

YOUTH IN ACTION

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SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

PROBATION DEPARTMENT

GANG PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

**For more information on the Youth In Action Program
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DEPARTMENT
GANG PREVENTION AND EDUCATION
PROGRAM**

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide at-risk youth of South San Luis Obispo County with a comprehensive, evidence based curriculum that will seek to reduce gang violence and activity through education, awareness, family and community engagement.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The San Luis Obispo County Probation Department's "Youth in Action" program will focus on youth between the ages of 10-14 years-old who demonstrate themselves to be at-risk for membership or association with a criminal street gang. The program will provide youth with an intense 18-week school-based intervention and education curriculum where students will engage in bi-weekly sessions focused on consequences of gang involvement, drug and alcohol abuse, and the role of violence in our community. The curriculum will explore the dynamics behind gang membership and affiliation, challenge the myths behind gang culture, and teach youth viable alternatives to the gang lifestyle. Participants will learn cognitive behavioral strategies to reduce violence through effective communication, conflict resolution, refusal and critical thinking skills. Students will be provided with opportunities to practice these techniques and will be encouraged to use these skills to remain safe in school and in the community. The students who participate in this program will be asked to honor their commitment to participate in the program for one school semester.

Participants will be presented with opportunities to develop leadership skills in and out of the classroom so they may become advocates of non-violence and gang prevention in their home, community and school. Youth will attend presentations from local law enforcement, probation, the District Attorney's Office and victims of gang violence. Participants will meet with community members and leaders from similar social and ethnic backgrounds. They will be exposed to positive role models in the community and/or through study. Finally, students will explore their own potential to create change in their community by participating in a service project.

To further engage and educate the community about gang violence and lifestyle parents/guardians will be encouraged to participate in selected workshops in which gang identification and access to community resources are the focus.

TARGET SITES:

The program will serve 60 students attending Oceano and Nipomo Elementary Schools and Mesa and Judkins Middle Schools.

CURRICULUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PURPOSE:

- Welcome and Purpose of group.

II. RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL AND IN THE COMMUNITY:

- Participants will deconstruct and debunk the myths of gang culture and violence.
- Participants will learn to face bullying effectively and identify safe places within their community.
- Students will learn to deal with these stressors effectively.

III. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TRAINING:

- The program will promote positive values for healthier lifestyle choices.
- The program will advocate healthy behaviors relative to drug and alcohol avoidance, relationship, nutrition and physical fitness.
- Participants will learn about the risks associated with drug and alcohol use.
- Participants will learn refusal strategies to effectively confront negative peer pressure.
- Participants will learn conflict resolution strategies to deal with conflict effectively.
- Participants will learn to communicate and express emotions effectively and appropriately.
- Learn effective anger management strategies.
- Participants will explore goal-setting strategies.
- Participants will learn to take responsibility for their own actions.
- Participants will identify peaceful alternatives to violence.
- Participants will introduce peace-building concepts within the targeted communities.

IV. MEDIA LITERACY:

- Participants will learn to critically examine images of gang and delinquent lifestyles projected in mainstream films, music, and popular culture.
- Participant will explore media of violence and how these images might influence media consumers.
- Students will explore the media representations of young men of color.

V. LEADERSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY:

- Participants will meet local leaders who share a similar background and have contributed to the good of the community.
- Participants will study and understand the lives of men and women of color who created history through the use of nonviolence.
- Students will participate in community service projects.

VI. PARENT FORUMS:

- Parents will learn about the societal costs and harm brought on by gang violence in communities.
- Participants will learn from victims of gang violence and from former gang members about how their lives have been impacted by gang violence.
- Parents will learn about the legal consequences of criminal gang involvement through discussions and interaction with Probation, Law Enforcement, The District Attorney's Office and other Community Based Organizations working with at-risk youth.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- Positively impact the amount of gang related crime in program area.
- A decrease of WIC 602 and WIC 601(b) filings for program participants.
- An improvement in school attendance, academic performance and reduction of conflict in school and in the community for program participants.
- Overall the presence of gang indicia will reduce in schools.
- Student participants will learn and utilize communication, refusal and conflict resolution skills to reduce conflict at school and in the community.
- Students will develop knowledge of the legal and financial consequences if they become involved in the Juvenile Justice system.
- Program participants will organize one community service project per year.
- Participants will develop pro-social values and beliefs.
- Participants will decrease anti-authority behavior by having pro-social contact with law enforcement officers.
- School staff and administrators will gain broader knowledge regarding gang prevention strategies.
- Parents will learn to identify early gang and other at risk behavior in their youth by participating in educational workshops in a culturally and linguistically appropriate setting.
- Parents will receive referrals for services including drug and alcohol counseling, mental health and parenting classes.
- Parents will develop knowledge of the legal and financial consequences if their children became involved in the Juvenile Justice system.

RISK FACTORS

The Youth In Action program coordinator will work closely with school counselors, administrators, teachers, school resource officers, probation, and community based organizations to identify students deemed to be most appropriate for the program. The following criteria will be used to screen potential candidates:

- Habitual truant behavior.
- Fighting in school or in the community.
- Possible school expulsion.
- Poor academic performance.
- Students who come from home with a single parent.
- Students who have an older sibling or family member involved in gang activity.
- Student who have an older sibling or parent on or previously on probation or parole.
- Students with parents or older siblings previously incarcerated.
- Students who are known to associate with identified gang members.
- Students exhibiting gang identification.