



## VPC Work Group:

# Making Connections to Address the Impact of Gang Culture and Gang Violence on Mental Health and Community Well-being

**MEETING SUMMARY of the Wednesday, March 30, 2016 Meeting**

**NOTES FROM - March 30, 2016**

### QUOTE OF THE DAY – MARCH 30, 2016:

**“We hear gunshots (so much) – it doesn’t faze us. We’re used to it.  
To me its normal.”**

Dear VPC members, Making Connections Work Group Participants and Interested Parties,

This is a **Meeting Summary** of the VPC’s March 30, 2016 **Making Connections to Address the Impact of Gang Culture and Gang Violence on Mental Health and Community Well-Being Work Group** (aka Making Connections) meeting.

### **BACKGROUND - Work group Goal:**

The **Making Connections Project Goal** is to:

- (1) foster a multijurisdictional, collaborative network of youth, practitioners and providers from different fields, community members, key stakeholders, public agencies and faith leaders united in their commitment to reducing the impact of GCGV on MH; and,
- (2) develop a coordinated community-based set of strategies that are effective at (1) engaging and retaining YMBOC and YWGOB aged 12-25 in schools, sports afterschool programs, alternatives programs and youth oriented services and (2) explore ways to create opportunities for YMBOC to prepare for and/or to develop jobs/business, improve the physical/built environment and/or shift socio-cultural norms related to ideas of masculinity – while helping YMBOC aged 12-25 avoid the brunt of GCGV.

### **BACKGROUND - Early Progress and Next Steps:**



Preceding Meeting #1, during Meeting #1 and preceding and during Meeting #2 we worked on Steps 1-3 of the THRIVE planning process [COMPLETED on March 30, 2016]. Preceding and during Meeting #3 and Meeting #4 we will be working on THRIVE steps 4-5. Preceding and during Meeting #5 and Meeting #6 we will be working on THRIVE steps 5-6. [Please refer to the Making Connections Project website for more information on the THRIVE approach.]

**BACKGROUND - Other progress (prior to meeting but reported at meeting);** We held a focus group on March 14, 2016 and are planning others for April and May. Data Committee making progress. One symposium speaker confirmed. Continuous fundraising, networking/outreach and engagement with community, funders and CBO's/501's.

**MARCH 30, 2016 - Making Connections Work Group Meeting #2 Attendance:**

- Registered = 36
- *Conference Call-in* = 25
- *Attended In-person* = 25
- **MEETING #2: Total attendance (phone + in-person) = 25**

**MARCH 30, 2016, Making Connections Network Analysis for MEETING #2g:**

- **21 Organizations attended** including expert representatives from the
  - Faith Community
  - CBO's/501c3's/
  - MH Service Providers
  - Education
  - Law Enforcement/DA Office of Victims Services
  - Consultants
  - Youth/Youth Development/Sports
  - County Agencies
  - Sports Organizations
  - Public Health Departments

**MARCH 30, 2016 Making Connections Areas of Expertise:**

Numerous areas of expertise were represented at the work group, including;



- Prevention
- Psychological services
- Family and children services
- Social Policy
- Community Development
- Social Justice
- Faith-based approaches
- Peace
- GRYD/Gang Intervention
- Youth development
- Mental health
- Education
- Law enforcement/probation/re-entry
- Gang Culture
- Public Health
- Jobs
- Coalition
- Domestic violence
- Data and Analysis
- Strategy

**MARCH 30, 2016 Making Connections Geographic Attendance:**

- Work group participants came [or represented areas] from all over LA County to participate, including:
  - Pasadena
  - East LA
  - South Bay
  - Crenshaw
  - North East LA
  - Pico-Union
  - South LA
  - Lynwood



- Boyle Heights
- Compton
- Long Beach
- Santa Monica
- Inglewood
- San Fernando Valley
- Pacoima

### **MARCH 30, 2016 - Making Connections Information Gathering:**

**On March 30, 2016 We asked attendees, what sparked your interest in this work group? They responded...**

- **Mary:** Theres a lot going on; things have been escalating
- **Jacqueline:** 1st time; to see how our program can collaborate and support
- **Reverie:** There was a young man of color shot and killed in our ER by police and a group of residents are having a discussion with doctors about safety and violence prevention. There are other hospital based violence prevention programs; we want to know ways we can better take care of the community. The incident has sparked a larger conversation. Wants to know about other programs.
- **Markisha:** wants to network with other agencies
- **Steven:** Intervention specialist for PUSD - new to being a part of the solution; wants to be a part of like minded individuals; planning a gang prevention program in the summer
- **Josh:** We operate urban peace academy that trains GRYD intervention workers, do place based work in gang impacted communities, wants to support
- **Jeannette:** the shootings are out of control in my community, we can't arrest our way out, we need healing, we need to connect with families
- **Jewel:** LACOE - gang person for 80 school districts; looking at amount of violence in the community, we can't rely just on law enforcement, we can't arrest our way out of the problem and need to collaborate
- **Jamecca:** PI - interested in topic on a number of levels, implementing comprehensive strategies, very interested in intersection between community prevention and mental health issues, we need to elevate the issue so we can find solutions
- **Cynthia:** Aviva - work with the whole family, going to start working in an intervention/prevention program, looking to open up own treatment center in Boyle Heights,
- **Beatrice:** Networking, better educate parents who are in the system with their teenagers due to gang related or substance abuse issues.



- **Carl Cruz:** Victory Outreach - we want to support and see how we can collaborate, we are concerned about spike in crime, want to understand so we can better approach it, former gang member, currently a gang intervention worker and pastor
- **Rogelio:** make connections (did at last meeting - discussed greetings in different cultures), it's not about agencies; it's people and relationships that create a movement for what we want to accomplish, representing a voiceless community, no benefits and support - the family, the parents - very little discussing family structure in literature review; we need to support resilience of family, we have neglected parents; if we put attention on youth, we also need to put attention on parents; parents do not receive support and are not prepared to deal with kids
- **Fabian:** Olin Law - community building, focus on violence, trauma and healing; lawyers who are ex-gang members; promote healing and educate adults that are not helping our communities
- **Dre:** Up2Us Sports - we are a small bit of the puzzle of what the community needs, we are a small part; we want to enhance existing assets in the community and collaborate and coordinate; make things more efficient
- **Joel McLafferty:** Main job is clinical director of mental health agency in ladera heights, works on DV issues; struggles to know what role he can play in reducing violence
- **Jessica Payne:** Mockingbird: research and evaluation, background with GRYD, advocacy with foster children, lend support
- **Blaine Watson:** new role to support foster youth and homeless youth, student attendance review board; working closely with young men and women at risk of gang violence; first point of contact for placement and access to programs for youth coming out of camps; USC doctoral student in education, connected to school of Social Work;
- (interruption - missed input from Homeboy Industries representatives)
- **Miriam:** in field for 7 years; attended LAVITA academy; provide services to clients; knew the streets, but didn't know gang intervention; volunteered at hospital based violence intervention program at White Memorial; mentor inspired her to get into the work - not a lot of women doing gang intervention; looking for tools and training; get a better concept of how gang culture impacts mental health of youth and families; loves to network; want to provide better services for youth and families
- **Michelle:** TeenLine - here to learn; we want to find a way to support teens at risk for getting involved in gangs and parents; wants to learn from the group
- **Sakeena:** focuses on trauma informed care at school wellness center; support youth and families and schools; wants to know what everyone else is doing as we develop a community collaborative
  
- **Randal:** there is a need; the need is great; there is little being done about it; lack of action and urgency leads to negative outcomes in the neighborhood, complacency around that; there is a greater need for understanding for the fierce urgency of now, we must recognize that tomorrow is today (MLK Jr.); now is the time; there is a big problem

**MARCH 30, 2016 - NEEDS – Attendees mentioned community needs**



- Address root causes of violence and mental health issues.
- Mental health resources are needed for people without 'documents'
- Mental health resources
  - Need more services and mental health professional
- Community Resource lists
- Important relationships – who should we know?
- We need to know what resources are out there.
- Follow-up services for mental health are needed
  - "And what about follow-up after referrals with the family – there has got to be something that looks at the whole child/family.
  - We need a 'feedback' loop.

On MARCH 30, 2016, We asked attendees, to describe strategies, policies and actions that could be taken to address the impact of GCGV on mental health and community/family well-being? They responded...

- **Faith-Based Strategies**
  - Crisis response systems/programs
- **School-Based Strategies**
  - Follow-up is a challenge
  - School-wide approaches are necessary
- **Business/Job Based Strategies**
- **DA - Victims Services**
- **Neighborhood/Community-Based Strategies**
  - Incorporating an understanding of trauma.
- **Culture-based Strategies**
  - Cultural competence in organizations and practices
  -
- **Neighborhood Council Strategies**
  - Can be an important potential resources
- **Family-Based Strategies**
  - -whole family partners approach
  - -address barriers: lack of resources, language/culture
  - -intervention, prevention, case management
  - -those who have come from lifestyle (authentic voices) have the best insight into what can be done
- **Hospital Based Strategies**
  - When youth come to the hospital for help – all we have is mental health referrals



- Bring key decision makers to ground zero
- Engage with the community, gain trust and listen
- Strength-based, wrap around, whole families
- Start meetings with families with good news
- **Cynthia:** ambulance and gun shots don't phase us; we're used to it - to me it's normal
- **Reverie:** would like to know what programs are out there that she can connect youth with in order to address root causes. I don't feel comfortable sending youth to programs and people I don't know. This space is valuable for me to connect with others
- **Blaine:** follow up is challenging; when you send someone to a program for mental health or substance abuse, there needs to be an investment and strategy in following up with individuals and their families
- **Miriam:** if we have a family in crisis and I want to do a referral, I sometimes get the run around or there is no follow through or a long waiting list; many families do not have health insurance coverage due to immigration status; would like to see more resources and other options where waiting lists are shorter

#### **STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT:**

**MARCH 30, 2016 - We asked attendees to name community level strategies that could be utilized to address (over) exposure to violence. They responded...**

- There is a need for Culturally competent services and community resources for the entire family.\
- We need intervention/prevention and case management strategies.
- We need strategies developed thru diverse input and experiences.
- Wrap-around models – utilizing teen-based, family and natural supports and tailor to the family
- Collaborate with systems
- Strength-based models
- CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS THAT ELEVATE THE POSITIVE (SCHOOLS, SERVICES)
- Networking and Engagement Strategies

#### **BARREIERS AND FACILITATORS TO ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT OF GANG CULTURE AND GANG VIOLENCE**

- Language
- Culture
- Lack of readiness to adopt practices that address violence
- Lack of resources
- Social isolation





## **ACTIONS THAT MIGHT BE TAKEN:**

**MARCH 30, 2016 - We asked attendees, What responses can be created in light of shortages? What would we do if we have the resources? They responded...**

- **Rogelio:** a privilege to be here and participate in the discussion; families are socially isolated and in survival mode; families need time to reflect and contemplate; networking should be required; how can we connect our families? the burden is on us
- **Randal:** we can use a community of practice - meet on a regular basis to have these conversations
- **Jamecca:** hospital referrals - inventory who's doing what, develop a model for the County
- **Pastor Cruz:** Crisis response - connect with chaplain and family and bring resources. A resource book is helpful. Faith community can help with follow up.
- **Joel:** Technology is an important piece - many youth are sophisticated and have smart phones. They communicate in a way that is different than others. Coordination of services, improve communication, utilize technology to improve communication (example: electronic health records available to new doctor was a relief)
- **Dre:** Importance of standardization of processes, mutual sharing of the internal perspective/context of a community; work with others who aren't from the community - takes an openness to context; what are the resources and preconceptions I'm bringing in; what is the family context, values and resources community has; how can my resources contribute.
- **Randal:** we would like to get law enforcement at the table
- **Frank:** Will there be an advocacy element to this project? LAUSD is spending money on school police and getting rid of counselors and mental health professionals. We can sign on as a collective, and promote change.
- **Randal:** There is an advocacy element; the data is one piece, the literature review; there is a national recognition that mental health is part of public health and there is a need to address it; there are several papers that have documented the mental health status of individuals, there are initiatives addressing BMOC, My Brother's Keeper; the planning paper will have recommendations, the May 11 symposium; the report will be a resource for advocates
- Increase the use of technology to reduce barriers and increase access to information and services

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS RELATED TO GANG CULTURE AND GANG VIOLENCE**

- "We hear gunshots (so much) – it doesn't faze us. We're used to it. To me its normal."
- Funerals are an opportunity to negotiate between gang and family members to give family some control over funerals.





- Births
- Quiceneras

## COMPLETED

### Preliminary data analysis of gang related homicide victimization

#### Lit. Review

#### Community Assessment

- May 10, 2016:
  - A conversation on the impact of GCGV on Mental Health and Well-being with youth from LAURA. – see note on GOOGLE DOCS.

## Closing Comments

NEXT STEPS – DEVELOP A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TO SUPPORT ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING.

- Connect with Chambers of Commerce
- Involve local elected officials
- Send Invitations to join the data committee
- The strategy committee - look at how we develop strategies across settings
- **Cynthia:** Send out roster
- **Michelle:** Create a document with a description of your organization
- **Randal:** will send survey monkey survey asking for organization description and a few other questions; opt out if you do not want to be included.
- **Fabian:** Thanked Randal for sharing and bringing himself and creating the space for everyone
- **Pastor Cruz:** Everyone wanted me to get A's but they didn't understand I had an alcoholic father who was beating up my mom. Pacoima used to be a vacation destination, but all I knew of it was the gangs.

## Upcoming Activities;

- In Planning:
  - Community Conversations and Focus groups
    - Holman United Methodist Church
    - Up 2 Us Sports
    - Centinela Valley Union High School District

**Upcoming Workgroup Meeting Dates**

1. Wednesday, March 2, 2016 9:30am-11:30am - COMPLETED
2. Wednesday, March 30, 2016 10am-Noon - COMPLETED
3. Wednesday, April 20, 2016 10am-Noon - (Please RSVP)
4. **Symposium Date:** May 11, 2016
5. Wednesday June 15, 2016

DRAFT