

## **Ventura County Probation Agency Grand Jury Responses**

- 1. That a county-wide gang tracking system include probation information.**

Yes, we agree. A county-wide gang tracking system will be possible when the new VCIJIS (Ventura County Integrated Justice Information System) is up and operational. Gang information can reside on the common platform as part of the common data base and assessable by all of the VCIJIS users, including probation information. Parts of the VCIJIS are already up and operational, however the remainder of the program components will be on line somewhere around May 2000. It should also be noted that Probation purchased approximately \$415,000 worth of computer workstations, servers and network hardware out of TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) monies which will enable each officer to input gang information on the juveniles on their caseloads and make it available to all law enforcement agencies in Ventura County.

- 2. That the Board of Supervisors fund a full-time effort to coordinate gang information and implement procedures to curtail gang activity in Ventura County.**

Yes, we agree with the concept of a coordinated effort to curtail gang activity in Ventura County. Agencies within the County family, the Sheriff, the District Attorney and the Probation Agency work closely with other law enforcement agencies throughout the County to share information and more effectively curtail gang activities. VCIJIS, which was approved and financed by the Board of Supervisors will facilitate the compiling and sharing of gang information.

- 3. That law enforcement agency gang task forces be considered a priority during budget considerations.**

Gang task forces are an important part of an enforcement strategy. These strategies include numerous agencies, and we would welcome and support law enforcement seeking and obtaining grants for all or part of these efforts. The Gang Violence Suppression program, coordinated by the Ventura Police Department, is a GVS grant and we would encourage other departments to follow their lead.

- 4. That City Councils and the Board of Supervisors work with law enforcement agencies in developing public awareness programs and alternative recreational programs for youths.**

We agree and it is currently happening in a number of locations all over the County. In Ventura, there is an annual "Block Party" open to the public where local law enforcement agencies have information booths and provide demonstrations. PAL and DARE are examples of programs that are currently providing public awareness programs and alternative recreation programs for youth. In conjunction with these programs there are also educational components and counseling/outreach services.

- 5. That programs of awareness begin with first grade students to establish respect and trust for police officers.**

We agree. There are currently programs in our elementary schools and in our middle schools where police officers go to the schools and talk with the children. They have bike safety programs, DARE and other information sharing programs. All of these programs have a primary purpose, but they also start to build a rapport and trust between the students and the police. For the high school students, PAL programs are very effective in bringing police and youth together in recreational activities. The rapport and trust that comes from these types of programs is invaluable.

- 6. That all police agencies follow the lead of the Ventura Police Department in establishing a Gang Violence Suppression program.**

While we cannot dictate policy and procedures for law enforcement, we agree that an interagency approach to gang violence suppression is the best utilization of all of our resources and expertise. County agencies are currently involved with the Ventura Police Department in their suppression efforts, and we would support the involvement of County Agencies with other local jurisdictions in their gang violence suppression efforts.

- 7. That graffiti be removed within 24 hours after it is reported.**

We agree, experience has shown that if graffiti is removed quickly, others will not add to the graffiti. Many jurisdictions already have graffiti removal programs which rely on citizens calling in and reporting the graffiti. Further, some law enforcement agencies have police officers who go out to the scene, record the graffiti, and then use their data base to determine who is responsible for the graffiti. These programs have been very successful in arresting those responsible for the graffiti.

- 8. That stiffer sentences be given to repeat juvenile offenders.**

In 1998 the Juvenile Court committed 48 youthful offenders to the California Youth Authority. The California Youth Authority is a state prison system for juvenile offenders and is reserved for only the most serious and violent repeat offenders who cannot be handled in our local facilities. This number is up from

15 in 1997. From these numbers alone, it would appear that the Juvenile Court is adopting a stronger stance toward hard core repeat juvenile offenders.

While the sentencing practices of the Court are better addressed by the Court, we agree with the concept of "tourniquet justice" where each additional sanction is stiffer than the last. The youthful offender will not change his/her behavior if they perceive that they "have gotten away with something". We also believe that this "tourniquet justice" should be augmented with community activities and services for the youth and their families. Alternatives to becoming involved in gangs, support for parents and mental health/alcohol and drug services are also a necessary part of the continuum of services.

9. **That parents be held accountable for the expenses and/or damages caused by their child's violent or delinquent behavior, as well as the offender, either by restitution or community service.**

Yes, we agree. The District Attorney has the ability to prosecute parents and hold them accountable for the expenses and/or damages caused by their child's violent or delinquent behavior. This is happening now as parents are being prosecuted and are paying restitution and doing community service work.

For youthful offenders it is important to hold them responsible in some way for their actions so they develop a sense of victim awareness and a realization that there are consequences for their actions. This reparation model is the basis for the Probation Agency's Juvenile Restitution Project where delinquent youth learn job search skills, obtain employment and pay restitution to their victims.



COUNTY OF VENTURA  
PROBATION AGENCY



MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 11, 1999

**To:** The Honorable Charles W. Campbell  
Presiding Judge of the Consolidated Courts

**From:** Karen J. Staples, Chief Deputy *KJS*  
Special Projects

RECEIVED  
FEB 12 1999  
*H. H. S. R.*

**Subject:** Responses to the 1997-1998 Ventura County Grand Jury Final Report

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The attached are written responses to the comments by the Grand Jury in their final report regarding Gang Activity and Enforcement in Ventura County.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact me at 654-2101.

Cc: Grand Jury  
CAO – Robert Sherman