

Multnomah County Youth Gang Services Report to the Board of County Commissioners

November 1, 2005

Introduction

This report outlines recommendations from the *Youth Gang Services Work Group* regarding the current and future investment of County resources for youth gang prevention services.

Process

In early 2005, the Department of Community Justice (DCJ) and the Department of School and Community Partnerships (DSCP) began to prepare for a competitive procurement process for current youth gang prevention services.

At the same time, as a result of the County's budget process, the Board directed DCJ, DSCP, and the Department of County Human Services (DCHS) to examine their various program offers related to youth gang prevention services in order to determine any areas of duplication and identify opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

In late spring, Chair Linn and Commissioner Cruz created an internal, cross county work group. The Work Group was charged with responding to the budget note and then creating the information necessary to conduct the required competitive procurement process.

The Work Group has met regularly for approximately the past 6 months. The recommendations in this report are built upon existing community plans and reports, including the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council's (LPSCC) Gang Report, the Latino Gang Report, the NE Rescue Plan, and others. The Work Group began by gathering information about the current community environment and any recent best practice research. The Group then reviewed current service delivery data and evaluated current services in light of that information. The result is a proposed service model that is targeted to maximize the effectiveness of the limited resources available.

The Work Group held a feedback session on September 29, 2005 with approximately 30 community representatives on the draft service model. Members have participated in the Chair/Mayor's Summit process to ensure that there is good collaboration between the two processes, and have briefed LPSCC on the proposed model and process.

Current Environment

While concern about gang activity has reemerged recently with increased shootings in downtown and northeast Portland and Latino gang violence in east

Multnomah County, funding for services has decreased significantly in the last several years and will decrease again next year. Since 2001, due to a number of state and county budget cuts, funding for several programs for youth has decreased including:

Juvenile Diversion: Diversion services decreased from serving 2000 youth a year to approximately 200 a year. Youth served have committed a misdemeanor or non-person felony offense and are given the opportunity to receive services in the community and perform community service in lieu of probation supervision. This program served many youth who were just beginning to exhibit juvenile delinquency. Youth now receive a letter instructing them to not offend again.

School Attendance Initiative: SAI provided outreach to youth who were not attending school. The program was very successful at returning youth in kindergarten through eighth grade to school. In 2001, services were provided to all schools in the county. Now, services are incorporated into SUN schools, and the outreach component has been drastically reduced.

Youth Gang Outreach Services: These community-based services were funded by a \$1 million dollar federal Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) that has been decreased to approximately \$200,000. The County switched the funding of the gang outreach services to ITAX and the remaining JABG funds will be eliminated in the next two years.

AITP: The Assessment Intervention and Treatment program was a 15-bed secure residential assessment program for youth exhibiting violence and mental health issues. The program provided a 30 day comprehensive assessment and youth were placed from the program in appropriate services. The program was designed specifically to address gang involved youth. This program was eliminated.

Juvenile Counseling Assistants: Juvenile Counseling Assistants (JCAs) assisted youth on probation to meet their basic needs and comply with conditions of probation such as attending treatment groups, reporting to community service and attending school. In recent budget cuts, these services have been eliminated and youth must follow through with these expectations without this assistance.

Since 2001, the disinvestment in these and other services amounts to approximately \$9 million dollars. None of these programs alone was eliminating gang behavior; however, collectively these programs were improving the educational, mental health, and basic needs assistance for populations of youth that can be recruited into gangs or were already involved in gangs. These programs were developed as best practices in the areas of truancy, juvenile delinquency, and gang violence prevention. Multnomah County knows how to implement effective comprehensive programming; at this time we do not have the

resources to fund all of the services it would take to address all of the needs. This makes the decisions about where to allocate our very limited funds even more critical.

Proposed Service Model

The County will seek to purchase culturally and gender specific services for young people and their families using a holistic approach and a menu of services along a continuum intervention levels.

The proposed service model seeks to target the County's investment more specifically to two primary populations of youth:

- Young people who are at highest risk of becoming a gang member or who are already involved with gangs but have not yet entered the juvenile justice system; and,
- Young people who are gang members and who are fully engaged in the juvenile justice system.

Please see attached.

Desired Outcomes and Target Service Numbers

The County will evaluate these service efforts based upon both identified risk factors for the two populations and the desired outcomes for them.

Community based gang prevention services will end gang involvement or prevent involvement with the juvenile justice system by building skills proven to impact identified risk factors.

System based gang intervention services will decrease recidivism and Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) commitments by building skills proven to reduce the potential for subsequent recidivism as a result of involvement with the juvenile justice system.

Target numbers will be negotiated with specific providers and will reflect the priority of holistic, effective service with measurable outcomes to the greatest number of young people and families as possible. The County will seek out the quality of the service provision, rather than the quantity of contacts.

Please see attached.

Funding

In FY 05-06, there is approximately \$2,126,063 of contract service funds available for youth gang prevention services.

Of that amount, approximately \$1,936,309 is potentially available for contract services. The Group recommends that \$1,025,899/(53%) be allocated to community based prevention services and \$910,410/(47%) be allocated to system based intervention services.

In addition, there is approximately \$189,754 in one-time-only funds that may be available to assist with the transition to this new program model or other appropriate needs.

Policy Issues

Leadership When gang violence reemerges episodically it becomes a concern for policy leaders, the media, and the public. However, we know it takes on-going, well resourced efforts to address complex social and legal issues like gang involvement. Multnomah County and the cities of Gresham and Portland need to consider how a sustained focus on gang violence can be achieved. The county and cities may wish to consider forecasting models like those used to forecast prison populations to forecast the need for prevention and intervention services to youth populations.

While leadership is concerned now with the reemergence of gang violence, it is time to invest in both long-term and short-term strategies. Prevention should be a priority as well as intervention to address an immediate crisis.

ITAX and JABG At the present time, of the \$2.5 million that the county spends on gang services and probation supervision of gang involved youth \$750,000 is ITAX funds and \$200,000 is JABG funds. As both these funding sources are eliminated next year, the county must consider how to fund these critical services. This is of particular significance since gang services and gang related services have been cut significantly in the last 4 years.

Investment The budget crisis experienced by Multnomah County and the state since 2001 and the shift of federal funding to homeland security has resulted in a disinvestment in programs that help keep youth from entering gangs and help them leave gangs. At this time, the challenge is to maintain the funding level that is left and allocate the remaining funds in the most effective way possible.

On a practical level, if the ITAX funds currently funding gang outreach services are not replaced in 2006, and/or other funds are cut, it does not make sense to conduct an extensive Request for Proposals process this year.

Education and Youth Development When young people become involved in gangs it impacts all aspects of their lives and their communities. In order to address gang involvement and gang violence, many organizations must respond to the needs of these youth. Deep links to the education system are key

to addressing gangs. If youth can stay engaged in school, return to school when they have left, and have assistance controlling their behavior in school, the chances that they will leave their gang involvement are significantly greater. Multnomah County and the cities must bring schools to the table to address gang behavior and keep youth in school.

Summit Recently Chair Diane Linn and Mayor Tom Potter held a gang summit with community leaders and policy makers to discuss recent gang violence. That discussion highlighted the need to reinvest in gang prevention and intervention services and create a single point of contact for gang issues between the cities and the county. Other recommendations will be coming from a small workgroup created at the summit. These may include recommendations to restart some of the programs that have been eliminated in the last several years.

Nest Steps and Timeline

After the Board has been briefed on the proposed service model, the Work Group will continue to meet and begin to develop a competitive procurement process, including allocation formulas, administrative issues, contracting guidelines, etc.

The Work Group envisions a single Request for Proposals (RFP) representing all County investment across departments to be let in January 2006. Anticipating awards by March 2006, the Work Group will facilitate whatever transition processes need to occur from April through June 2006.

The Work Group will also work to ensure that program offers in the upcoming budget process are developed and written collaboratively, and that they reflect the new model.