



## : STAND TOGETHER : The ACT Campaign for Youth Success

As people of faith, educators, youth leaders and community residents, we call upon all sectors of Sacramento life to stand together to address the growing violence, gang activity, and truancy among young people in our city and to build a brighter future for our youth.

Since December of last year, 23 young people have been shot or killed in the Sacramento Area. Fifth and sixth graders are being recruited into youth gangs. Since September of 2005, close to 10,000 youth have been truant from Sacramento Unified Schools (3 days or more of consecutive unexcused absence from school). In many neighborhoods, large numbers of middle and high school students drop out before graduation, and leave school unprepared for work or college.

Sacramento ACT has various strategies underway which we believe will lead to youth success in our community. While these strategies represent a big step in the right direction, we realize that more needs to be done. We welcome feedback, discussion, partnership, and new ideas.

### *Core Principles*

The STAND TOGETHER Campaign is based on a set of core principles. We believe that, in order to grow up to be healthy and productive adults, young people need:

- parents who nurture them and set limits
- schools that challenge them
- relationships with caring adults other than their parents
- a safe environment at home, in the neighborhood and at school
- structure and accountability
- opportunities for leadership and moral/spiritual development
- decent housing, a healthy diet, and access to quality healthcare

### *Action Strategies*

We are engaging faith leaders to:

- **Bring together caring adults with youth:** ACT clergy are developing tutoring programs to help students pass the high school exit exam and to bring volunteer mentors and tutors to school sites. ACT also seeks to mobilize local congregations to invest in the lives of at-risk youth and families in their communities.
- **Promote faith-based youth programs:** With help from the News and Review and Sierra Health Foundation, ACT is networking youth ministers across Sacramento and promoting positive youth activities through a new website, [www.sacyouth.com](http://www.sacyouth.com).
- **Speak prophetically to public leaders:** Local congregations are taking action on a range of issues. St Peter's/ACT recently took action to support the closure of two dangerous liquor stores.

We are working with school districts to:

- **Keep students in school:** We are currently working with Sac City Unified, the Police Department and City Councilmembers Fong and McCarty to develop an aggressive anti-truancy effort designed to keep students in school and to reduce gang recruitment.

- **Intervene with at-risk students early:** We are developing a new strategy at Hiram Johnson and Luther Burbank High Schools in which a team from the school will visit the families of sophomores who have failed the high school exit exam for the first time.
- **Empower parents:** We are laying the groundwork for an extensive education program to provide parents with skills to be supportive of their students. These programs will be offered in many languages, and will also help parents recognize the signs of gang involvement by their youth.
- **Build school "learning communities" with strong parent-school connections:** ACT is actively supporting the development of small high schools and small learning communities. We support schools "where everyone knows your name." We also continue to support parent/teacher "home visits" to build connections between parents and their child's school.

We are working with the police and sheriff to:

- **Prevent youth violence and reduce gang activity:** Working with the Sheriff's Department, ACT Hmong leaders have successfully created a 1-800 phone number through which families can leave information about gang activity anonymously.

We are organizing voters to:

- **Provide health coverage for all kids and expand healthcare access:** ACT is working with the American Cancer Society to pass a new cigarette tax that will expand children's health programs, reduce teen smoking, and fund non-profit primary care health clinics.

Raising the high school graduation rate, reducing gang recruitment, and preventing youth violence benefits all sectors of our society. In addition to the above, we need to develop strategies to help young people leave gang life, and to increase youth employment, particularly in the summer. As Rev. Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries says, "Nothing stops a bullet like a job."

### *Looking to the Future*

We are building momentum towards a 1000+ person "action" to bring the needs of youth in this community to the attention of city and school officials. At this event our congregations will host a city-wide prayer time for youth in our community, and will seek commitments from public officials to make youth success a policy and budget priority in the coming year. Sacramento ACT is committed to work in partnership with local congregations, police, local officials, and other youth agencies to build a brighter future for youth in Sacramento.