

Project Safe Neighborhoods Media Outreach Campaign Focuses on Reducing Youth Gun Crime

Violent crime in the San Diego region has become a growing concern to citizens, law enforcement, public health staff, and policy makers. The violent crime type that has seen the greatest percentage increase over the past year is homicide at 26 percent. Specifically, there have been 72 homicides in San Diego County in the first half of 2004, compared to 57 between January and June 2003. Contributing to this 26 percent increase was a growing number of gang-related shootings and shooting deaths by youth and young adults.

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a federal initiative to reduce gun crime. The U.S. Attorney's Office leads the local PSN Task Force, which includes representatives from law enforcement, SANDAG, the Children's Initiative, the District Attorney's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the San Diego County Probation Department. Through a competitive process, the Task Force selected SANDAG to create a media awareness program consisting of outdoor advertising and the distribution of posters to middle and high schools, recreation and youth centers, and other areas where teens congregate. As part of a pilot program, three images (see below) will be distributed this month to five middle schools in Oceanside, Lemon Grove, Chula Vista, and the Central San Diego area.

These media messages were developed from conversations with youth in both one-on-one interviews and focus group formats. From these conversations, we found that one in three youth at Juvenile Hall had ever had a gun and nearly one in four had been threatened with a gun. Of the youth with guns, almost half (48%) said they had been involved in gang activity.

For more information about Project Safe Neighborhoods and the media outreach campaign organized by SANDAG's Criminal Justice Research Division, please contact Liz Doroski at (619) 699-6921.



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again...



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