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“Addressing Gangs: What’s Effective? What’s Not”

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During the past decade concerns about the violence associated with guns, drugs, and gangs have led communities across the United States to seek new solutions to combat gang violence. Richmond has not been immune to these concerns. Many factors impact the rise of gangs and violent crime in our community, including a lack of educational and job opportunities, conflicts resolved by violence, lack of coordination among law enforcement agencies and the availability of drugs and guns. The Richmond Police Department has sought to develop a focused and comprehensive violent crime and gang strategy which addresses the systemic enablers of crime and that will create lasting partnerships with the community and local and federal law enforcement partners.

Gang Reduction and Intervention Program - GRIP

Virginia has not been immune to the growing gang culture that has gripped the nation, and officials in the Commonwealth began formally tracking gang activity in 1992. The results of three Virginia State Police surveys, conducted from 1992 to 1994, indicate the presence of gangs throughout Virginia, with the greatest concentrations in urban areas. Survey results also indicate that gang activity was “transplanted” when gang members moved or sought new market expansions. This finding has implications concerning the containment and elimination of gangs, rather than the simple removal of gangs from a community.

In Richmond many of the individuals who are participating in violent crimes belong to an organized local group or a loosely associated gang, often called “Boys” or “Crews.” The members of the “Boys” are often associated through criminal business dealings, familial ties, or geographic territorial ties.

In 2004 the City of Richmond was awarded a federal grant to combat gang violence and the influence of gangs on youth and our communities. GRIP is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (“OJP”), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (“OJJDP”). The purpose of the grant is to significantly reduce gang activity in targeted neighborhoods through the integration of local, state and federal resources and utilizing the GRIP grant to fill gaps in existing services. OJJDP selected four pilot cities to receive this grant: Richmond, Virginia; Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; and North Miami Beach, FL. Each site was awarded a grant in the amount of \$2.5 million dollars.

Richmond's program is administered by the Virginia Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and is a collaborative effort between the City of Richmond ("Richmond"), and federal, state and local partners focusing on targeted communities. The grant is limited to this geographic area which was chosen due to existing program investment, strong indicators of citizen involvement, high crime and gang activity.

GRIP features the following elements:

- Integration of local, state and federal resources to stabilize and build pro-social influences and reduce anti-social influences in challenged communities.
- Identification and coordination of existing resources, programs and services that address known risk factors in the community, and identification of gaps in existing activities.
- Application of state-of-the-art practices in primary prevention, secondary prevention, gang intervention, suppression and reentry to enhance existing activities and fill gaps across the full range of risk factors for delinquency and across the broadest possible age range.

The four broad program categories are:

Primary Prevention Primary prevention includes a wide variety of activities that focus on the entire population in high-crime, high-risk communities. Programs that effectively reduce community risk factors or provide protective factors for community members are considered primary prevention. The primary prevention strategy for GRIP centers around providing a single one-stop service and resource center that facilitates effective distribution of services.

Primary Prevention

- Targets entire population in high-crime, high-risk areas
- Encompasses programs that address risk and protective factors
- Key component is a one-stop service and resource center
- Includes prenatal and infancy support, after school and summer programs, and truancy and drop out prevention

Secondary Prevention It is essential to identify high-risk youth and provide focused services to avoid a pattern of increasing anti-social behavior. OJJDP-funded longitudinal research has found that serious, chronic offenders typically express their early problem behaviors at about age 7, with more serious problem behaviors occurring in subsequent years until first contact with the juvenile court at an average age of 14.5 years. The 7.5 years between the onset of early problem behaviors and court contact mark a window of opportunity to help these youth avoid a path of serious delinquency and gang involvement.

Secondary Prevention

- Identifies youth and children at high risk and provides services to prevent delinquency and gang involvement. Window of opportunity from ages 7 to 14
- Identifies other at-risk children and provides age-appropriate services and monitoring
- Involves schools, community-based organizations, and faith-based groups

Intervention Active gang members, gang members returning to the community from confinement, and youth closely associated with active gang members often have committed one or more serious offenses and are at high risk of further delinquency. These youth typically range in age from the early teens to the early twenties and are often on probation or parole. However, some will not be involved with the justice system and most will be resistant to traditional services. GRIP incorporates aggressive outreach and recruitment efforts that are needed to ensure that these high-risk individuals and their families receive needed services. Gang-involved youth are identified and referred to an intervention team composed of professionals from multiple sources such as probation, law enforcement, schools, mental health services, child protective services, community and faith-based organizations. This intervention team conducts risk and needs assessments for youth and develops an intervention plan that includes family members and blends services and opportunities with close monitoring and accountability. Because these youth are at the highest risk for involvement with gangs, intervention activities are likely to include individualized services, monitoring, and case management with outreach to family members over extended periods of time. Examples of services include help with educational and job opportunities, and meeting conditions of probation such as community service or drug treatment. The nature of the target population makes gang intervention difficult and potentially dangerous; therefore, it requires careful planning and coordination. However, the benefits of gang intervention become evident when serious offenders discontinue offending and no longer serve as negative role models for other youth in the community.

Intervention:

- Targets active gang members, close associates, and gang members returning from confinement
- Requires aggressive outreach, ongoing recruitment, and careful planning and coordination
- Multidisciplinary intervention team provides risk and needs assessment, intervention planning, and monitoring

Direct Gang Suppression and Reentry Where prevention and intervention fail, gang leaders are identified and targeted for an aggressive suppression efforts. Where appropriate, enhanced sentences, and federal charges are used to effectively remove the most dangerous and influential gang members from the community. Gang suppression is a cooperative effort incorporating federal, state, and local law enforcement and using federal gun, drug, and RICO laws where appropriate. For less serious offenders, a system of graduated sanctions (including community-based sanctions) will be developed to hold all offenders accountable and to match offenses with comparable sanctions.

Suppression

- Targets gang leaders for aggressive suppression
- Involves federal, state, and local law enforcement where appropriate
- Removes dangerous and influential gang members from the community by effective use of enhanced sentences, federal charges, and vertical prosecution
- Develops a system of graduated sanctions (including community-based measures) for less serious offenders

Reentry (Community-based)

- Targets serious and gang-involved offenders who face multiple challenges to reentering their communities
- Provides appropriate services and criminal/juvenile justice supervision
- Requires information sharing and coordination between confinement facilities, probation/parole, and community intervention service providers

The Richmond Police Department has developed partnerships with numerous public and private organizations through our relationship with GRIP. These partnerships include:

One Stop Resource Center: The GRIP One Stop celebrated its one year anniversary at its current location on March 26th. This location is for service providers to use to provide services directly to the community. It is also serves as a meeting location.

GRIP Intervention Team: GRIP Intervention Team consists of a highly dedicated team and outreach worker. Agencies which have participants participating on the Intervention Team include the Virginia Attorney General's Office, the Richmond Police Department, Adult and Juvenile Probation, Richmond Public Schools, Social Service Agencies, Truancy, Mental Health, Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, as well as a variety of other agencies. This team receives referrals of gang-involved youth for review.

After School Programs: GRIP has funded four different after school programs in the target area. GRIP funded the Boys & Girls Clubs located at Southwood and Southside by providing funding for extended hours and bilingual staff. Boys & Girls Club has agreed to sustain their extended hours as a result of this funding. GRIP provided funding to the

Richmond Outreach Center to assist with fuel costs for buses to go into the target area and bring kids back to the ROC for after school programs. The ROC continues to provide this service even after the funding period has expired. GRIP funded the Broad Rock Library's Homework Help Program for two years. Youth can go to the Broad Rock Library to obtain help from certified teachers with homework and special assignments.

Class Action Camp: Richmond Police Officers and staff from the Attorney General's Office work with City youth to provide them with a law-related curriculum in a camp style setting.

Truancy and Drop Out Prevention: GRIP has provided funding to the Richmond Police Department to identify and assess truant students and coordinate a delivery of services to prevent further absences. It is important to focus on truancy and drop out prevention as truancy is often the first sign of trouble in a youth's life.

Gang Awareness Training: GRIP contracted with the Virginia Gang Investigators Association to provide training for service providers, community residents, criminal justice providers, parents, school resource officers, teachers and staff.

Community Role Models/Mentors for Gang Members: GRIP entered into contract with the Richmond Police Department to provide employability skills training, internship opportunities, soccer league, National Night Out event, and SHOP with a Cop.

Richmond Police Department Training and Equipment: GRIP has provided funding for training and equipment for RPD. Equipment requests were related to suppression efforts in the target area. Officers received training through the National Youth Gang Center at their annual training event, as well as additional training opportunities.

Intelligence Sharing: GRIP purchased needed software for the enhancement of interagency intelligence sharing.

Directed Patrol: GRIP funded overtime hours for police patrol to be used during peak crime hours and on special projects with the goal of decreasing crime in the target area. Crime reductions have been noted during all funded periods.

Neighborhood Teams/Neighborhood Watch Programs: GRIP provided funds to the Richmond Police Department to enhance or start new neighborhood watch programs.

School Resource Officers (SRO's): Six school resource officers were funded through a grant opportunity made available through GRIP. In addition, Richmond Police Department received funding to sending SROs for specialized training.

Project Exile: GRIP provided public awareness information in the GRIP target area on Project Exile through the use of billboards.

Richmond Area Crime Stoppers: GRIP assisted with funding to make Crime Stoppers available in Spanish.

Crime Data Review: GRIP provided needed funding for collection of crime data to determine changes in the targeted community, a displacement area and a comparison area for purposes of grant evaluation.

Residential Programs: GRIP provided funding to Boaz & Ruth and New Life for Youth to provide residential programs to reentering offenders.

The centerpiece of GRIP has been its partnership with many outstanding organizations, departments and citizens. It is this collaborative partnership that has allowed the Richmond Police department to significantly reduce violent crime and gang activity. The GRIP target neighborhoods experienced substantial reductions in violent crime in 2007:

Robbery of Business	-25%
Robbery of Individuals	-20%
Aggravated Assaults	-12%

The target neighborhoods continue to experience decreases in violent crime for 2008 over the decreases in 2007

Robbery of Business	-71%
Robbery of Individuals	-36%
Aggravated Assaults	-31%

Cooperative Violence Reduction Partnership - CVRP

To increase communication and coordination of efforts between the Richmond Police Department and our federal partners, the Cooperative Violence Reduction Partnership (CVRP) was formed in May, 2005. Member organizations include Richmond Police Department, Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney Office, Attorney General of Virginia, United States Attorney, Eastern District of Virginia, Virginia State Police, ATF, FBI, DEA, Virginia Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole District One, United States Marshal, Eastern District and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority Police Department.

The CVRP is designed to reduce violence in Richmond neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for the city as a whole. The CVRP utilizes an intelligence-driven approach to identify the most violent neighborhoods and offenders in the City of Richmond and then deploy the combined resources of the CVRP partners to interdict, suppress and prevent violent crime.

The CVRP is a multi-pronged approach to reducing the historically high rate of violent crime in the City of Richmond. It does not consist of one or even a few "solutions" but many distinctly different solutions in each prong. Together, the five prongs and the respective specific solutions under each prong are effective in reducing violent crime.

Homicide and Violent Crime Prevention

This prong is designed to gather intelligence, identify neighborhoods, and target habitual offenders using the collective resources of the member agencies. The team members develop specific short-term and long-term strategies and tactics (both covert and overt) to enforce the law and prevent homicide and violent crime.

Homicide and Violent Crime Deterrence

At the core of this prong is a successful approach pioneered in Boston to address violent criminal activity among serious young offenders. The approach, "Pulling Levers," is a focused deterrence strategy, designed to influence the behavior and environment of groups of chronic offenders identified as being at the core of the city's violence problem. This prong in Richmond includes the "Call-In" Program. The Call-In Program holds individuals accountable for their actions and requires them to closely monitor their community to ensure that violent acts are not tolerated. Law enforcement officials pay particular attention to individuals under court supervision who reside or associate in areas where there is a particularly high level of violence or where specific violent crimes have been committed.

This new approach focuses on individuals who are capable of positively impacting their community by ensuring that violent crimes are not tolerated. This innovative program sends a clear message to the participants that the violence in the City must end. An identified group of state probationers and parolees on supervised release from around the City are "called in" to report to Probation and Parole officials who take them to federal court. When they arrive, they appear before a federal judge and the directors of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. The participants receive a message that they must not commit acts of violence and that they must take the message back to their associates. Law enforcement promises to dedicate its resources to "taking down" violent criminal groups if violence acts continue - a promise which this law enforcement team is capable of keeping. After the law enforcement message, the law enforcement partners leave the courtroom.

The Call-In participants are then offered a number of services and programs. They are presented with a variety of options for obtaining training, life skills, and counseling. The participants are offered a unique opportunity to benefit from government and private service providers in an effort to turn their lives around. Probation officers and counselors tailor service plans to the needs of the individuals in a user-friendly manner. Services are offered as part of a customized plan and may include substance abuse counseling, job training, housing assistance, and educational opportunities.

Richmond's recently enhanced features of the program include monthly Call-In meetings with the participants, each of whom is assigned a law enforcement partner (RPD, ATF) and probation officer to assist with their service plan and evaluate their progress. As a condition of probation, the probationer agrees to participate in certain service programs and achieve certain goals.

Homicide and Violent Crime Intervention

This prong includes interventions for the serious adult and high risk juvenile offenders identified in the deterrence prong. Those individuals who decide to become productive, law-abiding members of society will be offered the opportunity to realize the benefits of certain nontraditional programs in the Richmond area. Through GRIP, gang-involved youth are identified and referred to an intervention team composed of professionals from multiple sources such as probation, law enforcement, schools, mental health services, child protective services, community, and faith based organizations. This intervention team conducts risk and needs assessments for youth and develops an intervention plan that includes family members and blends services and opportunities with close monitoring and accountability.

Homicide and Violent Crime Investigation

This prong draws upon the experiences and the procedures of all the partners in the CVRP. It is critical that the member agencies be adequately staffed, trained, equipped, and guided by procedures to investigate violent crime.

Specifically, this prong included the following:

- Improving the quality of investigations of violent crime
- Reviewing all protocols associated with investigations
- Reviewing and revising protocols for the sharing of intelligence information and analytical resources
- Maintaining a fully staffed centralized homicide unit within RPD consisting primarily of the most experienced detectives
- Enhancing case management
- Conducting internal and external training coordinated between the member agencies;
- Maximizing witness security
- Participating in interagency investigations directly or collaterally related
- Improving inter-agency and intra-agency communication

Homicide and Violent Crime Prosecution

This fifth and final prong emphasizes the role that prosecutors play in the plan through their partnerships with not only police but also the community. Community prosecution, achieved in Richmond by integrating designated prosecutors into each of Richmond's 12

Police sectors, is generally defined as a grass-roots approach to justice, involving citizens, law enforcement, and other government agencies in problem-solving efforts to address the safety concerns of the local jurisdiction. This coordinated effort differs from other prosecution models primarily because of the emphasis on community involvement in identifying crime and related problems, as well as in the formulation of solutions. At community prosecution's core are five operational elements:

- A proactive approach to crime
- A defined target area
- An emphasis on problem-solving, public safety, and quality of life issues
- Partnerships between the prosecutor, the community, law enforcement, and others to address crime and disorder; and
- Use of varied enforcement methods

This prong also includes:

- Enhanced prosecution under existing statutes
- An interagency prosecutor/investigator team approach to homicides and violent crimes
- Regularly scheduled training for officers and investigators conducted by designated

Violent Crime Investigation Training Coordinators within both the Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and the Office of the United States Attorney (OUSA) focusing on problem areas in homicide and violent crime cases, search and seizure, interrogation, and evidentiary issues.

CVRP has worked to enhance communication and cooperation among federal, state, and local partner law enforcement agencies working together to reduce violent crime in the City of Richmond. Through this enhanced communication, this innovative approach has resulted in the reduction of violent crime.

Violent Crime Impact Teams VCIT

In June 2004, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the ATF announced the deployment of Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT) in 15 cities. Richmond, Virginia was chosen as one of the pilot cities for this initiative. The Richmond VCIT became fully operational in June 2005, although parts of it were in existence in the early part of 2005.

Initially in 2005, VCIT focused on sectors within the city identified as the most violent and needing intervention. VCIT, supported by ATF, VSP and RPD, formed three teams, each having a Team Leader and an Assistant Team Leader.

VCIT's that are geographically based enlist tactics that focus on disrupting the systemic violence associated with individuals and loosely confederated individuals that are involved in the use and/or distribution of illegal drugs and/or other inherently violent illegal enterprises through enforcement, prevention and education. A brief overview of VCIT's best practices includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Overt enforcement/presence is a common theme in VCIT tactics directed toward the prevention of violent crime. There are several methods employed that establish VCIT overt enforcement/presence. Every 30 days the VCIT teams do a threat assessment evaluation to identify those individuals and/or groups/gangs believed to have an imminent propensity for perpetrating a violent crime. Consideration is given to a subject's means, motive and opportunity. Subjects rated high in each of these categories are given special attention during the next 30 days. This will include weekly, if not daily, contact by a task force member.

These contacts can include an array of messages, to include but not limited to, VCIT's suspicion/knowledge of their violent intentions along with the warning that they are being monitored and any illegal activity will be dealt with swiftly and to the fullest extent the law provides. The subject(s) can also be offered alternatives to their suspected intentions through VCIT's partnership with the Richmond Department of Social Services (RDSS) such as job training and/or counseling.

2. The use of the federal grand jury subpoena has been effective in suspending neighborhood violence and acquiring current and historical information to further criminal investigations. This tactic has proven most effective when one or more identified groups or gangs are committing violent acts either against each other or in general throughout a community. The use of subpoenas addresses the problem on several fronts. It serves notice that the federal government including its laws, sentencing guidelines and out-of-state prisons are possible outcomes for violent crimes.
3. VCIT conducts "VCIT Patrols" where teams of four or more officers patrol one or all of the targeted areas. These teams endeavor to meet and greet the citizens and business community and consensually engage those identified as being part of the criminal element. Again, the message is delivered that the federal presence there is to "stop the violence." In addition to developing good community and business relations, these patrols often net arrests and seizures of illegal drugs and/or firearms. During these patrols valuable information is developed through field interviews that are later used to develop criminal investigations and share with other stakeholders in their efforts.

4. Project Exile functions as collaboration between ATF, RPD, Virginia State Police, United States Attorney's Office, Richmond Commonwealth Attorney's Office and the Virginia Attorney General's Office. VCIT and Exile are co-located within the ATF Richmond III Field Office. Simply stated, Exile allows for every firearm recovered in Richmond with a federal criminal nexus to be evaluated by a committee to direct the prosecution of the subject(s) involved to either state or federal prosecution. The Exile committee considers both state and federal sentencing guidelines as well how a case may fit into the investigative strategy of other on-going investigations being conducted by the federal, state and local partners.

5. VCIT team members are called out to all homicides that occur in a designated VCIT area. Once on the scene a VCIT team member is assigned to work directly with the assigned RPD investigative team for the first 48 hours following the homicide. This provides the homicide investigation with someone that has an established and current knowledge base of the area in which the homicide occurred. In addition, if the homicide goes unsolved, the VCIT team then has detailed information about the homicide that can be utilized to recognize and act on potential leads as they continue to execute their day to day mission in the area. Any action related to an unsolved homicide investigation is coordinated with Richmond Homicide.

Conclusion

The collaborative efforts of GRIP, VCIT and CVRP, along with a focused sector approach to policing which not only addresses violent crime and gangs but the systemic enablers of crime have produced significant decreases in violent crime and gang activity in Richmond.

Violent Crime in Richmond

2006	-14%
2007	-10%
2008(YTD)	-24%

Homicides have decreased from 86 in 2005 to 55 in 2007.

The Richmond Police Department continues to review and evaluate its methodology and tactics endeavoring to remain flexible and responsive to changing crime trends and patterns.