

1. **OVERVIEW:** Gang Awareness, Mentorship, and Education (GAME) deters youth from gang involvement through powerful and compelling anti-gang presentations and effective and practical parenting skills presentations.

2. **CHALLENGE:** According to the Riverside County Gang Task Force (RCGTF), the number of gangs in our county increased from 237 in 1997 to 341 in 2005 and total gang membership grew to an astounding 10,553 individuals. Alarming, in two years (2006 – 2007), the number of gangs increased to 474 and gang membership swelled to approximately 12,000 individuals. Despite this disturbing trend, very few resources had been allocated toward gang intervention and prevention and none existed on a county-wide basis that could serve communities beyond local municipal and regional jurisdictions.

3. **INNOVATIVE SOLUTION:** In 2007, the District Attorney's Office developed a wide scale anti-gang educational strategy whereby seasoned prosecutors experienced in juvenile delinquency intervention and prevention travel throughout the entire county: 1. to teach youth about the devastating social and legal consequences of gang involvement and to encourage success and personal fulfillment through education. (Youth also hear directly from **hard core ex-gang members** that vividly, dramatically, and convincingly discourage youth from gang participation.); 2. to teach parents about gang paraphernalia, why youth get involved in gangs, the warning signs, and important gang laws that could significantly affect their children; 3. to teach parents effective and powerful strategies on how to deal with defiant and rebellious children and how to keep their children out of gangs, drugs, and delinquency; 4. and to train educators and social services staff about local gangs (i.e., territories, signs, and colors), safety tips, documentation techniques, networking with the Gang Task Force, and strategies to connect and intervene with at-risk youth.

4. **ORIGINALITY:** To the best of our knowledge, no such program exists anywhere else in the state or the nation. As such, the Riverside County GAME program has been invited to give its presentations to audiences outside the borders of Riverside County such as Washington D.C. and San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Orange, and Santa Barbara Counties.

5. COST EFFECTIVENESS: An extremely important feature of this program is that it functions with no operating program budget, and costs simply include expenditures that would be made regardless of the existence of this program. These costs, paid by the District Attorney's Office general fund, are the fulltime salaries of the two Deputy District Attorneys assigned to the program.

6. RESULTS: The success has been staggering. What started in 2007 as one presentation to approximately 30 people in the city of Banning has exploded, by popular demand, to approximately 250 presentations to 25,000 people annually. Furthermore, the latest available RCGTF statistics indicate that between 2008 and 2010, documented gangs fell to 366 and gang membership fell to 11,161 individuals. (With a reduced sense of urgency, countywide gang statistics have not been collected since 2010.) Thus, the GAME program is reaching far more people than the number of gang members documented in Riverside County. The plateauing of previously increasing gang membership is highly significant in light of the fact that a neighboring county with very similar socio-economic conditions experienced an approximately 200% increase in gang membership during the same time period between 2008 and 2010. Additionally, the GAME program has been recognized by an international White House initiative (the Central American Community Impact Exchange) and by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government as an innovative government program and best practice that positively impacts the community. Furthermore, after an independent audit commissioned by the County of Riverside, the District Attorney's Office was commended for its cost effective and innovative community crime prevention efforts such as the GAME program. Lastly, over 75% of elementary and middle school students that have participated in the GAME program since February indicated that they are now less likely to get involved with gangs because of what they learned from the GAME program.

7. PROGRAM CONTACT: Gerry Lopez, Supervising Deputy District Attorney, 9991 County Farm Road Riverside, CA 92503, (951) 358-4140, GJLopez@RivCoDA.org