D7  Utilizing Art and Media to Support Probation Youth in Gangs

June 5, 2014, 1:00 - 3:00 pm

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Garden 1
Who are we?

Wraparound - Ventura County

• Wraparound is a state-initiated and state/county funded program intended to keep children in their own homes and communities who would otherwise be placed in out-of-home care settings such as residential treatment programs or group homes. This goal is accomplished by bringing together a unique team comprised of professionals and individuals who know and care about the family. Called the child and family team (CFT), this group helps develop a plan that builds on the family’s strengths and uses natural supports along with community resources.

How it Works

• The Wraparound motto is doing “whatever it takes” to keep the child and family together safely. Once enrolled in Wraparound, children/youth typically remain in the program for a year or more though each family’s unique needs determine the length of stay within the program. Wraparound is considered a process not a service and from the beginning of the process, the goal of Wraparound is for families to continue to succeed once formal supports (involvement of the CFT) has ended.

Who is Eligible?

• Referrals for Wraparound are made through Ventura County Probation and Human Services Agencies (Including Adoption Assistance Program, Permanency Planning, Family Preservation, and Family Reunification).

Wraparound Life Domains

• Following the Ten Principles of Wraparound, the program takes a unique approach to working with youth and families having the most acute and complex needs in Ventura County.

• While taking a family-driven, needs-focused, strength-based approach, the Wraparound team comprised of a Family Facilitator, Parent Partner, and Family Specialist works with the entire Child & Family Team to address the family’s needs in twelve life domains:

  1. Safety
  2. Family
  3. Social/Friends
  4. Emotional/Behavioral
  5. Education/Vocation
  6. Work
  7. Money
  8. Housing
  9. Health/Medical
  10. Cultural/Spiritual
  11. Legal
  12. Recreation

What do we do?
Disclaimer

• Wraparound’s goal is to support the child and family at achieving their identified goals.
• We do not push an agenda, we only support their achievement of their terms and conditions as well as any personal plan of care goals they have.
• For example, our goal is to not get the youth out of the gang nor shame them for being gang affiliated, but to bring out their strengths so that they can contribute to society in a health way.
• There are many ways to support Probation Youth, this is just one way we use in our work.

Breakdown and Demographics

Table 2: Ventura County General Population and At-Risk Populations – 2000 - 2050

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<td>% of Gang Incl.</td>
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Informal Probation Statistics

Table 3: Informal Probation Population by City – August 1, 2017

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<th>Informal Population by City</th>
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Informal Probation Age Range

Table 4: Informal Probation Population by Age – August 1, 2007

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Juvenile Probation Population by City

Table 5: Juvenile Probation Population by City – August 1, 2007

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<td>Newbury Park</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>184</td>
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Local Ventura County Gangs

- Eastside Saticoy gang, ESS
- Cabrillo Village, Campo, CV
- Eastside Montalvo, ESM
- Midtown, VMT
- Pierpont Gang
- Ventura Avenue Gangsters
- Hells Angels
- Skinhead Dogs
- Colonia Chiques
- Paula Street
- Lemonwood
- Varrio Simi Valley (VSV)
- West Side Locos
Population Breakdown
Map of Ventura County Gang and Tagging Crew Territories

Why do Youth Join Gangs?

- Safety
- Status/Pride/Honor
- Recognition
- Friendship/Belonging
- Curiosity
- Excitement
- Money
- Tradition due to generational Commitment
- Drug Abuse
- Peer Pressure
- Sense of Power
- Control
- Source of Survival and Guidance

(Taken from Gangs 101: Understanding the Culture of Youth Violence)
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
Why Youth Join Gangs

External Needs:
• Physiological
  — food, air, water, clothing and sex
• Safety
  — protection, stability, pain avoidance, routine and order
• Belonging
  — affection, acceptance and inclusion
• Esteem
  — self-esteem, self-respect, respect of others and respect by others
• Self-Actualization
  — achieve full potential and achievement

Internal needs:
• Self-Confidence
• Love
• Health
• Emotional and Spiritual Security
**Literature & Research**

- National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Association (NCCATA)-Group of Creative Arts Therapists who are human service professionals that use artistic modalities to help youth.
- Includes Art therapy, Dance/Movement therapy, Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, Poetry therapy, and Psychodrama.
- “Purpose is to ameliorate disability and illness and optimize health and wellness.”
- According to the NCCATA, there are more than 15,000 creative art therapists practicing in the United States.

**Literature and Research continued...**

- Art therapies assist young adults and adolescents with the following needs: mental health, substance abuse problems, physical disabilities, developmental disabilities (www.nccata.org).
- Example: Substance abuse: Can make a difference between denial and determination.
- Art therapies can confront the client’s barriers to the recovery process.

**Hip Hop Therapy**

- “Hip-Hop can be described as an urban mainstream culture driven by youth and young adults. HHT uses Hip-Hop music and culture to engage youth and address their issues in therapy by encouraging them to reflect on Hip-Hop lyrics as they relate to the youths’ own life experiences.”
- “HHT also utilizes concepts from established forms of therapeutic approaches such as music therapy, behavioral therapy, and narrative therapy and may be instituted in either individual or group settings. Analyzing Hip-Hop lyrics engages participants, stimulates discussion, and promotes critical examination of life issues, struggles, and experiences.”

Hip Hop Therapy

• HHT also embodies the person-in-environment (PIE) approach that is a central component of social work practice and explores the social, cultural, and environmental orientations and contexts of participants.

• Using HHT allows practitioners to embrace youth culture while simultaneously attempting to deconstruct negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors held by the youth and replace them with healthy and positive goals and objectives.”


Reasons to Use Art, Music and Media with Probation Youth

• Safety
• Emotional Release
• Coping Skill
• How they relate to others
• Perception of their own reality
• Improves communication, language, and expression
• Increases physical, emotional, cognitive and/or social functioning.

• Hip-Hop Therapy is designed and best utilized as an engagement tool in a psychotherapeutic or educational setting for high-risk youth and young adults.

• The intervention is diverse enough to be utilized with any racial or ethnic group familiar with and/or affected by Hip-Hop music and culture. It is educational, creative, culturally-sensitive, engaging, empowering, and therapeutic.

Nakeyshaey M. Tillie Allen. Exploring Hip-Hop Therapy with High-Risk Youth p. 31
The Significance of Gang Related Art

- Gang related art drawings may convey a particular meaning and significance to the individual drawer.
- May tell a story to those who understand the meaning of specific symbols within the drawing.
- “Graffiti can be a springboard for the examination of personal identity, commercial design, social history and community conflict.”

According to Dr. Jessie Whitehead, professor at Southern Connecticut State University (Graffiti Arts Project - GAP)

Bell Arts Factory-Ventura

- Community art outreach program in the city of Ventura.
- Free Art Classes for Youth
- Community Service Opportunities
- Mentorship
- Open Studios and Galleries
- Protected Building

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<th>PROGRAMS/</th>
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<td>AfterCare</td>
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Los Angeles County Resources

- Homeboy Industries
- Jeopardy Program/LAPD
- Juvenile Impact Program (J.I.P.) Boot Camp
- San Fernando Coalition on Gangs
- Toberman Neighborhood Center, Inc.
- We Care Outreach Ministries

How Do We Help Probation Youth?

- According to the National Gang Center Bulletin (June, 2012), “Outreach workers should be willing to help gang members, including advocating on their behalf, ensuring they have access to services and opportunities, and acting as their link to community institutions.”
- Through consistent one on one contact, encourage the youth to make positive behavioral changes.
- Center in on the youth’s talents/strengths and link the youth to those appropriate resources; the more pro-social skills the youth is engaged in, the less time for gang activity.

How Do We Help Probation Youth?

- Allow youth to guide the face to face visit. When using art or music, pay attention to the specific art/musical piece the youth is showing you. Youth at times use art as a third person or metaphorical outlet to express their own innermost struggles/challenges.
- Working with local law enforcement to create works of art featuring graffiti is an excellent way to show youth that adults are listening, are interested, and want to be part of this dialogue for social change.
Interventions

- Customize resource binder to identified interest (i.e. graffiti art [http://www.graffiticreator.net/])
- Soundtrack to my life survey worksheet
- Boys & Girls Club (www.bgclubventura.org)
- Oxnard Police Department’s Operation Peace Works (OPW)
- Bell Arts Factory (Ventura)
- Lyrical Analysis Intervention

Sam’s Story

16 year old male transitioned from Northern California to Ventura county. Client was in a Northern California gang and felt isolated and in fear of now being located in Southern California.

Safety Concerns:

- Client didn’t like to leave his house
- Challenges taking bus or traveling alone in the city
- Didn’t like to go to probation office because he would see rival gangs
- Rival gangs threw things at client’s house
- Was jumped multiple times when out in public

Interventions:

- Client expressed a great interest in art and media
- Wraparound helped client earn art supplies through a series of short term goals client could achieve
- Client used writing lyrics and poetry as a coping skill
- Wraparound would make client mix CDs to build rapport and broaden his musical taste
- Client expressed his mistrust of others and hate towards authority figures — this made his relationship with his referring party challenging
Edgar’s Story
13 year old male transitioning into new placement in new community. Target by local tagging crew. Early on client identified art as a coping skill. Wraparound utilized art to customize client’s safety plan incorporated art as in intervention at the beginning of meetings and during face to face visits.
Interventions
• Wraparound would have team meetings at a park and noticed client tagging his “nickname” into benches and playground equipment. Wraparound intervened and notified mother, discussed consequences.
• Client was being pressured to hang out with an older group of boys
• Wraparound supported mother at enrolling client in pro-social activities including community sporting leagues and art classes
• Wraparound encouraged client to draw and tag in notebooks – discussing the long term consequences of property destruction
• Incorporated team meetings, with family and introduced mother to client’s age appropriate friends, discouraging client hanging out with older youth.
• Discussed “safe areas” to hang out to avoid older youth/tagging crews

Challenges
• Staying motivated
• Surrounding self with positive influences in school and in neighborhood
• Stealing money from mother
• Home Environment

Angel’s Story
17 year old male living in a section of Oxnard, California that is heavily gang related. Angel was initiated in an Oxnard gang at the age of 11 years old. After four years of living the gang life, Angel decided to leave the gang.
Safety Concerns
• Rival gang members who live close by.
• Rival gang members breaking windows of family homes.
• Angel leaving the home and checking to see who is on the streets.
• Angel had multiple confrontations when leaving the home at night putting his life in danger.
• Angel did not feel very safe when out in the community.
• Angel wanting to break away from the gang life but constantly was targeted.
Interventions
• Angel expressed interest in art and music.
• Angel participated in Bell Arts Factory in Ventura linked by Wraparound team.
• Angel wrote lyrics and produced music. Angel showed the team his work during face to face visits with family specialist and CFT meetings.
• Linked Angel to the Boys & Girls Club, therapy, and RAD (substance abuse group).
Angel’s Story

Challenges:
• Angel leaving home at night although it was a Probation violation.
• Angel running away from home for weeks at a time.
• Angel struggling with substance abuse to self-medicate and cope with his anxiety.
• Angel refusing to attend therapy sessions.
• Angel not feeling supported by his mother.

Angel’s Mother

Angel’s mom wants the best for Angel but feels discouraged by her son’s choices.

Safety concerns:
• Angel bringing strangers into the home.
• Angel struggling with rival gang members confronting him out on the streets.
• Mother working the graveyard shift making it difficult to supervise Angel.

Interventions:
• Parent Partner helped Mom become a better listener.
• Mom role modeling positive communication.
• Mom supporting Angel with his art and musical skills.
• Mom to attend Angel’s performances.
• Mom to hold Angel accountable by reporting all violations to the Probation Officer.
• Mom to spend one on one time with Angel (ex: movies).

Angel’s Mother

Challenges:
• Angel running away from home.
• Angel’s substance use.
• Angel self-sabotaging.
• Mother feeling powerless due to her work schedule.
Maria and Angel Interview

School Performance

Original Song

• <iframe width="100%" height="450" scrolling="no" frameborder="no" src="https://w.soundcloud.com/player/?url=https%3A//api.soundcloud.com/tracks/101758907&amp;auto_play=false&amp;hide_related=false&amp;visual=true"></iframe>
"Confessionz" lyrics

The drugs I choose to abuse, the battle against my demons I refuse to lose, one thing, I will always choose is to throw my life away and hope for better days. I’m caught up in a daze, maybe it’s just a phase. In my life I better think twice about the choices I am about to make for my family I’ve got three other siblings. They all look up to me. So much pressure cuz the weight on my shoulders. Days passing by. I’m getting older. But the blood in my veins seem to be getting colder. And Yes I confess I am a little suicidal with a rope around my neck let it lay me out to rest.

"Confessionz" continued...

Feeling cursed, nightmares of me resting in the hearse. People around my casket.. yes I know there’s no way coming back from that. Maybe it’s for the best if I put myself to turn to rest.

Chorus: These are my confessions, my drug obsessions, get me to the phone quick so I can hit up my connections. No girl in this world will even ever show me affection. I’m only human. Not far from perfection.

"Confessionz" continued...

Do you really know me like you think you know me? Honestly I doubt it. Look at me and tell me what you see. A kid full of laughter and smiles. Cuz that’s where I hide all the anger with pain. I’ve been holding in for a while. I gave up hope the day I realized my parents weren’t getting back together, since then my life has been nothing but cloudy with rainy weather. The day I found out my sister was diagnosed with cancer turned to the meth pipe cuz drugs were my only answer. Every morning I woke up mad at the world asking myself why God chose to do this to an innocent little girl.
“Confessionz” continued...
Questioning the man up above. Am the way I am because my father never showed me love? Raised to know in the streets, turn the way of the thugs. Never dropped a tear or needed a hug. At least that’s what I told myself when I was high on drugs.

Chorus
I’m lonelier than ever, the day I got busted. Not one person in this world I could have ever trusted. Now I am up all hours of the night cuz I’m stressin’ about the struggles of my life. The nightmare that I’m in can’t be any worse than the one in my sleep. Walking down the street by myself I feel death creep.

“Confessionz” continued...

• My homies say they’ve got my back but talk’s cheap. I’m in the kitchen b****** to my mom cuz I want something to eat. The only way to show my feelings is lettin’ it out on this beat. Call it poetry. This is my chance to take the road to success. The way I see my life’s a f**** up mess. No way to clean it up. Got to learn on my own. I’ll take some short cuts. But it seems like the more I take drugs, the more I don’t feel loved. F*** it where’s the bud. Roll another blunt. F*** the pain tonight. I’m feeling dumb.
Created by 15 year old youth for a Wraparound staff
References

- www.nccata.org
- 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment
- National Drug Intelligence Center
- American Academy Of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
- 2011-2012 LAUSD School Mental Health Resource Guide of Agencies & Social Services Page 40
- National Gang Center Bulletin (June, 2012).
Questions? Comments?

CONTACT US!

CASA PACIFICA
www.casapacifica.org

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Soundtrack to my life survey

when you’re lonely

when you’re happy

when you’re bouncy

when you’re feeling country

when you’re sad

when you’re hating

when you’re looking good

when you’re going out

when you’re getting married

when you’re in love

when you’re angry

when someone passes away

when you feel motivated
when you’re on the run!

when you’re hurting

when you’re breaking up and don’t care

when you get your heart broken

when you get cheated on

when you cheated...if you have

when you’re by yourself

when you’re cruisin town

when you’re hanging out with family

when you’re getting peer pressured

when adults tell you what to do

when you get a gift

when you’re around a lot of people you don’t know