



COMMISSION ON GANG PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Monday, May 19th, 2025

TIME: 6pm-8pm

LOCATION: 3060 54th San Diego, CA, 92105

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

D'Andre Brooks (Chair), Rachel Bereza (CEO, San Diego Workforce Partnership), Godwin Higa (Mid-City Representative, Retired Principal), Jamie Wilson (Vice Chair, District 4), Elizabeth Bustos (County Health & Human Services), Cheryl Suey-Jones (District Attorney's Office), Tabitha Wilburn (San Diego County Probation), Pastor Jesus Sandoval (Executive Director), Danny Grubbs (San Diego PD) Lon Chhay, Bevelynn Bravo Rep. for Tracey Swafford, Derrick Mosely

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mario Valladolid, Dr. Beto Vasquez, Dr. Fabiola Bagula, Fernanda Ezquerro, Sheriff Kelly Martinez, Adam Gordon

STAFF PRESENT:

Pastor Jesus Sandoval, Executive Director.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair D'Andre Brooks called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

ROLL CALL:

Roll call was conducted, and quorum was established.

WELCOME:

Chair D'Andre Brooks called the meeting to order at 6 PM and welcomed commissioners and the public. He introduced the purpose of the Gang Commission, emphasizing its role in informing the City Council on gang prevention and intervention policies.

APPROVAL OF LAST COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES:

Previous meeting minutes were reviewed. A motion was made and passed to approve the minutes. Two commissioners abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. **Michelle Ibarra (Victory Outreach San Diego):** Shared details about the upcoming international Code Red outreach, a campaign focused on assisting women engaged in street-based sex work—referred to as 'Twilight Treasures' by the organization. The outreach will take place on June 5-7 in locations such as Main Street, D'Albergia, and Roosevelt. Ibarra explained that 10–15 women from Victory Outreach participate monthly, many of whom have either experienced street life themselves or have family members who have. She emphasized the goal of building personal relationships with the women they encounter and highlighted that some already recognize them by name and face. Ibarra noted the need for protection during outreach and expressed a desire to form partnerships with law enforcement and community organizations to support and safeguard their efforts. Code Red outreach aims to connect with vulnerable individuals and provide resources and spiritual support.
 2. **Alicia Valenzuela:** Highlighted the Cold Case Car Cruise and Community Event, now in its second year. The event brings awareness to cold cases and offers hope to families of victims by connecting them with resources and the District Attorney's Office. She shared that Ted Monsoor from the DA's office would attend to answer community questions about unresolved cases. The event also emphasizes support for victims of violent crimes and addresses current issues such as the fentanyl crisis. A representative from the DEA will attend to provide a federal perspective on fentanyl's impact. Valenzuela stated that the event will provide resources on gang prevention, homelessness, and more. Additionally, the event will benefit organizations like Mothers with a Message and Crime Stoppers, the latter being highlighted for its school-related violence prevention programs. Flyers were provided for attendees.
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COMMISSIONER REPORTS – INFORMATION SCAN:

A. UPDATE-WIDE GANG STATISTICS INVOLVING SAN DIEGO POLICE

DEPARTMENT-DOCUMENTED GANG MEMBERS: Lieutenant Jimenez provided a comprehensive report on youth programming and community engagement initiatives led by SDPD:

- **School Safety Patrol Promotion Ceremonies:** Over 1,000 students were honored in citywide promotion ceremonies held at venues including the San Diego Convention Center, the Rady Shell, and Golden Hall.
- **Junior Cadet Program (Ages 12–15):** A newly launched initiative designed to serve as a bridge to the Cadet Program. It focuses on early leadership development and mentorship for younger participants.
- **Cadet Program (Ages 16–21):** Enrollment has increased to 50 cadets. A live-in academy at UC San Diego (UCSD) was scheduled for the following month. Thirty cadets

were expected to participate, and the department had already raised over \$30,000 through community donations to support their attendance.

- **Back to School with a Cop:**SDPD partnered with the San Ysidro School District and Target to provide school supplies and backpacks to 40 unhoused students, fostering positive engagement between officers and youth.
- **Spanish-Language Civilian Academy:** The department successfully launched its first Spanish-only Civilian Academy, enrolling 60 community members. This program aimed to improve access and build trust with Spanish-speaking residents.
- **Community Immigration Forums:** Forums were hosted at mosques and churches to discuss Proposition 50 and reassure residents that SDPD does not enforce immigration law. The effort was aimed at reducing fear and promoting community-police dialogue in immigrant communities.
- **Cultural Partnership with San Diego Symphony:** Youth from underserved areas were being introduced to classical music through behind-the-scenes tours and performances, part of a broader effort to expose young people to the arts and healing-centered cultural experiences.
- **Fix-It Ticket Voucher Program:** Vouchers for minor vehicle infractions (e.g., broken taillights) were available through **Police Plaza at 4020 Murphy Canyon Road**. Lt. Jimenez encouraged officers to make greater use of this tool to support restorative community engagement and reduce financial burdens on residents.

B. UPDATE FROM PROBATION DEPARTMENT: David Campos, on behalf of Chief Tamika Nelson, presented the following updates:

- Due to the closure of DJJ (Division of Juvenile Justice), the Probation Department is now supervising youth ages 13 to 25.
- There are currently: 21 youth in the Achievement Center and 17 youth in the Choice Program
- During recent probation checks, officers recovered ghost guns and ammunition.
- A 15-year-old girl who was a victim of human trafficking was successfully located and reunited with her father.
- Probation officers are increasing engagement with families, often bringing food and offering resources when they go into homes. This includes helping with siblings and parents when needed.
- The department is seeing an increase in cocaine use among youth, particularly in the Southeast San Diego and Linda Vista communities.
- There is a major shortage of residential treatment facilities for youth under 18, which continues to be a significant gap in services.
- Four youth under probation supervision have earned Associate Degrees, and two of them plan to walk at their in-person graduation on May 30.

C. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE UPDATE: (N/A)

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A. Outreach and Communications Standing Committee: Youth Standing Committee – (N/A)

B. Gang Documentation Ad Hoc Committee – (N/A)

PUBLIC Comment:

Sylvia, a community member, delivered a powerful and emotional testimony about the death of her daughter from fentanyl and the systemic failures that contributed to it. Her statement centered around the trauma, frustration, and institutional neglect her family experienced while seeking help. She highlighted critical gaps in treatment and support systems, including:

- Poor coordination between law enforcement, hospitals, and families.
- Undertrained or insufficient facility staff for fentanyl treatment.
- Inadequate crisis response options for families.
- Lack of oversight in intake procedures and service denials.

She shared that her daughter was in crisis and had explicitly asked for help, telling others she didn't want to die. Despite being transported to a hospital under the influence and clearly needing care, her daughter was discharged within hours — without treatment, notification, or any proper care coordination. Sylvia and her family were never notified when her daughter was taken to jail. She found out only later that her daughter had called for help from inside a holding cell. She emphasized that no one explained what was happening — neither law enforcement nor hospital staff. There was no follow-up from any of the systems that had interacted with her daughter. The intake process at treatment facilities was called out as traumatizing, disorganized, and ineffective. Sylvia said they were often dismissive or lacked basic empathy. She described being told, "It's going to be three hours," while her daughter was in visible distress. She criticized the absence of protocols for parental involvement and oversight, especially when dealing with minors or young adults in crisis. Sylvia also spoke about the stigma her daughter faced, saying that people in the system treated her daughter as if her life didn't matter: Sylvia stated that, *"She mattered. She wanted to live. She was denied that."* She also pointed out that 2-1-1 was the only agency that followed up or offered support after contact — none of the other agencies kept track or circled back. Sylvia closed her testimony by urging the Commission and the community to recognize how the disjointedness of the system actively contributes to deaths like her daughter's. She demanded transparency, accountability, and humanity, stating: *"You all say you care. Then prove it. Show up. Do better."*

Commissioners expressed condolences and agreed to review service gaps and policy improvements. Pastor Sandoval and other commissioners recommended exploring church and community-based outreach initiatives.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

The Commissioners reflected on the themes raised during the meeting—particularly Sylvia's testimony, youth engagement, and systemic challenges—and shared the following perspectives:

- **Chair D'Andre Brooks** spoke passionately about the flawed process of gang documentation in San Diego, emphasizing that youth are often labeled as gang members based solely on their proximity to gang-affiliated individuals or neighborhoods—not on their actual behavior. He highlighted how this practice can have long-term consequences, including barriers to employment and housing. He stressed the urgent need for accountability within systems that criminalize youth simply for where they live or who they know.
- **Commissioner Jamie Wilson** expressed deep frustration with the use of gang enhancements, stating that they are overused and disproportionately impact Black and Brown youth. She raised

concerns about the school-to-prison pipeline and the systemic racism embedded in gang enforcement policies. Instead of relying on increased policing, she called for greater investment in healing spaces and community-driven alternatives.

- **Commissioner Elizabeth Bustos** highlighted the importance of exposing youth to the arts as both a healing and preventative tool. Citing the partnership with the San Diego Symphony, she emphasized how cultural experiences can provide young people with affirmation, dignity, and a sense of new possibilities. She urged the Commission to invest in creative and restorative programming that fosters long-term transformation.
- **Commissioner Cheryl Suey-Jones (District Attorney's Office)** acknowledged the systemic challenges highlighted during the meeting and emphasized the need for stronger coordination between agencies. She encouraged increased data-sharing and accountability among service providers and the justice system to ensure more effective support for impacted communities.
- **Commissioner Danny Grubbs (San Diego Police Department)** noted that gang injunctions are no longer being pursued by the District Attorney's Office and expressed support for expanding non-enforcement-based community engagement efforts, such as youth programs and civilian academies.
- **Pastor Jesus Sandoval** reiterated the importance of adopting a trauma-informed approach across all systems and advocated for faith-based and credible messenger partnerships to support both prevention and reentry in culturally relevant ways. He also emphasized the need to keep spiritual and relational healing at the forefront of the conversation.

The Commissioners collectively emphasized that real change requires reimagining public safety, challenging systemic practices, and elevating lived experience as part of leadership and solution-building.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT: (N/A)

STRATEGIC PARTNER PRESENTATION: – FREEDOM2SUCCEED

Patricia Franklin and Jason Nitchie presented on the **Freedom2Succeed program**, a project of the National College Resource Foundation, which provides trauma-informed support for youth and young adults, including those impacted by the justice system.

Key Elements of the Program:

- **Employment of formerly incarcerated tutors:** These tutors are paid staff with lived experience, who are trained to work directly with system-impacted youth. Their roles include mentoring, facilitating healing, and delivering trauma-informed care.
- **Project-Based Learning Model:**
Youth participants create interactive simulation games rooted in their own experiences and challenges, such as:
 - Resisting gang involvement
 - Responding to peer pressure
 - Navigating mental health crises
 - Avoiding substance abuse

- **Culturally and Trauma-Informed Approach:**
Tutors complete training in trauma-informed engagement before working with youth.
Many are formerly incarcerated, with a strong foundation in education and mentorship.
The model emphasizes healing, creativity, and leadership through storytelling.
- **Digital Engagement & Ownership:**
Youth maintain full creative ownership of their game projects.
The team is currently developing methods to monetize the games and allow participants to potentially earn income from their work.
- **Current Collaborations:** The program is actively embedded in school and community spaces.
 - San Diego County Office of Education
 - Cal State San Marcos
- **Goals and Expansion Plans:**
 - Grow the program within San Diego and beyond.
 - Build sustainable **youth-led content** that could be scaled nationally.
 - Continue using credible messengers and digital storytelling as tools for transformation.

Patricia and Jason emphasized that their goal is to help youth feel seen, empowered, and creative—turning their pain and experiences into tools for growth and income.

CHAIR REPORT: – (None at the moment)

ADJOURNMENT.

NEXT MEETING: Date July 21, 2025 at 6 pm.