

NATIONAL GANG CENTER

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Beyond Gang Suppression: Strengthening Community and Police Partnerships



The National Gang Center (NGC) is jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. NGC conducts research on street gangs and serves as a clearinghouse for individuals and agencies seeking information, technical assistance, and training in the areas of gang prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry.

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Beyond Gang Suppression:



Strengthening Community and Police Partnerships

The city of Fort Pierce, often referred to as the Sunset City, is located on the east coast of Florida. With more than 40,000 residents, the city boasts a rich heritage and a neighborly community, but in recent years the police department has struggled to curtail the prevalence of gang-related crime and violence. The U.S. Department of Justice recently awarded the city with a two-year grant that will assist with its Restoring the Village Youth Initiative. This comprehensive approach includes city leaders, outreach workers, community representatives, and law enforcement in their aims to reduce gang activity and violence. To gain more insight on this communitywide initiative, the National Gang Center (NGC) had an exclusive Q&A session with Fort Pierce Police Department's Chief of Police, Sean Baldwin.

National Gang Center: Many communities who experience gang violence choose to implement prevention and intervention initiatives that do not involve law enforcement. Why has the Fort Pierce community chosen to actively participate in a balanced suppression, prevention, and intervention approach?

Chief Baldwin: Like many communities, we've tried to combat gang violence using various prevention and enforcement strategies. While we achieved short-term successes, the gang violence continued to plague our community. An outbreak in

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gang shootings in 2013 led us to search for a more comprehensive solution.

We have learned that it is incredibly important to properly diagnose the problem, so that we treat the disease, not just the symptoms. In Fort Pierce, and perhaps most communities, gangs are not actually the disease, but rather a symptom of deeper illness in our neighborhoods. It is no coincidence that neighborhoods impacted by gang violence also suffer high rates of unemployment, poor health conditions, and low educational achievement. In Fort Pierce, it appears that generational poverty is the root of all this evil, so we needed a strategy that addresses the multiple risk factors this condition creates.

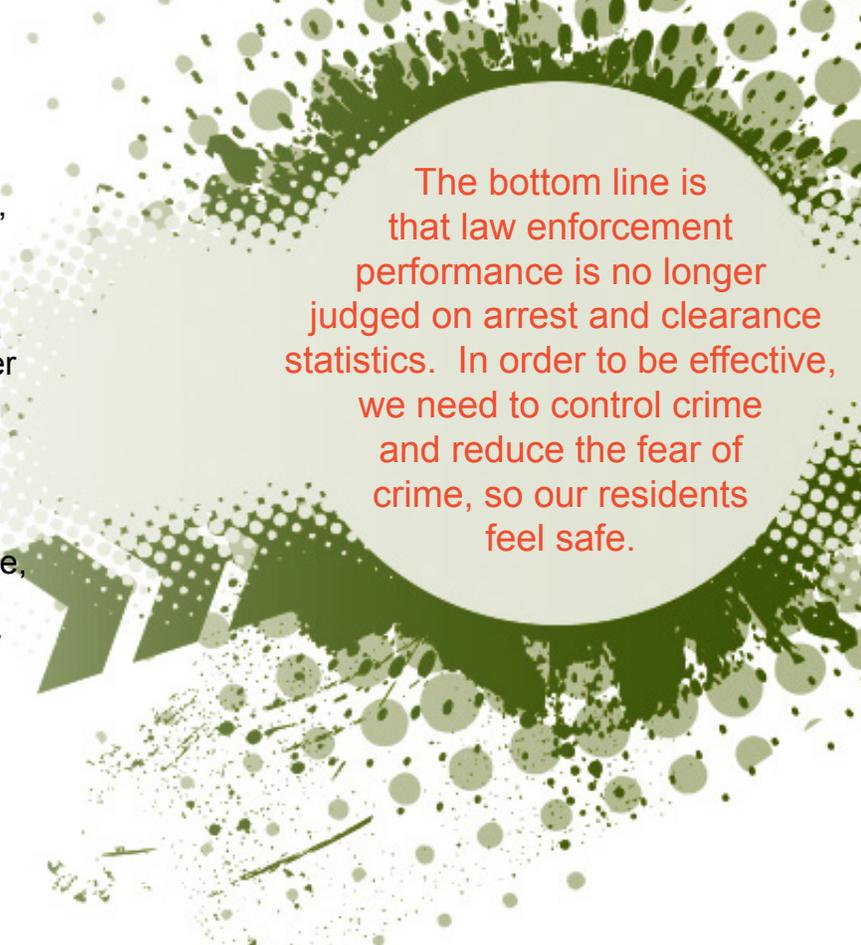
Our solution is the Restoring the Village Youth Initiative, which is based on the Comprehensive Gang Model developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This model provides suppression, prevention, and intervention components that specifically target gang violence and its root causes.

NGC: Why should law enforcement be actively engaged in prevention and intervention initiatives that address gang violence?

CB: The simple truth is we cannot arrest our way out of gang violence problems. While arrest is a powerful suppression tool, it is not a stand-alone solution to chronic gang violence. It certainly doesn't address the underlying issues that allow gangs to exist in our communities. Prevention and intervention strategies are the best hope for breaking the cycle of gang violence over the long term.

It is absolutely critical that law enforcement officers are actively engaged in intervention and prevention initiatives, because we have the intelligence information that should be driving these services. We know the gangs, gang members, and their turf. We need to share this information with community partners, so that they can help us effectively intervene and prevent gang violence.

Law enforcement can also leverage prevention and intervention initiatives to build closer relationships with community members. School Resource Officer, Police Athletic League, Gang Resistance Education and Training, and several other research-based programs provide these



The bottom line is that law enforcement performance is no longer judged on arrest and clearance statistics. In order to be effective, we need to control crime and reduce the fear of crime, so our residents feel safe.

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Law Enforcement Strategies to Reduce Gang Problems

What strategies are law enforcement agencies across the country using to reduce gang activity?

The most recent [National Youth Gang Survey](#) asked local law enforcement agencies to identify the measures they have taken to reduce gang activity in their jurisdictions. The most commonly cited strategies included targeted patrols (76 percent of jurisdictions reporting a gang problem), dedicated gang unit or officer (64 percent), and multiagency gang task force (52 percent). There were very few differences in the most common types of strategies used across jurisdiction size.

Strategies Used by Jurisdictions to Reduce Gang Problems



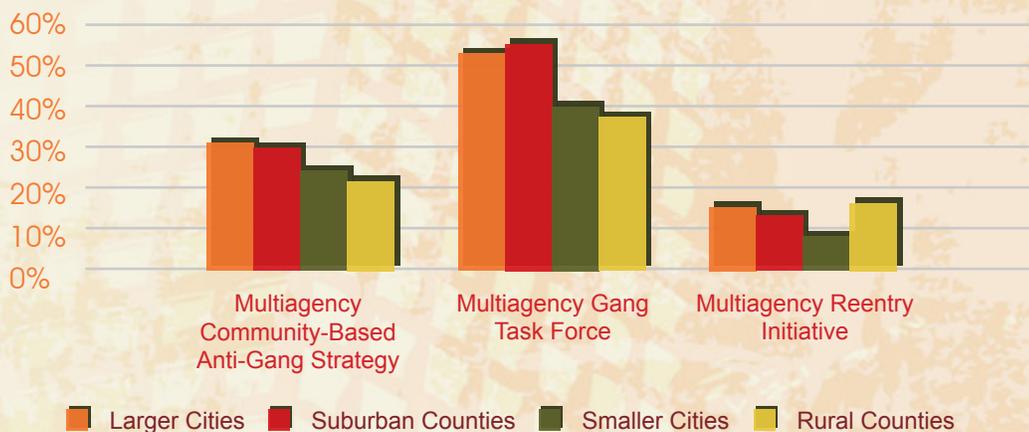
Law Enforcement Strategies to Reduce Gang Problems

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Are jurisdictions participating in multiagency collaborations?

Nearly 60 percent of jurisdictions reported participating in at least one multiagency collaboration (a gang task force, anti-gang strategy, or reentry initiative). Only about 15 percent of jurisdictions reported participating in a multiagency reentry initiative. Interestingly, larger cities and rural counties were about equally likely to participate in a reentry initiative, while suburban counties and smaller cities were less likely to participate. With regard to multiagency gang task forces and anti-gang strategies, larger cities and suburban counties were most likely to report participation, and rural counties were least likely to report participation.

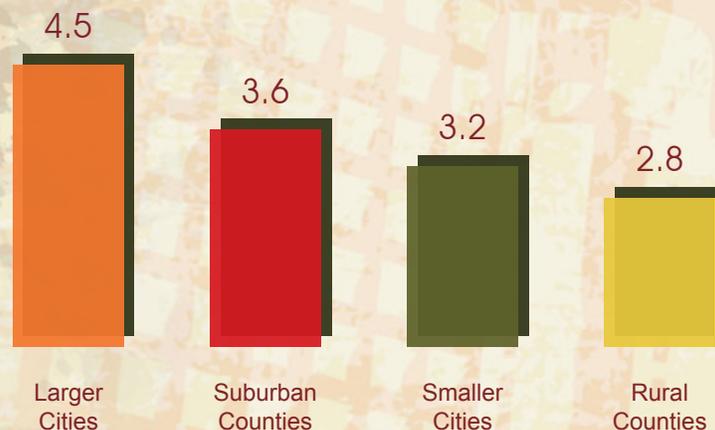
Agencies Participating in Multiagency Collaborations



Are agencies using multiple strategies to reduce gang activity?

Among the jurisdictions that reported gang activity, 93 percent reported using at least one of the 11 strategies listed. On average, jurisdictions reported using about four different strategies, with larger cities using the highest number of strategies (average=4.5) and rural counties using the lowest (average=2.8). Suburban counties reported using an average of 3.6 different strategies, while smaller cities used an average of 3.2 strategies.

Average Number of Gang-Reducing Strategies Used





Gang Investigators Enter the Social Age:

Tips to Prepare, Train, and Use Social Media Effectively

The use and utility of social media for law enforcement gang investigations is a relatively new phenomenon. While the potential benefits are obvious, it is critical that agencies plan for the use of these tools before they are used. Fortunately, there are many resources available to help:

- Every agency should consider having a social media strategy! The International Association of Chiefs of Police, Center for Social Media, offers a “Ready, Set, Go!” self-assessment tool and guide to help agencies develop their strategies:
 - www.iacpsocialmedia.org/GettingStarted/StrategyDevelopment.aspx
- The provision of training is the key to ultimate success. The National White Collar Crime Center has a slate of law enforcement-centric social media training opportunities that can benefit all agencies using social media.
 - www.nw3c.org/training/specialty-training
- Is your agency ready for this? Create an agency-specific checklist to ensure that your social media strategy matches your agency’s vision, goals, and objectives. This list should include provisions regarding privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections; documentation; data storage and purging; and any other legal issues that may impact the agency’s strategy.
 - The operating principles of 28 CFR Part 23 provide guidance to law enforcement regarding how to operate criminal intelligence information systems effectively while safeguarding privacy and civil liberties. Additional information and training opportunities can be found at: www.iir.com/Home/28CFR_Program/
 - The Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative provides information regarding developing a policy on the use of social media in intelligence and investigative activities. This document can be found at: <http://it.ojp.gov/gist/132/Developing-a-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Social-Media-in-Intelligence-and-Investigative-Activities--Guidance-and-Recommendations->

As you move forward, do not forget to leverage your partners’ success. Do you know of an agency that is successfully using social media? Leverage that agency’s success by learning its tips and techniques to enhance your efforts.



Street Gang Intelligence Online Training Course

The Bureau of Justice Assistance and the National Gang Center (NGC) are now offering law enforcement professionals a restricted-access online training on gang intelligence. The online training course is designed to assist local, state, and tribal law enforcement officers in better understanding the steps involved in the intelligence process. It reviews applicable standards, suggests possible sources of information, and highlights some of the problems encountered in collecting gang intelligence. **This course is restricted to law enforcement personnel, and each user must have a valid government e-mail address.**

The Street Gang Intelligence course contains six lessons, which will take approximately 85 minutes to complete, and includes the following:

- A Need for Gang Intelligence and Intelligence Systems
- Defining Intelligence
- The Intelligence Process
- Sources of Information
- Criteria for Gathering and Storing Information
- Problems Gathering Information

Video clips, in which subject-matter experts provide examples, tips, and comments about the subject matter, are integrated into the lessons. Transcripts for each video can be found by clicking on the Notes tab in each lesson. A Resources page contains sample documents, articles, publications, and other resources related to street gang intelligence.

The training is self-paced. It is structured to allow you to complete each lesson as your schedule permits. If you have to stop in the middle of a lesson, you can pick up where you left off when you return. Once you have completed the course, you will be able to print a certificate of completion, indicating that you have taken and completed this course.

To access the training via the NGC Web site, go to <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Online-Training>.



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All of our patrol officers are required to conduct routine foot patrols with an emphasis on building relationships with residents.

opportunities. These prevention and intervention programs also provide another source of information that can guide enforcement operations.

The bottom line is that law enforcement performance is no longer judged on arrest and clearance statistics. In order to be effective, we need to control crime and reduce the fear of crime, so our residents feel safe.

NGC: Some communities do not have good communication with the police departments that service their areas. Explain your approach in promoting a positive suppression and intervention concept in Fort Pierce.

CB: Frankly, we've struggled with developing good communications in neighborhoods that are impacted by gang violence. As the level of violence increases, the fear of retaliation increases. This condition, coupled with a "stop snitching" code that is perpetuated by gang members, can stifle communications and ultimately destroy relationships between police and the residents we serve.

In Fort Pierce, we are constantly working to improve communication with community leaders and our residents. Our local sheriff and I spent several weeks last summer going door to door talking with residents in gang-impacted neighborhoods to gather their input. Likewise, all of our patrol officers are required to conduct routine foot patrols with an emphasis on building relationships with residents. We host regular meetings with local pastors and have officers assigned to work with youth service organizations. We have partnered with local media to highlight our youth initiative, and we are also leveraging social media (i.e., Facebook and Twitter) to share our progress with the community.

Most importantly, we are developing and implementing our youth gang initiative with input directly from our community through surveys, focus groups, and a series of community forums. It is not a law enforcement-centered initiative, but rather a communitywide effort that is being managed by the Roundtable of St. Lucie County—a long-standing group of local agency heads, public officials, and funders that exists to improve outcomes for children in our community.

NGC: In your experience, how has this concept changed over the course of your career, and where do you feel law enforcement needs to be in order to make a difference?

CB: So much has changed over the last 25 years, but yet so much has remained the same. We now have very sophisticated technology that allows us to analyze crime data and deliver actionable intelligence to officers in real time. We can extract DNA from microscopic samples and track suspects globally. However, none of this technology changes the fact that our best

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crime-fighting strategy is strong community collaboration that produces the witness testimony needed to prosecute criminals.

Law enforcement must take a leadership role in developing solutions to gang violence. In order to accomplish this, we need to leverage technology and other advancements, but we must also maintain a strong commitment to community-oriented policing. We need to build stronger relationships with community leaders, service partners, and residents.

NGC: What information would you share with other communities who would like to initiate a collaborative suppression, prevention, and intervention approach?

CB: First and foremost, it is vitally important that a community acknowledge the existence of a gang problem and the urgent need to do something about it.

Next, understand that gang violence is a complex problem that will require a long-term comprehensive response. There may be a need to develop a separate tactical plan to address an outbreak of violence, but this will look much different than the strategic response required for long-term solutions.

Finally, community leaders, law enforcement officials, or anyone searching for a solution to chronic gang violence should study the *OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model* (<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Comprehensive-Gang-Model>). This model provides a step-by-step guide for implementing a collaborative solution that is based on research and decades of practical experience.

Fort Pierce has had a series of Restoring the Village Youth Initiative town hall meetings. For pictures of the September 30 meeting, visit <http://www.tcpalm.com/galleries/restoring-the-village-community-mobilization-meeting-in-lincoln-park>.



Interested in Anti-Gang Training?

Check out the links below for dates and locations:

Training and Conferences
<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Other-Training-and-Conferences>

Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training
<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Training-and-Technical-Assistance/Law-Enforcement>



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