

NATIONAL GANG CENTER

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Planning for Successful Summer Programs



The National Gang Center (NGC) is jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. NGC conducts research on street gangs and serves as a clearinghouse for individuals and agencies seeking information, technical assistance, and training in the areas of gang prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry.

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Planning for Successful Summer Programs

Gang-involved communities often require special preparation and planning efforts for their summer programs to be successful.

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Internet Adoption and Online Behavior Among American Street Gangs: Integrating Gangs and Organizational Theory

There is increasing concern that street gangs are exploiting the Internet for criminal purposes.

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Constitutional Policing: Issues, Awareness, and Action Steps

It is critically important to understand that law enforcement officers must be guided by the principles enshrined within the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

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IACP Launches Online Brief on Adolescent Development and Policing

This online brief is designed to help law enforcement officers who interact with youth in the field to better understand normal adolescent development and behavior.

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NGC Resources Update

NGC has published Highlights of the 2012 National Youth Gang Survey and updated the Gang-Related Legislation page.

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PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL • SUMMER PROGRAMS •



Warmer temperatures will soon be prevalent across the country. For many families, this means a multitude of summer camps, activities, and events. In many communities, however, the prevalence of gang activity plagues efforts to provide comprehensive summer services. Communities with a gang presence often require special preparation and planning efforts for their summer programs to be successful. To this end, they may need a different approach to draw gang-involved and troubled youth from unwholesome environments and away from crime-

ridden activities. The [Gang Reduction Initiative in Denver \(GRID\)](#) and the [Mayor's Anti-Gang Office in Houston \(MAGO\)](#) are two community initiatives that have developed successful summer programs for gang-involved youth. Both Denver and Houston have been Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) grant recipients funded to implement the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM). Their comprehensive summer programs grew out of data-driven planning and community coordination of the many collaborative partnerships developed over the years via the framework of the CGM.

Paul Callanan, GRID Project Manager, and Victor González, Director of Program Services for MAGO, recently took time to answer NGC's questions about their respective summer programs.



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How do you begin planning for summer activities and events?

Both projects identified several key areas of consideration, including:



- Identify and understand the community to be served.
 - This is typically done through analysis of the violent trend data, risk and protective factors key to the demographic being served, an understanding of the community's needs, and results of the previous year's pre-/post-surveys with youth.
- Collaborate with key partners.
 - This can be accomplished through community service planning meetings and conference calls. It can have an ancillary benefit of increasing awareness of community services and strengthening sustainable partnerships.
- Create an inventory of existing summer activities.
 - First, plan around existing activities and programs to avoid duplication of services and/or competition with partners over existing services.
- Secure program funding to support implementation of activities.
 - Funding can come from a variety of sources. Houston receives private and corporate donations and leverages charity fundraisers for its summer programs. GRID works collaboratively with its partners to obtain funds and/or resources. Volunteers are often used to support the logistical aspects of the GRID events. GRID summer activities and events are always free and accessible to the public.
- Ensure the safety of the youth and accessibility of services.
 - As part of the planning process, child protective factors must be considered as the program is developed.
- Develop clear objectives, goals, and outcomes.
 - These could include increasing open communication between adults and youth, providing service learning opportunities, and ensuring that the offering is both entertaining and interactive.

Houston has seen increased compliance with probation and social competency, decreased gang activity, improving esteem, and change in attitude regarding joining gangs.

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Internet Adoption and Online Activity Among Street Gangs:

Integrating Gangs and Organizational Theory

Moule Jr., Richard K., David C. Pyrooz, and Scott H. Decker. 2014. Internet adoption and online behavior among American street gangs: Integrating gangs and organizational theory. *British Journal of Criminology* 54: 1186–1206.

There is increasing concern that street gangs are exploiting the Internet for criminal purposes. Researchers at Arizona State University and Sam Houston State University have found that gang organization is an important influence on the ways in which street gangs use the Web. More than 400 current and former street gang members in five U.S. cities (Cleveland, Ohio; St. Louis, Missouri; Phoenix, Arizona; Los Angeles, California; and Fresno, California) were surveyed as part of a project examining technology use by gangs. Respondents answered questions on the characteristics of their gangs (e.g., size, duration) and the online behaviors of their gangs, as well as their own experiences using the Internet.

Richard Moule and his colleagues found that street gangs that were more organized (e.g., invested profits into the gang, had leaders, had rules, had turf) were more likely to have Web sites and to recruit new members and post gang-related videos online. In addition, better organized gangs participated in more online behaviors than their less-organized counterparts. Moule hopes that these findings will encourage researchers and practitioners to focus more on the use of technology by street gangs. If law enforcement believes a gang to be highly organized, then close attention should be paid to that gang's digital footprint. Richard Moule can be reached at rmoulejr@asu.edu.

Link to the article: <http://bjc.oxfordjournals.org/content/54/6/1186.abstract>

Constitutional Policing

Keeping communities safe is the core element of the law enforcement function. It is critically important to understand that law enforcement officers must be guided by the principles enshrined within the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. To this end, officers understand that it is an indispensable part of their jobs to protect the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of the public. By continuing to recognize the importance of these principles, officers create a transparent and trusting relationship with the communities they are committed to protect and serve.

Additional articles, tools, and resources regarding this topic can found at:

Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties Policy Development Guide for State, Local, and Tribal Justice Entities: Privacy Guide <http://it.ojp.gov/gist/31/Privacy--Civil-Rights--and-Civil-Liberties-Policy-Development-Guide-for-State--Local--and-Tribal-Justice-Entities--Privacy-Guide>

Policy Review Checklist <http://it.ojp.gov/gist/33/Policy-Review-Checklist>

Unconstitutional Policing: The Ethical Challenges in Dealing with Noble Cause Corruption, by Thomas J. Martinelli, J.D., adjunct professor, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=1025&issue_id=102006

Civil Rights and Law Enforcement Intelligence, by David L. Carter, professor of criminal justice, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan; and Thomas J. Martinelli, J.D., adjunct professor, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display_arch&article_id=1206&issue_id=62007

IACP Launches Online Brief on Adolescent Development and Policing



The [International Association of Chiefs of Police](http://www.theiacp.org), in collaboration with the [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](http://www.ojjdp.gov), has released “[The Effects of Adolescent Development on Policing](http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/IACPBriefEffectsofAdolescentDevelopmentonPolicing.pdf).” This online brief is designed to help law enforcement officers who interact with youth in the field to better understand normal adolescent development and behavior. The brief provides an overview of adolescent behavioral development, recommendations for developmentally appropriate responses, strategies to improve interaction with youth, and examples of programs fostering positive youth development.

To view and download this online brief, visit <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/IACPBriefEffectsofAdolescentDevelopmentonPolicing.pdf>.

Highlights of the 2012 National Youth Gang Survey



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The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has published "[Highlights of the 2012 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.

2014 Gang Legislation Update

The NGC Gang-Related Legislation page was recently updated to include updates and changes as of December 2014. Visit <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Legislation/> for a comprehensive listing by state, subject, and municipal code.

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How does your summer program fit into the Community Mobilization component of your community anti-gang strategy?

- Started in 1994, Houston's MAGO works to coordinate with service providers and available resources. This allows MAGO to connect youth with the most appropriate facilities and/or programs, so that they are familiar with their community's offerings. The coordination process increases social competency among youth served at home, at school, or in the general community. Denver's GRID, which started in 2007 and is based on a network of more than 400 partner agencies, brings together a ready group of partners that share information related to resources and gang activity trends; therefore, they can plan for appropriate summer activities. As with the Houston's Mayor's Office, GRID has built long-term relationships of trust with communities and partners, resulting in a growing engagement of community participation such as volunteerism—not only for summer programs, but for other gang prevention and intervention strategies as well.



What areas of focus (e.g., life skills, academic enhancement, employment) are considered in a summer program?

- The GRID project has a Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) [Summer Series](#) for youth and families that emphasizes violence prevention and life skills, such as academic activities; cognitive, social, and self-esteem building skills; and programs focusing on strengthening families and teaching healthy behaviors within the family unit.
- GRID also conducts a citywide event called "Safe Summer Kick Off" that targets high-risk areas. Leveraging its partnerships, GRID offers more than 50 free resource vendors providing employment, health, education, life skills, recreation, food, housing, mental health, civic volunteerism, trade training, recruitment, mentoring, and community resource connections for children, individuals, and families. In addition, the event provides an opportunity for law enforcement to engage with the community in positive ways through its Bicycle Safety program and a mounted patrol unit.

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- In Houston, two summer programs are available for youth.
 - Campo Del Sol Summer Camp, which targets youth from the ages of 7 to 16 who live in high gang-crime areas, provides a free camp and a summer lunch program for two four-week sessions from June through August. Activities include the Houston Police Department G.R.E.A.T. Program, art, sports, field trips, and education groups.
 - MAGO's Summer Enrichment Program, a part of its year-round gang intervention program, meets for eight hours, twice a week, from the months of June through August. Thirty to forty youth, ranging from the ages of 13 to 18, who are gang-involved or on probation and parole, are selected from referrals or case management pools. Youth from the city's mentoring and leadership prevention programs are also invited to participate. The program focuses on cultivating and maintaining healthy relationships and a healthy lifestyle, teaching tolerance for diversity, and academic and career enhancements. Gang awareness workshops, interpersonal skills workshops, team-building activities, athletic field days, HIV/STD education, and a partnership with a local gym for cross-fit training are examples of summer programming. College campus visits, job readiness workshops, and interviewing skills workshops



In Denver, these programs bring unity and a sense of welcoming to our communities. Ultimately, they inspire community pride and connectedness within neighborhoods.

are opportunities for career exploration. Additionally, service learning through organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Keep Houston Beautiful, and the Houston Holocaust Museum provides training and job readiness skills. It is also important to focus on providing youth with opportunities to just be kids by attending sports events such as Houston Astros games, visiting local amusement parks, or playing simple playground games such as basketball, beach volleyball, and dodge ball at the city park facilities.

What have been some successful strategies for marketing your summer program?

Both cities indicated that they use flyers, e-mail distribution lists, and media announcements to inform youth of summer program opportunities. GRID sees the distribution of flyers as an opportunity for community members, outreach teams, and youth volunteers to learn more about the neighborhood and discuss the events one on one.

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What have been some successful strategies for marketing your summer program?

Both program directors indicated that they use flyers, e-mail distribution lists, and media announcements to inform youth of summer program opportunities. MAGO hangs posters at local hot spots and sends program staff members to attend local fairs at community schools, parks, and other facilities. GRID maps out its areas of distribution and then sends teams to distribute flyers to identified areas a week prior to an event. The distribution of flyers is an opportunity for community members, outreach teams, and youth volunteers to learn more about the neighborhood and discuss the events one on one. Youth who are specifically involved in each city's gang intervention program are recruited through a referral pool. Victor González mentions the importance of providing on-site registration opportunities at different sites (e.g., schools, festivals) for summer programs.



What lessons have been learned through the challenges of planning and running a summer youth program?

There were several challenges noted, including:

- Keeping partners engaged
- Filling the void when specific agency personnel leave their posts or are no longer active
- Keeping program costs down through leveraging resources
- Planning activities that involve the community's efforts in order to build positive community relations while deterring negative situations
- Achieving a balance of educational and skill-building competence with fun and entertainment for the participating youth.

To manage deterring operations issues, GRID personnel indicated that they rely on detailed minutes and reports that provide roles and task assignments. These also include budget figures that provide a great road map for planning. To create a successful summer of activities over the years, MAGO has added out-of-town ecological field trips such as to Moody Gardens Aquarium, university visits, and interactions with sports celebrities.

How are these programs supervised? Do you have tips for managing gang-involved youth who participate in these summer activities?

Both sites provided several excellent recommendations to consider:

- Identify a lead supervisor for each event or program. Have each volunteer group identify its own lead person to whom the volunteer group will report (e.g., MAGO's Campo Del Sol is supervised by a camp director and youth camp counselors).

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- Try to find supervising staff from the communities to be served. This can help mediate gang violence through an awareness of local gangs and gang members.
- Bring the summer program supervising personnel into the planning and implementation process as soon as it is feasible.
- Supervisors should be trained to pay close attention to community and gang dynamics.
- Carefully select both staff and youth to avoid any gang rivalry issues.
- Provide an orientation of program structure and rules with all of the participating families and youth to gauge commitment to participate. In addition, participation can be achieved by ensuring that cases are staffed and selected by gang outreach and gang case managers.
- Monitor gang-related apparel, graffiti, and interaction among youth; this would include gang signs, stares, slang, and common phrases or gestures.
- Evaluate the operations with the highest priority on youth safety. This includes issues involving facility security, transportation drop-off and pick-up points, and the staff's ability to observe youth needs, substance abuse, and weapons.
- Continue to monitor high-risk and gang-involved youth. If issues arise, they should be addressed immediately, in private, with respect, but remaining fair and firm. One way to build rapport while monitoring youth is to involve outreach personnel as summer program supervisors. Even if outreach personnel do not have supervisory roles, it is still beneficial to have them involved. These individuals likely have established, ongoing relationships with the area youth.
- Praise positive behavior, interactions, participation, and progress.
- Gather constant feedback from youth.

Both GRID and MAGO employ trained gang intervention specialists, also referred to as outreach workers. These staff members are key to each city's initiatives in gang intervention and desistance, as well as being liaisons to the community. They are part of the planning, implementation, and supervision of summer programs.

Has your community received unexpected benefits, either with youth or in the community, as a result of your summer activity plans?

As a result of providing summer activities for gang-involved youth, Houston has seen increased compliance with probation and social competency, decreased gang activity, improved self-esteem, and changes in attitudes regarding joining gangs. We have also seen an increase in gang awareness among service providers and City of Houston departments.

Similarly, Denver, through support and organization of a series of summer community events in 2014, has created campaigns to keep the area safe and free from violence for the summer. The campaign has prompted several community organizers to take ownership for their community

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and to be creative in programs and community collaborations. In 2014, a community-led campaign dubbed “Safe Summer, Safe Holly” ensured a violence-free summer by declaring “a 90-Day Safe Zone around the site where children could learn, grow and play.” Residents engaged one another through a series of fun community events each weekend in support of the effort and participated in the development of a safety plan (which included Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). During the 90-day period, not a single act of violence was reported. This resulted in a new community center for a food pantry, a cop shop, and meeting space for partner agencies in the heart of the concentrated area of violence. Based on this success, there are more plans for redevelopment in the area and, more important, a sense of pride among community residents.

Clearly, both projects offer a broad and diverse range of services built on a foundation of strong partnerships across multiple sectors of service and industry.

Paul Callanan said it best: “These programs bring unity and a sense of welcoming to our communities. By fostering neighborhood connections, through safe activities for youth and families, by deterring violence, identifying and connecting families to needed resources. Ultimately, it inspires community pride and connectedness within neighborhoods.”

For more information on GRID and MAGO, visit their Web sites below:

<https://www.denvergov.org/safety/DepartmentofSafety/InterventionPrevention/GangReductionInitiatives/tabid/443524/Default.aspx>

<http://www.houstontx.gov/antigang/>



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Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training
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