
Gang Task Force Chief Updates City Council The Santa Barbara Independent

By Nick Welsh (Contact)

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Saul Serrano, interim director of the South Coast Gang Task Force, speaks before City Council (July 31, 2012)



Says Coordination Between Multiple Agencies and Entities Has Increased

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For the past 12 months, Saul Serrano has served as interim director of the South Coast Gang Task Force, and this Tuesday he gave his first presentation to the Santa Barbara City Council. Gang violence has been notably diminished in recent months, and while Serrano — an at-risk youth counselor with the Community Action Commission — took pains not to claim credit, he did point out that coordination between some of the disparate entities tackling the gang issue has increased.

The Task Force itself meets only four times a year, but a leadership council — made up of probation officers, school officials, intervention and prevention advocates, and city staff — are meeting more frequently to exchange notes on the roughly 150 minors on the South Coast serving probation with court-ordered gang “terms and conditions” and the 750 estimated to be at risk of falling into the gang life.

Leaving gang life, Serrano cautioned, is easier said than done, adding, “When we ask young men to do that, they’re putting themselves in danger.” One of the bigger problems confronting the 40 different organizations addressing gangs is how to share information without compromising a host of strict confidentiality rules that apply to law enforcement agencies, therapy providers, and anyone

treating minors.

The task force has enlisted the services of a private software company that's worked on developing systems allowing parking lot operators to conduct thorough background checks on attendants while keeping track of some very expensive machinery. Serrano took over as interim coordinator after his predecessor, an education specialist from Los Angeles, injured himself on the way to a meeting and resigned.