

Chapter 7. The Intervention Team

The Intervention Team is at the core of the Comprehensive Gang Model. This team is composed of a multidisciplinary group of professionals from the fields of law enforcement, probation, outreach, education, and social services, who work together to case manage the intervention targets of the Model and to identify additional prevention, intervention, and suppression activities needed in the target community. Participation on the Intervention Team can increase the effectiveness of each agency's efforts, reduce duplication of services, increase access to needed services, and ensure that gang members are held accountable for their actions.

The work of the Intervention Team is predicated on the following beliefs:

- Each gang member is a unique individual who joined the gang for unique reasons and who needs an individualized response.
- Each gang member affects (and is affected by) multiple domains such as family, neighborhood, school, and peers.
- Gang members often experience uncoordinated multiple-agency involvement and are high-end service users.
- Gang members frequently encounter barriers to needed services.

In general, research suggests that a relatively small number of gang members are responsible for the majority of gang-related crime and violence in the community. In most cases, this core group of gang members becomes the focus of the team's efforts. Because gang members often receive services simultaneously from multiple agencies, the team facilitates information-sharing and collaboration among these agencies. In many instances, gang members have had negative experiences dealing with the very agencies that are designed to offer assistance. The team-based approach helps ensure that all agencies working with these clients have a common goal and shared strategies for each client.

Short-term goals for the team include:

- Creating individualized case management plans for gang members participating in the project.
- Engaging gang members in direct services to address their specific needs.
- Working together to dismantle or surmount barriers to accessing services.
- Holding gang members accountable for negative behaviors.

Long-term goals for the team include:

- Assisting gang members in transitioning out of the gang lifestyle.
- Improving the effectiveness of agencies serving gang-involved clients.
- Reducing overall gang-related crime in the community.

The Intervention Team also seeks to achieve a much larger goal. By identifying and providing concentrated services to those within the gang culture, the team seeks to improve the quality of life for all residents of the community by reducing gang crime and improving community safety. Ultimately, the goal is to create systemic and communitywide change that will reduce overall gang involvement and criminality.

Creating the Team

First, the Steering Committee should identify the agencies that are involved in serving or interacting with gang members, and whose staff should serve on the Intervention Team. Each of these partners plays a crucial role in working with gang-involved clients. They should include:

- Law enforcement.
- Education/schools.
- Probation and/or parole officials.
- Court staff (juvenile and adult).
- Social service agencies.
- Youth-serving agencies.
- Grassroots community agencies.
- Outreach staff.

While the Steering Committee remains in control of overall strategies and policy decisions, the Intervention Team works more directly with gang members. The roles performed by each agency's Intervention Team member should be formalized in writing through the use of memoranda of understanding between the agencies.

Based on data from the Assessment Report, the Steering Committee should develop the criteria that will be used to screen and target gang members to receive services. Sample screening criteria might include:

- Age/race/ethnicity.
- Gender.
- Social factors (gang members from the same family, history of school problems, etc.).
- Threshold level of criminal history.
- Specific gang affiliation.
- Place of residence.

For instance, the target population for this team-based approach might be:

15- to 24-year-olds, residing in a particular section of town, affiliated with X, Y, or Z gangs, with a history of weapons possession.

To ensure that the Intervention Team's efforts have the greatest effect, the team should strictly adhere to these criteria, and ongoing crime and client data should be collected and analyzed to determine whether adjustments should be made to the screening criteria.

The Steering Committee should task the key agencies to appoint members to represent them on the team. It should be understood by all of the key agencies that membership on the team is a commitment to regular meetings (weekly or biweekly), providing access to appropriate information and services, and participating in the activities of the team. The agencies should plan for their representatives to serve on the team for a minimum of two years to cement team relationships, establish momentum, and enable individual representatives to gain expertise in working together.

Selecting Team Members

Ideally, agencies should select team members who:

- Have experience in working with high-risk and gang-involved youth. This is one of the most important criteria in selecting team members. The emphasis for the team (as discussed in this bulletin) is on active gang members. Potential team members who would prefer to work with youth representing little or no risk are probably not appropriate.
- Are willing, interested, and able to work within a team setting.
- Are well-respected within their own agencies.
- Are open to new ways of collaborating and interacting with different disciplines to achieve a common mission.
- Are committed to providing intervention options to youth and to holding youth accountable for negative and/or dangerous behaviors.

Because of the key roles they play, personnel assigned from law enforcement and outreach agencies must have specific qualifications.

Law enforcement team members should:

- Be familiar with gang dynamics and activities in the target area.
- Have a plan to interact and maintain liaison with other police department units/members who interact with gang members or their families.
- Be willing to work with other disciplines and respect what each discipline brings to the team's activities with clients.
- Be well-respected within their agencies, because this will lend credibility to the team with other law enforcement divisions.
- Understand and value intervention efforts and their complementary role with suppression.
- Understand the long-term benefits of collaborative teamwork.

Outreach staff should:

- Be familiar with the target population. Ideally, the outreach worker(s) will share a common ethnicity with clients. If the assessment shows that the majority of clients are likely to speak a language other than English, the outreach worker(s) should be bilingual.
- Be familiar with the community/neighborhoods targeted for team-based gang intervention.
- Be comfortable working with gang members and communicating with them in uncontrolled settings in the community.
- Be willing to serve as role models for clients, modeling prosocial behaviors in their own lives and being law-abiding and ethical.
- Demonstrate maturity and common sense, since they will be thrust into potentially dangerous and explosive situations.
- Be willing to work with the team to address and hold clients accountable for negative behaviors through verbal counseling and by supporting other agency sanctions.
- Always share information when it involves a possible threat of harm.

It is extremely important that reputable individuals and agencies serve in the outreach role. These individuals must have no current gang ties, current gang involvement, or other types of recent criminal involvement. A sample job description for outreach workers is found in **Exhibit 9.1** on page 70.

Formalize Information-Sharing Protocols

Information is shared within the team for specific reasons. First, safety is paramount. All participating team members have an obligation to share information when there is a risk of harm to clients, other team members, or community members. This information should be shared with the knowledge that it will be acted on by team members to protect public safety. Furthermore, clients in these projects must be briefed so they understand that team members have an obligation to report certain types of information. For example, if a team member from a social services agency receives information from a client that members of that client's gang plan to shoot at members of a rival gang, the team member needs to share this information with the team. However, law enforcement team members who receive this information must protect the other team members and the clients. Because law enforcement team members may receive information from grassroots agency personnel or outreach workers, they also must avoid jeopardizing the safety of these workers. Thus, great care should be taken in dealing with such scenarios.

Team members also should understand that information about clients is shared to help clients, not to penalize them. Potentially damaging or embarrassing information about a client must be closely guarded. For instance, a school representative at the team meeting who hears information about a client's family situation should not reveal this information to others at the school who have no reason to receive this information. A school should not use information about a client's gang involvement to justify expelling or excluding the client from school. The team may wish to create confidentiality agreements that commit each team member to protecting client information. Team members also need to be trained in mandatory reporting issues specific to their states or regions.

Prior to accepting clients, the team members must formalize protocols for information sharing at the team level. Because agency staff may be restricted in the types of information they can share, it is important that team members know and understand these limits. In some cases, the Steering Committee may require team members to sign confidentiality waivers detailing the types of information that will be shared, along with the ways that confidential client information will be safeguarded. These parameters can also be set through a memorandum of understanding determined at the Steering Committee level.

Developing a Referral/Screening Process

As discussed earlier, the screening criteria are set by the Steering Committee. When the team is getting started, it is important that team members create a protocol for screening and assessing new clients. The following questions should be answered:

- Which agencies will be making referrals?
- Will a referral form be created?
- If so, what client information will it include?
- How will referring agencies be made aware of the screening criteria?
- How will the team utilize the screening criteria in selecting appropriate clients?

It is recommended that referring team members present information about prospective clients to the team, outlining how each client meets the screening criteria. The team members can then come to consensus about whether a client is suitable for the project. A sample referral form is provided in **Exhibit 7.1** on page 54.

Client Consent Issues

Because the information shared across agencies may be sensitive and potentially damaging to a client, it is important for team members to ensure that they can legally serve the client. The client himself (if he is of age), his parent/guardian, and/or a state-appointed legal guardian must consent to the sharing of the

client's information and to the provision of services by the team. A sample Client Consent Form is found in **Exhibit 7.2** on page 55.

Needs Assessment

Finally, a needs assessment instrument should be developed to ascertain the status of each client when he is accepted into the project. This should include information on:

- The client's future goals, abilities, talents, and desires.
- Family situation and structure.
- Gang involvement of family members.
- Other family issues that may affect the client's gang involvement.
- Criminal history.
- Gang history (and gang affiliation).
- School history, including special issues such as learning disabilities or a history of behavioral problems.
- Gang climate in the client's neighborhood.
- Substance abuse or mental health issues.
- History of abuse or neglect.
- Client's employment history and skill levels.
- Special circumstances, such as a client who is a teen parent.
- Agencies that are currently serving the client.
- Possible safety issues involving the client.
- Current needs assessments from any of the team agencies.
- Court requirements such as community service hours and restitution.

Some of these factors may have played a role in the client's decision to join a gang and may become an impetus that can motivate or assist him in transitioning out of the gang. It is important that the team focus on each of these areas when developing a plan to intervene with the client.

Exhibit 7.1

Sample Referral Form

OJJDP COMPREHENSIVE GANG MODEL REFERRAL FORM

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---|
| FIRST NAME: | | MI: | LAST NAME: | | DATE: |
| ALSO KNOWN AS: | | DATE OF BIRTH: / / | | Age: | <input type="checkbox"/> MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE |
| ADDRESS: | | | Neighborhood: | | |
| CITY: | STATE: | ZIP: | PHONE: () - | | |
| ETHNICITY: | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White/Anglo, not Hispanic | | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino | | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American | | <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Native American | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other/Multiracial | |
| | | Specify other: _____ | | | |
| PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME: | | | PARENT/GUARDIAN ADDRESS: | | |
| THE REFERRED YOUTH: | | LEVEL OF GANG INVOLVEMENT: | | PROBATION STATUS: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admits gang involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Is known to associate with gang members | | With 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest, how would you rate this individual's level of gang involvement? <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | | <input type="checkbox"/> On probation <input type="checkbox"/> Not on probation <input type="checkbox"/> Terminated probation <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know | |
| Name of gang (s): _____ | | | | | |
| Location/set: _____ | | | | | |
| SCHOOL STATUS: | | | | SCHOOL NAME: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attending school <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate <input type="checkbox"/> Not attending school | | | | | |
| REASON FOR REFERRAL: <input type="checkbox"/> Meets criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | | | | |
| REFERRING PERSON: | | REFERRING AGENCY: | | PHONE NUMBER: | |
| | | | | () - | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Exhibit 7.2

Sample Client Consent Form

PARTICIPANT AND/OR PARENTAL CONSENT FORM for Participants in _____ PROJECT

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand. You may take home an unsigned copy of this consent form to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision.

The purpose of this project:

A team of individuals and organizations in your community collaborate with _____ Project. They include school district personnel, alternative education providers, law enforcement officers, juvenile and adult probation officers, social service providers, and outreach workers.

The project includes five types of activities:

- Getting the people in your community to work together to prevent and stop gang violence (called community mobilization).
- Working with youth who are in gangs and their families to get them whatever kind of help they need (called social intervention).
- Giving training to youth so they can get good jobs (called opportunities provision).
- Trying to stop gang activities and gang violence by keeping a close watch on gangs and youth who are in gangs (called suppression).
- Getting the schools, law enforcement, and other organizations to change the way they do things so they can help prevent and stop gang violence (called organizational change).

Those who participate in this project will be asked to do the following things:

If you agree to participate in _____ Project, you will be asked a number of intake questions about yourself and your family. We will ask you to update this information periodically during your involvement with the project. Once accepted as a participant in this project, you will develop a goal plan that will help you outline the things that are important to you. Your active participation in the project is important for your success! An outreach worker will be assigned to you to help you reach your goals.

Voluntary participation/withdrawal:

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You do not have to participate. If you agree to participate, you can stop at any time.

Your participation in this project may be ended at any time by the Project Director or the outreach worker without your consent.

About your consent:

Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions. If you agree to participate in this project, you will receive a copy of this signed and dated consent form.

I have read this consent form (or it has been read to me). Anything I did not understand was explained to me. I had all of my questions answered to my satisfaction.

If 18 or older, please initial: I agree to participate in this project. _____

If under 18, parent or guardian, please initial: I agree to allow my child to participate in this project.

CONSENT SIGNATURE:

Participant Name (printed)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Parent/Legally Authorized Representative (if participant is under 18)

Date

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Date