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Neighborhood Action Guide

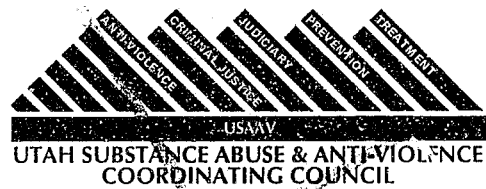
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ACQUISITIONS



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Utah Substance Abuse and Anti-Violence Coordinating Council



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he problem of youth violence is growing and it's going to take all of us to solve it.



This Neighborhood Action Guide Has Been Compiled To:

1

Help you identify specific problems in your neighborhood

2

Offer possible solutions

3

Help you organize with neighbors to implement solutions

4

Help you locate resources



our Neighborhood Snapshot

A neighborhood snapshot requires you to take a good look at your neighborhood in order to identify ways it can be improved. The warning signs listed below will help you evaluate the level of **youth related violence** in your neighborhood. After reviewing the list, you may be surprised by what you find: some problems may be larger or smaller than you had originally thought. But awareness of problems is a step towards solving them.

Have you noticed:

- Graffiti on or near your neighborhood or school?
- Crossed out graffiti indicating that there are two or more gangs fueling in or near your neighborhood or school?
- Youth in your neighborhood wearing colors, clothing, or flashing hand signs or any other behavior that may be gang related?
- Drugs available in or near your neighborhood or schools (for example, high traffic at a particular home or apartment at all hours)?
- A significant increase in the number of physical confrontations within the past twelve months in or near your neighborhood or school?
- An increase in home or car burglaries in your neighborhood within the past six months?
- A drive-by shooting in or around your neighborhood?
- A "show-by" display of weapons in or around your neighborhood or school?
- An increasing truancy rate in your neighborhood?
- An increasing number of racial incidents in your neighborhood or school?
- An increasing presence of "informal social groups" with unusual names such as Gangster, Crew, Posse, etc.?

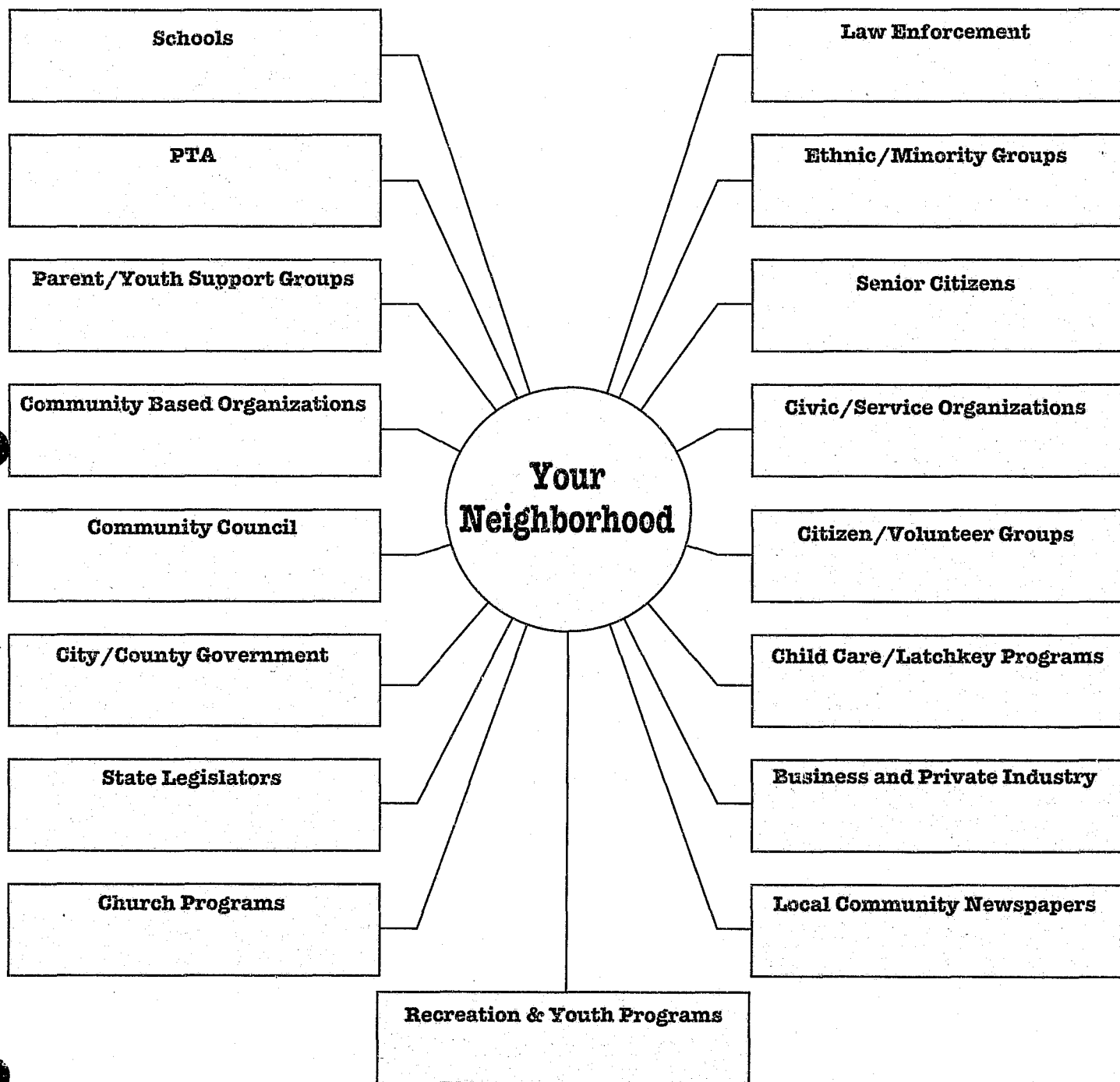
**If you've said yes to any of
the above warning signs,
now is the time to**





Identify your resources...

Even though you may have already recognized some of the warning signs in your neighborhood, remember there are plenty of positive things going on as well. Contact the following groups in your area and find out what resources are available.



If you're not sure how to contact any one of these groups, call your local city government for more information.

Neighborhood **Action**

Could this be your neighborhood?

Until a few summers ago, it was just another neighborhood. Family-run businesses, PTA meetings, and little league baseball games were the norm.

Then came the graffiti. At first no one paid too much attention. No one, that is, until the drive-by shootings started.

At first residents pointed fingers at the police, claiming that the police were not being responsive to their needs. Youths would tag businesses with graffiti, break into homes, steal cars and commit shootings. When they were arrested, nothing seemed to happen to them. They were back in the neighborhood sometimes within hours of committing a crime.

Residents also blamed the school district for failing to intervene and the court system for not locking up these youths. In fact, the residents were so good at blaming everyone else that they neglected finding ways to work on the problem together.

Realizing that things would only get worse, the police department and its crime prevention unit attempted to defuse the situation by educating members of the neighborhood about how the system works and the limitations of law enforcement. At the same time, they wanted to provide residents with the necessary tools to help them become better organized and more in control of the situation.

It was essential to develop a strategy that integrated all community components: schools, law enforcement, residents, churches, government, community-based organizations, neighborhood councils and businesses.

The police department started by helping neighbors get to know and trust each other. This brought residents together through neighborhood meetings, reassured them that there was power in numbers, and made them realize that local people can best solve local problems.

A Neighborhood Effort: Organizing Your First Meeting

Now that you have a snapshot of your neighborhood, it's time to organize your first neighborhood block meeting. Normally, a resident will host the meeting on a night that is convenient for everyone.

Your local law enforcement agency has a person that will be glad to help you get started. He or she can bring crime prevention information and let you know about criminal activity in the neighborhood. Your community council leader can also help you organize and let you know what is happening in other parts of your community.

At your first meeting, your neighbors may spend more time talking about problems than developing solutions. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to share concerns. But before the end of the meeting, neighbors should exchange telephone numbers that can be included in a telephone tree. This is an effective method for sharing information between neighbors. When problems arise, each neighbor is responsible for calling one or two other neighbors.

Sample Agenda for Your First Neighborhood Meeting:

- Discuss concerns
- Present neighborhood snapshot
- Receive law enforcement crime information
- Create a telephone tree
- Set next meeting time



What About Future Meetings?

Remember, neighborhood involvement is an on-going process. Be committed and patient. Part of the process involves creating "Action Plans" for your neighborhood.

Action plans will help you:

- Identify and prioritize neighborhood problems or concerns.
- Set specific and realistic goals to solve each problem.
- Establish a specific time frame in which to accomplish your goals.
- Brainstorm specific strategies you might use to reach your goal.
- Recognize possible obstacles.
- Utilize available resources you listed on the "Identify your resources" page.
- Assign team members to do specific tasks by a certain deadline.
- Assign a block captain or leader to follow up on team assignments.
- Be flexible. You may find it necessary to change your goals or activities in order to solve certain problems.

**"If you don't know where
you're going, you won't
know when you get there."**

- Lewis Carroll
Alice in Wonderland

Sample Agenda for Follow Up Meetings:

- Prioritize issues
- Set goals
- Work on Action Plans
- Make assignments
- Set next meeting time

The sample Action Plan on the next page shows you an easy way to outline and solve a specific problem. A blank Action Plan worksheet has been provided for you to copy and distribute to your neighborhood team.

Sample Action Plan Worksheet

PROBLEM	GOAL/TIMELINE
<p>Graffiti appears in the neighborhood.</p>	<p>Remove graffiti by sponsoring a neighborhood graffiti removal program within 6 weeks.</p>
STRATEGIES	OBSTACLES
<p>Provide graffiti clean up kits for residents.</p> <p>Encourage residents to clean up graffiti within 24 hours.</p> <p>Check with city council or local law enforcement agency to see if there is already a graffiti removal program.</p>	<p>No money to purchase paint and supplies.</p> <p>Residents' perception that graffiti is not a serious problem. Getting volunteers.</p>
RESOURCES	TEAM ASSIGNMENTS
<p>City-sponsored clean up program.</p> <p>Businesses and paint supply stores.</p> <p>Local law enforcement.</p>	<p>Assign individual members to contact local businesses, paint supply stores, and community organizations to donate paint and equipment.</p> <p>Hold a neighborhood meeting and invite a law enforcement/graffiti specialist to speak. Photograph all graffiti in the neighborhood and paste to a poster board to show the "big picture."</p>
NEXT STEPS	EVALUATION
<p>Create a graffiti resource directory so that residents know whom to call to report graffiti and how to arrange for its removal.</p>	<p>What changes have we seen?</p>

Action Plan Worksheet

PROBLEM	GOAL/TIMELINE
STRATEGIES	OBSTACLES
RESOURCES	TEAM ASSIGNMENTS
NEXT STEPS	EVALUATION



Working With Elected Officials

Recognize the power you and your neighborhood action team can have in local government. Working through your own community council or similar group, you can produce positive changes. For example, one neighborhood team identified a lack of street lighting as a problem. By bringing this concern to their local community council, they were able to go to their city council and request community block grant funding for more lighting. Within a year, they were able to add six new street lights in their neighborhood.

Local Community Councils

Contact your local mayor's office or county commission to find out the name and number of your local community council leader. Ask when and where the council meets. If you have a specific issue you want the council to know about, you can request time to present that information at the meeting. Be prepared not only to discuss the issue, but to suggest possible solutions. Community councils can be influential in issues such as zoning, budgeting and beautification of your neighborhood.

City Council or County Commission

Request a schedule of city council or county commission meetings. Assign a neighborhood team member to attend the meetings and report back. You can have an impact on city-wide and county-wide policies in these meetings.

State Government

Find out who your legislators (representatives and senators) are by calling your county election clerk. Discuss with your legislator your neighborhood's concerns and suggestions for legislative change. When the Legislature is not in session, legislators still meet to study issues and concerns brought to them by concerned citizens. Your entire neighborhood team can attend these meetings to present your issues.

Governor's Guide to Gang Violence Prevention and Intervention, Second Edition

This guide provides a comprehensive overview of model state programs designed to curb youth violence. It lists neighborhood, school, church, recreation, and law enforcement programs. Request a free copy by calling the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice at (801) 538-1031.



New Snapshot of Your Neighborhood

Your Action Plans should help you create a new "snapshot" of your neighborhood. A neighborhood in which people care, individuals are valued, young people are involved, and youth and adults support one another.

Even outside your neighborhood action group, there is much you can do on an individual basis. In fact, you will find that your personal efforts can be a great source of inspiration to the group as a whole. For example, if you make a difference in the life of a troubled youth, others will see your success and become motivated to do the same.

Your involvement is vital, because while it may be true that a child is raised in a family and school environment, you are a critical component in a child's community environment. It takes supportive people in all three areas to give a child a sense of security, purpose, and future.

Here is a list of ways you can get involved:

- ☐ Support public policies in your community. For example, most communities have curfew laws, but they have little impact when they are not enforced by law enforcement and supported actively by parents.
- ☐ Volunteer at schools as a tutor, coach, or mentor.
- ☐ Volunteer through a local youth organization as a mentor.
- ☐ Suggest starting a youth employment program at your place of work.
- ☐ Have a regular neighborhood clean-up day. Involve everyone—teens, children, senior citizens.
- ☐ Share your local resource list with your neighbors. This is the list you completed on the "Identify your resources" page.
- ☐ Establish a "McGruff House" program in your neighborhood so that children know which homes in the neighborhood are safe if they feel frightened or in danger.
- ☐ Work to set up safe, after school and weekend programs for youth.
- ☐ Involve youth in community service.
- ☐ Become trained as a mediator and volunteer to help your neighbors solve their disputes. Many colleges and universities provide mediation training.
- ☐ Model appropriate behavior with your own children.

"Kids can walk around trouble, if there is some place to walk to, and someone to walk with."

— Tito

17 year old former gang member



University of Utah
KUED
101 Wasatch Drive
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

Don't Fall Prey to These **Misconceptions About Youth Violence:**

- "Nothing can be done about youth crime and violence."
- "I don't know anything about gangs or drugs, so I can't help."
- "It's a police problem."
- "The government, the schools, and churches should take care of it."
- "I don't have kids, so I don't need to worry about it."
- "Locking kids up will solve the problem."
- "The problem isn't in my neighborhood."
- "Parents should be taking care of their own kids."
- "It's just media hype."
- "I'm just one person; I can't do anything."

**Local people can best solve
local problems. Believe in your ability
to make a difference.**



For more information, call:
Salt Lake Area Gang Project
(801) 799-GANG
Utah Substance Abuse and
Anti-Violence Coordinating Council
(801) 538-1031
or your local community council.

For additional copies of this guide
call KUED-7 at 585-LINK (5465).



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