

# Safe Border Community Project

Many communities along the US-Mexico Border in California are plagued by crime and violence. The **Safe Border Community Project (SBCP)** works to address these issues by facilitating cross-agency information sharing and collaboration, as well as engaging the support and participation of community members and other key stakeholders in implementing crime prevention policies and programs.

Residents of California Border communities struggle daily with violence and illegal activities on their streets and in their residential communities. San Diego ranks among the top 10 cities in the United States for both auto theft rates and child sexual exploitation through prostitution, criminal activities commonly linked to gangs. Children of all ages confront drug deals, gang violence, and other criminal activity as they travel to and from school. The lives of Border community members are being hijacked by violence, crime, and fear.

There are currently more than 1500 juvenile gang members under supervision in San Diego County. Children as young as second and third graders are being targeted by gangs for membership. A national survey found that twice as many low-income respondents (31%) as moderate income respondents (15%) worry about safety in their neighborhoods (Moore et al., 1996). In the San Diego region, more than 55 gangs operate in illicit activities ranging from drug dealing and smuggling to auto theft to human trafficking.

San Diego also ranks consistently among the top 5 cities in the United States for stolen cars per 100,000 residents. In 2009, 21,863 cars in San Diego County and 1,102 cars in Imperial County were reported stolen. Many of those vehicles are taken across the Border or sold for parts and are never recovered. Nationwide, billions of dollars in losses are attributed to auto theft each year. Stolen cars are also frequently linked to other

crimes, including robbery, drug trafficking, and gang-related crimes.

Child sex trafficking is one of the fastest growing forms of organized crime in America. In any given year, more than a million children in America are involved in child prostitution (Flowers, 2005). San Diego has been identified by the FBI as a 'High Intensity Child Prostitution Area,' one of only thirteen US Cities identified. Yet California law does not distinguish between solicitation of minors or adults, making solicitation of a minor only a misdemeanor offense. Each day, more than 1,000 San Diego youth are involved in or at high risk of involvement in prostitution (SANDAG, 2007).

Violence and criminal activity is not limited to the streets of California Border communities, but often occurs within apartment communities and specific residences. The Chula Vista Police Department reports that more than 13,500 (or 12%) of all citizen-initiated calls for service in 2009 came from apartment communities. Some trouble apartment complexes have an average of more than 3 calls for service per unit per year. Many neighborhoods are also plagued by drug houses and other nuisance properties, hotbeds for criminal activity that drive down property values and increase local violence. A number of parks and other public amenities have become too dangerous for community members to utilize them.

## IPS Environmental Prevention and Implementation Model



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By applying the environmental prevention model, which emphasizes addressing the community conditions and norms that contribute to crime and other unwanted social behaviors, the **Safe Border Community Project** will work with stakeholders to implement crime-reducing strategies in a number of different target areas, including: gangs, auto-theft, child sex trafficking, and community policing. The task forces associated with each of these target areas will bring together government agencies, law enforcement officials, community members, and other key stakeholders to facilitate inter-agency collaboration and innovation in addressing these significant issues of crime in the California-Mexico Border region.

Sources: National Insurance Crime Bureau, 2008. Moore et al., 1996. 'Neighborhood safety, child care, and high costs of fruit and vegetables as barriers to increased activity and healthy eating linked to overweight and income.' Flowers, 2005. 'The Prostitution of Women and Girls.' SANDAG, 2007. 'Child and youth sexual exploitation in the San Diego region: a community assessment for the ACTION Network.'



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