REPORT TO COUNCIL 18
City of Sacramento

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STAFF
February 7, 2006

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

Subject: Preventative Efforts for Teen Gang Involvement

Location/Council District: Citywide (All Districts)

Recommendation:

This is an informational report regarding: 1) the Police Department's efforts to reduce teen gang involvement, and 2) additional prevention efforts that other cities have implemented.

Contact: Daniel Hahn, Captain, 433-0301

Presenter: Daniel Hahn, Captain

Department: Police

Division: Special Investigations

Organization No: 2142

Summary:

Everyone is familiar with the traditional police response to gangs: arrest and incarcerate. However, the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) has taken preventative steps to educate and discourage our youth from participating in gangs and gang crime. The SPD has partnered with school districts and community based organizations to develop and present programs to teach our youth about the consequences of gang violence and to offer our kids an alternative to the gang lifestyle.

Committee/Commission Action: None.

Background Information:

Gang Violence Suppression Grant

The SPD is the lead agency on a multi-agency Gang Violence Suppression Grant. The previous grant partially funded one detective, a probation officer, a deputy district attorney, a Gang Violence Prevention & Intervention (GVPI) Coordinator for the Sacramento City Unified School District, and counseling through two community based organizations (CBO): La Familia and Another Choice, Another Chance. The focus of the grant was to target gang members, especially juveniles/students in SCUSD schools. The prosecutor and probation officer allowed for a coordinated criminal justice system

response to any arrests. The GVPI Coordinator, Tracey Lopez, provided a direct link to students and schools. This grant was just re-awarded. It maintained the previous award amount and added a second GVPI coordinator. Finally, the CBOs provide opportunities for kids and their families to receive counseling and the help they need to get out, or stay out, of a gang.

During the 2004-05 school year, this grant provided the funding for training over 360 school employees in gang identification. The GVPI Coordinator made over 70 referrals to law enforcement, CBOs, and other organizations during the school year. Another 75 students were enrolled in a role model program.

School Resource Officers

The SPD received Council authorization on August 23, 2005 to hire ten (10) additional School Resource Officers (SROs). This allowed the Police Department and the Sacramento City Unified School District to assign five (5) SROs to middle schools. The SROs at these middle schools work in collaboration with community-based organizations and school district initiatives to reduce truancy and develop mentoring programs. Additionally, these officers work to identify potential gang members and notify the school when the officers identify a student who is a gang member. Working with the school, a required meeting is arranged involving the officer, school administration, parent(s) and the student. The purpose of this meeting is to notify, educate and assist the parent in dealing with their child's activities, and to provide referrals to appropriate service programs. The goal with the students is to deter them from further involvement with gangs and gang activities. Currently, twelve (12) SROs are assigned to the Sacramento City Unified School District and two (2) SROs are working for the Natomas Unified School District.

This grant allows the SPD to create a gang team to focus on school age gang members and gang activity affecting school students. This team works in conjunction with the SROs to ensure schools are free of gang violence. They also concentrate their enforcement in the neighborhoods surrounding the schools to make sure students are not exposed to gang activities and violence on their way to and from school.

Gang Resistance Education and Training

Another effort we make is teaching classes to 6th and 7th graders, which is called the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program. The GREAT Program is a school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curriculum that is taught over 13 weeks. The Program's primary objective is prevention and is intended as an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership. GREAT lessons focus on providing life skills to students to help them avoid delinquent behavior and violence to solve problems. We have seven (7) officers who are trained as GREAT instructors; four of whom just joined the program in January 2005. The new middle school SROs will be sent to this training and will begin teaching these classes at their assigned schools during the 2005-06 school year.

Last year, the GREAT Program was presented to students at six (6) schools (Susan B. Anthony Elementary, John Bidwell Elementary, Cesar E. Chavez Elementary, Elder Creek Elementary, Northwood Elementary, and Leroy F. Greene Middle School) in three (3) different school districts (Sacramento City Unified, North Sacramento, and Natomas Unified) throughout the City. In total, 390 students graduated from the GREAT Program during the 2004-05 school year. Our goal is to graduate at least 420 students during the 2005-06 school year.

Kops-N-Kids

The Kops-N-Kids Program is a summer program that the SPD participates in with other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as fire departments in the Sacramento area. Kops-N-Kids is a highly successful drug and alcohol abuse prevention and sports camp for 9 to12 year old Sacramento youngsters. In a joint effort with the local school districts, 300 Sacramento area youth are selected each year to attend this weeklong day camp. The camp utilizes law enforcement professionals, fire service professionals, educators and professional athletes to serve as instructors and role models for these youngsters. To date, the camp has provided more than 4,250 Sacramento youngsters with an opportunity to interact with positive role models from law enforcement and fire service agencies. The camp focuses on educating youths about the realities of drug use and gang involvement and the consequences of choices they make in life. The camp offers the youngsters an opportunity to learn about and participate in various team sports as a way of furthering their social skills while learning the importance of maintaining a drug and gang-free lifestyle.

Project SAVE

Project SAVE (Safe Alternatives and Violence Education) is a program for adolescent first-time offenders, ages 10 to 17, who have been involved in violence or weapons possession on or near a school campus (i.e. fighting). Project SAVE offers alternatives for the less sophisticated offender who acts without thinking or in response to peer pressure, and who is not yet intimately involved in the juvenile justice system. Project SAVE requires parent participation. Youths and their parents or guardians attend a six-hour Saturday class that addresses issues of weapons and violence and provides information and skills related to effective anger management, refusal skills, choices and consequences and parenting skills.

The SPD School Resource Officers complete Project SAVE referrals whenever possible. If the SRO takes enforcement action against the juvenile, the referral is included with the crime report. This allows the District Attorney's Office and the Probation Department to make the Project SAVE referral part of the disposition of the charge. We made 133 referrals to Project SAVE last school year, which was higher than any other organization.

Magnet School Program

The Criminal Justice Magnet Academy is an occupationally focused four-year program, which represents a highly structured educational environment authentically linking education, service, learning and employment in the criminal justice fields.

In 1990, the SPD formed a partnership with the Sacramento City Unified School District and created the Criminal Justice Magnet Academy program. The curriculum was developed to allow students to participate in a law enforcement related program in an academic school environment and meet the educational code requirement for high school government credits. The first Magnet Academy was established at John F. Kennedy High School. Due to the high success of the program in 1996, the SPD partnered with Hiram Johnson and Grant Union High School and implemented a Magnet Academy on each schoo
l campus. A full time law enforcement officer is dedicated to the program to work in partnership with a teacher who facilitates the learning environment.

Students in the program remain together for four years with a team of designated teachers to provide instruction in the core learning subject areas of Math, English, History and Science. The classroom atmosphere, which creates discipline, respect and teamwork, emulates an actual Police Academy.

Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together

Lastly, we work with various schools to train student leaders to mediate disputes, through Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (SPIRIT). SPIRIT takes natural student leaders, both formal and informal, and provides them with two consecutive half days of training. This program uses the principles of mediation, problem solving, and full engagement of the school community, to help improve the climate of schools. SPIRIT brings students, administrators, teachers, and parents together to identify issues, develop solutions, and take action on conflicts within their schools. Some of the accomplishments of the program have been a Sureno and Norteno truce at Hiram Johnson High School. This was initiated the day after a Sureno leader attended SPIRIT training. Weekly meetings are held with gang members on the Hiram Johnson campus to discuss various issues that could result in violence. Also, the McClatchy high school SPIRIT group has started a community garden where both the academic leaders and streetwise students are participating.

These are just a few examples of SPD's prevention and intervention efforts. Through everyone's continued hard work in dealing with gang violence by arresting gang members, obtaining injunctions against specific gangs, and taking weapons off the street, and these prevention efforts, we will help create safer neighborhoods in Sacramento.

OTHER CITIES

Other cities have also taken steps to reduce gang violence. A report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS outlines strategies that have worked in Boston, Philadelphia, and Baton Rouge.

Operation Ceasefire, Alive at 25, Operation Eiger

Operation Ceasefire in Boston is a collaborative approach that uses enforcement as sparingly as possible and combines it with services and the moral voice of the community. This program was developed following a study by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. The Department of Justice provided funding for the initial development. A comprehensive team is used to address gang members and high-risk youths. The team is made up of law enforcement (local and federal), prosecutors, probation officers, street-mentors, religious leaders, social service agencies, and the broader community.

The street-mentors and probation officers brought the gang members together for meetings. At the meetings, the gang members were put on notice that violence would not be tolerated and that a violent crime would bring a severe law enforcement response on all of the gang's members, not just on the individual offender. This message was followed with offers of job training, drug treatment, and other social services.

This team approach allowed for close supervision of these high-risk youths to ensure they did not engage in gang violence. The street mentors and community leaders also encouraged the gang members to take advantage of the services being offered.

Operation Ceasefire began in 1996. In 1997, youth homicide dropped by two-thirds, youth gun assaults were cut in half, and the city's overall homicide rate went down by half. Operation Ceasefire died out due to budget cuts and the homicide rate went back up in 2001, which is evidence that this collaborative effort was related to the drop in homicides.

Philadelphia has implemented a similar program, but they instituted it in one police district at a time. The police districts that have implemented the "Alive at 25" program have seen dramatic results.

Baton Rouge started Operation Eiger in 1997 with Justice Department start-up funding. According to FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, this collaborative effort increases supervision and provides more certain and swifter consequences for further violence coupled with support and services that will help these troubled youths to turn their lives around. An outside evaluation showed that the youths in the program had about one-fifth as many new violent offenses as youths not in the program.

Family Services

Targeting chronic juvenile offenders who may not necessarily be known gang members is another alternative to incarceration. Offering intervention to the families of these youths improves the parents' ability to control their children. Functional Family Therapy (FFT) focuses on providing parents with techniques to communicate more effectively, and to monitor and control their children. In Salt Lake City, youths whose families received family therapy were half as likely to be re-arrested as the youths whose families did not receive family therapy.

Bullying prevention, pre-natal care, parenting classes/coaching for first-time parents, quality pre-kindergarten programs, and specially trained nurses working with at-risk families from pregnancy until the child's second birthday are all proven methods of keeping kids from getting involved with gangs.

After School Programs

After school hours (from 3 PM to 6 PM) are the prime times for juvenile and gang-related crime. According to T.P. Thornberry, a leading risk factor for joining gangs is unsupervised time spent with friends. Programs such as the Boys and Girls Clubs provide alternatives to kids. These groups need to attract and keep troubled kids in their programs in order to fill those after school hours with constructive opportunities. An intensive after-school program for low-income high school students, called Quantum Opportunities, also dramatically cut crime. The program combined academics, personal development, community service, and monetary incentives. After six years, boys who did not participate in the program had six times more criminal convictions.

Preschool Programs

Research shows quality preschool programs get kids started on the right track and steer them away from lives of crime. A study of the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan, which began in 1962, showed that those children who attended were more likely to graduate from high school on time. Those children who did not participate were more than twice as likely to become career criminals and four times more likely to be arrested for drug felonies. These results are based on four decades of data.

Chicago has federally funded Child-Parent Centers. Over 100,000 three and four year olds have received services since 1967. The centers provide educational and family-support services to economically disadvantaged children. One study of over 1,500 children showed that children not in the program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age eighteen.

Other examples of effective preschool programs are the Syracuse University Family Development Program. That program provides home visitation and quality early learning programs to low-income, single-parent families from prenatal through age five. North Carolina has a Smart Start initiative that helps working parents' pay for early childcare and provides educational resources and materials. Head Start is the federally

funded national program for low-income families. It provides early education services for children between three and five.

Quality preschool programs require qualified teachers earning a fair wage. The curriculum needs to be comprehensive and age-appropriate. Quality programs have strong involvement from parents. Studies have shown that the child to staff ratio should be no higher than ten to one and classes should be limited to a maximum of twenty students. Finally, these programs should provide screening and referral services to other programs for specific, identified needs.

CONCLUSION

The SPD has undertaken many proactive steps to reduce teen gang violence. The solution to teen gang violence is not a simple one and requires the efforts of the entire community. From preschool to family services, from mentoring to job training, the community needs to offer guidance and support to our youth. Many of these programs require extensive funding, but all of the successful programs across the country have been proven to save much more in future costs than they require in current funding.

Future Plans

The SPD recognizes the juvenile population will significantly increase over the coming years. In preparation for the anticipated increase in juvenile crime and the continuing need for education and prevention, we are looking to expand and consolidate services under a lieutenant assigned to the Special Investigations Division. The lieutenant will oversee the Gang Unit, Gang Enforcement Team, G.R.E.A.T. Program, Magnet School Program, School Resource Officers, and the Gang Violence Suppression Grant.

With the expansion of the School Resource Officer program the SPD will need to add an additional sergeant for span of control and supervision.

Additionally, the SPD is looking to develop a summer camp, in conjunction with the Magnet School Program, for middle school kids. This program will give kids the opportunity to learn about the Police Department and discuss alternatives to gang and juvenile crime.

Financial Considerations: N/A

Environmental Considerations: N/A

Policy Considerations:

This report meets one of the objectives identified by the Mayor and City Council in the City's Strategic Plan.

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD): N/A

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February 7, 2006

Respectfully Submitted by: _____
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Approved by: _____
Albert Nájera
Chief of Police

Recommendation Approved:

_____
for Ray Kerridge
Interim City Manager

Ref: COP 2-2

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