

COSTA MESA POLICE DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Allan Roeder, City Manager

FROM: Chris Shawkey, Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Gang Initiative—City Council Follow-Up Questions

DATE: March 29, 2007

The purpose of this memo is to respond to questions raised by City Council during the March 13th staff study session on the gang initiative.

Gang Probation Officer

The probation officer (PO) has been in place for over two months. The probation officer has two primary approaches to supervise probationers: Home visits and office visits. The home visit allows the PO to see the probationer in a home setting and confirm the probationer is following probation requirements such as curfew, association and clothing permitted. The office visits allow the PO to meet with a large number of his caseload and to conduct drug testing in a controlled environment. To date, the PO has completed the following:

Office Visits:	31
Home visits:	22
Arrests for Probation	
Violations:	8

Families and Students Together (FAST) Program

FAST is an off the shelf intervention program that is run by a non-profit charity. FAST was initially part of the Project ASK collaboration but was removed due to the overhead costs required to fund the program's paid positions. From the school district perspective, they can run the same program and in fact run parallel programs, without adding additional bureaucracy. The program is operating in two NMUSD elementary schools and referrals are on a voluntary basis. The FAST program has three goals:

1. Build a bond between parents and the child at risk.
2. Build a link between the school and parents.
3. Create and sustain a parent support group that builds partnerships between parents.

These three goals combine to create a true family and social safety net for a child at risk of academic and lifetime failure. The FAST program is held at elementary school sites. With information distributed to students in the schools, families are invited to attend an eight-week FAST session. A FAST program facilitator follows up with parents by telephone, school visitations and home visits to encourage continuing program attendance.

NMUSD Truancy Efforts

When the ASK project was initiated, the staff conducted a comprehensive study of all trancies in the school district. At that time, the district was averaging 220 full day or partial day unexcused absences. Project ASK identified the class trancies in 7th through 12th grades as 240,910 in 04/05 school year. As part of their grant, they established a goal of reducing truancy 20% by June 2008. In 05/06, the class trancies dropped to 171,023 which reflects a nearly 30% decrease. In this respect, NMUSD has exceeded their objective on a substantially shorter timeline.

The process for addressing truancy is the School Attendance Review Board (SARB). This is a process prescribed in the Education Code that formalizes a process to make parents accountable for their children's attendance at school. In some cases, the parents can be brought to court to have a judge review their case and impose sanctions. In past practice, very few students were referred to the SARB. Additionally, the SARB process became very ponderous and could not act swiftly or firmly enough to create a real deterrence to truancy. To remedy this, the ASK staff has initiated the following changes. The current process works as follows:

- 1st or 2nd truancy or cut: Telephonic notification to parents.
- 3rd truancy or cut: Letter to parents.
- 4th and 5th truancy or cut: Letter to parents (a requirement of the DA's office).
- 6th truancy or cut: Parents and child required to meet with DA.
- Failure to meet with DA or additional cuts will be referred to the SARB hearings or can be taken by the DA for a formal hearing by a judge.

NMUSD Dress Code Policies

NMUSD has a dress code policy that prohibits offensive, provocative, revealing and other inappropriate clothing, including gang attire. On the issue of uniforms, the individual schools can opt to have uniforms if the PTA agrees and consents to the uniform requirement. Dress code violations are handled through the normal disciplinary process, but parental support and cooperation are essential to achieve maximum compliance.

The following information is also being provided in response to additional questions asked by the City Council.

1. Why were Rea, Wilson and Tewinkle Schools NOT included in the original grant funding? Why was funding given for Costa Mesa Middle School and not Tewinkle Middle School when it is common knowledge that Tewinkle has "at risk" Westside students prone to join gangs? **This not the case. The ASK Project funding applies to all schools in the district.**

2. Is the Crisis Advocate the same as the Interventionist? Does the city have an interventionist? Does the city have a liaison person who will interface with the Crisis Advocate? Are we talking about a 3-4 member team? Will the 3-4 member team be working with all students or their own case load of students referred to them because of at risk behavior? **No. The crisis team will respond to all types of issues. This could be any type of mental health issues, a traumatic event, or a child who is undergoing personal crisis. The crisis team could intervene and be a resource for the gang intervention program. The city does not currently have a liaison working with the Crisis Team . . . the NMUSD team consists of counselors and is led by Rhonda Reid, Coordinator of Project Safe Connections.**

3. Please explain what is meant by "mental health" (See page 1, "at risk due to gang involvement, mental health..."). To what mental health and social service agencies will families/students be referred? **The ASK mental health partners are Orange County Mental Health, Hoag Hospital, Turning Point, Western Youth and Providence.**

What are the types of comments regarding "mental health" that would be put on the Referral Form? (see Current Student Findings "Behavioral or mental health areas of concern"): **Entries could include but are not limited to: drugs, alcohol, bulimia, fighting, depression, and anxiety.**

4. What does "monitoring" mean when referred to monitoring the home environment? Who will be doing the monitoring? **Home visits are conducted by Project ASK, Family Outreach Advocates if a family asks for a visit. This should not be confused with home monitoring of gang members on probation by the gang detail.**

5. Please send information/ backup on Parenting Wisely and Parent Project classes: when, where, what, who. In Spanish? Free? **The parenting classes are held at varying times and locations throughout the school district. They are held in Spanish and English and always at no cost.**

6. Database. Who uses this database? Other agencies? **Only NMUSD**

7. "Assess and review youths in the community for behaviors that reflect their risk of gang involvement." What kind of things might be included on the Individual gang assessment tool that would fall under "Other." (What if a kid has problems at home but

no gang association--is it possible that normal kids with family problems get evaluated and lumped into this program?) **No. The intervention specialist would be looking for specific conditions and behaviors that would be indicative of being at risk for gang involvement. These actions could include but are not limited to bullying, the wearing of gang clothing styles, claims of gang involvement, association with gang members, participation in gang like cliques, siblings involved in gangs, gang posturing and possession of items indicative of gang involvement. These activities are observable and recognizable and indicate an opportunity to employ a gang intervention strategy.**

8. How long will the District's Federal Grant for this program last and how will it be continued once this funding is gone? **Through June 2009 without renewal.**

9. Please send information about the Challenge Day and any data that proves Challenge Days deter gang activity. **We are not aware of any specific data that links the Challenge Day program to deterrence of gang activity. We do have strong anecdotal evidence that the Challenge Day can reduce bullying and school violence.**

10. Family Counseling--who are the preferred providers? Please list ALL agencies that the district refers to currently. **OC Mental Health, Hoag Hospital, Turning Point, Western Youth, Providence**

11. What "tough love" measures does the District currently use in dealing with truancy first time through habitual? **The NMUSD has process that is defined by the education code for managing truancy. The process for addressing truancy is the School Attendance Review Board (SARB). A description of how this process works was provided earlier.**

12. What disciplinary measures does a TEACHER use to deal with any gang related misbehavior (swearing, clothing, etc). **The only measure available to teachers is suspension.**

Should members of the city council require additional clarification or have any further questions, Captain Ron Smith and Lieutenant Clay Epperson are available to assist them.