



OJJDP  
Serving Children, Families, and Communities  
**JUVENILE JUSTICE**  
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Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator

### From the Administrator

In the 1970s, less than half the states reported gang problems. By the turn of the 21st century, however, every state and the District of Columbia were facing this challenge.

Helping communities combat gang activity is a leading priority for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and our Gang Reduction Program has been a key initiative to that end. A comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to preventing and reducing gang activity, the program emphasizes addressing the needs of youth and affecting change in families, organizations, and communities.

This bulletin draws on findings from an independent evaluation, conducted by the Urban Institute, of the Gang Reduction Program's impact in Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; North Miami Beach, FL; and Richmond, VA, to examine how effectively these sites implemented the program.

The findings reported in these pages have greatly augmented our understanding of the program's achievements and will guide our efforts to enhance the effectiveness of OJJDP's anti-gang model.

Jeff Slowikowski  
Acting Administrator

## Findings From the Evaluation of OJJDP's Gang Reduction Program

by Meagan Cahill and David Hayeslip

### Highlights

Researchers from the Urban Institute conducted an independent evaluation of the impact of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Gang Reduction Program (GRP) on gang-related crime in Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; North Miami Beach, FL; and Richmond, VA.

The evaluation focused on program implementation and outcomes in each of the four cities. Following are some of the authors' key findings:

- In contrast to many previous crime prevention and reduction efforts, all sites successfully implemented the GRP model. Three of the four sites also implemented plans to sustain elements of the program as federal funding expired.
- Successful outcomes related to crime reduction were seen in most of the sites although results varied.
- Strong leadership of a site coordinator, close oversight by OJJDP during the strategic planning and implementation phases, and the availability of technical assistance contributed to implementation progress at the sites.
- GRP is not a one-size-fits-all approach to gang prevention and reduction. The model is flexible enough that sites can adapt it to local conditions yet remain true to the original design.





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### Introduction

Youth gangs have existed in various forms since at least the 19th century, although the nature and extent of their activity has evolved over time. Over the past 25 years in particular, gangs have expanded rapidly both in size and their areas of operation. Gangs today are more violent, their activities are more widespread and pervasive, and they are more entrenched within the community.

Research highlights the relationship between gang involvement and increased criminality; gang-involved youth engage in more frequent and more serious criminal activity than they do prior to joining or after they leave a gang (Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber, 2004; Browning, Thornberry, and Porter, 1999; Battin et al., 1998; Thornberry and Burch, 1997; Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher, 1993). A number of individual, family, and community risk factors increase one's likelihood of becoming involved with a gang (Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber, 2004; Thornberry, 2001; Hill, Lui, and Hawkins, 2001; Esbensen, 2000; Browning, Thornberry, and Potter, 1999; Howell, 1998). Although anti-gang programs have traditionally addressed these risk factors through prevention, intervention, or suppression activities, recent approaches have employed more comprehensive strategies that incorporate different elements into a flexible model for organized gang crime reduction. Evaluations suggest that these comprehensive models are particularly difficult to implement; nevertheless, they continue to garner increasing attention and warrant extensive implementation and outcome evaluations.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Gang Reduction Program (GRP) is one such comprehensive program, an outgrowth of previous comprehensive approaches to reduce and prevent gang activity at the local level. In 1994, following a review of

promising anti-gang programs and interventions, Dr. Irving Spergel and colleagues from the University of Chicago introduced the Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression, more commonly referred to as the "Spergel Model" (Spergel et al., 1994b). This multifaceted approach to gang reduction emphasizes addressing the needs of individual youth and making changes in the families, organizations, and communities around them. The Spergel Model is unique among anti-gang programs because its prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts are coordinated (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009; Spergel et al., 2004; Spergel et al., 1994a). The model was applied to school violence under OJJDP's Gang-Free Schools and Communities Initiative (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2008).

OJJDP's Gang Reduction Program is the most recent adaptation of the Spergel Model. This bulletin presents findings from the Urban Institute's independent evaluation of GRP—a \$10 million, multiyear initiative (2003–08) to reduce crime associated with youth street gangs in Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; North Miami Beach, FL; and Richmond, VA. The evaluation focused on program implementation and outcomes in each of the four cities. The implementation component assessed the progress of the initiative in each site from its launch in the spring of 2003 through mid-2008. The outcomes component considered the effects of the program in each site from implementation through early 2008 and examined whether each site experienced significant changes in gang-related crime, serious crime, and other outcome measures associated with the goals of GRP.

### Background

OJJDP's primary goal in implementing GRP was to reduce gang crime and violence (see figure 1). To achieve

this goal, OJJDP sought to implement programs that were “comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated.”<sup>1</sup>

OJJDP selected four target communities of limited geographic area (about 2 to 5 square miles) in which to implement its comprehensive gang-reduction model. According to OJJDP, these communities were chosen because they were areas of substantial gang activity and sites of previous crime-prevention efforts. The target sites were Boyle Heights in Los Angeles, Metcalf Park in Milwaukee, the entire city of North Miami Beach, and the Southside community in Richmond.

The program’s multipronged implementation approach required community stakeholders to develop local plans to address family, peer, school, and community needs. Next, stakeholders identified local resources that they could use to meet these needs. After these planning objectives had been met, communities could use federal support to enhance delivery of appropriate resources and services to meet the identified needs.

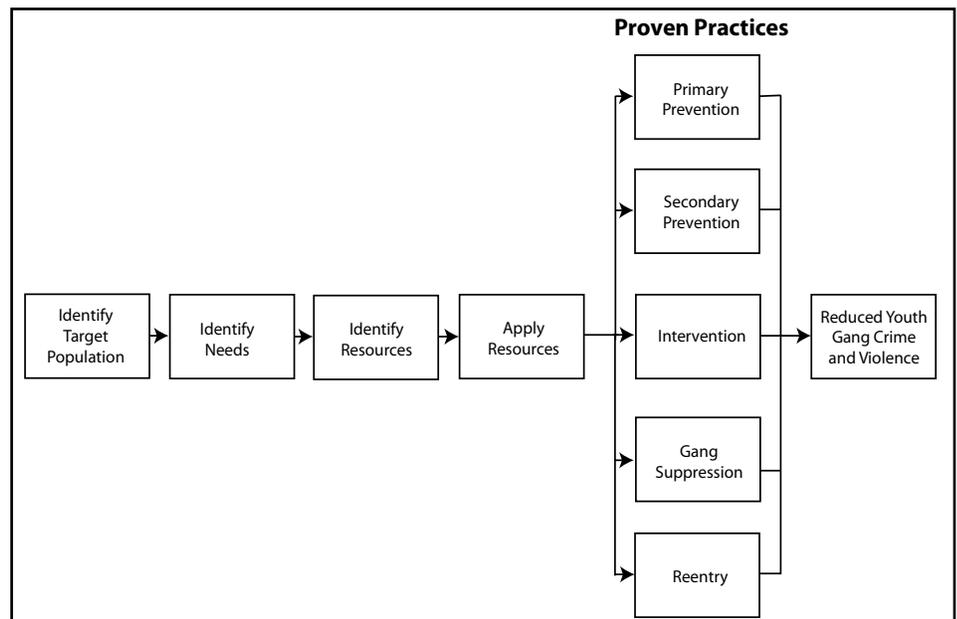
In fall 2003, OJJDP made a one-time, 5-year, \$2.5 million award to each site. The mayor’s office in Los Angeles and state agencies in the three other sites administered the awards. A local GRP coordinator served as the primary point of contact for each site and was responsible for planning, developing, and implementing the program. The coordinators also developed and maintained collaborative relationships with local leadership that included representatives from community organizations, service providers, police precincts, schools, and social service agencies. These local leaders often shared their expertise through participation in either a GRP executive board or a steering committee.

From late 2003 to early 2004, each site conducted an initial strategic planning process to lay the groundwork for longer term plans to implement the complete GRP model. This planning process was very short—sites had 6 months to complete their plans, seek OJJDP approval of the plan, and begin implementing the program. Although sites were required to complete this phase prior to funding or implementation of any program component, OJJDP allowed each site to use a maximum of \$80,000 in grant funding to complete this phase. OJJDP also offered sites technical

assistance through the National Gang Center<sup>2</sup> in support of this phase and during later program implementation.

Following plan approval, OJJDP limited sites’ GRP activities in summer 2004 to those of a short-term nature. Each of the sites successfully implemented several short-term programs (e.g., alternatives to suspension, midnight basketball, Boys & Girls Clubs programming, college preparation); however, the number of clients that these programs served was relatively small. Even though the sites incorporated some of these programs into the larger, comprehensive plans they implemented following further strategic planning over the next 6 months, these early activities did not appear to be clearly and logically connected to the larger GRP plans. Instead, sites chose these programs because they could quickly implement them and they required modest initial funding.

Figure 1. The GRP Framework



Following OJJDP’s approval of their expanded strategic plans in late 2005, each site began implementing the program. Although each of the sites generally adhered to the overall GRP model, the emphasis on each of the components necessarily varied from site to site based on differing local contexts, community factors, and characteristics of each site’s gang problems. Prevention received the greatest emphasis in terms of the numbers of individual programs and funding support across the sites. After exhausting federal funding, Milwaukee ceased GRP operations in fall 2007. Implementation continued through at least 2008 in the other three sites. (See sidebars throughout the bulletin for brief backgrounds on each of the GRP implementation sites.)



## Methodology

### Evaluation of the Implementation Component

Researchers employed several methods to collect data to document implementation in each site. The first was direct observation of GRP planning activities, both onsite and at OJJDP-convened meetings. Researchers also collected and reviewed relevant documents from each site, including progress reports, strategic plans, budgets, and requests for proposals from potential local service providers.

In addition, an evaluator conducted one-on-one and small group interviews with GRP coordinators, steering and implementation subcommittee members, and local stakeholders. The sessions were designed to gather individuals' observations and opinions about how strategic and implementation groups were formed, how the planning process unfolded, and how decisions were made about specific programs to be funded. Other major topics addressed in the interviews were the participants' views on lessons learned (both positive and negative) and program sustainability once federal grant funds expired. Researchers conducted followup interviews with committee members every 6 months to a year throughout the evaluation period.

The complex nature of programs such as GRP often makes concepts such as collaboration and functioning difficult to gauge. Researchers designed and conducted three waves

## LOS ANGELES

Although levels of overall crime in Los Angeles decreased early in the GRP effort, gang crime rose 14 percent citywide in 2006 and city officials promised to increase their efforts to address gang crime (Archibold, 2007). By some estimates, there were nearly 40,000 gang members throughout the city, a large portion of whom operated in the 15-square-mile division of East Los Angeles that the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Hollenbeck Division patrols (Winton, 2005). The area includes the neighborhoods of Lincoln Heights, El Soreno, and Boyle Heights and was thought to have the highest concentration of gang activity in Los Angeles with an estimated 34 gangs and 6,400 LAPD-documented gang members. Gang detectives estimated that an additional 2,000 to 3,000 gang members operated in the Hollenbeck Division. These gangs were intergenerational and claimed territory block by block.

Located in 2 square miles of the southeastern-most corner of Boyle Heights, the GRP target area was home to approximately 25,000 people, many of whom lived in one of the

neighborhood's two large apartment complexes. Although largely residential, Boyle Heights also hosts several prominent commercial zones of "mom and pop" establishments and an industrial area on its southwestern edge. The area was home to approximately 2,000 documented and suspected gang members belonging to 4 major gangs and had received significant media attention for its gang activity in recent years (CNN, 2005; McCarthy, 2005; ABC News, 2004; PBS, 2001).

The suppression component of the Los Angeles GRP was unique from that in other sites because similar suppression activities existed in the target area prior to the introduction of GRP. The suppression component was implemented through a partnership with an existing multiagency law enforcement collaborative, the Community Law Enforcement And Recovery (CLEAR) program. The federally funded CLEAR program began in the Boyle Heights target area in 2003 and coordinated resources in areas of high gang crime to decrease gang violence. The decision to co-locate the GRP site with CLEAR maximized the synergy between the two programs.

*“The program’s multipronged implementation approach required community stakeholders to develop local plans to address family, peer, school, and community needs.”*

of a Web-based survey<sup>3</sup> of site coordinators and committee members (both current and former) to measure collaboration among partners, examine how well GRP functioned in each site, and assess how the perceptions of those involved in GRP changed over time. Although these types of surveys are rare in evaluations of programs such as GRP, the data gathered are important to understand how well the program worked.

## Evaluation of the Outcomes Component

Researchers collected a variety of community-level outcome measures in each site with data from local police departments forming the central element of the outcome analysis. This bulletin focuses solely on the violent and gang crime outcomes in each site. Results from the analyses of the additional outcome measures in each site will be available in a forthcoming final evaluation report.

The researchers worked with law enforcement and stakeholders to select a suitable comparison area for each GRP target area. Outcome data were collected for both the target and comparison areas in each site and analyzed.<sup>4</sup> To analyze the crime and gang-related crime outcomes<sup>5</sup> across the four sites, the evaluation team investigated the trends in each outcome measure over time, examined maps of the measures over time, and conducted time series analyses to test whether any observed trends were statistically significant. Given that suppression activities were most likely to have immediate and short-term effects on outcomes, including reduction of serious violent crime and gang crime, the evaluation team focused on the periods immediately before and after suppression activities began in each site. The crime outcome measures analyzed included monthly figures before GRP began in 2003 through early 2008.

Analysis of GRP outcomes posed several challenges. The researchers expected that suppression activities, if effective, would impact the average number of criminal incidents in a target area. However, using information from law enforcement about the timing, nature, and intensity of their GRP-sponsored gang suppression activities, the research team was unable to formulate hypotheses about exactly when the effect, if any, of the suppression activities

would begin. This uncertainty was the result of several factors. First, the team did not have detailed information on the number of man-hours the police departments devoted to gang-suppression activities over time. In addition, the team expected that the suppression activities might become more effective over time as the police refined their tactics, improved their gang intelligence, and became more familiar with the target communities. Lastly, the researchers expected that other interventions—such as the introduction of the Milwaukee Police Department’s new data management system or the enactment of civil injunctions against gangs in Los Angeles—likely affected the outcome measures. However, the team had even less information about these interventions, such as their exact timing, to account for them in its models, and thus could not ascertain when those effects would take place or what actual effect those interventions would have.

To meet these challenges, the researchers adopted a method of statistical analysis that allowed them to find those points in time, known as break points, where the average number of crime incidents per month changed significantly—either increasing or decreasing.<sup>6</sup> They then interpreted these break points in the context of each site’s implementation timeline. For example, if the analysis detected a decrease in gang-related crime in the target area shortly after GRP activities began and found no similarly timed drop in the comparison area, that finding was interpreted as being consistent with the hypothesis that GRP had reduced gang-related crime.

For each site, the research team constructed separate monthly time series composed of counts of each of several categories of crime, such as serious violence<sup>7</sup> and gang-related incidents for the target and comparison areas, and tested for any number of months where the mean of crime incidents changed significantly.<sup>8</sup> In the section on Findings below, the researchers report only those months where the mean level of crime incidents changed significantly.<sup>9</sup> They then compared their knowledge of site activities to the statistical break points to determine whether GRP activities may have influenced the changing crime levels. The results of these analyses follow below.

## MILWAUKEE

The north side of Milwaukee, once home to much of the city's middle class, deteriorated greatly during the 1980s coincidental to the decline of the manufacturing sector and the rise of the city's crack cocaine epidemic. In the wake of this upheaval, these neighborhoods became nearly synonymous with unemployment, poverty, and crime. Traditional youth gangs such as the Vice Lords and Gangster Disciples operated a thriving narcotics trade and violently feuded over territory.

The Milwaukee GRP target area covered all or parts of the Midtown, Metcalfe Park, and Amani neighborhoods. Eighty-nine percent of the roughly 8,000 residents in the target area were African American and 45 percent of the population lived below the poverty line. The area was economically depressed, and the population had declined significantly over the past decade despite attempts at economic revitalization. The

socioeconomic woes of the target area were compounded by the high rate of high school dropouts: more than 40 percent of the adult population older than 25 did not graduate from high school.

The gang problem in the target area was typical of gangs on the north side of Milwaukee and consisted of loosely organized groups of young African American males mainly focused around the drug trade. The groups were nonhierarchical and members were not easily identified by their clothes or other symbols, a fact that frustrated law enforcement efforts to eradicate them. The lack of gang organization on the north side of the city, however, did not mean the gangs were any less violent. A majority of Milwaukee's homicides were routinely concentrated on the north side of the city as opposed to the south side, where gangs followed a more typical, hierarchical structure.

## Findings

In general, each of the four sites implemented a wide range of promising and viable approaches to address its gang problem. These approaches were the result of strong local leadership and considerable local-level effort in most of the sites. However, the sites also faced significant challenges implementing the GRP model, particularly early in the program. Findings related to violent and gang-related crime were mixed; some measures showed decreases associated with GRP, but other measures showed no change at all surrounding the period of GRP implementation. Evidence of a positive effect of GRP on crime and gang measures appears strongest in the two sites—Los Angeles and Richmond—that most effectively implemented the model and either developed or built upon strong local partnerships across the various GRP components. The evaluation findings focus on three areas: implementation, outcomes, and sustainability.

## Implementation

Each of the demonstration sites focused on different types of gangs, gang-related problems, and community conditions. Only Los Angeles applied the GRP model to combat “traditional,” multigenerational, urban territorial gangs. The other sites considered gangs in the selected target areas to be relatively new or recently emerging. Because of these differences, the cities had to adapt implementation of the GRP model to meet local needs and problem-solving approaches. For example, North Miami Beach and Richmond had to take into account the large number of undocumented immigrants and their reluctance to trust government agencies. As a result, specific programs funded through GRP in those cities were selected to address these issues. Moreover, the three cities other than Los Angeles had paid little attention to gangs in the past (some reported not having any gang problems until recently) and targeting gang crime and violence was a relatively new undertaking for stakeholders.

*“The GRP model has been shown to work well in a wide range of community contexts, including areas with nontraditional gang problems.”*

The implementation evaluation examined the role of the steering committees; assessed the sites' strategic planning process, program management and leadership, collaboration, and functioning; as well as the obstacles and successes they faced during program implementation.

**Steering Committees.** Despite the limited organizational direction that OJJDP provided, the sites all developed similar planning bodies, referred to as steering or advisory committees. Several factors appeared to contribute to the development of and reliance on steering committees. First, GRP emphasized maximizing program funding and minimizing administrative or overhead costs. Thus, most coordinators came to rely on steering committees for management and decisionmaking support. In addition, all of the sites had past experience with other U.S. Department of Justice crime and violence-reduction programs, such as Weed and Seed, which specifically called for the formation of local committees or task forces to assist in program planning and implementation. Finally, OJJDP advised sites to form groups of local stakeholders to assist in the early GRP planning meetings; this advice naturally led to the sites' reliance on committees.

The use of steering committees appeared to be a mixed blessing in some of the sites. The program's parameters initially were not clear to the sites, and thus, some local government agencies, service providers, and community groups developed unrealistic expectations. Committee outreach and participation initially included some organizations that, upon announcement of the GRP funding, expected to secure substantial sums from the grants for their own agencies. As a result, planning and GRP implementation were, in some situations, disrupted because of individual agency or organizational priorities rather than collective interest in consensus building to fulfill the GRP's mission.

Strategic planning for the implementation of GRP took place in two phases. During the second phase, the role of the steering committees became less clear and a number of members in different sites expressed concern over the committees' future responsibilities. In fact, over the course of the second phase of implementation, the active

participation of steering committees and subcommittees declined. However, in the case of North Miami Beach, local coordinators required their committees to oversee funded programs and participate in sustainability efforts for the site. This expanded role resulted in continued active participation of some members, particularly those most dedicated to the overall GRP mission.

**Strategic Planning Process.** Both phases of the strategic planning process were intended to accelerate the placement of programs in the target communities. In addition, because the target areas were predefined, the assessments of gang problems were very limited. As a result, at the beginning of GRP, the sites vaguely defined community problems as the presence of gangs engaging in criminal activities in the target area. Moreover, most sites found it difficult to precisely define the target populations and specify concrete goals and objectives, particularly early in the planning process. After the initial planning phase, program coordinators and local committees in each site realized that they needed additional information about the nature of local problems and resources and evidence-based practices that might be most effective. To address these shortcomings, each site spent additional time and effort on the planning process, which substantially delayed implementation during phase two. It appeared that a number of implementation challenges could have been avoided if OJJDP had allowed sites additional time to engage in more indepth and thorough problem and resource assessments.

**GRP Management and Leadership.** OJJDP chose state agencies for three sites and the mayor's office in Los Angeles as fiscal agents for GRP, and program coordinators, hired as employees of each fiscal agent, were selected. OJJDP hypothesized that this arrangement would allow the coordinators to avoid being influenced by local





politics, thereby protecting them from local agencies' influence over funding and other project decisions. Strong leadership was indeed an important factor for the successful implementation of the program. In large measure, the successful implementation of the GRP model over its first 5 years was attributable to the coordinators' leadership. However, this leadership appeared to derive from the individual coordinators' skills and experience rather than because they were employees of the chosen fiscal agents. In fact, where implementation was most successful, local stakeholders reported coordinator leadership as one of the most important contributing factors. In addition, coordinators in three of the sites exercised some degree of independent decisionmaking authority. In Milwaukee, however, the coordinator shared decisionmaking authority with an active executive committee, which included representatives from the fiscal agent and local policymakers. This made it significantly more difficult for the coordinator to assume a leadership role, and local stakeholders consistently reported confusion over who was in charge.

During 2007, the local coordinators at three of the sites left their positions. In Los Angeles, the coordinator assumed a new gang coordination role within the mayor's office and was replaced. However, the original coordinator remained closely involved in the city's gang-reduction efforts—including those in the GRP target area—through her new position. In Richmond, the coordinator was similarly promoted within the Office of the Attorney General and was replaced. However, the new coordinator left soon after assuming the position, and the program management role reverted back to the original coordinator. In Milwaukee, the coordinator left for another position in state government approximately 6 months prior to the end of the site's planned operation period and was not replaced. The original coordinator in North Miami Beach remains in her capacity under GRP, although the organization itself was recently incorporated as an independent nonprofit

agency. With the exception of Milwaukee, coordinator turnover did not appear to have much of an effect on GRP efforts, which could be because of the strong leadership of the original coordinators who continued to maintain significant roles in the project. In Milwaukee, however, the coordinator's departure left a void that exacerbated existing management and decisionmaking problems. The absence of strong, local leadership hindered the program's efforts toward sustainability, and it ceased most of its gang-reduction activities when OJJDP funding ended.

**Collaboration and Functioning.** As noted earlier, although OJJDP did not mandate it, each of the demonstration sites developed steering committees and subcommittees to help guide strategic planning and program implementation. As conceived, the sites expected these various committees to involve interested local stakeholders who would develop partnerships to address the goals and objectives of the GRP.

The researchers found that the level of collaboration and communication in the early stages of planning and implementation was not equal within or across sites. In general, suppression-focused stakeholders seemed to function more collaboratively and effectively. This was likely because law enforcement and other suppression-focused agencies frequently seek out and develop interagency partnerships. In other words, these agencies and individuals had worked together successfully in the past and understood the importance of collaboration and open communication. In Los Angeles, for example, many of the participants had worked together previously on the CLEAR<sup>10</sup> initiative. In Richmond, the Office of the Attorney General had also coordinated a number of anti-gang programs, including a summer camp that involved multiple agencies.

On the other hand, those groups that focused on prevention and intervention did not appear to function as well together at this stage of the implementation process. This was likely a result of their lack of experience working together toward common goals and/or because in the past these groups had often competed with one another for limited local resources.

*“Each site experienced significant success at building partnerships to address local gang and crime issues.”*

These variations in collaborative functioning led to a number of changes in local planning and implementation groups over time. First, at sites where functioning was more problematic, member attrition and turnover tended to be more prevalent and member absenteeism was reported more often. Second, more senior level decision-makers delegated membership in the various committees to middle-level program managers or other practitioners. Los Angeles was one exception to changing composition; its membership and participation remained relatively stable. This was once again likely a result of past experience working on collaborative initiatives in the target area.

Despite these early challenges, collaboration among partners and the functionality of the local committee and other working groups generally improved during GRP implementation. Although experience working together contributed to this improvement, strong GRP coordinator leadership also appeared to improve local functioning and committee members often cited it as an important factor. Finally, some early members whose primary reason for participation appeared to be acquiring funds for their own agencies withdrew from participation after finding out that they would not receive GRP funds. This reduced competition and disruptions, thereby also improving local committee functioning.

**Obstacles.** Members of GRP planning and implementation teams and all GRP coordinators reported that they had to overcome numerous challenges and obstacles throughout the implementation period. The accelerated strategic planning process was the first major challenge that all sites faced. Participants stated that the preselection of the target areas and their lack of a precise understanding and definition of the problems they would address made informed strategic planning more difficult. The OJJDP-mandated short turnaround time for the initial planning stage resulted in the implementation of some activities that served few clients. With some exceptions, these activities were also generally extensions or modest expansions of programs that were already in place. Each site spent a substantial amount of time and effort during this initial implementation phase collecting and assessing

information about the nature of its gang problems and identifying evidence-based practices that they might employ to address those unique and, in some cases, new problems. More emphasis on a strategic planning process informed by reliable data on crime, gangs, and existing community resources might have improved implementation during these early stages.

Local implementation teams across all four sites consistently cited government bureaucracy and “red tape” as major obstacles. Local interview and survey respondents identified OJJDP as one source of bureaucracy. A number of strategic planning committee members and those responsible for implementation found OJJDP’s basic GRP model too rigid and not adaptable to local problems and issues. Contrary to this perception, however, the evaluation team found substantial variation in the actual strategic implementation plans across sites. Even though sites were restricted to implementing programs within the general OJJDP framework, they emphasized different component areas and chose different programs based upon local needs, particularly in the later implementation phases. The sites pointed to GRP reporting requirements as obstacles at the federal, state, and local levels. However, those sites with little past experience participating in a large-scale, federally funded program such as GRP were most likely to express this perceived burden.

The sites also saw OJJDP’s accelerated timeline for implementation as an obstacle. All four sites found it difficult to adhere to OJJDP’s expectations for a short initial planning process and immediate implementation of programs. As a result, all the sites experienced delays during both stages of implementation, and little significant programming was put in place during the early stage. At sites where no preexisting relationship between potential GRP partners was present, coordinators had to put forth a great deal of effort to build a comprehensive and representative partnership. In retrospect, the sites may have benefited from a lengthier planning period that did not require them to rush into program selection and implementation. Later implementation delays may have been reduced or avoided altogether had the sites’ leadership dedicated more effort

during the earlier stages toward planning, capacity building, and partnership development, including communication, collaboration, and consensus building.

The biggest delay in implementation in all four sites was the requirement to follow fiscal agent policies and regulations for selecting and contracting with service providers. This meant that once the sites had finalized their implementation plans, they then had to identify service providers to implement different elements of those plans through a competitive application process. This typically meant that coordinators had to develop specific requests for proposals (RFPs) for services. The sites had to publish these RFPs and rate each proposal received on objective criteria before they could select individual providers, after which they had to follow an often lengthy subcontract process. In the case of Los Angeles, an additional step was required: city council committees reviewed all proposed subcontracts before the council formally approved them.

Local procurement laws and regulations had several negative effects on GRP implementation. The first was that the timeframe for actually getting services and programs up and running in the target communities was much longer than the parties involved, including OJJDP, had anticipated. Indeed, some contracts for services were awarded in late 2007 with little time in the official GRP grant period. The second effect was a number of potential providers with little experience in the competitive bidding process missed deadlines or submitted incomplete applications that resulted in their disqualification, despite the fact that they were thought to be the most qualified providers. This was particularly true in Richmond, where a series of RFPs had to be reissued for providers. In other cases, some providers thought to be the best qualified did not apply because they were deterred by the complicated

application procedures or because they viewed the amount of available funds to be insufficient to be worth their effort. (Los Angeles, for example, initially did not receive enough bids for some program components.) Thus, RFPs for certain components had to be reissued in some sites. A substantial amount of GRP administrative resources was expended on this process.

**Successes.** Despite the obstacles and the long implementation delays, all four sites experienced similar implementation successes:

- All sites developed strategic implementation plans that were acceptable to OJJDP and generally consistent with target area needs and gang problems. The local plans generally were also true to OJJDP's GRP model.
- Despite early challenges with the planning process and initial program implementation, management of the initiative in each site steadily improved as did partnerships among core members as the program developed (although, as noted above, implementation outcomes varied among the sites).
- Coordinator outreach to government agencies, service providers, and community groups generally resulted in a broad participation in GRP planning and implementation.
- Each target area ultimately funded specific program activities and services across the main prevention, intervention, and suppression components of the GRP comprehensive model.
- Outreach to these communities improved communication on gang issues within the target areas and researchers found evidence of improved communication among organizations involved in GRP, such as between law enforcement and service providers.
- Each site successfully adjusted the GRP model to local conditions. This demonstrates that GRP is not a one-size-fits-all approach to gang prevention and reduction. It can and must be flexibly applied to different gang problems and in different environments.



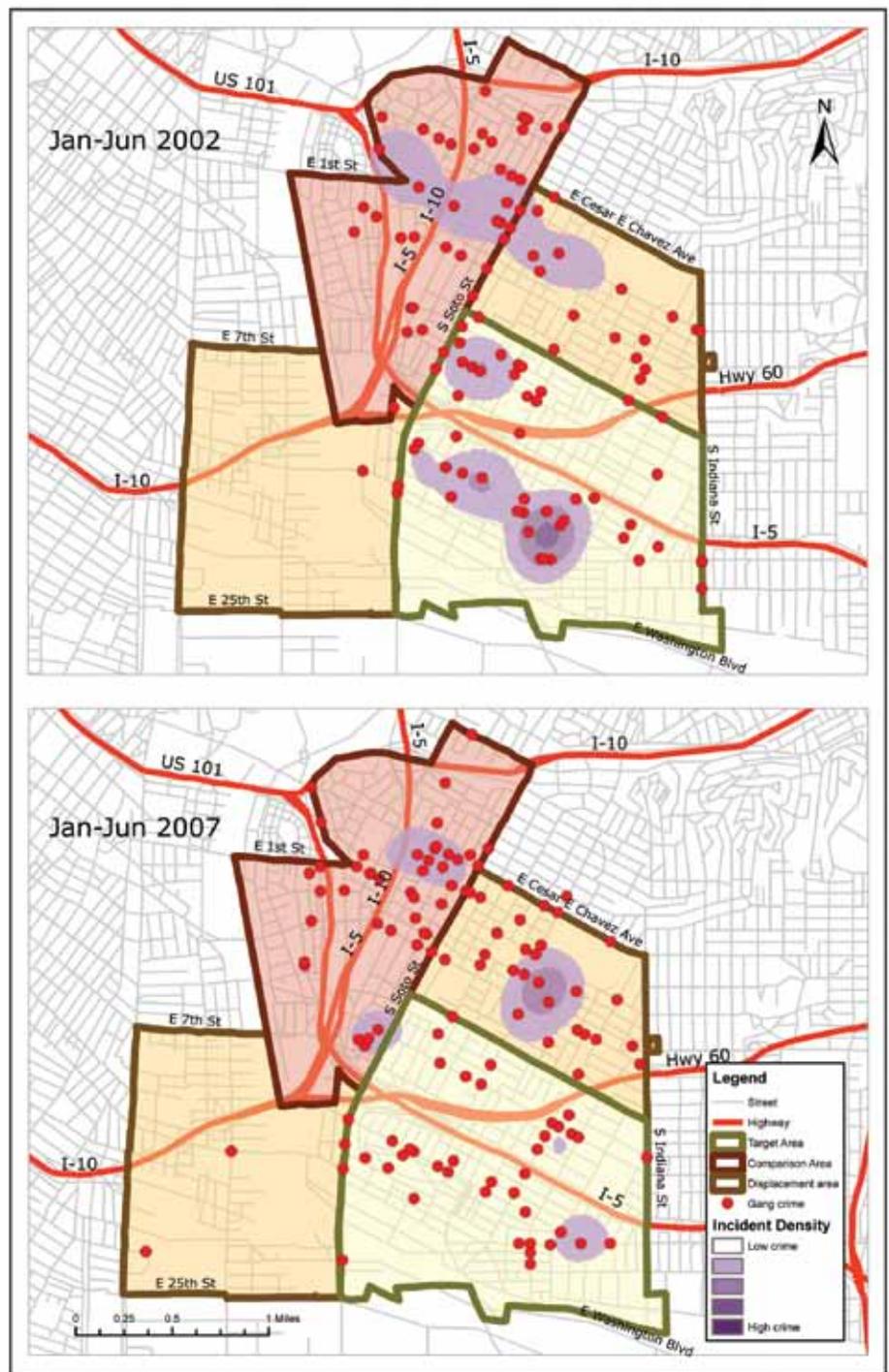
## Outcomes

The observed effects of GRP on crime and gang-related crime outcomes were mixed across the four sites.

**Los Angeles.** An analysis of the association between the implementation of GRP and crime in Los Angeles revealed that pre-post implementation trends for serious, violent gang crime and calls reporting shots fired were consistent with hypothesized declines in the target area. For these measures, decreases were seen in both the target and control areas following GRP implementation, but the declines were steeper for the target area and structural break analysis found these declines to be statistically significant.

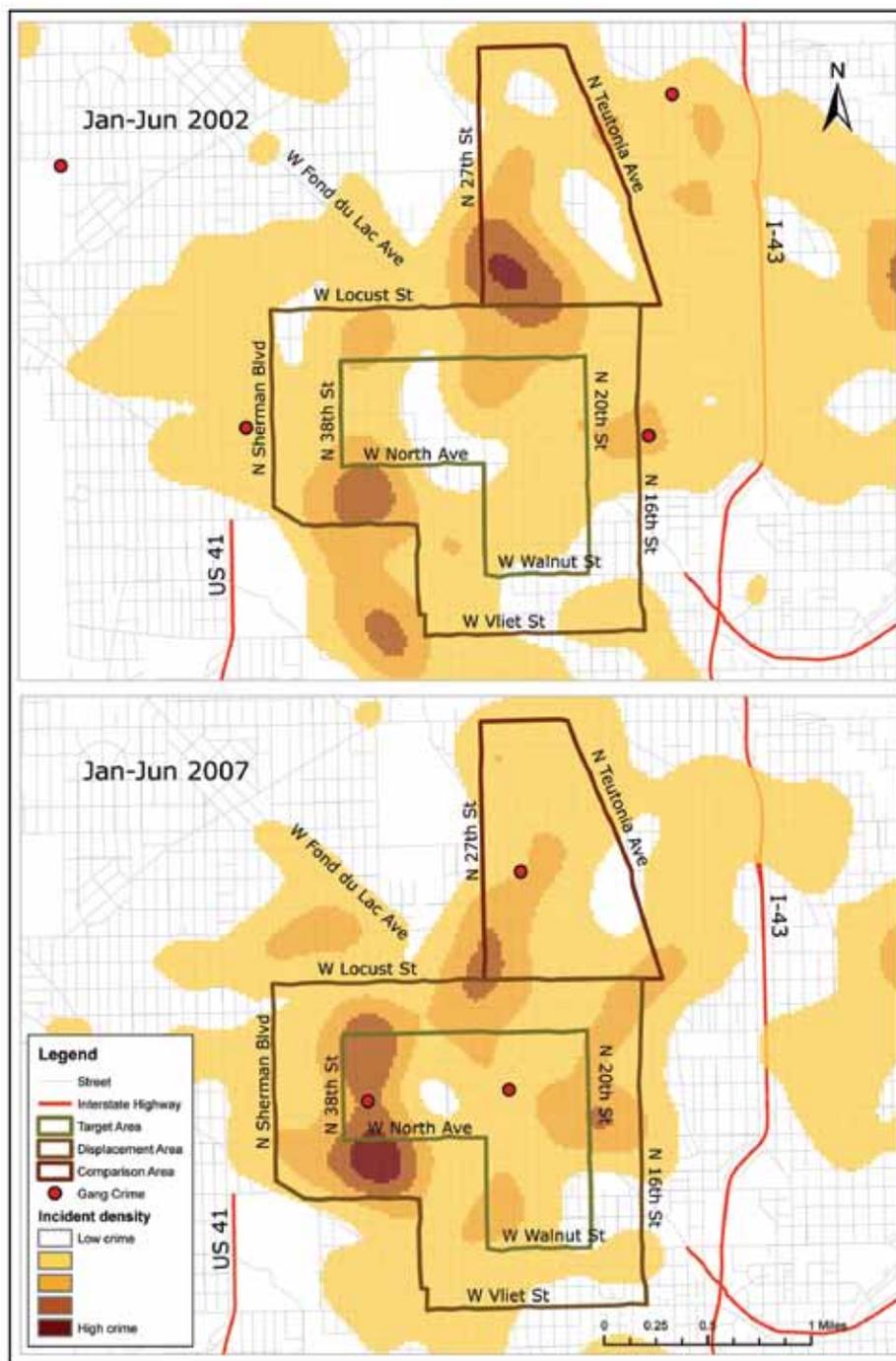
Analyses of calls reporting vandalism, serious violent incidents, and overall gang crimes were not supportive of research hypotheses. As illustrated in figure 2, crime levels in the Los Angeles target area decreased, as the density of crime appears highest in the baseline year (2002). The strongest concentrations of violent crime, or “hot spots,” diminished following GRP implementation, and their locations changed over time, moving from the target area to outside areas. A number of violent gang crime locations were consistently found in the central portion of the target area over the evaluation period. In contrast, incident locations in the comparison tended to become more concentrated in the eastern part of the area and the primary hot spot diminished in terms of intensity but was in the same area in 2007 as it was in 2002.

Figure 2. Los Angeles: Density of Serious Violent Crimes, 2002 and 2007



*“OJJDP maintained close oversight during the strategic planning and implementation processes and made available extensive technical assistance to each site, which also contributed to the success of GRP.”*

Figure 3. Milwaukee: Density of Serious Violent Crimes, 2002 and 2007



**Milwaukee.** In Milwaukee, only one crime measure—drug crimes—was found to have a possible association with GRP. These crimes declined somewhat more in the target area than the comparison area after GRP implementation, but the change was not found to be significant with statistical analysis.<sup>11</sup> As shown in figure 3, prior to the implementation of GRP, serious violence was actually concentrated outside of the target area. By 2007, that concentration of crime diminished but a new hot spot emerged to the south

of the target area within the displacement area. Otherwise, crime locations appeared relatively stable over time.

**North Miami Beach.** Researchers could offer only limited conclusions on the effect of GRP for North Miami Beach because crime data could not be obtained for North Miami, the comparison city. The analysis of serious violent crime incidents in North Miami Beach showed a substantial decline following GRP implementation, although statistical significance was not found, mostly because of small monthly frequencies. However, gang-related criminal incidents also declined postimplementation and were statistically significant. Figure 4 shows that the concentrations of serious violence in North Miami Beach were relatively unchanged from 2002 to 2007, although the hot spot in Victory Park, where many GRP activities were focused, did decline slightly in intensity over the course of the evaluation. The reader should be careful in interpreting the North Miami Beach findings, however, not just because there were no comparison crime data, but also because the monthly incident levels were quite small.

**Richmond.** In Richmond, the analysis of crime outcome data revealed a number of changes that supported the evaluation hypotheses. For serious violent crimes, the preimplementation trends were relatively stable for both the target and comparison areas. Following a marked jump in crime in summer 2005, violent crime in the target area dropped sharply through early 2008, while crime decreased only slightly in the comparison area. Similar patterns were also observed for gang crimes and

serious, violent gang incidents. In contrast, drug crime incidents increased in the target area after GRP implementation, which was contradictory to the research hypotheses. Figure 5 shows that the changes in the spatial distributions of serious, violent crime also supported the evaluation hypotheses. From 2002 to 2007, the primary target area hot spot diminished and there was a general reduction in the concentrations of crime in the target area. On the other hand, concentrations of violent crime were relatively stable over time in the comparison area.

## Sustainability

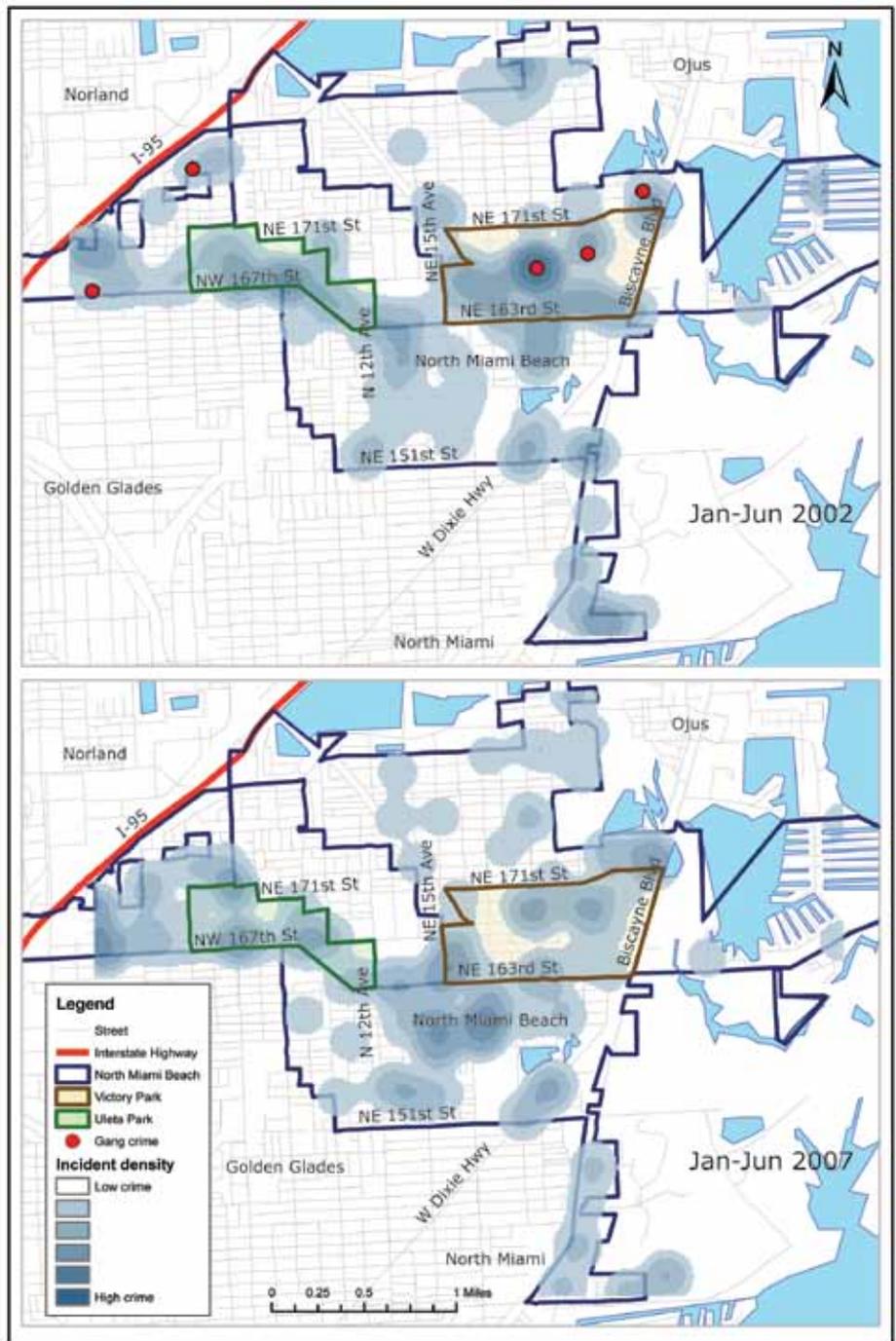
The Urban Institute reported in its interim implementation report (Hayeslip et al., 2006) that by the end of 2006, the sites had given little consideration to sustaining GRP once OJJDP funding ended. In fact, the four sites had undertaken very little sustainability strategic planning. Progress since then markedly improved in three of the sites.

**Los Angeles.** Los Angeles incorporated the basic GRP model, its organizational structures, and planning processes into a citywide gang initiative known as the Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program. The city implemented a strategic planning process similar to GRP's in 2007 and, at the end of the evaluation, efforts were underway using local and other funding sources to replicate the successful components of GRP in other targeted areas throughout the city.

**Milwaukee.** In 2007, GRP effectively ended in Milwaukee because of a lack of any concerted efforts to sustain it. A variety of organizational and community political factors appear to have contributed to the Milwaukee site's lack of sustainability efforts. Leadership was not as strong in Milwaukee as in the other sites, and the fact that the local coordinator left during the early stages of sustainability planning and was not replaced contributed to a "wrap it up" posture among local stakeholders, many of whom reported being active participants primarily for their own organizational funding. Furthermore, it did not appear that a local GRP brand was established or a plan for sustainability developed in Milwaukee. Despite the lack of sustainability plans, some local stakeholders reported in late 2007 that they were still optimistic about continuing certain components of the GRP model. One major suppression component—community prosecution—has continued with local funding support in Milwaukee.

**North Miami Beach.** Considerable efforts have taken place in North Miami Beach to sustain the GRP initiative there. Despite initial setbacks in securing state and county funding, GRP in North Miami Beach has incorporated as

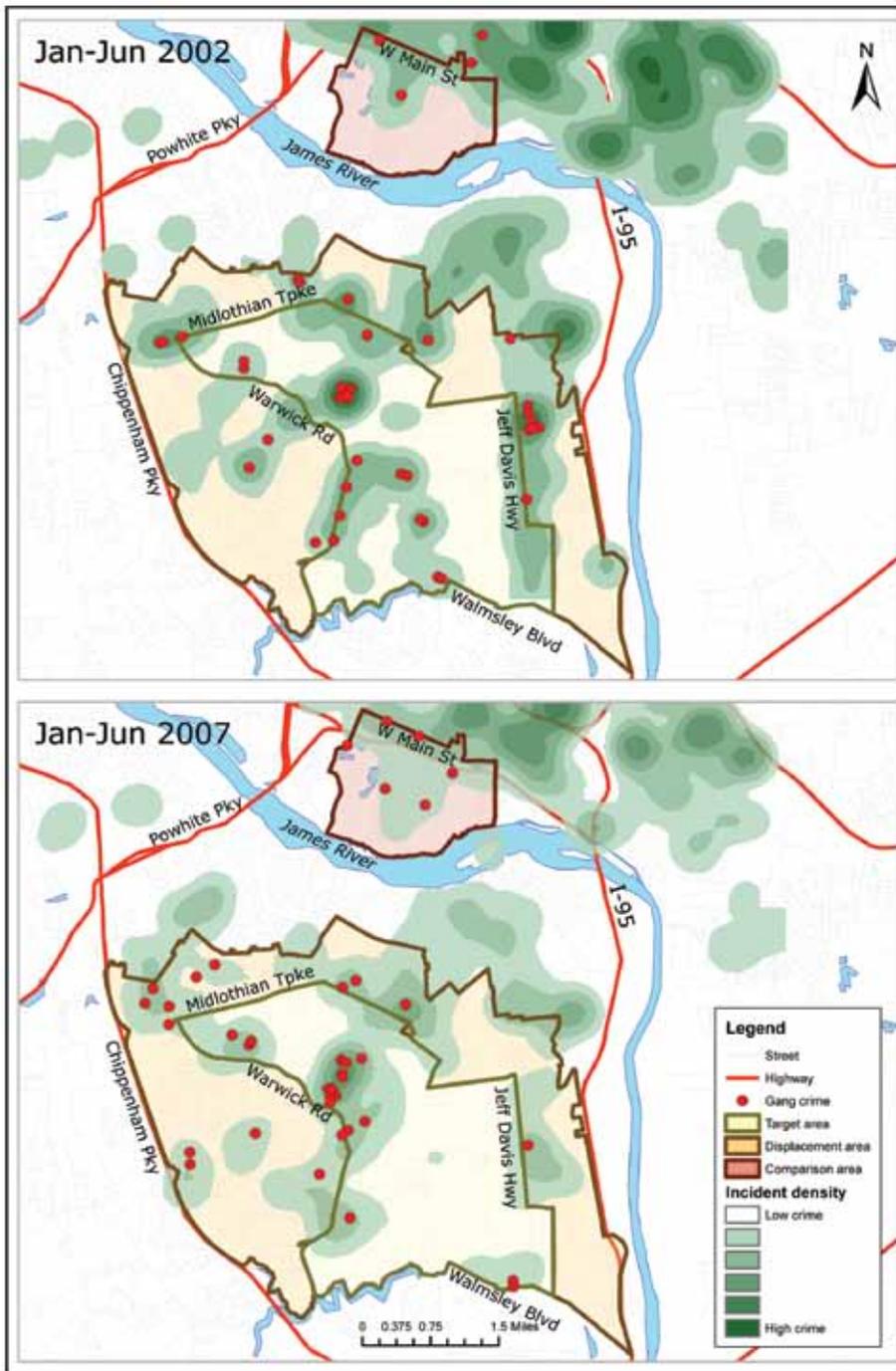
Figure 4. North Miami Beach: Density of Serious Violent Crimes, 2002 and 2007



an independent nonprofit organization and actively sought funding from a variety of external sources.

**Richmond.** Richmond expended a substantial amount of planning and effort toward sustainability. Strong partnerships between the Office of the Attorney General and the Richmond Police Department, in particular, developed under the initiative and the active community policing and outreach efforts in the targeted neighborhood appeared to have reaped support from the community by the end of the evaluation period. In 2008, the program was expanded

Figure 5. Richmond: Density of Serious Violent Crimes, 2002 and 2007



to include a neighborhood in the northern part of the city, with many of the original partners providing services in the new area. Even if the partnership itself is not formally sustained in the Southside target area, it is likely that many of the programs that arose out of GRP efforts will be continued there.

## Summary of Findings

Approximately 5 years after the selection of GRP sites and the start of program implementation, researchers found some evidence that GRP was associated with changes in the levels of crime and gang-related incidents in three of the four demonstration sites. However, the strength of that evidence varied. Some findings contradicted the hypothesized GRP crime outcomes, but on the whole, the positive evidence appeared to outweigh the negative. The nature of the pre-post comparison group design, however, precludes concluding there were cause and effect relationships between GRP and the positive outcomes observed.

Researchers also found that each site experienced significant success at building partnerships to address local gang and crime issues and raising awareness of such issues. Los Angeles had an existing network of prevention, intervention, and suppression providers who recognized the need to address the local gang problem and had experience providing services to gang members and youth at risk of joining gangs. The GRP effort in Los Angeles, therefore, focused more on providing services instead of laying the groundwork for gang-reduction efforts.

By contrast, the other sites (Milwaukee, North Miami Beach, and Richmond) had to begin their GRP efforts by first describing and understanding the local gang problems, garnering support and participation from local providers, and building a partnership of organizations that did not have experience providing services to gang members or youth at

risk of gang membership. However, these sites made substantial progress in establishing a consensus understanding of their gang problem, building community partnerships, cultivating experienced social service providers, and planning to sustain their anti-gang activities. These successes may form the groundwork for future gang-reduction efforts.

## NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Throughout spring and fall 2002, a Haitian gang known as Eastside allegedly carried out at least 15 drive-by shootings in the greater Miami area (Alvarado, 2003). Three murders from those drive-bys happened within the North Miami Beach city limits. This and other violent occurrences appeared to be early signs of the city's developing gang problem.

North Miami Beach, which totals 5.3 square miles, is located north of the city of Miami and has experienced rapid population growth over the past decade. According to local residents, the increasing heterogeneity of the population is the result of rapid growth in the Haitian and Haitian American populations. In the past decade, the number of Haitian Americans and Haitian expatriates in the city grew significantly: the 2000 census found that approximately 50 percent of the

population of North Miami Beach was foreign born, with 19 percent of the population claiming Haitian ancestry. According to service providers, local police, and others involved with GRP, this rapidly growing minority population put a strain on the city, which lacked adequate services to address the needs of its Haitian residents, many of whom did not speak English.

The number of active gangs composed predominately of members of Haitian descent had also increased in the area. Relatively little research on Haitian and Haitian American gangs exists, but by 2007, there were at least 16 different gangs with predominately Haitian membership known to exist in the Miami-Dade area. For the most part, the gangs were economically motivated and were not hierarchical or territorial in structure. In North Miami Beach, involvement in drug sales was common among these gangs (Marcelin, 2005).

## Implications for Practice

The findings from the GRP evaluation have several implications for the program model and policy.

- OJJDP should target areas that have a recognized gang problem that is severe enough to warrant a comprehensive model. The model requires a significant amount of funding, and the greatest success will come where need is high and the site acknowledges and understands the nature of its unique gang problems.
- Site selection should be based on a variety of factors, including details on the gangs to be addressed such as turf areas, structure, and size. The number of gang incidents in any potential target area should also be taken into account. Other relevant pieces of information that should be factored into site selection include potential levels of community buy-in for such a program and the inventory of existing community resources that can be tapped for the effort.
- The model is best suited for sites that already have established partnerships of service providers, city leaders, politicians, and other relevant parties. The sites spent a lot of time on partnership building; had they been able to jump right into implementation, they may have experienced more positive results from the initiative in a shorter time.
- OJJDP should provide more detailed and indepth guidance on program expectations and steps required to achieve implementation success. The manner in which

the GRP funding awards were announced fostered unrealistic expectations among many local stakeholders across the sites. As a result, in the early stages of strategic planning, unnecessary competition and conflict arose over the distribution of grant funds among potential participants and service providers. Many of those involved in GRP strategic planning and implementation also expressed confusion over the requirements of the GRP awards and what was expected of them.

- The timeline set by OJJDP should be as flexible as the model itself. The pressure exerted on the sites to conduct strategic planning on a compressed timeframe and implement programs within 6 months was unrealistic. OJJDP also should not have expected the sites to implement programs during the first year.

## Recommendations for Future Sites

The GRP model has been shown to work well in a wide range of community contexts, including areas with non-traditional gang problems. The lessons learned from the development and implementation of the program in the demonstration sites should guide future implementation efforts.

- Sites considering such a model all will have a unique blend of gang problems, community investment, and resources that will affect the needs and capacities of the community. Even though the GRP model includes specific components (i.e., prevention, intervention, and suppression) within which sites have to provide services,

## RICHMOND

With a population of fewer than 200,000, Richmond has a small-town atmosphere but faces big-city issues, including high levels of violent crime. The GRP target area was largely residential, characterized by two large apartment complexes and a mix of single-family residences, low-rise apartment complexes, and townhouses. Several major surface streets cut through the target area and the population density was relatively high. Much of the economic development in Richmond, however, had focused on revitalizing the downtown area; the target area had not enjoyed the same growth as other parts of the city.

Geographically, the target area was located on the city's Southside, home to the city's small but growing Hispanic population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, 9 percent of the target area population was Hispanic even

though only 2 percent of the Richmond population was Hispanic. Local officials reported to the Urban Institute that the Hispanic population has grown significantly since the 2000 census.

The GRP site, administered through the Virginia Office of the Attorney General, focused on emerging conflict between local gangs and the city's growing Hispanic population. Local leadership reported that the city's gang problem was centered around African American and Hispanic gangs preying on Hispanic day laborers. In addition, although the community had in place a significant number of social service providers with the capacity to address gang-related issues, many of those providers felt overwhelmed by the influx of immigrants. Local GRP leadership in Richmond cited the language barrier and the immigrants' culture of distrust of the government, especially the police, as complications to its ability to serve that population.

as the demonstration sites illustrate, the model design is flexible enough that sites can adapt it to local contexts yet remain true to the original design.

- Selecting a strong leader capable of leading a complex partnership through a strategic planning process into implementation is an obvious first step for localities considering adopting a GRP model. Even more important is role definition: program coordinators did best in the sites where their roles were clear and all involved understood the responsibilities of their position and other management positions (including executive and steering committees). Close OJJDP strategic planning and implementation oversight also played a key role in GRP success, and this should be replicated in future federal anti-gang initiatives.
- Sites should take advantage of the partnership-building aspects of GRP which, in three demonstration sites, had positive benefits for the community and could have lasting effects beyond the life of GRP. The

partnerships helped to build the capacities of those involved; partners learned from each other, made connections with similar organizations, and tapped into resources of which they were previously unaware or unable to attain.

- A related recommendation is to keep the size of the partnership manageable. Although sites should recruit a range of partners to represent different community interests, recruiting too many partners can make the partnership difficult to manage as was the case in Richmond.
- Sites should devote at least 1 year to a comprehensive strategic-planning process that allows them to conduct a thorough assessment of the gang problem and develop a clear logic model and agenda for the initiative. The time needed for strategic planning will necessarily vary depending on local context; some sites may have the foundation for a partnership in place and may have already come to a consensus on the best ways to address

*"GRP is not a one-size-fits-all approach to gang prevention and reduction. It can and must be flexibly applied to different gang problems and in different environments."*

gangs, but for most cities, the model's outcomes will improve with more thought put into the local design through the strategic planning process.

- Sites must allow plenty of time for the procurement process for selecting service providers for each component. Sites should also expect to provide guidance to potential applicants on the procurement process and should expect some providers to have no familiarity with the process. Sites should consider this an opportunity to build local service provider capacity. Local management should also expect to spend time increasing its own capacity to navigate the procurement process, with some form of technical assistance a likely necessity. Addressing these issues early in the process will prevent implementation delays later on.
- Once sites move past the strategic planning phase, they must redefine the role of committees formed during the planning process to maintain the functioning of the partnership. In sites where this redefinition did not happen, the partnership suffered because committee members did not maintain contact with each other and at times reported feeling unconnected to the GRP initiative. This sense of disconnection also led partners to lose focus of the overall GRP goals.
- Sites should make a concerted effort to collect program and client data from the start of program activities, with reporting requirements in place for all providers who receive funding under GRP. Data on program performance should be monitored closely not just for fiscal reasons but also to assess how well the intervention is working via the programs selected for funding through the monitoring of performance.
- Sites should begin planning for sustainability—keeping the initiative going for an extended period of time—very early in the implementation process, and OJJDP should provide sites with much more guidance on this phase. Although three sites have sustained at least parts of the initiative, the sites were latecomers to achieving sustainability and may have been more successful had sustainability efforts started earlier.

## Conclusion

The findings from the evaluation of the Gang Reduction Program have contributed a significant amount of understanding regarding the implementation process and potential outcomes of OJJDP's comprehensive anti-gang model. The lessons learned from the evaluation of the GRP model in Los Angeles, Milwaukee, North Miami Beach, and Richmond provide a foundation from which future sites can learn. In addition, the GRP evaluation resulted in specific policy implications that can inform future policy at OJJDP and other federal agencies in successful implementation of a comprehensive anti-gang program.

## Endnotes

1. In *Gang Reduction Program Strategic Planning Tasks and Timelines* (2003), an unpublished handout for gang reduction program and planning participants, OJJDP defined a *comprehensive program* as one that (1) used the best research-based program components to focus on locally identified risk domains, (2) applied strategies across all appropriate ages, and (3) included approaches that cut across traditional agency boundaries.

An *integrated program* was defined as one that (1) identified overlapping and underutilized existing services to meet local needs, (2) identified gaps in services and sought to fill them, and (3) incorporated serving at-risk clients across multiple organizations.

A *coordinated program* was defined as one that used fiscal and other resources at multiple levels, such as federal, state, and local, as well as private sources, such as community-based organizations, volunteers, and local residents.





2. Formerly the National Youth Gang Center; funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

3. See Cahill et al. (2008) for the survey instrument.

4. In North Miami Beach, the evaluation team identified the city of North Miami as the most suitable comparison area. However, North Miami collected its own police data, and researchers were unable to secure that data. Therefore, analyses for North Miami Beach are lacking comparison data.

5. The research team analyzed additional outcome measures for each site, but this bulletin presents only the findings from the serious, violent crime and gang crime measures for each site. Other outcome data that were analyzed include:

- Longitudinal school-level attendance, performance, and delinquency data for target and comparison schools in each site except Milwaukee. (Milwaukee practices school choice, which made it impossible to identify one or a few target schools that most school-aged children in the target area attended.)
- Longitudinal property tax data in Milwaukee to assess the changing property values that may have resulted from GRP efforts.
- Patient data from hospitals in Richmond for prenatal patients and crime victims.
- Data on North Miami Beach and North Miami juvenile referrals to the county Juvenile Services Department.

6. This time series analysis method is known as structural break analysis.

7. The research team defined “serious violence” to include any murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, aggravated assault, or robbery. For crimes against persons (i.e., murder, manslaughter, rape, and assault), the team counted one crime per victim; for all other types of offenses, including robbery, they counted one crime per incident.

8. See Bai (1997a, 1997b) for a complete description of the methodology.

9. The research team used a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ .

10. The Community Law Enforcement And Recovery (CLEAR) program is a federally funded, multiagency law enforcement collaborative to decrease gang violence.

11. In Milwaukee, there were many months with no reported gang crimes. Consequently, the research team did not conduct a time series analysis on the gang crime measure for Milwaukee as the findings from such an analysis would have been unreliable.

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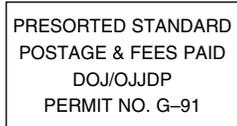
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