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A School-Based Model

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Statement of the Problem

Schools with serious youth gang problems are usually located in low income, high crime, and often changing communities. Truancy rates are high, in part because students are afraid to come to school and once in school, afraid to enter certain school areas. They are also reluctant to return home through treacherous gang turfs. Officials in schools with serious youth gang problems often deny their existence or minimize their seriousness. These assessments delay appropriate reaction and the problems grow more severe.

These schools are located in communities with a whole complex of social, economic, health, housing, and academic problems. Single parent households may abound; parents are often unemployed or employed in low skilled occupations. Preadolescents and adolescents are provided with limited supervision and guidance and roam the streets. Youth gangs have staked out turf in different parts of the neighborhood, at different schools and some times different parts of the same school. Schools, churches and local youth service agencies operate independently in regard to youth gang problems and seem unable to establish relationships with vulnerable youth or to properly serve their needs for education and socialization.

The youth gang problem has spread to children in elementary school grades and to schools in suburban areas and smaller communities. To some extent the school youth gang problem has been fueled by the spread of drug trafficking, involving some gang members; although the primary problem at schools whether gang members are involved or not is alcohol and not use of harder drugs.

The school gang problem spreads from the streets to the school. Students who are gang members, particularly in middle schools, bring with them destructive gang attitudes and behaviors. They claim the school as "turf" which they "own" and which is off limits to certain other students. They deface the school with graffiti as part of the territorial marking process and exert control through intimidation and assaults of other students. Yet the school must also bear some responsibility for the gang problem. Most gang members are terribly bored and feel inadequate in class, and drop out as soon as possible. They begin to detach themselves from the school long before official drop-out. They develop poor learning skills and experience academic and social failure at school from an early age. They have little identification with teachers or staff whom they may distrust and intensely dislike.

However, some schools seem to do a remarkably good job under extremely adverse community conditions. The school educational and social climate is positive. Truancy rates are fairly low and student performance and attendance are high. Their students earn a large proportion of prizes at school district fairs. Parent involvement in school related activities is very high. How do we account for these school differences and varying levels of deviancy problem, including participation by youth in gang activities?

A variety of factors may account for these differences. Much has to do with school leadership, the knowledge and skill of faculty and staff and their commitment to the school, the strength of the parent organization and its commitment to the school, and the extent and quality of interaction and coordination of school personnel with local community agencies, including youth agencies and the police. Perhaps most important is the school's attention to the academic and social learning needs of all students; the creation of clear and high expectations for student achievement; and fair and consistent treatment of students, even those who have behavioral problems or who are likely to be gang members. The physical appearance of the school is also extremely important. Schools should be neat and attractive and kept free of gang and other graffiti at all times.

Dealing with the school's youth gang problem requires a series of interrelated and complex steps involving key people, groups, and organizations inside and outside the school. The approach may vary somewhat depending on level and duration of the problem and whether it occurs in an emerging or chronic youth gang problem context. Reduction and control of the youth gang problem requires that both school and community systems learn how to communicate with each other, integrate their concerns, and take collective responsibility for dealing with the problem.

Assessment

The school's approach to dealing with the gang problem requires first that it be recognized. Usually this occurs in response to a crisis, bad publicity, concerns by parents or pressures by district administrators. The extent and seriousness of the problem must be openly and systematically assessed in order to select appropriate strategies and programs. An important first step, by a school committee appointed by the principal (or district officials), is to gather data about the problem. This committee or advisory group should be as broadly based as possible, including school administrators, teachers, staff as well as parents, representatives of the police, youth agencies, and community groups. Information must be obtained from school records, teacher and staff observations, parents, police and community agency personnel as well as directly from students and youth gang members, themselves. These data may be gathered informally or formally and the assessment should begin at an early point before the problem has become chronic and almost intractable.

Specific information needs to be gathered as to which youth and gangs are involved and where the gangs hangout within and outside the school. Such individual gang member characteristics as age, gender, race/ethnicity, family structure, and school performance need to be known. Information about gang characteristics such as leadership, size, the scope and severity of the criminal behavior of its members are important. Determination also has to be made as to whether the individual's troublesome behavior is indeed gang-related; what precipitating events or

conditions led to the various incidents of gang activity that concerns school officials, parents, and the community.

It is very important to develop a consensus as to the nature and scope of the problem. Such consensus among the actors will contribute to the effectiveness of program planning and implementation. Conflicting views as to whether a gang problem exists often signal that appropriate strategies will not be selected or adequately implemented.

The committee assessing the problem needs, with the help of the police and school system authorities, to establish clear definitions of what is meant by a "youth gang," "gang member," and "gang incident." Definitions tend to be too broad in those schools and communities where the problem is just emerging, especially in smaller communities. These definitions may also be quite inclusive of a variety of youth and delinquent activities when the community takes a very "hard line." A narrower or more specific definition of gang activity and gang member is somewhat more characteristic of a school or community with a history of experience with the problem. Excessive labelling of youth as gang members without adequate criteria can be as inappropriate as denying that a gang problem exists when in fact it does. Some of the multiple criteria that should be used to identify at-risk or gang youth are: use of gang signs, special clothing, self-admission, association with known gang members, gang members in the family, school failure, drug use, and actual participation in gang conflict.

Definition of the problem usually brings with it an explanation of the causes of gang presence and disruptions in and around a school. Youth associate with gangs, and sometimes participate in violent behavior, to compensate for personal, academic, and social deficiencies. Gang activity may become a pervasive way of life in a community without social resources, where day to day survival is uncertain. Gang members are often from families that may not be literate and do not encourage youth commitment to school and studies. While peer groups and sometimes family members value education in general, they often do not provide or enforce norms that support school expectations and routines. Specific aspects of school structure and program may also contribute to the problem.

The problem is usually assessed as emerging when only a few youth are involved or the gang problem appears to have been introduced by newcomers to the community. A few youth, uncomfortable at school, wear gang colors and declare themselves to be gang members. The problem is regarded as chronic when gang violence and gang related crime are serious and sustained over a long period. In either case, when gang assaults or turf battles occur on school grounds, the school's system for dealing with the gang or gang prone youth has broken down. A set of differential approaches or strategies must be developed in emerging and chronic gang problem contexts.

Goals and Strategies

While there are limits to what the schools can do in regard to basic family and community factors which significantly contribute to the youth gang problem, there is much that schools, in conjunction with community agencies and groups, can do. Gang youth need strong support and control, a flexible and meaningful curriculum, positive role models and relationships with adults as well as access to opportunities for achievement at school, in work settings, and in the community. Schools can provide important opportunities for youth development and control of youth gang activity by virtue of the fact that schools can control their environment and can significantly influence the academic and social development of youth for 5 to 6 hours a day, 5 days a week through much of the year.

The approach of the school should be built around five strategies. The key strategy is provision of social opportunities, i.e., the development of academic competence and employment preparedness. Special remedial courses, training situations, and appropriate flexibility in school curricula and procedures must be provided. Second is social support which must be demonstrated by faculty respect for gang as well as non-gang youth particularly as the former tries to achieve success through legitimate means. While formal counseling of individuals and groups is important, positive relationships by teachers and administrators with youths who happen to be gang members are essential to the development of this support structure. Third, since gang youth are by definition in conflict with established norms of society, the school has a special responsibility to directly impose controls and enlist a variety of outside forces to assist in the supervision of gang youth while also protecting non-gang youth. Fourth, since the gang problem arises and is sustained through weakness of family and community structures, the school has to mobilize organizations including police, youth agencies, grassroots groups, and above all parents to deal with the school-related gang problem. The final strategy is organizational development and change. A school may need to change organizational structure and procedures to facilitate the above strategies. Required may be new or different mechanisms for decision making about curricula and ways of handling gang youth, e.g., special training for teachers and staff and new structures to integrate community and school efforts for dealing with the problem.

These goals and strategies must be given initial form and meaning through school leadership, especially the office of the principal. The special community-focussed school structure that is established, furthermore, must be related to and supported by the school district superintendent and a neighborhood or local community organization concerned with the problem. Little of significance can combat the youth gang problem in emerging or chronic problem contexts, unless there is coordination with and support by both the school system and the community.

A key structure for the development and implementation of these goals and strategies, particularly in the emerging gang problem setting, should be based on an alliance between the school and a local community-based agency or a group of such agencies. A special school community council focussed on the gang problem should be established. A team of local school administrators and program directors of local agencies should be organized to create a pattern of coordinated learning opportunities and services directed to gang member and gang prone youth. In the chronic gang problem community, the problem may be of such scope and severity that central responsibility for dealing with it must lie with a broadly based coalition of criminal justice agencies, local business and citizen groups as well as schools in central leadership positions. This coalition should also include youth agencies, churches, and representatives of city government.

Objectives

Our model proposes that primary academic competency objectives cannot be achieved, unless social objectives are also given due attention. The objectives of a special school program should be: 1) creation of a structure for flexible curriculum delivery to gang prone and gang member youth; 2) provision of vocational education, job preparation and employment experiences; 3) development of a learning support system; 4) early intervention to prevent and deter gang involvement (and drug abuse); 5) application of consistent sanctions and means to protect the school population and surrounding community from gang depredations; 6) parental involvement; 7) liaison, coordination, and outreach to community agencies and programs; and finally 8) appropriate training, staff selection, data retrieval systems and evaluation procedures to facilitate and determine the effectiveness of the programs developed.

For purposes of the present model, a gang prone youth is defined as an individual student, usually a younger student, who meets at least three of the following conditions: there are gang members in his family; he is performing poorly at school; he flashes gang signs, wears gang colors or special gang clothes; he associates regularly with known gang members; he has engaged in gang-related behaviors, especially conflict on school premises; or he has been arrested at least once for a gang or non-gang related offense. A committed gang member can be defined as a student who is generally recognized or acknowledges himself to be a regular or core gang member and has a record of two or more arrests for gang related incidents.

1) Delivery of a flexible curriculum

The mastery of basic skills leading to success in elementary and middle schools and ultimately to a high school degree or the GED equivalent can be delivered in one or two forms. Schools should supplement a basic academic core with remedial instruction within their own institution during regular school hours or after

school. At the high school level, schools should be able to refer gang prone students to alternative educational settings. Gang prone youth who are deficient learners especially in the upper grades of elementary school and lower grades of middle school should be especially targeted for enriched programs within their schools. However, alternative schools should be considered for drop-outs and even for chronically truant middle school students who have fallen far behind grade level. They often include the most committed gang youth. Many of them cannot be directed to return to, nor will they be accepted by, the traditional school system. High school students especially will need a program of special education, social support and supervision before returning to regular school classes or completing a G.E.D. perhaps in conjunction with a work experience.

In developing academic curricula for gang-active youth, educators usually find it most difficult to "mainstream" them. To successfully reintegrate students with acute learning disabilities into traditional school instruction requires a great deal of effort. Therefore, the easy or quick use of special classes or alternative schools for gang-affiliated youth might be inappropriate, particularly if the special classes or alternative settings project a sense of being a "losers" group. Young people with learning problems and moderate self-discipline may be able to learn with special assistance in a normal classroom setting or perhaps when they are a little older, in a normal school-work apprentice setting, with some counseling and social support. A further means to "mainstreaming" gang youth, should an alternative school setting be required, is to establish the school on neutral "turf," with ample support services, for example in a downtown business or commercial area.

2) Provision of vocational education, job preparation and placement

It is essential that a gang youth be literate in a variety of subjects essential to survival and achievement in an increasingly complex society. He must be adequately prepared at school for success in holding skilled level jobs. Social and vocational adaptation means that he must begin to acquire understanding of and familiarity with the legitimate world of work from an early age. He must become familiar with people who are successfully holding full time conventional jobs. He must himself become exposed to the incentives of a work structure in a part time or full time job. A curriculum which combines academic and vocational preparation is particularly useful for many gang prone and younger adolescent gang members.

Both teacher and principal need to introduce gang prone and gang member youth to the adult world of work responsibility and reward. The teacher should take responsibility in the early grades for arranging visits of workers from a variety of occupations to class as well as field trips to work sites. The principal or administrator should take key responsibility for placement of older gang member youth in community agencies and places of business and for integrating the school and work experience. A variety of part

time job and/or training opportunities should also be created in cooperation with probation officers and local business organization, chambers of commerce, and public employment services. These job placement sites will obviously need to be tailored to the needs of youth based, to the extent possible, on individual age, interest, and ability. More limited, less demanding training and job opportunities will obviously be required for younger youth, and more substantial skill and career oriented opportunities for older youth.

Special attention should be paid to the work supervisors or mentors at the job site as well as to issues of integration of the vocational and educational experiences. There is some evidence that good supervision at the work site helps the gang youth maintain interest and involvement in class work. Furthermore, supervision and instruction on the job or at a training site can be enhanced by use of volunteers, including senior citizens or retired "experts" who may be able to provide academic tutoring as well as vocational assistance.

For the older gang member or gang prone youth, job and school performance have to be adequately linked if the larger objectives of developing problem solving capacity and career development are to be achieved. Standards of class and job attendance and performance should be maintained in some interdependent fashion. Close working relationships and immediate feedback have to be established between the school and work site, especially with the tendency of some youth to "slack off" or retain close gang ties. Positive teacher interest and close work supervision of the gang youth is required so that he does not fall between the cracks of school routine and work pressures.

3) Development of a school learning support system

The special, additional efforts required to implement a flexible and meaningful curriculum to "mainstream" gang prone and gang member youth may be called a "learning support system." The classroom instructor, school counselor, and other staff must fulfill complex interrelated roles of teacher, policeman and social worker. The distractions and emergencies created by gang life tend to impede the learning process of gang and non-gang youth in class. Extraordinary dedication is required by the teacher to make headway with these difficult youth. A sensitive and caring approach is critical to the development of any system which has promise of success with gang youth. Back-up support by all staff and administrators is also necessary if the gang youth is to develop the social skills necessary to achieve success at school, on the job, and remain trouble free in the community.

The development of small student work groups emphasizing mutual cooperation should enhance learning. Cooperative group learning arrangements build on needs of the gang prone or gang youth for group identity and collaboration. Small study teams may accommodate different student learning styles and rates. Teachers will need to pay special attention to group formation, i.e., to adequately assess the strengths and weaknesses of each youth and

determine the extent to which members of the study group will work together productively. It is advisable that no more than one or two gang youths be assigned to a particular work group. Much depends on the strength of positive leadership provided by the non-gang members of the group.

Teachers must be careful to avoid coaptation or intimidation by gang youth of other non-gang youth. Special care may be required in assigning students from different gangs in conflict with each other to the same class. However, a sensitive, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher may be able to use a potential conflict or tense situation for specific dispute resolution purposes, but there are risks involved. The teacher needs to understand group process and use it for the social benefit of the youth involved. He must also have developed close and positive relationships with his class.

In their efforts to enhance the academic achievement of gang prone and gang member youth, teachers should not emphasize performance standards to the exclusion of the nature and quality of the learning process. A system of points or credits that rewards students for personal progress, nature of contribution to the group's achievement, as well as actual performance is useful. Such an approach enhances a gang youth's self-esteem in a non-gang context and at the same time reasonably meets "real" world and school standards.

Situations need to be developed in which the gang youth's achievements in class or on a particular work project are advertised or rewarded. Thus certificates of commendation should be given out on a frequent basis. Rewards for academic progress may include special jobs, pleasurable assignments, and field trips. The notion of failure must be avoided as much as possible. The student who is persistently weak at academic tasks may have to achieve his status and rewards in other useful situations at school, e.g., as organizer of athletic events, school monitor. But persistent efforts must be made to assist the youth to succeed in academic or vocational learning situations.

It is likely that school and class size are less important than the teacher's positive personal long-term contact with a youth gang member. There is some evidence that where teachers or staff have personalized, positive relations with gang members, violence and disruptive acts are reduced at least in the classroom or school context. Where resources permit, a team of teachers and staff should be established to target particular youth and develop a stronger more integrated pattern of academic and social support as well as control relationships encouraging both academic achievement and conforming behavior by gang youth.

Support staff, whether social workers, coaches, tutors, psychologists, security personnel, community agency professionals, parents and even community residents can supplement the teacher's efforts. Ideally they should all meet together periodically as members of an explicit and recognized team to consider and assist the student with his academic and social progress. A combined academic and human services approach is important. Home visits,

assistance to families of gang youth, e.g., job and educational referrals for parents, may be indirectly but extraordinarily beneficial to the gang youth in reducing home pressures on the youth and providing additional support for the efforts of the teacher.

Finally, school administrative leadership is critical to the development of a combined school-community support system. The principal should play not only the central role in facilitating a positive school climate, setting standards, and insuring that fair and consistent treatment exists for all students. He must also demonstrate special knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the youth gang problem. He must also be able to combine extra support with social controls on gang prone youth while protecting non-gang youth and maintaining academic integrity at the school. The principal plays a complex role in which he or the assistant principal meets with police, youth agency personnel, community organizations, and even gang leaders or ex-gang leaders in the community to work through a whole variety of problems which may impede the learning support system at school.

4) Early intervention to prevent and deter gang involvement (and drug abuse)

The school must undertake a variety of programs to prevent and deter gang activity, particularly in its early stages. Counseling, crisis intervention and informal education should be joined with close supervision to deal with the gang behaviors of younger students. The school should be especially alert to those risk factors (described above) which incline youth to gang membership. The following methods should be employed to prevent gang activity and drug abuse, and to deter and counsel youth who begin to engage in delinquent and violent youth gang behavior.

Anti-gang Curricula Elementary schools in many cities throughout the country have been the settings for a variety of discussion and lecture programs on the dangers of, and ways to avoid, gang membership and its activities. DARE (Drug Awareness Resistance Education), SANE (Substance Abuse Narcotics Education), and other programs have been introduced by police or sheriffs departments and some youth agencies. Schools themselves have also developed their own gang curricula for use in the early grades. These programs are mainly preventive and guide youth from neighborhoods with high drug use and gang activity in the maintenance of pro-social behavior. They provide discussion opportunities for youth to examine and make correct decisions, and how to learn to avoid peer pressure and experimentation with anti-social behaviors destructive to themselves and their communities. By and large these programs are directed mainly at drug prevention, and deal with gang prevention only on a secondary basis. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that they are successful in promoting positive attitudes and possibly some positive behavioral change particularly for youth at minimal risk for drug use and/or gang behavior.

Some schools have developed dispute resolution and values change curricula. Sometimes there is discussion of the dangers of firearms to resolve interpersonal disputes. These curricula tend to be made available to a broad cross section of students. However, it's not clear that such informational programs are sufficient to affect the attitudes and behavior of youth more fully engaged in gang activity. The carrying of weapons to school, even guns, is not an uncommon occurrence in chronic gang problem neighborhoods. Adequate security arrangements including use of metal detectors and police presence are as essential as anti-weapons curricula.

Few school-based programs have been established to target youth who are already committed gang members, while still in middle school and as they enter (or do not enter) high school. The programs available tend to be non-curricular. They do not involve gang youth in some type of participatory classroom or field learning experience. They involve mainly the participation of adults as enforcers of rules and regulations or punishments. They emphasize suppression, in which special surveillance, searches, or patrols are provided. Some local police and/or school security personnel as well as parent and youth or agency groups will patrol the streets during school hours, for example, to identify and apprehend truants, especially those likely to be gang bangers. The truants may be directed to a special community site, school or agency outpost to which parents are then called and appropriate arrangements made to assist with the reintegration of the youth back to school.

An alternate approach involves a school-community staff team, as suggested above, in the development of a more comprehensive program response with student involvement. The team identifies gang youth and provides them with extra supervision and services, including remedial teaching and discussion groups. An assistant principal and a school or community-based agency outreach staff, along with special teachers, may be assigned responsibility to the development of such a program. A youth who commits an infraction, especially gang-related, will be suspended from school, required to participate in values change or dispute resolution seminars, and receive special supervision to make sure he completes his classwork. If a gang youth is absent, outreach personnel should go to the youth's home or search the neighborhood to bring him to school. At the same time special services should be provided both to the family and youth, utilizing a school community-based psychiatrist or psychologist. Special recreational, cultural, as well as educational visits to prisons and drug treatment facilities may also be provided to such gang youth.

Other mechanisms for involving committed gang youth in experiences to change attitudes and behaviors include peer group counseling, peer conflict resolution teams, and other devices in which youth assess or critique each other's gang-related problems and develop constructive ways for dealing with them. It is critically important that staff at school and from outside service agencies closely coordinate their efforts in the creation of

experiences directed to gang youth, including combined school and community service projects such as graffiti elimination, murals, school beautification, camping and leadership development.

5) Application of consistent sanctions and creation of means to protect the school and community from youth gang depredations

There are at least three components to an effective suppression approach in respect to youth gang problems in a school setting. They include 1) the development of a school gang code including guidelines specifying an appropriate response by teachers and staff to gang behavior, and a mechanism or set of procedures for dealing with gang delinquency after it occurs. The effectiveness of sanctions, however, depends not simply on rule enforcement but 2) their application within a context of positive relationships and open communication among principal, teachers, staff, parents, community-based agency workers, and all students, including gang youth.

School authorities should establish and communicate rules of school conduct, particularly relevant to prohibition of gang behavior, and enforce them firmly and fairly. Thus, gang attire, symbols, signs, graffiti, sale, possession or use of weapons, drugs, and certain behavioral patterns (for example, body language) which can be clearly related to gang activity should not be permitted. The more serious the gang behavior, the more severe the school's reaction or punishment should be. However, gang patterns may change from year to year and interpretations of serious behavior and the school's response should be attuned to these changes.

Furthermore, it may be appropriate to 3) distinguish between gang and non-gang related activity of youth gang members. While gang members may be responsible for a large amount of delinquent and disruptive behavior, much of it may be of an individual nature and not gang related, thereby suggesting that gang control strategies per se may be inappropriate. In addition, delinquent gang or non-gang behavior may not always be related to academic performance. Some gang youth are very bright and may even perform well academically at school. Yet the school has responsibility for the youth's social and moral as well as academic development.

The teacher should assess the meaning of gang-related behavior both for the youth's academic and social development and that of other students in class. He should not be gullible and duped into use of or toleration of gang symbols or behaviors. The teacher needs to devise appropriate teaching strategies that will take into consideration the interests and abilities of gang youth as well as protection of other class members. Again special attention needs to be paid to development of a positive relationship with gang youth in terms of an appropriate blend of support and control. The teacher must try to understand the dynamics of gang life as it affects the youth's behavior and also that of the other students in the class.

The teacher should refrain from quick calls for assistance from administrative and security personnel, except in the face of

clear-cut physical threat to students or teachers, or in situations in which gang behavior is a major impediment to teaching. The teacher, based on his relationship with all students in the class, is in the best position to handle most crisis situations. The working through of a series of problems by the teacher is an appropriate way to ensure progress and development for both gang youth and the class as a whole. Even when it is necessary to suspend a gang youth, a positive and continued relationship by the teacher with the youth should still be maintained so that academic and social development is assured to the fullest extent possible.

Several mechanisms should be in place for dealing with gang delinquency and outbreaks of violence in addition to punishment by a school disciplinarian, usually an assistant principal. Student, faculty/staff/parent or task force groups can be formed to assess the gang problem and advise on measures to be taken. In emergencies these groups or task forces can be used as crisis teams to deal with offenders, victims, and others affected by gang incidents.

Finally, a cautionary word is in order, if a decision is made to transfer a gang youth from one school to another because his gang activities constitute a serious threat to other students or he himself is subject to assaults, it is important to engage and follow through on a process beneficial to the youth transferred. The administration of the school to which the youth is to be transferred as well as the youth himself and his parents should be thoroughly briefed. Expectations and contracts for future improved behavior, special services by and for the youth and his family should be clarified and agreed upon. Furthermore, it is important that the youth not "fall between the cracks." School transfers can be an easy device to get the youth out of the system, if there is no follow through. The gang youth at age 14 or 15 years becomes in effect a permanent truant and premature dropout when no one pays attention to the fact he does not show up at the school to which he is transferred.

"Safe" or drug free zones for students should also be established around schools and safe passage guaranteed for students going to and coming from school. City or state ordinances may already be in effect requiring extra law enforcement and enhanced sentences for drug possession and sale as well as weapons possession and use in the vicinity of the school. In this gang activity deterrent process, special attention is also required to safeguard rights of student privacy, confidentiality of records, free expression, and due process in actions taken against gang member students.

6) Parental Involvement

Parents are essential to any structure and process established to deal with the gang problem on school grounds. They need to be involved as part of the provision of social opportunities as well as those of suppression, social intervention or support, and community mobilization. Parents need to help their children internalize those norms and values that will help them make the

best possible use of the school's educational program. Some distinctions need to be made, however, as to which kinds of parents are involved in these efforts, whether parents of gang youths, parents of non-gang youths, or parents of youths who may be innocent victims in gang incidents.

Most parents will be concerned with the safety and security of their children attending school. They should be involved in parent group meetings, street patrols as well as monitoring in and out of school to detect and prevent gang activities including providing assistance to teachers and staff in carrying out class and field trip activities. Parents, by their presence, can exercise a certain degree of natural control which is calming both to teachers and students. Essential control and punishment for infraction of rules, however, must lie with principals and teachers. By and large, parents of youth who are not in gangs are more likely to participate in these efforts, although there may be significant exceptions. Occasionally a parent may be a community leader and school activist and still have a child who is a gang member.

The challenge to the principal and the teacher is to engage the passive or reluctant parent in addressing the problems of his child who is gang prone or a gang member. The parent may deny knowledge of his or her child's involvement in gang activities or, if he or she does acknowledge it, demonstrate an inability to deal with him. Special contracts--sometimes formal--may be required among parent, youth, and the school to maintain the youth's conformity to school expectations. Specific duties or responsibilities of parent and youth will have to be spelled out. At the same time a variety of social or psychological services or referrals to obtain help for the parent and youth are required. Furthermore, effort should be made to persuade parents with problem youth to participate in mutual support groups.

Of special interest to parents, including teenage gang member parents, may be parenting or parent-education classes conducted by school or outside community youth agency personnel to deal with a range of issues related to child development, child care, and optimizing the student's performance at school, with special attention to related youth gang problems. Efforts should also be directed to involvement of parents of gang youth in activities of personal and social interest to them, including field trips, picnics, typing or computer learning classes, and other general learning activities. The assumption is that if parents' own needs are met, this may improve the capacity of the parents to supervise, support, and guide their children.

Experienced parents, particularly those who have successfully dealt with their own gang member children, may be especially useful as members of a special parent committee. These parents can assist with a variety of gang prevention and control programs, including visiting homes of school parents whose children are currently causing gang problems, assisting teachers directly in class to manage potential gang situations, and acting as advocates or representatives on school and school-community task groups addressing youth gang issues.

7) Outreach to Community Agencies

The youth gang problem largely arises as a result of the interaction of conditions of poverty and social disorganization, including the failure of local organizations and community to consensually and appropriately perceive and collectively act on the problem. In most socially and economically deprived communities, the school represents the strongest or most viable legitimate social institution. But it tends not to serve as a major base for addressing local community problems. Ideally it should or can be a key mechanism for integrating or mobilizing community efforts, especially as they directly touch on the school-related youth gang problem.

The school should establish liaison relationships with a variety of outside organizations and agencies which have knowledge and data about the problem and can provide services and energies to deal with it. The police, probation, youth service agencies, and local community groups are often already involved with these problems. Both police and youth serving agencies can be extremely useful to the school with information about youth gangs and how to deal with them. The community-based youth agency in the area can be a valuable partner in joint programs dealing with gang prone youth. Police, probation, youth service personnel, and other experts should be used on a regular basis for educating students, teachers, and staff about the problem. Contact with PTA representatives and committees of local organizations and churches concerned with youth problems and program should also be established on a regular basis.

The school principal, the community-based youth agency director, and other organizational representatives need to accept the critical importance of close cooperation with each other in sharing service resources, not only for the benefit of gang and non-gang students but for their own particular organization's interest and benefit. For example, if the youth gang problem is reduced, more students will be in daily attendance at school and state funding for schools will automatically increase; if youth truant less often; police recorded community burglary and larceny rates will go down; and if youth agency activities are better attended accountability of the agency will rise in the eyes of the United Fund or other funding sources.

Local businesses and the media can also be participants in this larger community developmental process, particularly through outreach efforts to support certain community oriented school projects. Positive community wide recognition should be given to individual "problem" youth who participate in activities which make a contribution to community well being, particularly for leadership in community clean-up, graffiti expunging campaigns, mural projects and other activities sponsored by the schools in which gang prone and gang member youth play an important role.

An extension of the outreach notion is use of the school as a community base or center for the provision of a whole range of protective, preventive and remedial health, educational, training, employment, and other services focussed on the needs of youth,

including gang prone and gang member youth and their parents. This more comprehensive approach means that a variety of agencies should have service resources situated directly in the school. This approach requires that these human services be closely integrated with those of the school. Thus, teams of teachers, youth agency, social service and health workers as well as parents, representatives of business, police and probation would be available to deal with various issues related to youth gang problems.

This targeted gang member or gang prone approach could be part of a more general approach which targets all youth at different levels of risk. In this broader preventive approach, specific schools and locations in the community rather than certain types of youth would be targeted for services and special activities. Again special care should be taken that more intractable gang prone and gang member youth are not excluded or receive lower priority attention in such programs.

8) Staff Selection, Training, Data Systems, and Evaluation

School success in dealing with youth gang problems will depend on the nature of school structure and processes, and especially the quality of staff and information developed to address the problem. The right staff must be selected and trained, appropriate information acquired, managed and transmitted, and programs in due course evaluated.

School personnel who have special leadership, school security or student rehabilitation responsibility in respect to gang youths should be selected with particular criteria in mind: 1) warmth, friendliness, a sense of humor, and a capacity to reach out and relate to youth in both formal or informal settings, including school playgrounds and athletic fields or the youth's home; 2) sensitivity to the interests and needs of adolescents, with an ability not to be intimidated by the youth's testing behaviors; 3) an ability to stand firm on rules and regulations which the teacher or staff person can spell out clearly, and especially be able to justify; 4) understanding of adolescent development, gang subculture and behavior at school and in the local community; and 5) an ability to establish productive relationships with parents and representatives of key local organizations, including law enforcement and grassroots groups. Security and other staff in close contact with gang youth should not be active gang members or even strongly identified with a particular gang. Police checks may be required.

Training in most respects serves to develop or enhance abilities and knowledge which many school personnel already bring to the job. Training should increase the teacher's or staff person's knowledge of gangs and community resources for dealing with gang members and their families. Individual and group counseling skills especially in relating to gang crisis situations should be developed. Information should be continually updated on local gang activities, including codes, symbols, and inter group relationships. A key concern of training should be development of

ways to enhance both self-esteem and self-discipline of gang youth. Criminal justice personnel, especially police as well as community agency and local grassroots representatives, other outside experts should be involved in these special teacher, staff, and school security gang training institutes and seminars.

Gathering and sharing information on gangs are extremely important tasks in the development of an information system to identify, track, investigate, suppress and assist gang youth. The school system, particularly in large cities, should have a centralized system for identifying student gang members and recording gang-related acts, particularly disruptive and drug-related activity. The analysis of these records becomes a basis for school and school system policy to deal more effectively with the problem in terms of assignment of security personnel and development of targeted intervention programs. These records also assist in focussing efforts on certain youth, whether first time "offenders" or repeaters, for appropriate special supervision and services.

These records, however, can be abused by school administrators, teachers, and other staff, if they serve to exclude youth from school, subject the youth to harassment and stigmatization, and violate normal student rights and privileges. It may be appropriate for only certain school personnel to have access to these records and for their use to be carefully monitored. Procedures for maintaining such files should be developed by a special committee or task force, containing representatives both of school, local community, and parent representatives.

In general, no outside agencies, including the police, should have access to these files. Both parents and students should complete forms which authorize the release of specific types of information to certain sources desiring information without going through a formal administrative or legal process. This does not mean that selected information on specific youth who are clearly chronic gang offenders cannot be shared informally by school authorities with security personnel and police. The nature of informal or less than formal communication of such information should be carefully monitored, however. If the youth is already known to the justice system, especially if he is on probation or parole, the full sharing of school information may be required. On the other hand, a full sharing of justice system information by criminal justice personnel with school authorities may not be appropriate, particularly if the gang youth is performing reasonably well in school.

Such data systems provide a critically important basis for testing the effectiveness of prevention, rehabilitation, and control programs. But they must be developed and used judiciously. Periodic evaluation should determine who is being classified as a gang youth and for what behaviors; what services or special treatment such students receive, and what benefits or costs result from the programs established. Benefits to be expected would be improvement in academic achievement by gang and non-gang youth,

reduction of gang and non-gang delinquent behavior, and success in keeping potential drop-out youth, especially gang members in school.