

Councilman
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CARDENAS, PARKS PUSH COUNCIL TO ADOPT COMMUNITY-BASED GANG INTERVENTION MODEL

Councilmen “Redefine” Intervention to Prevent Wasteful Spending on Vague Programs

Los Angeles- Councilman Tony Cardenas, Chairman of the Ad-hoc Committee on Gang Violence and Youth Development, and Councilman Bernard Parks unveiled an initiative to redefine the city’s gang intervention programs. For years, the city has funded programs without a clear definition of what gang intervention is and what its activities should entail.

Today, the council members introduced a model that clearly defines that scope of work and helps the city create stricter guidelines for intervention programs seeking future funding. The Community-Based Intervention Model, put together by the Community Engagement Advisory Committee appointed by Cardenas, is the first to clearly define “intervention”. The advisory committee was composed of actual gang intervention and prevention workers. Cardenas wants to use the model to compare and evaluate the city’s current gang intervention programs.

“The city has been wasting taxpayer dollars on programs that say they provide hard-core intervention when they simply do not,” said Cardenas. “These programs can no longer hide under the guise of loose intervention terminology. By providing a clear definition and model of what intervention is supposed to be, we will know what programs really qualify for intervention dollars.”

"This is certainly a groundbreaking effort, in which the City has taken the task of more clearly defining its mission by creating evaluation material to assess its success," said Councilman Bernard Parks.

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The model also defines different levels of intervention work – level one providing the lowest risk of intervention work and level five providing the highest risk of intervention work including 24-hour emergency response to gang-related killings. City officials are hoping to use the system as a blueprint to create funding categories in the future and classify all gang programs. Programs would then be expected to meet specific guidelines if they want to continue to qualify for funding. Once the Council adopts the model of what intervention should look like, programs will be evaluated to see if they are in accordance with the new definition.

“This is a first step in finally creating the metrics of accountability we need in our departments,” said Cardenas.

Cardenas says he’s been frustrated with the difficulty in getting real estimates on what the city is actually spending on intervention, prevention, and suppression. After holding many hearings in committee on department budgets, he guesstimates about 50 to 60 million dollars is going towards suppression, about 20 million dollars to prevention, and only 2.5 to 5 million dollars is going to intervention. Historically, intervention is the least funded of all gang solutions.

“For the first time in the history of Los Angeles, intervention workers on the frontlines had the opportunity to come together and clearly define what we do and the risks we take,” said Blinky Rodriguez, Director of Communities in Schools. “In the area of violence, not many programs are willing to deal with the gang population we deal with. With such limited funding, we should make sure that the dollars ear-marked for intervention are going to those programs that are proven to be effective and that truly ‘intervene’ in gang violence.”

The full council could take up the motion to adopt the model as early as thirty days from now. For copies of the model and definition e-mail Stacy Bellew at stacy.bellew@lacity.org.

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