

Step Up Committee

Best Practices to Address Community Gang Problems

A City/County Perspective

BEST PRACTICES COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Janet M. Honadle, Chief Probation Officer, Co-Chair
Adam Valencia, Tulare County Office of Education, Co-Chair
Carolyn Rose, Executive Director, C-SET, Inc.
Galen Quenzer, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club of Tulare County, Inc.
Mike Leoni, Executive Director, Tulare Youth Services Bureau
Juan Guerrero, Proteus, Inc.
Jaime Robles, Lindsay Unified School District
Sylvia Castelle, C-SET, Inc.
Rev. Andrew Rivera, West Coast Believers Center
Cheryl Summers-Lane, Probation Department

Special Thanks to our Leaders:

Chief Bob Carden, Visalia Police Department
Phil Cox, Chairman, Tulare County Board of Supervisors

Tulare County Step Up Best Practices White Paper

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) developed a Comprehensive Gang Model published in 2006. This model program is the basis for the development of evidence-based practices to reduce youth involvement in gangs. Each sub-section of this document begins with a direct quote from this model.

Although there is no clear solution for preventing youth from joining gangs and participating in gang-sanctioned violence, there are evidence-based practices that work with at-risk and delinquent youth, the same youth who often join gangs. Whether these programs work with gang members depends more on the individual youth than on whether he or she belongs to a gang.

Evidence-based practices are defined as “Interventions and practices that have been independently evaluated using sound methodology, including, but not limited to, random assignment, use of control groups, valid and reliable measures, low attrition and appropriate analysis. Studies should provide evidence of statistically significant positive effects of adequate effect size and duration. In addition, there will be evidence that replication by different implementation teams at different sites is possible with the same positive outcomes.” *Knowing what it takes to move an idea, no matter how well intended, to a promising practice to a model program, is a good starting framework for innovative ideas. It takes evidence, not good intentions. **Replication, sustained impact across multiple sites, and repeated evaluations** are the new requirements.*

OJJDP Guidelines for a Successful Program

Addressing the problem

Organization

Collaborative process

Develop goals and objectives

Relevant programming

Coordination and community participation

Youth accountability

Staffing

Staff Training

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

“Community must recognize the presence of a gang problem before it can do anything meaningful to address the problem.” Gang violence in the community with the death of several young people resulted in the request by law enforcement for the community to assist.”

1) In June, 2006 Visalia Police Department Chief Bob Carden recognized the serious impact gangs were having on the city and its residents and the need for community mobilization. He organized and developed the Multi-agency Gang Intervention Task Force. Participants included the City of Visalia, Visalia Unified School District, Tulare County Sheriff, District Attorney, Probation, Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare County Board of Supervisors, and community-based and faith-based organizations. The original direction of the committee was to:

- Work together as a group
- Commit to regular meetings
- Strengthen partnerships
- Educate each other
- Reach out to the community to discover community’s needs
- Set goals

- 2) Phil Cox, member of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors and the Visalia Multi-agency Gang Intervention Task Force, recognized the success of Visalia and the need to unify all aspects of our communities and forge a coalition approach to combat gangs and take back our neighborhoods.

On July 12, 2007 the Tulare County Gang Prevention Task Force held its first meeting with representatives from the Tulare County Sheriff, District Attorney, Probation, Health & Human Services Agency, County Office of Education, city law enforcement agencies, school districts, local city officials, media, members of the public, local businesses, faith-based and community-based organizations. The Step Up logo and the “Be Part of the Solution” slogan were developed to unify the organizations and entities that participate and to “brand” events, activities and programs. Two tactics emerged: the need for aggressive gang awareness campaign and more opportunities for at-risk youth to make a positive contribution to their community. The top three priorities are:

- Increase activities for youth
- Identify Best Practices
- Identify local resources

INITIAL PROGRAMMING

“The community must systematically articulate and implement rationales for services, tactics or procedures.”

Both the City and County efforts initially focused on the need for community gang education. A survey conducted by Visalia Police Department PAL program and others revealed the need for transportation for youth activities and the creation of jobs for youth.

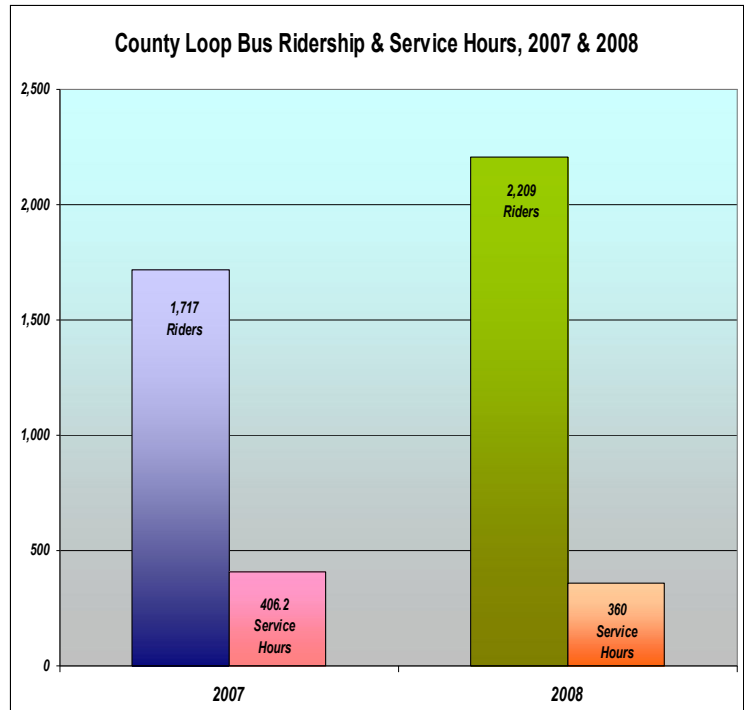
Community Gang Education:

- Step Up events have been attended by over 10,000 community members countywide. Topics include identification of gang involvement; available resources, programs and services; promotion of healthy lifestyles; bullying; youth panels conducted by students; summer activities and youth employment opportunities. Step Up Gang Summits were held in Visalia, Ivanhoe, Cutler-Orosi and Dinuba in 2008 and in Exeter and Pixley in 2009. 1,220 participants responded to a Step Up survey. Results of the survey reveal that 83.5% would be interested in attending future gang education meetings; more than 24.6% percent said they would like to start a Neighborhood Watch program in their community; and nearly 40% said they would like to be contacted regarding current/potential gang problems.
- The City of Dinuba implemented a Gang Prevention Task Force (GPTF) in August, 2007. The Task Force developed a mission statement and identified community needs. This committee continues to convene monthly. The Dinuba GPTF received presentations from the Tulare County Office of Education (gang trends), Tulare County Sheriff’s Department (Gang Suppression Officer), Dinuba High School (violence and gang trends), Dinuba Police Department (city gang activities), former gang members and the Dinuba City Attorney (legalities of gang injunctions). The City of Dinuba identified areas of need and implemented a Gang Hotline in 2008. A Step Up Dinuba event was held on October 27, 2008.
- The Dinuba Gang Prevention Task Force applied for federal Safe Schools Healthy Students and Gang Resistance Education & Training and Youth Mentoring grants.
- A “Take Charge” concert was held in May, 2008, targeting youth in Visalia and was attended by more than 800 youth.
- More than 950 Tulare County high school students attended the Step Up Youth Summit in November, 2008.

Youth Activities:

- In 2007 the City of Visalia and Tulare County each sponsored a “Loop Bus” providing free transportation for children in Visalia and county areas to local youth centers and sporting activities.

- Loop Bus statistics, provided by the Tulare County Resource Management Agency, indicate a 22% increase in ridership between 2007 and 2008. Routes have increased from Ivanhoe and Goshen in 2007 and now include Visalia, Linnel Camp, Patterson Tract, Dinuba, New London, Cutler, Orosi, East Orosi, Seville, Porterville and Allensworth in 2008. More routes are being considered in 2009.



- The Tulare County Board of Supervisors created a fund for Step Up activities, events and grants. Included in this funding was *Step Up Service Learning Grants* to five high schools for gang-involved youth programs, *Step Up Youth Good Works* programs and the *Step Up Youth Activities Grant Program* that made competitive grants available to local non-profit organizations specifically for youth programs in each Supervisorial District. This grant continues to support small-scale, youth-directed projects focused on reducing youth crime, aggression, delinquency and/or substance abuse.

Creation of Jobs for Youth:

- Fund-raising efforts by local business leaders included a charity performance by Broadway singer Betsy Wolfe. The event raised \$35,000 for summer jobs for youth.
- The Cal-GRIP partnership between the Visalia Police Department and Proteus, Inc. provided Neighborhood Youth Counselors to supervise summer youth workers. Local businesses provided job opportunities.
- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has provided funding for youth employment for the summer of 2009 throughout the county.

LAW ENFORCEMENT MOBILIZATION

“Focuses on identifying the most dangerous and influential gang members and removing them from the community.”

Community forums were conducted by the District Attorney, Sheriff and the Visalia Police Chief in 2008 to inform and educate the public about law enforcement’s role in reducing gang involvement and gang violence. Additionally the following programs and activities have been implemented by local law enforcement agencies:

- ◆ Tulare County Gang Task Force formed between Probation, District Attorney, Sheriff and Visalia Police Department.

- ◆ Increased law enforcement officers involved in gang details throughout the county utilizing targeted patrol.
- ◆ Probation Department and Visalia Police Department partner to provide a full-time probation officer for intensive supervision/family intervention.
- ◆ District Attorney, Sheriff, and Visalia Police Department complete successful gang injunctions.
- ◆ District Attorney Witness Intimidation Program and Sentencing Enhancements.
- ◆ Monthly Probation/Tulare County Office of Education truancy suppression efforts.
- ◆ Campus Probation Officer program is active in 14 county schools.
- ◆ Law enforcement agencies are active on school campuses throughout the county.

UNIVERSAL PREVENTION/INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

“Targets active gang members, close associates, and involves aggressive outreach and services activity. Support services for gang-involved youth and their families to help youth make positive choices.”

Tulare County law enforcement agencies, social services agencies, schools, community-based organizations and local service organizations actively participate in developing programs to support healthy and positive choices for our youth. Some of these include:

- Step Up Service-Learning Grants are designed to help reward at-risk youth for their involvement in hands-on projects aimed at improving neighborhoods, helping the disadvantaged, or other meaningful community projects. The grants are limited to private and public high schools only.
- Step Up Youth Activities Grant Program funds 13 grants to local community-based organizations totaling \$70,000. Funds are utilized to develop and implement a variety of youth programs throughout the county.
- Probation Gang Resistance Education & Training Program (GREAT) is active at ten school sites throughout the county, impacting over 1,800 4-7 grade children per year.
- GREAT Summer Camp is provided, in partnership with C-SET, Inc., for up to 100 children.
- GREAT Families Component has been successfully implemented in Traver and Lindsay with an average of 58 persons attending two sessions per week for six weeks.
- Probation Gang Risk Intervention Program (GRIP).
- Law enforcement Police Activities League.
- Faith-based outreach activities.
- Gang Watch Program.
- Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) Reconnecting Youth Program active in schools, communities and the juvenile detention facilities.
- Probation Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funding to Ivanhoe Youth Center/Boys & Girls Club, Pixley Youth Center, and Goshen Youth Center.

- Visalia Police Department, Tulare County Sheriff's Department and Tulare County Office of Education provide community law enforcement gang educators for K-12 students, parents, and staff.
- TCOE Friday Night Live; Coping and Support Training (CAST) suicide prevention support; "Too Good for Drugs" (k-8); "Too Good for Drugs and Violence" (9-12); Owleus Bullying Program (k-8), Project Alert (9-12) & Life Skills (k-8).
- 21st Century Afterschool Program & Choices After school program.
- HEART program.
- Probation/TCOE Truancy Reduction.
- Neighborhood Youth Counselors were provided through City of Visalia/Proteus Cal-GRIP grant. These counselors are working closely with schools and the Visalia Police Department to identify and respond to specific neighborhood gang problems.

OFFENDER REENTRY

"Targets serious offenders who are returning to the community after confinement and provides appropriate services and monitoring. Of particular interest are displaced gang members who may cause conflict by attempting to reassert their former gang roles. Reentry within comprehensive programs is often handled as an overlapping function with intervention. Because gang involved individuals are almost constantly entering or leaving one system or another, and because many of them are frequently incarcerated for brief periods of time, intervention clients are generally served during incarceration through regular contacts and pre-release planning."

- Probation Aftercare Unit.
- Probation GPS/Electronic Monitoring programs for adults and juveniles.
- Probation/TCOE Stagecraft Program for juveniles.
- C-SET, Inc. Culinary Program and Greenhouse Project at the Tulare County Youth Facility funded through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

Many incarcerated juveniles return to their communities with serious risk and need areas unaddressed, complicating their chances for successful reentry. Current model programs call for the coordination of case management and rehabilitative/reintegrative services over (a) *an institutional or prerelease planning and services phase*, (b) *a reentry preparation or short term postrelease phase*, and (c) *a community-based services phase after release from placement*. Validated assessment allows for the development of individualized case plans and the identification of services both during placement and in the community to address the unique needs of the offender. Coordinated case management services are an attempt to ensure continuity in services, improved matching of placement services to real-world problems faced by the offender, and to ensure that treatment services during placement are followed by aftercare in the community. By identifying and addressing the needs of the offender and improving support networks upon return to the community, both assessment and coordinated case management attempt to effect short- and long-term changes in offenders to improve public safety.

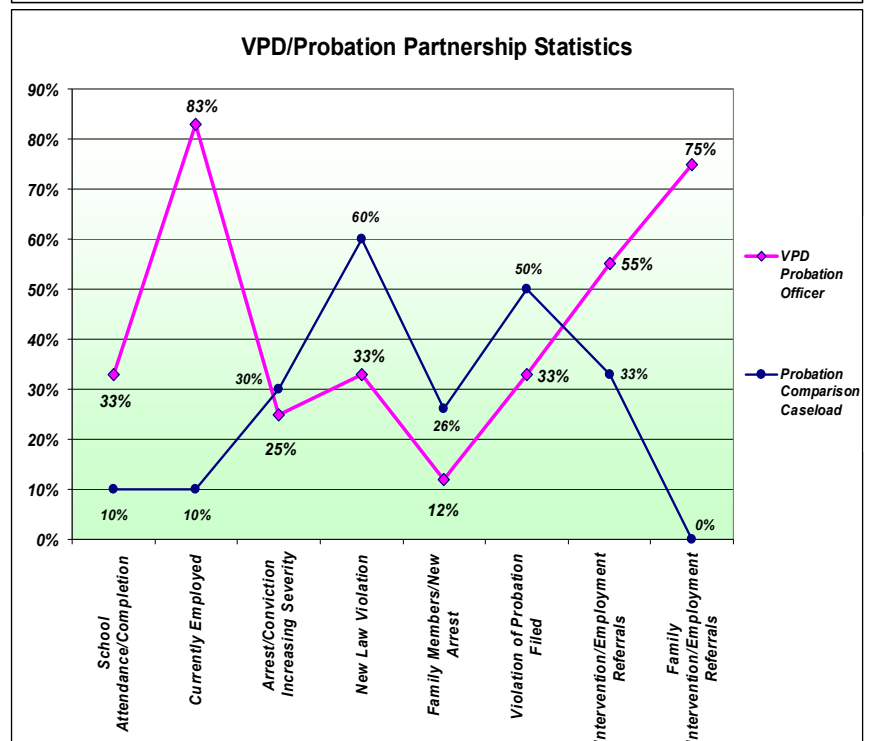
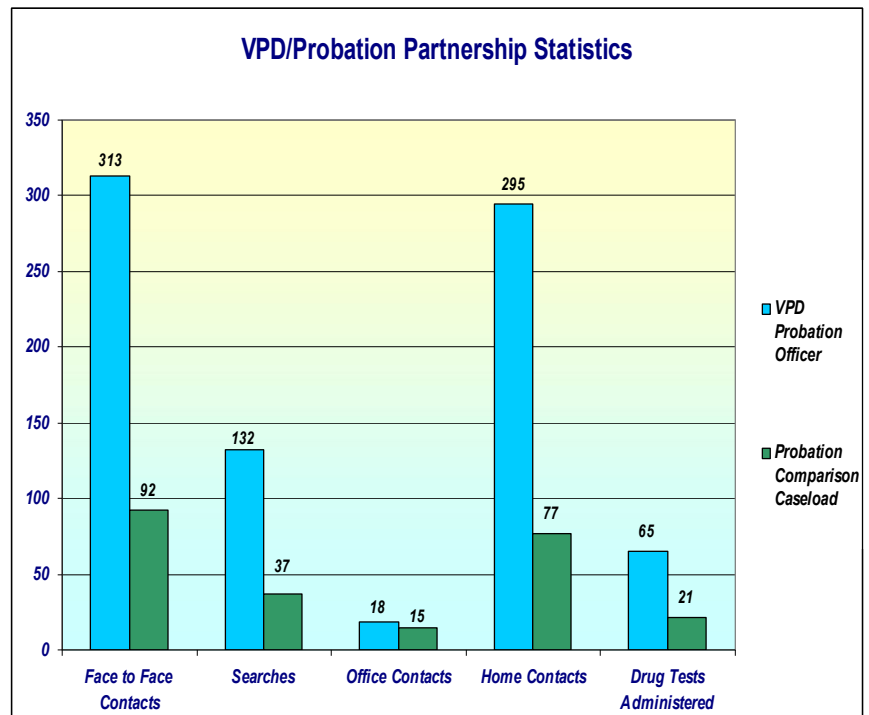
The Probation Department implemented Girls Circle and Boys Council, both evidence-based programs, for wards in custody at the Juvenile Detention Facility and will be working toward establishing these youth programs in local communities to support the continued progress of wards who have returned to their homes. While the Probation Department is actively working to develop greater coordination with the Tulare County Office of Education, charter schools and community-based organizations offering job training/readiness programs for youth that are returning to their homes and schools after a period of incarceration, there continues to be a gap in specific services for youth reentry in Tulare County.

ORGANIZATION CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

"What has been done by your organization to meet the current needs of children and communities across agencies?"

As an example of organizational change and collaboration, the following agencies are currently working together on a variety of projects:

- TCOE and Probation – life and social skills for positive reentry into the community from the juvenile institutions.
- C-SET and Probation developed job opportunities in the juvenile institutions and will continue to work together to identify youth needs and available programs through 2009/2010.
- District Attorney assigned to Visalia Police Department to aid in prosecution efforts.
- Probation contracted with Visalia Police Department for an Intensive Supervision program for gang members and their families. The value and success of this program is illustrated by the statistical charts illustrated on this page.
- Board of Supervisors dedicated staff resources, time and funding to address youth needs countywide. This support will continue through 2009/2010.
- Community-based organizations, law enforcement agencies, city councils, education and residents have made strides through Step Up events to commit resources to fight gangs, increase neighborhood safety, develop jobs for youth, and provide transportation to youth centers and recreational events for children.



RECOMMENDATIONS

STAFFING:

“Youth gang intervention and control efforts require a thorough understanding of the complexity of gang activity in the context of local community life. A gang coordinator or program director is the key to successful implementation of a Gang Model Program. Selection of a program coordinator with specific skills and abilities is of paramount importance. Best results have been obtained where the steering committee and the lead agency jointly develop a written job description for this position and, in concert, select the program coordinator.”

- The Probation Department and Tulare County Office of Education have partnered on the OJJDP funded Gang Prevention Coordination Assistance Program. If funded, the project will fund a Gang Prevention Coordinator for a two-year period, provide overtime funding for MAGNET sweeps, and support the GREAT Summer Camp program.
- The Fresno County Gang Coordinator made a presentation at a recent Step Up Executive Steering Committee meeting, explaining the role, duties and responsibilities of her position. Her presentation aided in the planning process for a Tulare County Gang Coordinator.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

“These must include short-term suppression and outreach services for targeted youth, and longer term services, such as remedial education, training, and job placement. Re-evaluate where we’ve been, where we are, and where we need to be.”

- Law enforcement partnerships have resulted in an array of suppression efforts countywide through Tulare County Gang Task Force, gang injunctions and targeted patrol efforts.
- Outreach services are provided through law enforcement campus officer programs, school programs, family services and information through the Step Up Summits and events.
- Job placement services will increase in 2009/2010 as a result of significant funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.
- Specific data for all programs needs to be compiled and reported to support the development of evidence-based programs and practices.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION

“Gang data should drive gang reduction/suppression/intervention strategies used in the target community and should also be responsive to the local community, the intervention team and the steering committee. These strategies should be viewed as part of a larger whole, rather than as singular, one-time-only activities. Data collection is the basis for identifying continuing needs and program success.”

- 1) The Sheriff’s Department, Probation Department and District Attorney’s Office have new data collection/case management systems capable of gathering a variety of crime and program statistics.
- 2) School district offices have similar data collection systems through the California Healthy Kids Survey and EdData through the State Department of Education.
- 3) Evaluate the effectiveness of the response to gang problems; reassess the problems; and modify the approach as needed.
- 4) Identify gaps and respond to reentry challenges.
- 5) Reset Goals and Objectives based upon data outcomes and current conditions.

IDENTIFICATION OF SUSTAINMENT FUNDING

“Programs should begin planning for long-term sustainability during the initial stages of implementation. Programs that were sustained long-term had two key practices. First, they standardized and institutionalized data collection to show program outcomes. Access to data is critical for leveraging funds and resources. Second, these programs utilized strong and engaged steering committees that shared ownership and responsibility for the programs among the key agencies. The importance of these two factors in sustaining multi-agency programs cannot be overstated.”

- The Tulare County Gang Task Force was originally developed as the result of grant funding in 1995. When grant funding ceased, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors, recognizing the importance of dealing with emerging gang problems, made a continuing commitment to provide funding for this task force.
- The Sheriff’s Department, Probation Department and District Attorney’s Office actively partner on grant projects and work together with community-based organizations, education and social services to bring needed services and programs to this county via state, federal and foundational grant programs. The value of recent grant applications submitted by these agencies is in excess of \$5 million.
- The Sheriff’s Department was awarded a federal COPS grant in excess of \$3 million. The funding will be utilized to will hire 12 deputy sheriffs for a period of three years. The Sheriff’s Department has indicated these positions will be utilized as community-based officers throughout the county.
- The Tulare County Workforce Investment Department (WID) was recently awarded over \$4 million in federal grant funding for jobs for Tulare County youth between ages 14 and 24.
- The Tulare County Board of Supervisors has committed \$225,000 to Step Up projects in the 2009/2010 fiscal year.
- Summer Youth jobs, funded from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, have been extended through December, 2009.
- The Cutler/Orosi Federal Weed & Seed project will be hosting a Step Up Community Summit and a Step Up Youth Summit in 2009/2010 and has budgeted a total of \$4,300 to support these events.