Gang Dynamics

RACE/ETHNICITY OF GANG MEMBERS, 1996-2011

Gangs tend to emerge in the most disadvantaged areas and thus naturally attract the disadvantaged youth residing in these areas.

Gang Dynamics

GANG MEMBER INFORMATION BY AREA TYPE, 2011

MAJOR RISK FACTORS FOR GANG MEMBERSHIP

No one risk factor is responsible for youths joining gangs; rather, it is the accumulation of multiple risk factors across the following domains that greatly increases the risk.

- **Individual Risk Factors**: Juvenile delinquency, drug use, and involvement in violence (as either victim or offender).
- **Family Risk Factors**: Conditions that compromise parental capacity to carry out child development responsibilities, including low parent education, family poverty, low family socioeconomic status, pro-violence attitudes, and child maltreatment (abuse or neglect); lack of parental supervision (including control, monitoring, and management of family matters); living with a gang member.
- **School Risk Factors**: Low academic achievement and/or poorly functioning and unsafe schools.
- **Peer Risk Factors**: Association with aggressive peers; rejection by prosocial peers (being unpopular).
- **Community Risk Factors**: Access to drugs/high drug use, exposure to firearm violence, high community arrest rates, feeling unsafe in the neighborhood, neighborhood disorganization.
WHY DO YOUTHS BECOME INVOLVED IN A GANG?

- **Social reasons**: Youth join to be around friends and family members (especially siblings or cousins) already part of the gang.
- **Protection**: Youth join for the presumed safety they believe the gang can afford.
- Also reported by youth, albeit far less frequently, are more instrumental reasons for joining a gang, such as drug selling or making money.
- Most youth reported being in a gang for one year or less, but field studies in Chicago and Los Angeles, where some gangs are intergenerational, provide some evidence of more long-term patterns of gang membership among youth.
# Others Who Care

## GANG VIOLENCE

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<th>ROLE</th>
<th>PROFILE</th>
<th>AGENDA/HOPE TO ACHIEVE</th>
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| Clinician                | • Surgical resident at county hospital  
                          • Frustrated with the number of gunshot victims who return to the trauma bay with repeat injuries | Communicate your hopes:  
                          • Stakeholders will begin to think of violence-related injuries the way people think of chronic illness: preventable and manageable  
                          • They will be inspired to get involved and fully participate in collaborating on sustainable plans to reduce gang violence and its related traumatic injuries  
                          • Action steps will be developed to sustain the momentum and lead to positive change |
| Public Health Representative | • Convener of the meeting  
                          • Director of the county department of public health  
                          • Responsible for all public health functions including surveillance and disease control | Express these points about violence:  
                          • It is a leading cause of injury, disability and premature death  
                          • It increases the risk of other poor health outcomes  
                          • It is a significant health disparity, disproportionately affecting young people and people of color |
| Former Gang Member       | • Recently released from prison after serving a 10-year sentence for armed robbery  
                          • Newfound Christian faith is driving a desire to help others avoid gang life | • Eager to help transform the lives of young people who believe they have no life-affirming options. |
| City Council Member      | • Business owner (printing/graphics)  
                          • City councilman for four years  
                          • Mayoral candidate in the upcoming election, with a public safety platform | • Increase support base for the election  
                          • Continue learning about gang violence issues |
| Police Officer           | • Patrol officer in a hotbed of gang activity for five years  
                          • Part of new gang suppression unit at the police force  
                          • Gulf War veteran | Communicate your perspective:  
                          • The community deserves to feel safe and secure and needs to be protected  
                          • Perpetrators who “do the crime should do the time”  
                          • There simply are no excuses for what gang bangers do for the sake of “honor” and “respect” |
| School Counselor         | • Counselor at a high school in an impoverished neighborhood for eight years  
                          • Recently completed a master’s degree in social work, with a focus on urban family practice  
                          • Board member of A Bridge to a Better Future (a.k.a. “Bridge”) | • Make meaningful connections in the community to further the mission of Bridge |
| Hospital Administrator   | • Administrator at the County Hospital for the last 15 years, handling long-term planning, managing the budget, and supervising the delivery of medical services, including the Level I trauma center. | • Stay in the loop on this issue and make sure any ideas put forth that involve the hospital are fiscally prudent  
                          • Keep an eye on Janet, making sure her public activities continue to highlight her as a responsible representative of the hospital. |
## Others Who Care

### GANG VIOLENCE

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<th>OBSTACLES FACED</th>
<th>RESOURCES TO OFFER</th>
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| Clinician            | • Young doctor with inadequate network in the affected community  
• Limited free time | • Enthusiasm and dedication  
• Credibility and knowledge |
| Public Health        | • High workload with little time for an extra project  
• Limited funding      | • Ability to coordinate stakeholder efforts and build capacity among multiple players  
• Access to epidemiologists and statisticians who can provide relevant data. |
| Representative       |                                                                               |                                                                                  |
| Former Gang Member   | • Judgment for past behavior                                                  | • First-hand knowledge of gang life, along with risk factors and protective factors  
• “Street cred”         |                                                                                  |
| City Council         | • Upcoming election makes evasiveness necessary (political clout could be harmed by siding with a particular group) | • Funding from the Community Development Council – up to $50,000 per year for five years – for interventions that will result in measureable reductions in gang violence |
| Member               |                                                                               |                                                                                  |
| Police Officer       | • Personal skepticism that the problem can be solved  
• Increasing negative perceptions of police officers in the community | • Familiarity with day-to-day life on the street  
• Knowledge of repeat offenders, both gang “kingpins” and their “pawns” |
| School Counselor     | • Lack of funding  
• Limited free time               | • Enthusiasm for strengthening families, finding adult role models for children and teens, and finding ways to provide marketable job skills. |
| Hospital Administrator | • Balancing the need for positive public relations with the need to maintain revenue for the hospital | • Link between the hospital and the board of trustees, and responsible for initiating fund-raising activities  
• Responsible for approving any community-level campaigns |
Know What Affects Health

- **Socioeconomic Factors**: 40%
- **Clinical Care**: 20%
- **Health Behaviors**: 30%
- **Physical Environment**: 10%

Source: www.cdc.gov/chinav
Know What Affects Health

More information on reverse side

Match these factors to their impact level:

- Physical environment (40%)
- Clinical care (20%)
- Socioeconomic factors (30%)
- Health behaviors (10%)
City Facts

- Large, metropolitan area
- Diverse population of 500,000 (adding the surrounding county, it is close to a million)
- Ethnic makeup:
  - 42.5% White
  - 21.3% Asian
  - 20.2% African-American
  - 11.1% Hispanic
  - 4.5% Native American
  - 0.4% Pacific Islander
- Gang activity is mostly isolated to areas of poverty. Race/ethnicity of gang members is as follows:
  - 46.7% Hispanic or Latino
  - 38.4% Black or African American
  - 8.4% White
  - 5.5% Asian
  - 1.0% All Other
- Unemployment rate: 10.6%
- Homicides are on the rise, with 38 in 2001, 45 in 2003, 58 in 2007, and 60 in 2013.
- Trauma care:
  - County hospital, the only Level I trauma center in the city, treated 87% of the firearm victims
  - Olympus Medical Center is a new private hospital with plans to offer state-of-the-art trauma care.
  - Adolescents (ages 15-24) have the highest rates of non-fatal violent injury, primarily involving assaults, resulting in hospitalization.
  - In 2010, county hospital treated 228 gunshot victims and 196 stab victims. There were nearly three times as many gunshot victims in 2010 than there were only five years prior. Over half the victims were under the age of 25.
Name: Janet Wilson, MD

Your Agenda: You are at this meeting today because you reached out to the local health department for data and developed a rapport with the director, Casey Chang. Both of you are interested in bringing stakeholders together to discuss potential solutions to the problem of gang violence in your community, and that was the impetus for this meeting. Casey will convene today’s meeting and ask you to begin the conversation; you can do so by using some of the background information on this page.

Motivation: Since that day when Michael showed up near death in the trauma bay, you have been busy conducting research, collecting data, and forming alliances:

- You found national gang violence and traumatic injuries surveillance data, but no local data.
- Ratio of mortality related to gunshot wounds versus stab wounds is nearly 10:1.
- It is more difficult to treat a gunshot victim, in the ER and in recovery.
- Hospital data are only collected about cases in general (number of total gunshots, knife wounds, etc.) due to patient privacy issues.
- DOAs aren’t even reported in the hospital system, but rather by the medical examiner to the department of public health. This gave you the idea to seek out data at the local health department.
- Local law enforcement agencies in some cities track incidents by type of crime only (homicides, aggravated assaults, drug trafficking, firearm possession, etc.), while some identify whether those crimes are strongly associated with gangs. While you were able to determine that a new gang suppression unit is being formed in your city, the police department has not shared any of its data.
- You started attending meetings of a local community-based organization called A Bridge to a Better Future (a.k.a. “Bridge”) and met:
  - A school guidance counselor, Lonny Rodrigues, MEd, MSW, and
  - A former gang member, Darrell Robinson.
- To prove your commitment, you feel you need to just keep “showing up,” which is why you attended a recent town hall meeting some of the Bridge members thought was important.
  - One of the speakers was mayoral candidate Mel Hicks, who is taking a strong anti-gang stance.

What you hope to achieve: Your objectives for this meeting are: 1) stakeholders begin to think of violence-related injuries the way people think of chronic illness: preventable and manageable; 2) they are inspired to get involved and fully participate in collaborating on sustainable plans to reduce gang-violence and its related traumatic injuries; and 3) action steps are developed to sustain the momentum and lead to positive change.
Name: Casey Chang, MPH

Your Agenda: You are at this meeting because you are the convener. You think public health can build capacity among all the stakeholders, and the health department serve as a clearinghouse or hub for vital violence prevention efforts. All interested parties – schools, law enforcement, social services, economic development, community-based organizations, etc. – have circumscribed mandates, but public health can serve as the “big tent,” bringing everyone together and linking their efforts. As specified in your meeting agenda, begin with a short introduction of yourself, and then ask everyone to introduce themselves and briefly state their interest in the issue. Then ask Dr. Janet Wilson to begin the conversation by giving details about why she reached out to the health department. Don’t forget to wrap up the meeting by summarizing any action steps for a future meeting.

Motivation: You are the director of the county department of public health and the county health officer, responsible for all public health functions including surveillance and control of both communicable and non-communicable diseases, and of health protection for the county’s one million residents.

- You have been in this job for 10 years.
- Your previous job was the director of the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention.
- You did a rotation with the Division of Violence Prevention during a fellowship with CDC. It was the first time you became acutely aware of the link between disease and social determinants of health.

Here are the main points you want to make sure you get across to the others at the meeting today:

- Violence is a leading cause of injury, disability and premature death.
- Violence increases the risk of other poor health outcomes.
- Violence is a significant health disparity, disproportionately affecting young people and people of color.

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<td>You are on a committee called First 5 (focusing on health of children ages 0-5) with Adrian Banks from the County Hospital, and you two have a great rapport. You met on several occasions with Dr. Janet Wilson after she contacted you about local surveillance data involving gang-related injuries. You were apprehensive at first – clinicians seem to have their own arcane lingo – but she did more listening than talking and seemed very committed to finding viable solutions. You have been working with a group of urban planners at the Community Development Council, and they are willing to help fund initiatives — up to $50,000 per year for five years — that will result in measureable reductions in gang violence. You attended one of their meetings a few months ago, which was also attended by City Council Representative Mel Hicks, who seems concerned about the issue but perhaps not very committed.</td>
<td>You don’t have any conflicts with anyone at the meeting, but you are opposed to the notion that any single intervention – especially more arrests of gang members – is going to have long-term effectiveness.</td>
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What you hope to achieve: Here’s what you think the public health world can offer to deal with the problem*:

- Public health provides and can maintain a focus on prevention of violence before it occurs.
- Public health can measure the problem and the progress in addressing it.
- Public health can play a key role in coordinating the range of needed efforts, and build capacity among multiple players.
- Public health can develop data-informed strategy.
- Public health can be an invaluable advocate for prevention of violence.

**Name:** Darrell Robinson

**Your Agenda:** You are at this meeting because you want to stop young people from making the same mistake you did. To do this you know you must show them there are options other than getting tied up in gang life.

**Motivation:**
- You “came up hard” and began living on the streets when you were 10 years old and became a member of a gang called the 415 Mafia when you were 13.
- Your special talent was thievery, because in a gang, if you can take something from someone else and then flaunt it as a trophy, it increases your status. Status is all you have when you run with a gang, and you have to protect it, all the time.
- You were recently released from prison after serving a 10-year sentence for armed robbery. While in prison, you were “shanked” multiple times during an altercation in the yard. You suffered serious injuries and came close to dying.
- After this experience, you started attending the prison church. You had an “aha” moment when you realized that turning the other cheek is not a show of weakness, but a show of strength.
- Your newfound Christian orientation helped you to reflect on your life, and surprisingly, the other inmates pretty much left you alone after you “converted.”
- Finding that things are not as hopeless as you once believed, you decided to step away from gang life permanently.
- Your mantra is Romans 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
- You actively engage street youth, including current gang members, in conversations almost every day. This is why your pastor got you involved with a local community-based organization called A Bridge to a Better Future (a.k.a. “Bridge”).
- It was at a recent Bridge meeting that you met Dr. Janet Wilson, and although you doubt she’s got what it takes to stick it out in this rough world, you’ve decided to give her a chance. You think her asking you to be at this meeting is a sign of God’s will, and you are on the right track with your new life.

**Character Sketch:** FORMER GANG MEMBER

**Friends**
You are on the same page with the folks who run Bridge, but you feel some of them are out of touch with street culture and won’t be able to really connect with gang members. However, Lonny Rodrigues, the school counselor, has been very kind and helpful. Together you went to a local coffee shop to meet with Dr. Janet Wilson, a local surgeon who is concerned about all the gunshot wounds she sees at her hospital.

**Foes**
You are distrustful of law enforcement officials in general, because they have never helped you or anyone you know. In fact, they don’t realize that being hassled by the police or even going to prison can “up your juice” on the street. It also occurred to you to hope that none of the guys you’ve been mentoring see you with the police officer, Chris Hayes; they may not trust you after that.

**What you hope to achieve:** Having placed your faith in a higher power, you have been praying for direction and you are eager to help transform the lives of young people who believe they have no life-affirming options.
**Character Sketch:**

**CITY COUNCIL MEMBER**

**Name:** Mel Hicks

**Your Agenda:** You are at this meeting because you have decided to run for mayor, and public safety is part of your platform.

**Motivation:**

- You have been a member of city council for four years, while also running your own successful printing and graphics company. Recently, you decided to run for mayor.
- Because gang activity is rampant on the south side of your district, you decide to make public safety a key campaign issue and you need to hone your political approach.
- You’re leaning toward rhetoric about gun control, but you still need to test the waters to see how that will affect your vote projections.
- Your campaign manager feels you need more support from minorities, but you’re not exactly sure where they come down on this issue.
- During recent town hall meetings, you have been approached by parents, school teachers, merchants, and even a surgeon from the county hospital, all desperate for their own reasons to have something done about gang violence.
- This surgeon followed up with you and invited you to today’s meeting. You were thinking, “We’ll see how soon she loses interest in this pet project,” but you agreed to take part anyway … in case something useful results.
- While you personally believe the most efficient and cost-effective way to handle gang violence is expanding the police presence in dangerous areas, it seems politically prudent to cast a wider net. For this reason, you are highly motivated to be at this meeting today and learn all you can.
- On the campaign trail, you are pledging to hire more police officers and make gang violence a priority at the police department. You know they are currently organizing a gang suppression team, so you spoke with the police chief and suggested he attend today’s meeting with you. He couldn’t make it, but he assigned a police officer to attend who is part of the new team.

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<td>A group of urban planners at the Community Development Council has been lobbying for solutions for inner-city violence. They are willing to help fund initiatives – up to $50,000 per year for five years – that will result in measurable reductions in gang violence. You actually met with them a few months ago, along with Casey Chang of the county health department. You are making it a point to be on good terms with all constituencies.</td>
<td>You have none of which you are aware, but of course anyone running for public office needs to be prepared. You were criticized in the media recently for wanting to beef up the police department – the reporter wrote that you were “big government on a little budget.”</td>
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**What you hope to achieve:** You hope to increase your support base and continue educating yourself on the issues. You are especially interested in learning what this initiative can do for you at this point in the election cycle. Low-hanging fruit is especially attractive – anything that can be accomplished quickly while you’re still in office.

*Note: this is a difficult role to play because you don’t want to harm your political clout by siding with any particular group this early in the game. Try to be evasive about making commitments. In other words, don’t worry about ensuring this group’s success … sit on the fence if it’s better for you.*
Character Sketch: POLICE OFFICER

Name: Chris Hayes

Your Agenda: You are at this meeting because your boss, the police chief, told you to attend.

Motivation:
• You have been a patrol officer in Hepburn Heights (a hotbed of gang activity) for five years.
• You describe your beat as “tribal warfare combat duty” because it reminds you of your tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.
• Recently you were made part of the new gang suppression team at the police department.
• You are one of the most knowledgeable officers on the force about the gangs in the area (including their history, initiation practices, identifiers like symbols, clothing, tattoos and graffiti), so your boss is counting on you to help train the other officers who are being transferred onto this team.
• The gang suppression unit has been tasked with “responding to gang-related crimes and developing community-based strategies to reduce gang activity within the city,” which is fine if these “community-based strategies” are really going to work and keep people safe.
• You feel strongly about the oath you made to protect the people in your district. They deserve to feel safe and secure so they can protect and care for their loved ones.
• Few people realize how frustrating it is to make so many gang-related arrests, only to have the cases dropped because people in the community are afraid to testify against the perpetrators.
• Your attitude toward criminals, or anyone who thinks they can threaten this safety and security, is very rigid: You abide by and believe in the “do the crime and do the time” mantra.
• Most of the people you keep track of, shake down for information and sometimes arrest, are just pawns for the gang’s power-hungry leadership. But while you understand many of the underlying dynamics of gangs, there simply are no excuses for what perpetrators do for the sake of “honor” and “respect.”

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<td>Your boss is friends with Mel Hicks, the city councilman running for mayor, so you guess he’s one of the good guys.</td>
<td>You don’t know anyone else at the meeting, but from what you’ve heard they are a bunch of over educated do-gooders who don’t really understand how things really are on the street.</td>
<td>You heard a former gang member was invited to attend. You don’t know him – he was off the streets by the time you started – but you wonder whether he will be friend or foe. If he has an attitude problem, that’s going to be trouble. On the other hand, like you, he has seen his comrades killed and lived through the stress of “battle.” Maybe there’s some common ground.</td>
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What you hope to achieve: You hope to get a chance to add your perspective to this meeting, but you are skeptical that any practical or implementable strategies will come to light that hasn’t been thought of before.
Name: Lonny Rodrigues, MEd, MSW

Your Agenda: You are at this meeting because of your knowledge of the educational system, your experience with local youth and your desire to give them a more hopeful future.

Motivation:

- You have been a counselor at Nueva Vista High School for eight years.
- Your school is located in an impoverished neighborhood.
- Truancy is a major problem, and teachers constantly express the challenges of teaching at Nueva Vista: disruptive students, fear of physical harm and teaching students who miss class frequently.
- Many of the students at your school have a sense of fatalism and hopelessness and therefore are easily seduced into gangs. You struggle with motivating students to see beyond their current situation because they find things they need with gangs: a sense of belonging, powerful role models, and prestige; they also like having the “right” tattoos and all the glitzy bling.
- You recently completed your master’s in social work, with a focus on urban family practice.
- You feel the keys to getting a handle on the truancy issue are:
  - Strengthening families
  - Finding adult role models for children and teens
  - Finding ways to provide marketable job skills.
- You were invited to this meeting because you are a board member of a local community-based organization called A Bridge to a Better Future (a.k.a. “Bridge”). It is a relatively new, underfunded organization, but has a lot of promise.
- Bridge is also opposed to criminalizing youth offenses and seeks more sustainable options.

Friends

You are looking forward to interacting with the director of the county health department and with Darrell Robinson, a reformed gang member who has been volunteering with Bridge. You’ve been talking about this stakeholder meeting with him for several weeks and even took him to an informal meeting with Dr. Janet Wilson. The three of you met at a coffee shop, because you thought he would feel more comfortable at the larger meeting if he knew some of the stakeholders in advance.

Foes

You are concerned about Mel Hicks from city council, the mayoral candidate who has been campaigning for adding more police officers in areas rife with gang activity; you believe it’s a waste of money and doesn’t solve the real problems – not to mention the added costs to the criminal justice system!

What you hope to achieve: You hope to make meaningful connections in the community to further the mission of Bridge.
**Character Sketch:**
**HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR**

**Name:** Adrian Banks, MBA

**Your Agenda:** You are at this meeting because you are looking for ways to save money for the hospital.

**Motivation:**
- You have been the administrator at the county hospital for fifteen years.
- You are responsible for handling long-term planning, managing the budget, and supervising the delivery of medical services, including the Level I trauma center.
- You also review financial reports, managed care contracts and major hospital expenditures.
- You are the link between the hospital and the board of trustees, responsible for initiating fund-raising activities, which you enjoy because you have a lot of connections. You suspect this is why the surgical resident, Janet Wilson, came to you after the recent gang-related traumatic injuries treated at the hospital – she’s determined to do something about it, and naturally, that’s going to cost money.
- There are several things about which Janet isn’t fully aware:
  - On one hand, trauma care is a cash cow for the hospital – that’s crass, but true.
    - Average charges for assault victims were a little over $100,000 per patient last year, with a range between $10,000 and $630,000.
    - The revenue from a gunshot wound is about $154,000 per survivor versus a knife wound, which is about $12,000 per survivor.
    - Even when people are uninsured, the trauma center gets state and federal dollars to care for these patients, and many qualify for Medicaid after they’re injured.
  - But on the other hand, due to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) and other major reforms within the healthcare system, soon the hospital won’t get more money to treat certain conditions (cardiac patients, for example), if they are readmitted too soon after being released. You’re reading the writing on the wall, and predicting that reimbursements for all sorts of recidivism – even gang-related gunshot wounds – may be drying up.
  - Lastly, due to IRS mandates, conducting a community health needs assessment is necessary to maintain the hospital’s tax-exempt status. Today’s meeting is a great way to make more connections in the community and to get a sense of what might be involved in truly working with the community on health issues.

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<td>You are on a committee called First 5 (focusing on health of children ages 0-5) with Dr. Chang from the local health department, and you two have a great rapport.</td>
<td>Your competition is Olympus Medical Center, the private hospital in the area, which has been making efforts to improve its trauma care. There is competition for cases, which are highly reimbursable.</td>
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<td>You like Janet and admire her determination to make meaningful change in the community. You hope that you can fully support her, but honestly, it will depend on what makes financial sense for the hospital.</td>
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**What you hope to achieve:** You hope to stay in the loop on this issue and make sure any ideas put forth that involve the hospital are fiscally prudent. You also have to keep an eye on Janet, making sure her public activities continue to highlight her as a responsible representative of the hospital.

*Note: This is a difficult role to play because you want to help solve the problem but you have multiple aims. In other words, don’t worry about being a skeptical presence among the group. Make them convince you with financial arguments – how will this affect the bottom line?*
Character Sketch:

Name: ___________________________

Your Agenda: ____________________________________________________________

Motivation: ______________________________________________________________

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What you hope to achieve: ________________________________________________________

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Wraparound Project Strategies

The San Francisco Wraparound Project employs culturally competent case managers who see victims of interpersonal/youth violence from 10-30 years of age while they are recovering from physical injury. They make an assessment and enroll patients they deem high risk for repeat injury and/or incarceration, based on the presence or absence of risk factors.

The following is a list of services and risk-reduction resources provided through the Wraparound Project:

- Crisis response services along with the City’s Crisis Response Network and crisis home visits
- Vocational training programs via Goodwill, Glide, trucking academies, Friends of the Urban Forest, and Job Core Employment opportunities throughout the region
- Tattoo removal services
- After-school programs – Department of Parks and Recreation
- Mental health services for victim and family
- Cognitive behavioral therapy through the Trauma Recovery Center
- Completion of education and improved performance through school advocacy and placement, and referrals to the city’s General Education Degree resources
- Assistance in obtaining a driver’s license, temporary disability and victim services

For more about The San Francisco Wraparound Project: http://violenceprevention.surgery.ucsf.edu/about-us/overview.aspx
Model for Improvement

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How will we know that a change is an improvement?
- What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

Plan
Do
Act
Study