



A Gang Exit Service For Ottawa

The Ottawa Gang Strategy

The Ottawa Gang Strategy: A Roadmap for Action 2013-16 is a comprehensive, community-based approach to taking action on gangs in Ottawa. It is based on an extensive public consultation in October 2012 and was considered by Council in June 2013 as part of Crime Prevention Ottawa's Annual Report. The Ottawa Gang Strategy (OGS) is a series of 8 interlinked projects based on the key themes of: Neighbourhood Cohesion; Prevention; Intervention; and Enforcement/Suppression. For a report on the first year please see: [Ottawa Gang Strategy: One Year Progress Report](#) presented to the Board in September 2014.

What is the proposed “Gang Exit Service”?

An effective Exit service is a series of interventions which provide gang-involved individuals with legitimate alternatives for fulfilling the needs satisfied by the gang. In order to offer alternatives to those who are willing to change their life but who may feel “stuck” in a gang lifestyle, the Exit Strategy will include the following components:

- Assistance with safety through the exit process.
- Access to education, training and employment opportunities that result in sustained employment to replace money obtained from criminal activity and offer new hope for the future.
- Support for the development or re-establishment of healthy relationships with non-gang involved individuals, especially family members.
- Assistance in re-envisioning their personal identity and in establishing positive behaviours.
- Assistance with personal issues: some gang members may have untreated mental health or addictions issues which must be addressed along with improved life-skills.

We will address these multiple needs through a long term intensive case management approach which actively seeks out and engages the individual whose commitment to leaving may waver. Gang involved individuals are very difficult to serve clients who must be engaged and re-engaged through their process of transition.

Service Model Overview

The service delivery model would follow a case management approach guided by evidence-based assessments and case planning. The case worker positions, 2 FTE, will be funded by the gang exit service funding envelope.

The case worker is responsible for a) assessing needs with the formal Service Planning Instrument (see attached) and the initial triage meeting; b) working intensively with the client on individual change, c) ensuring ongoing adequate case conferencing for all involved in the individual's transition and d) actively referring the clients to other services, and following up with referrals to ensure that the client is engaging and to assist the service in working with that client.

Intensive work with an individual client has three central principles: risk, need and responsibility. Overall risk is assessed as well as risk within specific domain areas. Needs that can be impacted through change-work are identified. Finally, the individual's responsibility and the best approach to working with him or her is evaluated. The intensity of service (how often per week and the length of overall involvement) is also determined through the standardized needs assessment. Individual interventions will be provided to the client based on their individual case plan. There will be focused work in areas in which we know we can impact the ongoing risk of criminal behaviour: substance use, social influences, employment, housing/stability, attitudes, social/cognitive skills and aggression/violence. A cognitive behavioural approach will be used.

The case worker is responsible for coordinating information between different service providers and ensuring that all parties are working cooperatively towards the same goals through case conferencing and follow up.

The case worker is also responsible for ensuring proper referrals and following up on them. Some of the services needed for a transition out of gang life already exist, such as employment and education services. In that situation, the role of the case worker will be to ensure follow up and success by working with the receiving agencies. A small amount of money will be set aside for client costs but in general those agencies will not receive funding from the gang exit service envelope.

Although many services already exist, we have identified three services which do not currently exist for exiting gang members: culturally appropriate counselling, mentoring and family interventions. These specialized services will receive funding through the gang exit service funding envelope.

Specialized Services

Culturally Appropriate Support Services

The case worker will participate in all relevant case conference triage meetings to assist in assessing need. With the referred multicultural clients, the case worker will support them in the plan for change, initiate connections with relevant

community resources, expand pro-social networks, reconnect with family members and community, and explore employment opportunities with the support of the mentorship component. For some clients, this worker will be their lead worker; for others, this service will be an additional support. The gang exit service funding envelope will cover 0.5 FTE at OCISO, an agency with extensive experience in working with immigrants.

Mentorship

This element of the project will involve engaging volunteer mentors to support clients in developing effective support networks and where appropriate, professional networks. Those clients showing sincerity and high potential to commit to exiting gang activity will be paired up with one or more (up to 3) mentors who will support them to establish pro-social connections in the community and work with them on implementing their exit plan. Mentors will be oriented and trained in the support approach and will work closely with the case worker to evaluate and modify the approach to client support as needed. Group mentoring, where several clients and mentors work together, may be considered as well. The gang exit service funding envelope will cover an expansion of the OCISO Mentorship program by 0.2 FTE at OCISO.

Family Interventions

The family component of this service will be explored on a case by case basis. Family re-unification and connection is integral to supporting individuals away from criminal activity and repairing harm to the family unit. Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) is the main modality for family intervention work. For some clients, this worker will be their lead worker; for others, this service will be an additional support. The gang exit service funding envelope will cover 0.5 FTE for this worker.

Key to the success of the program will be the successful establishment of strong and trusting partnerships between the service partners. In addition to working intensively with individuals, we will seek to harness the community willingness to help.

Community Engagement

The community engagement aspect of the project will involve inviting several ethnic, faith based and other grassroots community stakeholders with vested knowledge and interest, to engage in dialogue on best approaches to supporting gang exit outcomes. These community forums will explore collaborative approaches to achieving the desired outcome, build support networks and explore cultural considerations for intervention. Sessions will take place three times over the course of the year with findings consolidated into a report.

Outcomes and Evaluation

The Ottawa Gang Strategy, overall, is a multi-year, multi-stakeholder plan for action to achieve collective impact on the issues surrounding gangs in the City of Ottawa.

Approved by the CPO Board in June 2013, the plan aims to:

- build resilient children, families and communities through positive relationships in gang-affected neighbourhoods;
- take inclusive and preventative approaches through social development, situational measures, education, awareness and community policing;
- identify intervention opportunities for children, youth and adults, including those at-risk, on the edge of joining a gang, or looking to leave gang life; and
- conduct targeted, sustained and effective enforcement.

The gang exit service will contribute to these overarching goals by providing concrete assistance to gang members who wish to transition out of that lifestyle. The combination of the OGS projects intends to slow the growth of gang activity in Ottawa and promote a safe and healthy community.

The gang exit service is a very intensive intervention which will seek to engage a total of up to 30 clients a year and each client or family may benefit from the service on a long term basis, to be determined based on specific need.

The gang exit service will be managed as an integral part of the Ottawa Gang Strategy. All Ottawa Gang Strategy projects report to the Steering Committee at our regular, bi-monthly meetings. Both John Howard Society and OCISO will attend these meeting to report on ongoing progress and challenges and will contribute to the annual reporting on the Ottawa Gang Strategy.

In addition, Crime Prevention Ottawa will receive written reports annually that will include measures of both outputs (# clients referred to the program, # clients accepted, # clients rejected, # client contacts, # client services engaged, etc.) as well as outcomes (initial assessed risk, changes in risk domains, reduction in frequency and severity of criminal activity, successful engagements in pro-social activity, increases in pro-social assets, changes in anti-social attitudes, etc.)

The entire program will be re-assessed after one full year of operation. This is to ensure that the program is achieving the intended outcomes and to re-examine roles, partnerships and allocation of resources.

Approved by the CPO Board of Directors May 4, 2015

Referral Sources and Intake

Ottawa Police, Probation and Parole, Correctional Services of Canada, Court, Community Partners, Problem Address initiative, Self and Family, and other. All Referrals and Intake through JHS.



Consultation Process with OPS G@G Unit

Confirmation referral is appropriate for project

Not appropriate: refer to other agency and community resources

Appropriate

Priority Referral: MOU with OPS for immediate response during critical incidents i.e. shooting

Triage Meeting

Referral and project partners come together to review case information and determine who is case "lead" for coordinated intervention/integrated plan



Outreach/Engagement/Assessment/Case Plan

Rapport and Engagement and completion of Service Planning Instrument (SPIN) as well as CANS if familial involvement is prioritized. Other tools may be utilized as deemed appropriate. Using assessment of risk/needs/protective factors, and in conjunction with client and family, determine intervention plan



Intervention and Case Coordination

"Lead" provides coordinated intervention using relevant components based on need and convenes key partners who play role in supporting client together to ensure a coordinated approach



Reporting and Accountability

Case managers will report regularly with regards to individual clients and the lead agency will roll up the client reports into a full progress report