker, Alliance of Concerned Men:
<http://www.allianceofconcernedmen.com/alliance/>
 6. Eleuthera Lisch, Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative:
<http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/education/youthinitiative/>
 7. Angela Wolfe, National Council on Crime & Delinquency:
<http://www.nccdglobal.org/>

Changing Course: Preventing Gang Membership

The [National Institute of Justice](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) have published “[Changing Course: Preventing Gang Membership](#).” Written by leading public health and criminal justice researchers, “Changing Course” provides principles to help practitioners and policymakers make decisions based on the best available evidence to prevent kids from joining a gang. The report examines why youth are attracted to gangs, explores key child development issues and risks for joining a gang, and offers prevention strategies that a variety of stakeholders—such as schools, law enforcement, public health, and communities—can use to address their specific needs.



- National Institute of Justice:
<http://nij.gov/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/>
- Changing Course: Preventing Youth From Joining Gangs:
<http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gangs-organized/gangs/youth-gangs/welcome.htm>

Interested in Anti-Gang Training?

Check out the links below for dates and locations:

Training and Conferences

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Other-Training-and-Conferences>

Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Training-and-Technical-Assistance/Law-Enforcement>



www.nationalgangcenter.gov



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