

A Brief History of Portland's Street Level Outreach Workers

Worker #s, Past Funding Issues and the Future

For nearly 2 decades Portland has followed national best practice like that of Boston, MA in working with gang affected youth. From the late 1980's to 2006 street level outreach to gang affected youth has been run by area private non-profit organization, while working in collaboration with community and law enforcement. The number of street level outreach workers grew to 8 workers, just within 1 private non-profit administrated program.

In the spring of 2006, the private non-profit New Approaches to Community Outreach (NACO) providing street level outreach ceased to exist due to the loss of funding. NACO, established in 1999 in response to high level of violence and crime involving youth, had been funded by Multnomah County, Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods, Emmanuel Community Services, Portland Victory Outreach and the Asian Family Center. Eight outreach worker positions were lost.

In 2006 funding for the Youth Gang Program (YGP) supplying street level outreach, formed in 1988 to deliver city wide services, was reduced to due to a loss of funding from a Federal Law Enforcement Block Grant and other sources. The City of Portland through the Community Oriented Policing Initiative stepped in to fund the program temporarily through December of 2006. By August 2006, YGP had been diminished to 1 street level outreach worker.

City grant funds amounting to \$400,000 per year were offered through the Office of Youth Violence Prevention (OYVP) for general outreach programming servicing at risks youth and their families from June 1, 2007 through April 2009. Grant funding supplied structured educational, recreational, and cultural programming offering service referral opportunities to clients and families but were not specifically allocated for street level outreach.

Due to an increase in gang related violence starting in late December 2008, City grant funds available through the OYVP were directed specifically to Street Level Outreach programs starting in May 2009. This funding provided 7 street level outreach workers and 2 part time coordinator positions involving Brothers and Sisters Keepers Inc., Emmanuel Community Services, Catholic Charities, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, and Native American Youth and Family Center all of which are private non-profit service organizations.

As of September 2009, with the City grant funds available through the OYVP and the Portland Police Bureau 10 street level outreach worker positions through the above listed organizations will be made available to serve the needs of at risk youth in Portland, thus returning to the service worker staff numbers available to at risk youth in Portland prior to 2006.

Job Definition for a "Street Level Outreach Worker"

Outreach workers are street-smart individuals who identify and engage individuals who are at high risk of becoming involved in violence. Outreach workers are challenged to build sufficient trust with these high risk individuals, many of whom are gang-involved, to influence the ways these young people think and act and to direct them to positive pursuits, including jobs, job training, and returning to school. Outreach workers assist at-risk youth in non-traditional settings such as parks, street corners, other gathering locations, during non-traditional hours when local data indicate violence is most likely to occur, particularly evenings and late-night hours and on weekends.

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Please feel free to investigate Portland's street outreach worker history further by reading source material used to support this review prepared by the City of Portland's Office of Youth Violence Prevention.

Sources:

Oregonian Newspaper Article, [A Sad but Ongoing Story in the World of Intervention and Prevention](#)

One left to stand against gangs Crime prevention - Portland police officers and activists are dismayed as an outreach program unravels, Monday, August 14, 2006 by MAXINE BERNSTEIN

Found @ the following web link: <http://www.gangwar.com/blog/2006/08/sad-but-ongoing-story-in-world-of.html>

Office of Youth Violence Prevention Implementation Plan 2006

<http://efiles.ci.portland.or.us/webdrawer/rec/2844119/view/City%20Auditor%20%20City%20Recorder%20%20Council%20Resolutions%20%2036460%20Office%20of%20Youth%20Violence%20implementation%20plan%20exhibit%20A.DOC>

Office of Youth Violence Prevention Small Grant Program Outcomes June 1, 2007 through August 31, 2008 <http://www.portlandonline.com/saltzman/index.cfm?c=49758&a=232478>

Oregonian Newspaper article, Portland Steer Anti-Gang Money to Street, by MAXINE BERNSTEIN

<http://www.portlandonline.com/saltzman/index.cfm?c=49741&a=231744>

Ceasefire Chicago, Community Mobilization (Street Level Outreach Worker Definition)

http://www.ceasefirechicago.org/five_core_components.shtml