

A Strategic Collaborative  
Approach to Impacting Gang  
Violence: *The Community  
Focused Youth Empowerment  
Initiative*

The 2015-2020 Strategic Action Plan by the City  
of San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention  
and Intervention

## Executive Summary

Since 2007, the City of San Diego’s Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention has supported community initiatives, researched best practices and resources, and made recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on reducing the impact of gang violence in our neighborhoods. The Strategic Action Plan for 2013-2014 emphasized collaboration as a fundamental approach to prevention and intervention of gang-related crime. A broad range of stakeholders partnered across systems, disciplines and communities to promote initiatives on five areas of focus: 1) employment training and placement, 2) integration of services, 3) youth activities, 4) early intervention, and 5) collaborative accountability. The spectrum of resources, research data and working relationships emerging from this collaborative culture strengthened a comprehensive response to addressing gang violence in the City.

<i><b>Gang Related Crimes</b></i>	<i><b>2012</b></i>	<i><b>2013</b></i>	<i><b>2014</b></i>	<i><b>2015</b></i>	<i><b>2016</b></i>
Attempted Homicides	11	15	7	13	3
Assault with Deadly Weapon	200	187	196	202	173
Homicides	16	3	4	6	5

No year has ever matched the deadly toll of 19 homicides in 2003, which included the shooting and killing of Carol Waite and Cynthia Burton, at the corner of Logan Avenue and Euclid Avenue. Even with the aggregated decrease over the years, the City of San Diego has taken a strong position that even one homicide is unacceptable in our community.

Since its establishment in 2006, the Commission has supported and effectively facilitated systems coordination of multiple strategies cited as critical to reducing gang violence in our community. Our efforts have been noted in *The UNITY -Urban Agenda for Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: Bringing a Multi-Sector Prevention Approach To Scale In U.S. Cities* (2010, Prevention Institute Publication, page 7) and the National League of Cities Institute for Youth Education and Families publication, *Preventing Gang Violence and Building Communities Where Young People Thrive*, (page 8).

The impact of gang related violence is devastating to any community. As residents are literally caught in the cross fire of shootings and beatings, the emotional trauma is a wound inflicted on the entire neighborhood. Families feel unable to protect their children, businesses feel besieged by crime and vandalism, and schools become fortresses. The Commission is concerned about how violence becomes normalized in residents’ daily lives, and comes to be seen as an inevitable part of their environment.

Each iteration of the Commission’s two-year Strategic Action Plan is an opportunity to review, reaffirm, and recommit to a shared effort at stopping gang violence. As of March 2017 the Strategic Action Plan has been extended to a five year plan. We believe that more time was necessary to achieve the goals stated in the Strategic Action plan. The challenge inherent in this process is to continue building on the knowledge and collaboration generated over the Commission’s eight years of work. The 2015-2020 Strategic Action Plan has been guided by a

consistent mission to work with communities and agencies to meet emerging issues and seek appropriate responses.

The Commission has joined with local agencies and organizations in facilitating community discussion about the trauma that ripples out from gang related violence. We recognize the role trauma plays in individual responses and community reactions, affecting the health, well-being and academic success of San Diego's youth, and the safety and vitality of its neighborhoods.(Attachment A: *Impact of Community Violence*)

Families devastated by crime and loss, grassroots leaders, and faith-based communities consistently identified a need for improved access to mental health and other support services. It is the consensus of the community that these services should be grounded in trauma informed practice, be culturally competent and incorporate restorative justice principles. These priorities are consistent with best practices for impacting gangs and gang violence, and are broadly advocated throughout San Diego.

The Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention is recommending that the Mayor and City Council continue to invest in San Diego's youth and further support them by endorsing the **Community Focused Youth Empowerment Initiative**.

The goal of this initiative is to advance prevention efforts to increase safety, provide opportunities that give hope to young people, and support the implementation of services for high need offenders. The actions and recommendations are grouped under three core strategies or elements universally acknowledged as fundamental to impacting gang violence in communities:

- **Prevention:** Start early: preschool education and after-school activities
- **Intervention:** Workforce readiness and employment; youth development
- **High Risk Engagement:** The hardest to serve: Gang Violence Interruption (GVI) support

The work of many individuals and leaders representing San Diego's public, private and community sectors cannot be thanked enough for their time and dedicated collaboration. Thank you to all the commissioner who serve on the commission that took time out of their busy schedule to attend the commission's retreat and spend many hours that lead to creating this intended Strategic Action Plan and who grounded these efforts by referencing the community voice and feedback as the compass that guided our process. A special thank you to our special council for all her legal input.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Rodney Hood M.D.

Chair, Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention

City of San Diego  
 Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention  
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<b>Geneviève Jones-Wright</b> District 4		

# City of San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention

2015-2020

## Strategic Action Plan

### **Framing & Focusing: *What We Know and What We Need as a Community.***

The shared goals and strong collaborative relationships that have emerged out of the last eight years are fundamental to the Commission’s purpose. Recognizing that no single agency, strategy or group can resolve the multiple challenges of gang-related crime and violence, we continue to forge partnerships and foster collaborative efforts throughout the City of San Diego.

Trauma informed care<sup>1</sup>, restorative justice practices<sup>2</sup> and culturally appropriate services must be the foundation for education and services implemented by this Strategic Action Plan/Initiative.

Without nurturing families with trauma informed supports, families struggle to keep youth involved and healthy. Without trauma informed strategies by schools and law enforcement, communities are impaired at nurturing families and creating a thriving youth community. And without culturally competent services, access to care remains a barrier, interventions are ineffective, and healing and recovery cannot occur.

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Nowhere is the culture of collaboration more vital than among the residents and grassroots leadership seeking an end to gang violence.

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Nowhere is the culture of collaboration more vital than among the residents and grassroots leadership seeking an end to gang violence. On May 14, 2014, Community participated in the joint Public Safety and Livable Neighborhood joint meeting where they gave input and direction. Fifteen gave public testimony about their concerns for youth in the community, the impact of violence on youth, the need for trauma-informed services and the need for jobs.

The Commission also reached out to 250 residents throughout the city using a survey conducted from November 2013 to February 2014. This was facilitated through the collaboration of local agencies and commissioners addressing gang-related issues. (Attachments B, C & D)

Among the results: nearly two-thirds (63%) of survey participants acknowledge a gang presence

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<sup>1</sup> “A thorough understanding of the profound neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on the individual, and an approach to care that addresses these effects that is collaborative, supportive and skill based.” National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, retrieved from: <http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Is-Your-Organization-Trauma-Informed.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Restorative justice is a process involving the *primary stakeholders* in determining how best to repair the harm done by an offense. The three primary stakeholders in restorative justice are *victims, offenders* and their *communities of care*, whose needs are, respectively, obtaining reparation, taking responsibility and achieving reconciliation. “ International Institute for Restorative Practices, retrieved from: <http://www.iirp.edu/what-is-restorative-practices.php>

in the City of San Diego, citing neighborhood tagging and graffiti most frequently (27%) as the indicator. Distinctive clothing (19%) and drug activity (15%) were also cited. While slightly less than a quarter of survey participants felt gang activity had significantly increased within the last year, 35% believed the level of gang activity had remained the same. Participants also stated they were concerned about violent crimes (28%) weapons (20%) and drugs (15%).

A San Diego Police Department report to the Commission provided additional data, noting that at the close of 2013 there were 91 documented gang sets, representing a total of nearly 4,100 individual gang members active within the City of San Diego.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, of the 800 youth on probation, only 76 were documented as gang involved. (Attachment D: *Juvenile Probation Map*). This relatively low number reflects documentation in CalGangs, a law enforcement data base used to document gang members. It is estimated the number of actual gang members is much higher. As of July 2017 there are 76 documented gangs in San Diego. There are also 3722 gang members this year compared to 4052 last year. 29 are juveniles and 4023 are adults.

The County of San Diego Probation Department has embarked on an initiative to engage youth involved in 'low level delinquent conduct, including status offenses, from escalating into more serious delinquent activity (gangs, violent offenses, substance abuse). Working with caregivers, educational support personnel and community and justice partners to support youth and family, probation staff utilize an intensive case management approach and engage resources according to youth and family strengths and needs. Pilot goals include increasing resiliency (building the youth's assets), utilizing evidence-based, best and promising practices toward recidivism reduction and ultimately shortening the youth's exposure to and engagement in the delinquency system. There have been positive changes from 2008 to 2012, with a 33% decrease in the percentage of juveniles arrested who were under supervision. In 2012, juveniles under probation supervision represented 12% of arrests compared to 18% in 2008.<sup>4</sup>

Research indicates a high instance of violent interpersonal injuries in teenagers and young adults. In San Diego County, persons aged 15-34 years sustained 62% of assaults and 49% of homicides.<sup>5</sup> Though the Probation initiative is focused on youth with open child welfare cases, this effort reflects the clear understanding that youth who experience *any* kind of emotional or physical trauma are impacted and need a more wholistic effort to prevent the escalating of their involvement into more serious activities. As the Commission stated in its white paper "Community Violence": *We recognize the serious impact community violence has on those victimized and on those exposed to violence. In addition to the physical and emotional impact, the effect of community violence interferes with healthy child development, school attendance, academic achievement, worker productivity, and family and social structures.*

Researchers quoted in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) Juvenile Justice Bulletin (Dec. 2010) points out that one of the individual risk factors for youth becoming involved is mental health problems that are the result of community/family violence:

*Evidence suggests that certain mental health problems in young people increase their risk of joining a gang. These problems include conduct disorders, externalizing behaviors,*

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<sup>3</sup> San Diego Police Department Report to Commission, January 2014, Lt. Lucas

<sup>4</sup> "Arrests of Individuals Under Probation Supervision in the San Diego Region 2012" May 2014, SANDAG

<sup>5</sup> San Diego County Trauma System Report: 2010

*hyperactivity, and depression (Howell and Egley, 2005). Davis and Flannery (2001) noted that gang members in juvenile corrections facilities often are admitted with histories of physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, psychiatric disturbances, posttraumatic stress disorder, cognitive deficits, poor self-esteem, and other problems” (Davis and Flannery, 2001, p. 37).<sup>6</sup>*

Commission Member and Chief of Probation Mack Jenkins joins his agency with other public systems that are advancing the integration of trauma informed practices into services through staff training. San Diego County Health and Human Services Director Nick Macchione sent a letter to his department in May 2014 detailing the training and programmatic plan with the goal of developing a workforce able to offer trauma informed care as a standard<sup>7</sup>. In a public meeting at the San Diego Urban League, Macchione explained that he wanted his staff to be more cognizant of the issues many of the clients face in the community and to be responsive and sensitive to traumatic events and situations. San Diego Unified School District has also become involved in supporting the concept of Trauma Informed care and responses in the classroom. Commissioners Brown and Lozada made a presentation on Trauma Informed agency responses during a 2013 training at the University of San Diego called the San Diego 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Character Matters Conference. Cherokee Point Elementary has a team of parents and teachers trained in Trauma informed practices with a team involving SDSU faculty and Commissioners Brown and Lozada.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission held a *Community Summit on Trauma Informed Care Summit* in 2012. San Diego families impacted by violence, professionals working with families and youth attended the summit. In a family session the community clearly articulated how they can best be supported for family and community healing: peer support; culturally appropriate and trauma informed services including mental health; more responsive systems such as Victims Assistance; and more support for youth.(Attachment E:*What is needed to heal*).

### **The Follow Through: *Implementation Recommendations & Actions***

Informed by the above information and supported by research and best practices, the Commission is recommending that the Mayor and City Council continue to invest in our youth with support focused on the following recommendation elements, which have been framed as the **Community Focused Youth Empowerment Initiative**:

**Recommendation#1/ Overarching Goals:** The Commission recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the establishment of a **Community Focused Youth Empowerment Initiative** with the goal of advancing prevention efforts to increase safety, provide opportunities that give hope to young people, and support the implementation of services for the high-end offenders.

**Recommendation #2/Implementation Plan/Strategies:** The Commission recommends that the

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<sup>6</sup> OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin for December 2010, page 6

<sup>7</sup> Burk, Megan, Voice of San Diego (April 8, 2014), retrieved from: <http://voiceofsandiego.org/2014/04/08/how-the-county-is-responding-to-the-trauma-factor/>

<sup>8</sup> Burk, Megan, Voice of San Diego (March 26, 2013 ) :[://www.speakcityheights.org/2013/03/the-secret-to-fixing-school-discipline-problems-change-the-behavior-of-adults/](http://www.speakcityheights.org/2013/03/the-secret-to-fixing-school-discipline-problems-change-the-behavior-of-adults/)

Mayor and City Council approve the three strategies within the Action Plan that implements the initiative and includes the following:

- 1) Prevention: Start Early: preschool and after school activities
- 2) Intervention: Workforce readiness and employment; Youth Development
- 3) High Risk Engagement: The Hardest to Serve: Group Violence Interruption (GVI)

support

**STRATEGY #1 — PREVENTION**

***Starting Early: Preschool and After School Activities--Information and Education***

**Background**

The comprehensive SANDAG report Gang Involvement Among San Diego County Arrestees in 2012 provided valuable insights gathered from adult and juvenile arrestees as a part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program. For example, the study results concurred with a large body of research---and the consensus among Commission members---that gang involvement begins early: “Association with gang members started on average at 13.5 years of age, and the number one reason for joining a gang was their friends were members or associates.”

Research demonstrates that the pathway for this involvement at early teen years can be interrupted. In a recent research article it was stated: *Adolescents born to nurse-visited (treatment group 4) women who were unmarried and from low-SES families had fewer episodes of running away from home, arrests, and convictions and violations of probation than did their counterparts in the comparison group.*<sup>9</sup>

**Strategy 1: Start Early (Information and Education)**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Measures and Timelines</b>
<p>The Commission will work in collaboration with key entities that serve children/youth in the community to help ensure that Trauma-Informed principles and anti-bullying strategies are incorporated in services. The Commission will assist in compiling written material for public distribution and/or training opportunities for staff in applying these principles.</p>	<p>1) Library staff, 2) After school staff 3) PD’s Juvenile Services Officers 4) Park and Recreation staff 5) STAR/PAL staff</p> <p>Geographical focus will begin in the Southeast and Central regions</p>	<p><b>By September 2014:</b> The Commission will meet with City Department managers , after school staff, PD’s Juvenile Services Officers and Park and Recreation staff to support their requirements goals for training content, process, schedule and logistic.</p> <p><b>By November 2014:</b> The Commission will identify materials for distribution to support public information and awareness, and a PowerPoint outline of training</p>

<sup>9</sup> Journal of American Medical Association, (Oct. 1998) Retrieved from: <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=188048>



		opportunities for staff.
San Diego Compassion Project volunteers will be trained by HHSA Public Health Nursing (Nurse Family Partnership) staff to learn about their Home Visiting Program, available services, and how to make appropriate referrals.	Expectant mothers impacted by gang violence or a loss	<p><b>By November 2014:</b> The Commission will work with the HHSA Home Visiting Program to coordinate a training for all San Diego Compassion Project Volunteers.</p> <p><b>By December 2014:</b> The Commission will establish a process for tracking referral activity by December 2014.</p>

**STRATEGY #2 --- INTERVENTION**

***Workforce Readiness and Employment; Youth Development***

**Background:**

As of the 2010 census, 16.7% of the City’s 1.3 million residents are youth 15-24. The unemployment rate locally is higher than the national unemployment rate for the same age groups:

- 28.5% of San Diego youth ages 16 to 19 compared to the national unemployment rate of 24.2% for youth ages 16-19;
- 16.5% of youth ages 20 to 24 in the City of San Diego are unemployed, compared to 18.8% for the entire population of 16 to 24 year olds.

Historically and statistically, a high rate of unemployment among youth puts their community at risk for violence and other negative behaviors. In the Commission’s survey the lack of jobs was one of the top five reasons repeatedly cited as leading to gang involvement. At the joint meeting of the Commission and Public Safety and Livable Neighborhood Committee public comment focused on this as an important way to impact gang joining and gang violence.

A 2013 Boston study was one among many to bear this out, noting that low income teenagers in Boston “*who hold summer jobs are less likely to engage in violence. It (the study) was hailed by the mayor and other community leaders as proof that youth employment programs can change people’s lives.*”<sup>10</sup>

Employment opportunities have the potential to turn around lives, and communities; however, youth who lack training and basic employee skills may be set up for failure without some preparation for the workplace. Trauma informed services with a culturally competent understanding, will help youth who have been traumatized get a job and keep a job. The sensitivity and the understanding can help these youth move through the stages of job training and job learning as they understand the impact their experiences have on their lives. Staff at

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<sup>10</sup> “Summer jobs add up to Less violence Study”, Travis Anderson, Boston Globe (July,09 2013)

organizations that provide job training must understand the impact of trauma on youth and be trauma informed.

Jobs are critical but an expansion of job training options, such as Youth Build and Urban Corps are equally important. The San Diego Workforce Partnership’s “Connect2Careers” program employs strategies that support youth who apply for a summer job have job readiness skills. Connect2Careers is currently funded by the Mayor and San Diego City Council. Recently, the City invested \$240,000 for the 2014 summer effort to serve as many youth as possible.<sup>11</sup>

**Strategy 2: Work Readiness and Youth Employment--Jobs Can Turn Lives Around**

Action	Target	Measures and Timelines
Work with the City CDBG Economic Development Office to explore possible availability of funds for creative resolution to the problem along with CIP funds from the City Council	Youth in communities with high levels of violence	<p><b>By December 2014:</b></p> <p>Work with CDBG and other funding agencies like Workforce Partnership to assess what grants and funding streams are available</p> <p>Using the Commission’s Website, post funding opportunities for agencies and the community to apply.</p>
Work in collaboration with the Mayor and City Council, Workforce Partnership and the business community to advocate for more job opportunities for youth	Youth and their families	<p><b>By February 2015:</b></p> <p>Provide youth in the community with job opportunities. Encourages linkages between youth and employers.</p>

**Strategy 2: Youth Development---Positive Interactions with Adults Are Critical**

**Background:**

Youth development can take place in a variety of settings. Youth-specific programs ranging from sports to service projects, organizations, socializing systems and community are regularly cited as important venues for this important process. The most noteworthy of these is community:

*Community is not only the geographic place within which programs, organizations, and systems intersect but also the social norms, resources, relationships, and informal*

<sup>11</sup>San Diego Workforce Partnership: retrieved: <http://c2csd.org/about/>

*settings that dramatically inform human development—both directly and indirectly.*<sup>12</sup>

The San Diego Youth Development Office (YDO) has applied for a grant from the Aspen Institute (with Workforce Partnership as grantee/fiscal agent) to work with youth ages 16-24 who are at risk of dropping out of school and those who are recent dropouts. Youth will receive mentoring (SDUSD Check & Connect mentors), intensive educational and case management wrap around services (including culturally appropriate, trauma informed behavioral health), credentialing, industry certification, and employment. This initiative is called PATHWAYS and brings together the Workforce Partnership and SDUSD to provide re-engagement services. Although gang involvement is not specifically called out, PATHWAYS is expected to positively impact those youth most at risk.

Currently, the following organizations are doing youth development work in a myriad of ways: San Diego Police Department, STAR/PAL program, the Parks and Recreation Department, Probation, the San Diego Youth Development Office (housed at the Workforce Partnership), community organizations and all the many county-funded programs.

Recently, the County District Attorney’s office embarked on a three-school Youth Advisory Board mentoring project involving AmeriCorps volunteers. There will be Youth Advisory Boards at Mira Mesa High School, Lincoln High School and Scripps Ranch High School to serve youth in these schools (See Attachment F: *DA YAB Campaign Premier*). These projects have moved youth to college, kept them in school and are important ways to interact with youth in our community.<sup>13</sup>

Particularly in a time of constrained resources, the mosaic of youth-serving projects and programs is notable. We think it important to highlight the critical need among youth for positive interactions with adults, and to encourage the evaluation and expansion of programs that provide these opportunities.

**Strategy 2: Youth Development---Positive Interactions with Adults Are Critical**

Action	Target	Measures and Timelines
<p><b>Support the extended hour program with Park and Recreation and the Police Department’s Juvenile Services Unit and the Gang Unit’s Diversion officer.</b> Non uniform Police officers continue to be part of the Friday night programming and interact with youth at the events. We recommend that another Gang Intervention officer be added as part of the gang unit to</p>	<p>Youth who attend Friday night extended hours and youth contacted by police or are known as active in gangs.</p>	<p>Facilitate conversations by September 30, 2014</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Leadership\\_And\\_Youth\\_Development.pdf](http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Leadership_And_Youth_Development.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> San Diego County District Attorney Website, retrieved: <http://www.sdcda.org/office/4or40/faq.html>

work with youth. Commission will work to facilitate partnering on grant opportunities and leveraging resources through alignment with County health and safety initiatives.		
<b>Advocate for a Youth Development Office within the City.</b> This office would bring resources, facilitate collaborations to strengthen youth development initiatives in the city. Commission would work to share and distribute information and promote the Youth Development Office and its resources.	All San Diego youth	Ongoing

**STRATEGY #3 -- High Risk Engagement**

*Serving the Hardest to Serve; Group Violence Interruption (GVI)*

**Background**

The following pyramid graphic is a way of visually organizing our approach to San Diego’s youth population and their level of gang involvement, or risk thereof. The strategies and interventions correspond to the exposure and gang-related experience of youth. Developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), this framework draws on a plethora of research on risk, resiliency, prevention, intervention and juvenile crime analysis. The definitions used by OJJDP are standardized, based on research and evaluations of programs nationally.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs, James C. Howell U.S. Department of Justice (2010)

Figure 2. Gang Prevention and Intervention Strategies



Source: Wyrick, 2006.

We found that this framework was helpful in guiding us and substantiating the work in the community for youth, youth empowerment and leadership, allowing us to structure our recommendations according to clearly defined levels of risk. These four groups of youth should be targeted with the four basic strategies for combating gangs:

- **Members of group 1 (serious and chronic offenders)** are candidates for targeted enforcement and prosecution because of their high level of involvement in crime and violent gangs and the small probability that other strategies will reduce their criminal behavior. While they may represent as few as four to eight percent of offenders, these individuals may account for the majority of all adolescent crimes in some communities (Loeber and Farrington, 1998).
- **Members of group 2 (gang involved youth)** are candidates for intensive treatment services and supervision.
- **Members of group 3 (high-risk youth)** are candidates for secondary prevention services, which are less intensive than those provided to group 2 but more intensive than those provided to youth in the community at large.
- **Members of group 4 (all youth)** receive primary prevention services.

It should be noted that the **Primary Prevention Services** (“group 4”) are those services and supports that reach the *entire population* in communities contending with high levels of crime and / or gang activity (Wyrick, 2006). These resources address needs or risk factors and are available to all youth and families in a community. Government, schools, community organizations or faith-based groups may deliver these services; they are the formal and informal networks of support that build community attachment and resiliency. It should also be noted that the term “at-risk youth” could be used to define all groups in the pyramid, but that doesn’t mean it *should* be used to define all groups in the pyramid. For purposes of clarity, and to provide more specific recommendations to the Mayor and Council based on the wide array of issues around gang prevention and intervention, we will use the above referenced groups to guide a focused

discussion about resolutions to gang violence.

At the top of the pyramid is **Targeted High Risk Engagement** (“group 1”). OJJDP suggests that communities use the strategy now called Group Violence Intervention (originating in Boston, at the time of publication the strategy was called Ceasefire Strategy). The National Network of Safe Cities has an implementation guide for building safe communities. One element it cites is the Group Violence Intervention strategy (GVI). It provides evidence-based strategies (some of which are already in place in the City) for those youth heavily involved in gang crimes and those young men who have not left the gang lifestyle. The Group Violence Intervention (GVI) strategy outcomes have demonstrated

*Violent crime can be dramatically reduced when law enforcement, community members, and social service providers join together to engage directly with street groups to communicate the following:*

*A law enforcement message that any future violence will be met with clear, predictable, and certain consequences;*

*A moral message from community representatives that violence will not be tolerated;*

*An offer of help from social service providers for those who want it.*

*GVI is now a well-documented approach to reducing serious violence. The strategy is unusual, but it is based on common sense and practical experience. Embedded in empirical analysis of what drives serious violence, and in the schools of thought and practice known as “focused deterrence” and “procedural justice,” the strategy follows a basic logic.<sup>15</sup>*

The GVI calls on law enforcement to fundamentally change its relationship with communities by taking the stance that those most likely to do violence are not only problems but are also human beings in need of clear boundaries and services to support a necessary change in behaviors.

*Evidence and experience show that a small number of people in street groups, cliques, drug crews, and the like cause the majority of violence in troubled neighborhoods. The internal dynamics of the groups and the honor code of the street drive violence between those groups and individuals. The group members typically constitute less than 0.5 percent of a city’s population but are consistently linked to 60 to 70 percent of the shootings and homicides.<sup>16</sup>*

Recognizing and approaching this small percentage of youth and adult in San Diego s using the GVI strategy makes several key options possible: concentrating intervention efforts on the youth who are most involved; initiating dialogue directly with those who need to hear from their

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<sup>15</sup> National Network of Safe Cities, retrieved: <http://www.nnscommunities.org/>

<sup>16</sup> **Group Violence Intervention An Implementation Guide**, The National Network for Safe Communities Retrieved here: <http://www.nnscommunities.org/>

community; and responding both to gang members and the community with services that are trauma-informed.

*Individuals who come from past histories of physical and sexual abuse, who have criminally involved families, and participate in substance misuse, have an increased chance of being incarcerated and experiencing traumatic events. Many incarcerated individuals come from neighborhoods inundated with illicit substances and gang activity. As in prison, to survive in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, individuals often participate in street politics. As a result, it is nearly impossible to avoid witnessing and at times participating in physical violence and various other illegal activities, which often result in increased vigilance, emotional numbing, increased substance use, and other means of coping with those chaotic environments. Many of these coping skills can become symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>17</sup>*

The San Diego Police Department's Street Gang Unit currently uses most of these strategies to fight gang violence, and has for many years. These strategies have already produced historic lows in San Diego's gang-related crime rate. San Diego Police Department's current Street Gang Unit strategy is as follows from their report at the Public Safety and Livable Neighborhood Committee meeting in May:

TARGETING:

- *We identify shot-callers and shooters for surveillance, enforcement, and investigations...such as our recent West Coast Crip and Gangster Pimp takedowns with our VICE Unit, the District Attorney's Office and the FBI.*
- *We utilize uniformed Gang Suppression Team officers for targeted enforcement based on intelligence from Gang Unit investigators and other law enforcement sources.*
- *We identify gang members on 4<sup>th</sup> waivers and conduct regular compliance checks.*
- *We actively seek community input and cooperation for long term investigative operations.*

COLLABORATION:

- *We work closely with allied Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to conduct long-term projects and gang sweep operations.*
- *We maintain a solid working relationship with Community Groups, faith-based organizations, and Social Services dedicated to stopping crime and violence in our communities (C.A.S.T., Compassion Project, Crime-Free Multi Housing, etc.)<sup>v</sup>*

According to SDPD:

*Having two of the three major components of Project Ceasefire already in place*

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<sup>17</sup> PTSD first appeared as a diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Version III (DSM-III) in 1980 (American Psychiatric Association [APA], (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.) Washington, DC

*(Targeting and Collaboration), formalized Call-ins would be the next component to set up. To adopt the full Ceasefire program, the SDPD would draw from existing partnerships with San Diego County Probation, the San Diego District Attorney's Office and other local law enforcement partners. Identified Community Groups and Social Services would also play a major role.*

*Community groups would take the lead in being the "Moral Voice" in the discussion. Community groups would make the effort to convince the call-in targets to stop the violence and become a voice for peace. Community groups and Social Services would take the lead in providing needed services for the call-in targets (job counseling, substance abuse counseling, housing, etc.).*

*These types of collaborative efforts have proven effective for the SDPD Street Gang Unit in the past, and have contributed greatly to the reduction of gang violence in the City of San Diego. The implementation Operation Ceasefire should continue these efforts and bring more resources together for the benefit of the entire San Diego County region.*

### **Target Communities: Peace Makers**

For the past two years, the Commission has been working with community residents and faith leaders, walking together through high crime areas at different times and on a regular basis. This kind of strategy is being implemented along with the GVI in many cities including Oakland, CA; New Orleans, LA and High Point, N.C. San Diego Police representatives, residents and faith leaders walk the neighborhoods and in San Diego's case, hand out resource information and answer questions.

The access to resources has emerged as an important focus of these walks. Interactions with residents have shown many are unaware of resources right in their neighborhood. The volunteers have been alerting residents to food distributions opportunities, mental health resources and domestic violence and drug rehab programs, as well as gaining insights from community members.

The community group of volunteers that performs these services is called Community Assistance Support Team (CAST). By employing techniques of de-escalation support, conflict resolution, retaliation prevention, in-hospital spiritual care, in-home support and advocacy, CAST has brought quality community support to individuals and families impacted by violence. The group's commitment and credibility have helped shape a proactive, relevant response to neighborhoods in crisis. Their efforts have been highlighted by KPBS, Fox News and the Voice of San Diego.

The range of experience and disciplines represented among Commission members is a resource to tap as we invite people to the table to implement GVI strategies. Commission members from law enforcement, health services, nonprofit providers, education and the clergy can provide guidance and recommendations for recruiting and engaging participants. As stated in the NNSC



implementation guide:

*To implement GVI, a city assembles a partnership of law enforcement, community representatives (e.g., parents of murdered children, ministers, street outreach workers, ex-offenders, and other people with moral standing and credibility), and social service providers, all of whom are willing to provide a specific message to group members.*

**Strategy 3: Serving the Hardest to Serve; Group Violence Interruption (GVI)**

Action	Target	Measures and Timelines
<p>Explore the implementing and standardization of a wraparound services option to shot callers and those that the Police Department work with one-on-one to implement the Group Violence Interruption model</p>	<p>Youth and their families in communities with high levels of violence as identified by law enforcement</p>	<p><b>By August 2015:</b> Commission will facilitate discussions and assist with coordinating a training summit for all the law enforcement partners and key community leaders</p> <p><b>By November 2015:</b> Participates in discussions that address protocols and procedures.</p>
<p>Explore funding and structural models that can support the hiring and training of former gang members to work with law enforcement in the implementation of the Group Violence Interruption Model.</p>	<p>Communities with high levels of gang violence: Central and Southeast San Diego</p>	<p><b>By September 2014:</b> Commission will work with SDPD and facilitate collaboration with other departments to:</p> <p>Establish job description, protocols, and oversight responsibilities.</p> <p>Identify funds to train law enforcement and key leaders in the Group Violence Interruption model and identify funding sources for trained Peace Makers.</p>

**CONCLUSION**

As an advisory group, the Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention has worked for eight years to research, recommend and support a constellation of programs and community initiatives aimed at ending gang violence. Among these efforts:

- Collaborative Curfew Sweeps

- Crime Free Multi Housing
- Safe School Zone re-implementation
- Safe Passage
- Trauma Informed Community Conversations
- Park and Recreation Extended Hours
- Community Initiatives including the San Diego Compassion Project, CAST, Gun Buy-Back events and the Girls Only Program.

As we look ahead we anticipate the satisfaction of hard work, shared success, and safer communities. San Diego and the young people who live here deserve nothing less.

## ATTACHMENTS

- A. Impact of Community Violence
- B. Survey Narrative
- C. Survey Details
- D. Juvenile Probation Map
- E. What is Needed to Heal
- F. DA YAB Campaign Premier