



RESEARCH BRIEF: *Feedback from the APPA Membership on PSN T/TA*



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In 2013 an online questionnaire was disseminated to the APPA membership concerning involvement in Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) and related training or technical assistance (T/TA) needs. This update provides an overview of PSN, briefly summarizes the results of the survey, and provides information on seeking out PSN T/TA support.

What is PSN?

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funded nationwide anti-gun and anti-gang initiative initiated in 2001. Building on the framework espoused by a variety of programs in the 1990s, PSN adapted many elements from programs such as Boston's Operation Ceasefire, Richmond's Project Exile, and New York City's Compstat (DeMichele & Matz, 2012). The foundation of PSN is predicated on three core elements. Specifically, local initiatives must be comprehensive, coordinated, and community-based. In other words, a PSN task force in a given Federal District must incorporate prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies. These strategies must be coordinated across a multitude of agencies (i.e., law enforcement, prosecutor, probation/parole, community/faith-based organizations). Finally, strategies utilized must be tailored to the needs of the community being served. These strategies are, ideally, guided by five components that include partnerships, strategic planning, training, outreach, and accountability.¹

Though PSN programs vary by jurisdiction, Chicago's PSN program is a particularly noteworthy example. In this initiative four intervention strategies were utilized including increased federal prosecutions for illegal firearms possession, lengthier sentences associated with federal prosecution for felons found possessing a firearm, offender notification meetings,

and gun seizure strategies (Papachristos, Meares, & Fagan, 2007). An evaluation by Papachristos and colleagues revealed a 37 percent drop in quarterly homicide rates for PSN intervention jurisdictions, reflecting an overall decline in gang homicide rates of about 12 percent. The strongest aspect of the intervention was the offender notification meeting, followed by gun seizures. The number of federal prosecutions and length of sentences were shown to have limited-to-no impact on homicide rates. Parolees were randomly selected to attend notification forums based on 1) residence in the PSN area, 2) having at least one weapons-related offense, and 3) having been released from prison in the prior nine months. Parolees were sent an invitation by letter and a follow-up call from their parole officer. Though attendance was voluntary, Papachristos and colleagues reported 98 percent of those contacted participated. The notification meetings consisted of, on one hand, a deterrence message conveyed by law enforcement, prosecutors, and parole agents that they were being watched closely. On the other hand, the meetings also connected parolees to services provided in the community by including representation of community-based and faith-based organizations. A variety of PSN and other anti-gang/gun programs, each possessing their own unique goals and strategies, exist across the nation (for further discussion see McGarrell et al., 2013).

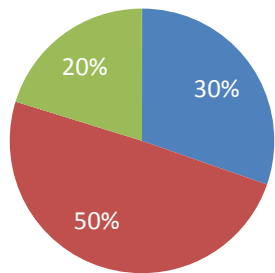
The Membership's Experience with PSN

A brief web-based questionnaire was shared with the APPA membership in 2013 that inquired as to probation/parole agencies' experiences in working with a PSN Task Force, as well having requested and received training or technical assistance (Full results available in Table 1 and Table 2). Of the roughly 90 respondents, about 30 percent indicated they are actively involved with a PSN Task Force (Figure 1). Fifty-eight percent were involved in other multi-agency collaborations (e.g., Ceasefire) (Figure 2). About 74 percent of respondents indicated they were not aware of the availability of training or technical assistance from BJA (Figure 3). Of the 22 individuals that indicated they were knowledgeable of such assistance, only a third of them had been a recipient of such support. There was only one case in which assistance was requested but was not received. About a quarter of these respondents indicated they were

unsure if their agency had requested assistance. When asked about interest in pursuing PSN T/TA in the future, over half of the respondents agreed they would be interested (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Is your agency involved in PSN (i.e., PSN Task Force)?
(N=89)

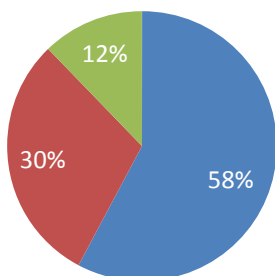
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know



Of those agencies that indicated receiving training previously through PSN, the most commonly mentioned training provided was safe search and seizure trainings.ⁱⁱ In terms of difficulties in requesting assistance, the most common barrier was the willingness of law enforcement agencies to partner with probation or parole.

Figure 2: Is your agency involved in other interagency collaborations (e.g., Ceasefire)?
(N=90)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

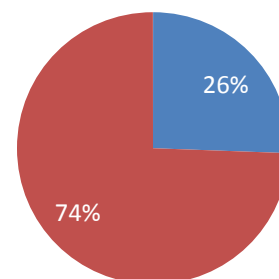


Looking at future T/TA of interest, agencies cited managing gang members, natural responses control tactics, safe search and seizure, and formalized partnerships with law enforcement. Interestingly, the issue of role conflict was reiterated throughout the

comments and the need to balance compliance enforcement with rehabilitative goals, especially when working in partnership with law enforcement. Another common concern among respondents was understanding their role and how they can contribute to the larger multi-agency partnership, despite regular attendance of to PSN Task Force meetings. In some cases, frustration appears to exist in regards to strained relationships between organizations within a partnership. Notably, this frustration tended to focus on the local-to-federal interagency relationships more so than relationships between local partners. Another source of frustration expressed was the lack of funding for probation or parole agencies to support their staff's participation in Task Force meetings and activities. Finally, the reduction of federal funds was attributed to the cessation of many partnerships and related anti-gang programs. That said, a consensus from the respondents is that PSN support, funding and T/TA, is needed and assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Figure 3: Prior to taking this questionnaire, were you aware of opportunities for PSN sponsorship for T/TA from BJA? (N=86)

■ Yes ■ No

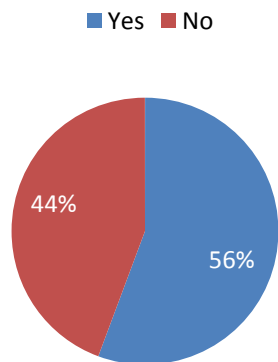


Getting PSN Support

The American Probation and Parole Association, a PSN T/TA provider for nearly a decade, no longer possesses funds to support training and technical assistance.ⁱⁱⁱ However, other PSN T/TA partners include the Community Corrections Institute (CCI), International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Michigan State University (MSU), National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), National Gang Center (NGC), Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS), and Winston Salem State University (WSSU), some of which may or may not still have PSN funding available. Agencies interested in applying for support in anti-gang or anti-gun

training/technical assistance should work with their Federal District's PSN Coordinator to request assistance through BJA. A PSN T/TA request form is available online from BJA that provides specific guidance on how to request support.^{iv}

Figure 4: Are you interested in pursuing PSN T/TA support?
(N=79)



References

- DeMichele, M. T., & Matz, A. K. (2012). *APPA's C.A.R.E. model: A framework for collaboration, analysis, reentry, and evaluation: A response to street gang violence*. Lexington, KY: Council of State Governments, American Probation and Parole Association.
- McGarrell, E. F., Hipple, N. K., Bynum, T. S., Perez, H., Gregory, K., & Kane, C. M. (2013). *Promising strategies for violence reduction: Lessons from two decades of innovation*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, School of Criminal Justice. Retrieved from https://www.bja.gov/Publications/MSU_PromisingViolenceReductionInitiatives.pdf
- Papachristos, A. V., Meares, T. L., & Fagan, J. (2007). Attention felons: Evaluating Project Safe Neighborhoods in Chicago. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 4(2), 223-272.

Table 1: Summary of Results

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
1. Is your agency involved in PSN (i.e., PSN Task Force)? (N=89)	27 (30%)	44 (49%)	18 (20%)
2. Is your agency involved in other interagency collaborations (e.g., Ceasefire)? (N=90)	52 (58%)	27 (30%)	11 (12%)
3. Prior to taking part in this questionnaire, were you aware of opportunities for PSN sponsorship for T/TA from BJA? (N=86)	22 (26%)	64 (74%)	n/a
3a. [If yes to #3] Have you been the recipient of PSN T/TA support from BJA previously? (N=21)	7 (33%)	9 (43%)	5 (24%)
3b. [If yes to #3] Have you requested PSN T/TA support previously but did not receive it? (N=21)	1 (5%)	17 (81%)	3(14%)
4. Are you interested in pursuing PSN T/TA support? (N=79)	44 (56%)	35 (44%)	n/a

Table 2: Demographic Information

Item/Response Set	N (%)
1. Please indicate the type of supervision field(s) that best describes your agency (<i>mark all that apply</i>).	
Pretrial	17 (24%)
Probation	65 (93%)
Parole	22 (31%)
Other	8 (11%)
2. Please indicate the appropriate jurisdiction level of your supervision agency.	
Local/Municipal	29 (41%)
County	10 (14%)
State	28 (40%)
Federal	2 (3%)
Other	1 (1%)
3. Please indicate the general age (i.e., adult/juvenile) of the population your agency serves.	
Adult Only	36 (52%)
Juvenile Only	4 (6%)
Adult and Juvenile	26 (42%)
4. Please indicate the type of geographic region(s) that best describes the jurisdiction your agency serves.	
Urban	41 (59%)
Small City	22 (31%)
Rural	30 (43%)
Not Applicable	3 (4%)
5. Does your supervision agency possess a specialized gang unit?	
Yes	13 (19%)
No	54 (77%)
Don't Know	2 (3%)
Not Applicable	1 (1%)

ⁱ Learn more about PSN at https://www.bja.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?Program_Id=74

ⁱⁱ The Community Corrections Institute (CCI), often in conjunction and partnership with the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), provides safe search and seizure trainings.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more on APPA's involvement in PSN please see our PSN-dedicated website at <http://www.appa-net.org/psn/>

^{iv} Please find the PSN T/TA Request Form at https://www.bja.gov/Programs/PSN/psn_ta_request_frm.pdf