

## **Monterey County Gang Violence Prevention Initiative – Executive Summary**

**Overview:** The Monterey County Gang Violence Prevention Initiative is a county-wide effort to address a prevalent and complex social issue which is a top County priority.

**Statement of the problem and solution:** Monterey County for years has experienced high rates of gang-related violence, especially among young people. While the City of Salinas remains the area of highest concentration of gang-related violence, gang related shootings and homicides in the south and west regions of the county are on the rise. Regardless of where specific incidences occur, gang violence is a countywide issue. Monterey County ranked #1 in the state of California for highest homicide rate per capita in 2009, 2010 and 2012 and ranked #2 in 2011. In 2012, 88% of youth homicides were gang-related (Violence Policy Center: Lost Youth).

**Innovation, resourcefulness, vision, uniqueness and risk-taking:** Over the years, numerous collaboratives have been formed with the goal of reducing gang violence. Yet, new flare-ups are common and so far efforts to break the cycle of violence systemically – have not been sustainable over the long term. In response, the Board of Supervisors decided in the spring of 2012 that it would need a new approach and commissioned the development of Strategic Plan for Gang Violence Prevention. The Board approved the plan in May 2013 and subsequently requested the development of an action plan that would take the key findings of the strategic plan and turn them into actionable implementation steps.

The Monterey County Gang Violence Prevention Initiative (MCGVP) has become the nexus through which County departments are beginning to leverage its own investments as well as that of others and seek to align them for maximum impact.

The MCGVP Initiative has established an infrastructure and framework in which County operated systems are able to arrive at a common language by developing focus areas that lead to unraveling root causes that lead youth to gang involvement and eventual criminal activity. Additionally, County departments are identifying methods for working towards a thorough assessment to build a shared measurement process where multi-disciplinary approaches may be employed and provide youth with a holistic approach, meeting critical and basic needs to ensure success in their participation of any program or service offered.

Using the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) model for Gang Violence Prevention and Reduction, the MCGVP Initiative focuses on key indicators that adequately fit the entire spectrum of prevention: Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement and Reentry. The key indicators are also inclusive of a public health approach which takes the root causes and risk factors

into consideration. Blending both a public health approach with a justice focus is innovative and complex, much like the problem of youth and gang violence.

The MCGVP Initiative's focus areas are:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency
- Employment Opportunities for Youth
- Youth have opportunities for meaningful participation in school and in their community (California Healthy Kids Survey)
- Truancy
- Juvenile and Adult Recidivism

Furthermore, the MCGVP Initiative acknowledges and gives adequate attention to cultural, racial and ethnic disparities as identified in the demographics of youth most impacted by gang violence and gang involvement. The MCGVP Initiative has led the way for County officials and leaders to become engaged in partnerships with entities such as the California Endowment, Building Health Communities Initiative and grassroots community partners who are focused on social justice efforts.

Through the MCGVP Initiative, Monterey County is now part of the national Governing for Racial Equity Network, the national My Brother's Keeper Initiative, and the California Assembly Members Boys and Men of Color initiative. Through collaboration of these initiatives, the MCGVP has an active role in community engagement, building relationships with Justice Partners, serve as a liaison between community and local law enforcement agencies throughout Monterey County, develop methods for evaluating policies and practices that may be unintentionally further marginalizing communities of color.

**Replicability of the program/project:** Using a Collective Impact Model, the development of an initiative such as the MCGVP is replicable anywhere and with focus on a complex social issue. The MCGVP has taken collaboration to a level where partners work closer and more effectively with existing resources.

**Cost-effectiveness of the program/project:** The MCGVP Initiative leverages existing funds and seeks opportunities for partnerships with both internal and external (community) partners for fund development, making the project cost effective. The total project budget is: \$516,132 and came within budget. The Funding source is the County General Fund. The measure for increased productivity is in the increase of partnerships between community and county partners and the results of those partnerships by increased opportunities for youth involvement and employment.

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