

Road DAWG* Summer Camp Fact Sheet

(* Don't Associate With Gangs)

Preventing kids from joining gangs is just as important as suppressing gang activity. The Road *Dawg* Summer Camp, was held August 16-20, 2004, for 35 Annandale youth, as part of a coordinated response to prevent gang involvement and violence. The camp operated under the premise that all youth are at-risk for gang involvement and that all can benefit from prevention-focused programs. "Road Dawg" is an affectionate slang term for the street officers who respond to calls for service and seemed to match the underlying camp philosophy.

The camp focused on building resilience in participants and promoting gang refusal strategies through the following goals:

1. Build youth decision-making and refusal skills to help them resist:
gang involvement;
experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; and
use of violence to resolve conflicts or problems.
2. Provide youth with alternatives to "hanging out," during unsupervised time when they typically might engage in violence, substance use, or other problem behaviors.
3. Introduce youth to the numerous programs and services offered by the police and county human services agencies.
4. Promote career exploration in public service.

The camp was held at different county facilities each day. All activities were designed to build skills to help prevent many problem behaviors that lead to more intensive interventions and more costly services. Activities included:

Visits to the Criminal Justice Training Academy, the police department's Operations Support Bureau, Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, and the West Springfield District Police Station.

The "Get Real about Violence" program was a centerpiece of the camp's activities. This evidence-based program teaches alternatives to violent behavior and other gang-related concerns through classroom instruction and role-playing. Other activities focused on building skills to resist alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

The camp also featured guest speakers who talked about the myths and realities of gang life. At the end of camp, the participants were connected with other county programs and facilities such as the police department's Explorer program, CRS Teen Services, and CSB after-school programs.

This camp was unique because it recognized that only a joint effort can solve gang problems confronting our community. Road DAWG collaborators included the following:

West Springfield District Police Station
Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services (CRS)
Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB)
Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court (JDRC)

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