
Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

Street Gang/Prevention and Intervention

SB 1358 (SL 2008-56)

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Report #20

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Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

and

Department of Public Instruction

School Violence / Gang Activity Study

S.L. 2008 - 56
Senate Bill 2007 - 1358

December 2008

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) offer the following School Violence and Gang Activity report in response to Session Law 2008-56 (Senate Bill 1358) SECTION 5. The report is organized into the five sections required by the Session Law. Each section provides information that builds a case for the State doing more to address gang activity.

(1) Prevalence of School Violence and Gang Activity – A number of instruments were used to determine the level and extent of school violence and gang activity in North Carolina. All findings from these measures indicate that schools and communities are facing significant challenges with these issues. To garner a more precise picture of how prevalent these challenges are in regards to gangs, DPI and DJJDP believe more specific data collection are necessary.

(2) The use of Department [of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention] Juvenile Crime Prevention Council programs for out of school suspension alternative learning programs for students who are identified as being associated with gangs – The Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs) are well established planning bodies and funding vehicles for providing prevention and intervention programs for at risk youth that at the local level in partnership with the State. Although there are very few JCPC funded programs that are strictly aimed at gang prevention/intervention or alternatives to suspension, there are a number of JCPC programs that address the risk factors associated with suspension and other school related difficulties youth face. The legislature should consider funding additional services for suspended youth through the JCPC structure and DPI.

(3) Current programs that are designed to educate school personnel and parents on signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang – This informal study identified that schools are conducting some programs for parents and school personnel. DPI believes that additional time is needed to complete a more comprehensive survey to determine the extent of the school-based offerings, the format for program implementation, and to assess if the programs are evidence based.

(4) Effective practices for reducing school violence and gang activity that have been successfully implemented in other states – There are numerous evidence based school violence prevention programs available and operating in other states as well as in North Carolina. However, although there were evidenced based school violence programs being offered, there were few programs geared specifically toward gang prevention and intervention.

(5) Findings and recommendations – This study identified four major findings and recommendations regarding the presence of school violence and gang activity: improved data collection is needed for a more precise picture; additional funding is needed for serving at-risk youth in schools and communities; additional funding is needed for educational programs designed for parents and school personnel; and effective, evidence based programming should be funded for schools and communities to prevent delinquency and gang involvement.

Introduction

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) submit this report in response to:

Session Law 2008-56 (Senate Bill 1358) SECTION 5.

The Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention shall report to the Joint Legislative Corrections, Crime Control, and Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 1, 2008, on:

- (1) The prevalence of school violence and gang activity;
- (2) The use of Department Juvenile Crime Prevention Council programs for out-of-school suspension alternative learning programs for students who are identified as being associated with gangs;
- (3) Current programs that are designed to educate school personnel and parents on signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang;
- (4) Effective practices for reducing school violence and gang activity that have been successfully implemented in other states; and
- (5) Any findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, for further implementation and coordination between the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Department of Public Instruction to address issues related to prevention and intervention of youth gang activity.

This report addresses these five items as they relate to crime, violence, gangs, and gang activity taking place in the schools of North Carolina. An analysis of available data reveals that crime, violence, and gang activity exist in our schools. Furthermore, research has revealed the need for a greater focus on effective prevention programs for school personnel, parents, and students.

Before specifically addressing the information requested in Section 5, the collaborative effort and methodology used to generate this report will be discussed.

Collaborative Effort / Methodology

In order to accomplish the responsibilities outlined by the General Assembly of North Carolina, in Senate Bill 1358 Section 5, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) met regularly to compile this report. DPI assumed responsibility for responding to the prevalence of school violence, program identification information from “Alternative Learning Programs,” as well as identifying current programs in use to educate parents and school personnel on gangs and gang activity. DJJDP assumed responsibility for responding to the prevalence of gang activity, the use of Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs), and effective practices for reducing school violence and gang activity implemented in other states.

DPI utilized three major strategies in order to address the tasks above.

- Data from the Annual Report on School Crime and Violence was analyzed in an effort to review crime and violence acts submitted by the Local Education Agencies (LEAs),
- A survey was sent to all 115 Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinators (SDFS) and over 80 Alternative Learning School Principals (ALP)/Contacts, and
- Previous workshops and training agendas were reviewed in order to determine the technical assistance provided to LEAs and schools.

The DJJDP – Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP - Center), in addition to records and information kept in the regular course of business, utilized the following strategies to collect, analyze, and present the information requested in this report.

- A survey of one hundred School Resource Officers (SROs) in North Carolina (convenience sample).
- A survey of all thirty-nine Chief Court Counselors working for DJJDP.
- A survey of the JCPC consultants working for DJJDP.
- A census of North Carolina School Resource Officers conducted by the DJJDP - Center.
- A review of published public records and documents.
- An analysis of the NC-JOIN (North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network) database.

(1) The prevalence of school violence and gang activity

I. Prevalence of School Violence

The following are selected sections of the Executive Summary for the 2006-2007 Annual Report on School Crime and Violence.¹

In 1993, the General Assembly passed the Safe Schools Act requiring Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to report specified acts of crime and violence to the State Board of Education (SBE). General Statute 115C-288(g) describes the school principal's responsibility "to report certain acts to law enforcement" and lists a number of acts to be reported. The SBE later expanded on the list of acts to be reported to law enforcement.

GS 115C-12(21) requires the SBE "to compile an annual report on acts of violence in the public schools." The SBE has defined 17 criminal acts that are to be included in its annual report, ten of which are considered dangerous and violent.

The ten dangerous and violent acts are:

- Homicide
- Assault resulting in serious bodily injury
- Assault involving the use of a weapon
- Rape
- Sexual offense
- Sexual assault
- Kidnapping
- Robbery with a dangerous weapon
- Robbery without a dangerous weapon
- Taking indecent liberties with a minor

Schools that report five or more of these acts per one thousand students in two consecutive years and where "conditions that contributed to the commission of those offenses are likely to continue into another school year" are deemed Persistently Dangerous Schools (SBE Policy SS-A-006). In 2006-07 there were no Persistently Dangerous Schools identified in North Carolina.

The other seven reportable acts included in this report are:

- Assault on school personnel
- Bomb threat
- Burning of a school building
- Possession of alcoholic beverage
- Possession of controlled substance in violation of law
- Possession of a firearm or powerful explosive
- Possession of a weapon

¹ <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/schoolviolence/2006-07schoolviolence.pdf>

The number of the “17 reportable acts” of crime and violence increased by 0.5% from 2005-06 to 2006-07. However, due to an increase in average daily membership of almost two percent, the rate of acts reported (per 1000 students) decreased by 1.6%. The table below shows the number and rate for each of the last five years.

| Reporting Year | Total Acts | Acts Per 1000 Students |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2002-03 | 8,548 | 6.58 |
| 2003-04 | 9,800 | 7.37 |
| 2004-05 | 10,107 | 7.49 |
| 2005-06 | 10,959 | 7.90 |
| 2006-07 | 11,013 | 7.77 |

The changes in the numbers of each of the seventeen offenses reported from 2005-06 to 2006-07 are shown in the table below. Violent offenses (per SBE Policy Number SS-A-006) are **boldfaced** and represent only four percent of the acts reported. Most of the increase in the numbers from 2005-06 to 2006-07 come from the seven categories not classified as violent. These seven categories accounted for a net increase of 51 acts; the total increase was 54 acts. The total number of violent acts was the same as the previous year.

| Acts | Number of Acts 2005-06 | Number of Acts 2006-07 |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Possession of controlled substance in violation of law | 4,427 | 4,339 |
| Possession of a weapon excluding firearms and powerful explosives | 3,845 | 3,925 |
| Possession of alcoholic beverage | 1,053 | 1,081 |
| Assault on school personnel not resulting in serious injury | 862 | 889 |
| Bomb threat | 176 | 175 |
| Possession of a firearm or powerful explosives | 134 | 139 |
| Assault resulting in serious injury | 128 | 122 |
| Sexual assault not involving rape or sexual offense | 89 | 97 |
| Assault involving use of a weapon | 111 | 94 |
| Sexual offense | 62 | 78 |
| Robbery without a dangerous weapon | 42 | 44 |
| Burning of school building | 20 | 20 |
| Robbery with a dangerous weapon | 4 | 5 |
| Kidnapping | 2 | 3 |
| Rape | 1 | 2 |
| Death by other than natural causes | 0 | 0 |
| Taking indecent liberties with a minor | 3 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 10,959 | 11,013 |

The following categories experienced increases from 2005-06 to 2006-07 (numerical increase and percent increase in parentheses):

- Possession of a weapon excluding firearms and powerful explosives (80, 2.1%)
- Possession of alcoholic beverage (28, 2.7%)
- Assault on school personnel not resulting in serious injury (27, 3.1%)
- Sexual offense (16, 25.8%)
- Sexual assault not involving rape or sexual offense (8, 9.0%)
- Possession of a firearm or powerful explosives (5, 3.7%)
- Robbery without a dangerous weapon (2, 4.8%)
- Robbery with a dangerous weapon (1, 25.0%)
- Kidnapping (1, 50.0%)
- Rape (1, 100%)

The number of acts in these categories decreased from 2005-06 to 2006-07 (numerical decrease and percent decrease in parentheses):

- Possession of controlled substance in violation of law (88, 2.0%)
- Assault involving use of a weapon (17, 15.3%)
- Assault resulting in serious injury (6, 4.7%)
- Taking indecent liberties with a minor (3, 100%)
- Bomb Threat (1, 0.6%)

II. Prevalence of Gang Activity

School Resource Officer (SRO) Census / Gang Presence

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Center for the Prevention of School Violence (DJJDP – Center) conducts an Annual School Resource Officer census to provide information about the growth of the SRO Program in North Carolina. All 115 school systems were contacted to collect data for the census. The information is compiled from each Local Education Agency (LEA) by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

As part of the census in 2008, every school system was asked to report if there was a gang presence at any of the schools within their district. LEAs were provided the following definition of a gang when responding to the question: “Gang - a group of three or more persons that has a distinct name, is known by a common identifying symbol or sign; has some degree of organization and permanence; and is involved in delinquent behavior or commits criminal acts.”

One hundred fourteen of the 115 LEAs have responded to the census. Of the 114 LEAs that reported on gang presence during the SRO Census, 76 (67%) stated that there was a gang presence in one or more schools in their district. Data collected was also collected on 2,317 schools. Gang presence has been identified in 568 schools (24%), with one school system declining to report. The annual SRO census was completed in December 2008. The breakdown of schools by grade level is as follows:

SRO Census Gang Presence Reported

| Grade Level | Schools Reporting | Gang Presence Reported | Percentage of Schools with Gang Presence |
|---|-------------------|------------------------|--|
| High Schools | 369 | 236 | 64% |
| Alternative Schools | 76 | 45 | 59% |
| Middle Schools | 441 | 216 | 49% |
| Other Schools (including Non-Traditional High Schools, Early Colleges, and Special Schools) | 120 | 37 | 31% |
| Elementary Schools | 1,311 | 34 | 2.59% |
| Total | 2,317 | 568 | 24% |

2008 DJJDP – Center Annual School Resource Officer Census

SRO Survey / Gang Presence –Activity

SROs are well positioned in the schools to understand the safety challenges faced by school administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents and the community they serve. The shared responsibility the SRO has for providing a safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning and meeting the academic mission of the school, combined with their ability to discover patterns of crime and disorder, quickly identified them as a reliable data source.

DJJDP – Center surveyed a total of 100 SROs through a convenience sample. Standard definitions contained in North Carolina state statute or as defined by the DPI were used in the SRO survey in an attempt to obtain the necessary information to accurately report on school violence and gang activity. Eighty percent of SROs surveyed by DJJDP – Center stated that, during the 2007 - 2008 school year, incidents of violence occurred at the school where they worked, and 39% of SROs reported that incidents of gang violence occurred at their school.

The SROs were asked “To the best of your knowledge, how often does gang activity occur in the school where you work?” Their responses are in the following table.

SRO Survey Gang Activity in School

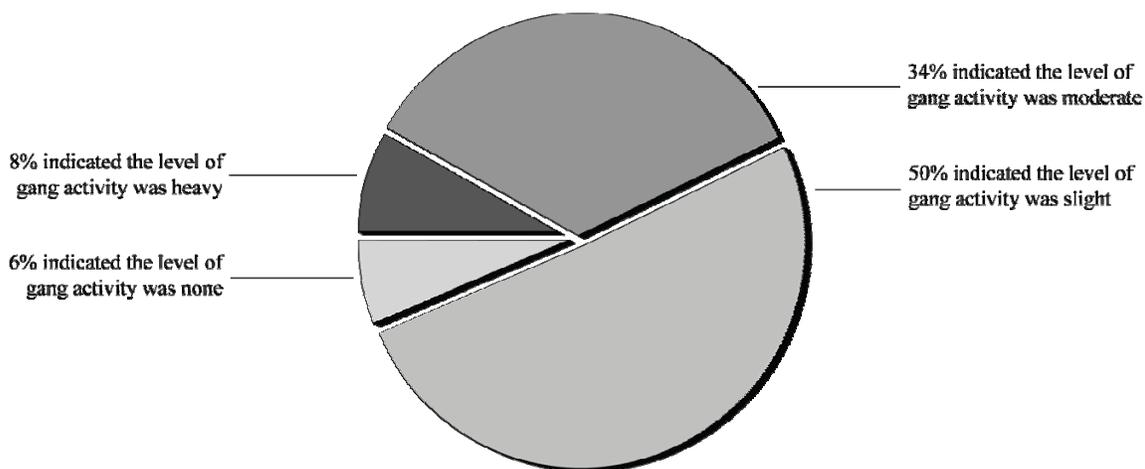
| How Often | Percent of Respondents |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Gang Activity Occurs Daily | 19% |
| At Least Once A Week | 13% |
| At Least Once A Month | 8% |
| On Occasion | 41% |
| Never Happens | 19% |
| Total | 100% |
| Survey of 100 SROs conducted through a convenience sample by DJJDP – Center | |

Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators – Gang Prevalence

DPI administered an online survey that was sent to 115 Safe and Drug-Free School (SDFS) Coordinators and over 80 contact persons for Alternative Learning Programs (ALP's). These stakeholders were selected because they have the responsibility of managing student disciplinary data and forwarding it to DPI for its Annual Report on School Crime and Violence. In addition, these individuals provide staff development related to safety initiatives and coordinate safe school plans for their respective sites.

The SDFS Coordinators were asked to describe the "...level of prevalence of gang activity in your district or Alternative Learning Program". Eight percent of the SDFS Coordinators responded that the level of gang activity was "heavy," 34% replied "moderate," 50% replied "slight" and 6% responded "none." The SDFS Coordinators who responded "moderate" or "heavy" (a total of 47 responses) were asked to estimate what percentage of students were involved in a gang. Fifty-one percent of the 47 respondents replied that 10% - 20% of the students were gang involved, nineteen percent of respondents replied that 21% - 30% of the students were gang involved, another nineteen percent of respondents replied that 31% - 40% of the students were gang involved, nine percent of respondents replied that 41% - 50% of the students were gang involved, and two percent of respondents indicated that greater than 50% of the students were gang involved.

Level of Gang Activity in Schools as Reported by SDFS Coordinators and ALP Contacts



N = 90

Survey of 90 SDFS Coordinators and ALP Contacts conducted online by DPI

NC-JOIN / Gang Presence

The State's database for juvenile justice is entitled the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN). NC-JOIN contains information on every youth who has entered the juvenile justice system. As the name indicates, the network is a web-based system that allows DJJDP staff at all points in the State's juvenile justice system to enter current information on the juveniles being supervised or provided services.

Risk assessments are completed on every juvenile who has a complaint approved for court. The risk assessment assists with determining the level of supervision most appropriate for the juvenile upon disposition. The results of this risk assessment are entered into NC-JOIN. An analysis of the data contained in NC-JOIN as of October 21, 2008 for the fiscal year 2007-2008 revealed that there were 16,398 distinct juveniles who underwent a risk assessment. Eight hundred thirty-three distinct juveniles (5.1%) were assessed to be associates of a gang, and four hundred thirty-four (2.6%) were assessed as gang members. (Note: assessments are based upon self reporting by the youth and family as well as review by court counselors)

Conclusion

The information collected from the Annual Report on School Crime and Violence, the survey of School Resource Officers, the School Resource Officer census, and the survey of Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators and Alternative Learning School Principals (ALP)/Contacts all indicate that there is a presence of crime, violence and gang activity in the schools of North Carolina. In addition, the data from NC-JOIN further indicates that there is a gang presence in the State of North Carolina and a small number of youth have been identified as associating with gangs.

(2) The use of Department [of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention] Juvenile Crime Prevention Council programs for out-of-school suspension alternative learning programs for students who are identified as being associated with gangs

Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs) are the planning bodies at the local level in partnership with the State that exist to fund programs that are prevention and intervention oriented for at risk youth. JCPCs go through a planning process each year that leads them to funding decisions made in the spring regarding programs for at-risk and adjudicated youth. Knowledge about what programs and services are needed evolves from this planning process in each county. Beginning in the fall of the year, each county conducts an assessment of local resources and a local Risk and Needs Assessment. This study of juvenile justice risk and needs data, as well as other community data highlights the issues facing delinquent and at-risk juveniles in each county. The following table outlines the risk factors for juvenile delinquency studied across various ages and domains used by Department area consultants in their annual planning with county JCPCs.

Risks Factors for Juvenile Delinquency by Age

North Carolina JCPC County Assessment and Planning Tool

| | Onset of Risk | | |
|---|---------------|---------|----------|
| | Birth to 6 | 7 to 11 | 12 to 16 |
| <i>Individual Risk Factors</i> | | | |
| Constitutional factors: mental health & biological conditions | X | X | X |
| Early and persistent behavior problems in school | X | X | X |
| Academic failure | | X | X |
| Early initiation of conduct problems | X | X | X |
| Gang membership | | | X |
| <i>Family Risk Factors</i> | | | |
| Prenatal factors | X | | |
| Family management problems | X | X | X |
| Parent problems | X | X | X |
| Family conflict and disruption | | X | X |
| <i>Peer Group Risk Factors</i> | | | |
| Peer rejection | X | X | X |
| Peers who engage in delinquent behavior | | X | X |
| <i>School-level Risk Factors</i> | | | |
| School and classroom size | X | X | X |
| Disruptive school environment | | X | |
| <i>Community Risk Factors</i> | | | |
| Impoverished neighborhood | X | X | X |
| Community drug and alcohol use | | X | |
| Community crime and violence | | X | X |
| Presence of gangs | | X | X |
| Availability of guns | | | X |

NOTE: Risk factors are correlated with high county rates of juvenile delinquency. Not all of these factors correlate with delinquency for individuals.

Source: Prepared by the Jordan Institute for Families, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Membership of a JCPC is comprised of not more than 26 members from local government, public and private agencies serving juveniles and their families, local business leaders, local law enforcement, local health director and others as deemed appropriate. The local school superintendent or his designee, if possible, should be a member of the local JCPC.²

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) partners with JCPCs in each county to galvanize community leaders, locally and statewide, and to prevent and reduce juvenile crime. DJJDP allocates funds to these councils annually which are used to subsidize local programs and services.

JCPC Responsibilities

- Review the needs of juveniles in the county who are at risk of delinquency or who have been adjudicated undisciplined or delinquent.
- Review the resources available to address those needs.
- Prioritize community risk factors.
- Determine the services needed to address those problems areas.
- Develop a request for proposal for services in need.
- Submit a written funding plan to the county commissioners for approval.
- Evaluate program performance.
- Increase public awareness of the causes of delinquency and strategies to reduce the problem.
- Develop strategies to intervene, respond to and treat the needs of juveniles at risk of delinquency.
- Provide funds for treatment, counseling, or rehabilitation services.

JCPC Powers and Duties

- To ensure that appropriate intermediate dispositional options are available.
- To provide funds for treatment of juveniles.
- To increase public awareness of the causes of delinquency and strategies to reduce the problem.
- To assess needs of juveniles in the local community.
- To develop strategies for delinquency prevention through risk assessment.
- To assess resources to meet the identified needs.
- To develop or propose ways to meet those needs.

² 2007 General Statutes of North Carolina Article 12 § 143B-544

- To plan for a permanent funding stream for delinquency prevention programs.
- To evaluate program performance.

Each JCPC conducts a community Risk and Needs Assessment during its annual planning process in an effort to review the needs of juveniles in the county who are at risk of delinquency or who have been adjudicated, undisciplined or delinquent; evaluate program performance; develop strategies to intervene, respond to and treat the needs of juveniles at risk of delinquency; and provide funds for needed services. JCPC members work to fund the following types of services and programs in their local communities: assessment programs such as clinical evaluation and psychological assessment; clinical treatment programs; community day programs; residential programs; restorative programs, including mediation/conflict resolution, restitution and teen court; and structured activities programs such as skill building and mentoring programs.

JCPC Funded Gang Prevention and Intervention Programs

In 2005, the General Assembly directed the North Carolina DJJDP, in conjunction with the Governor's Crime Commission, to provide two-year grants to JCPCs to assist with youth street gang violence prevention programs. Funding was awarded in July of 2006 and ended in June of 2008. Counties receiving funding are included in the following table.

| Counties Receiving Funding | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Applicant County | Rural / Urban | Partnering Counties | Funding Amount | Services Provided |
| Mecklenburg | Urban | | \$100,000 | Street Smart Gang Prevention & Targeted Outreach, Community Survey & Town Hall Meeting |
| Wake | Urban | | \$184,538 | Outreach Exercise Based – Independent Living, Adolescent Gang Awareness and Prevention Education (AGAPE) |
| Cumberland | Urban | | \$212,219 | Law Enforcement Training, Intelligence & Public Awareness, Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach, Mentoring, Project Coordination & Parent Support |
| Durham | Urban | | \$184,538 | Targeted Outreach & Street Worker/ Community Outreach Worker |
| Guilford | Urban | | \$231,933 | Teaching Adolescents Pathways to Success (TAPS), Gang Violence Prevention Education and Gang Mediation, The Hope Project, Gang Wise Parent Talk, Brothers Organized to Save Others (BOTS), Evaluation |
| Gaston | Urban | | \$127,116 | Street SMART Gang Prevention Education, Teaching, Educating and Mentoring (TEAM), Community Education & Hot Line, Law Enforcement Intelligence, Training, Conference & Community Support |
| Pitt | Rural | | \$370,651 | Project Center Stage (Targeted Alternative to Suspension), Standing in the Gap Day Program, Project Unity, Blue Print for Peace, Gang Resistance, Intervention and Prevention (GRIP) |
| Catawba | Urban | Burke (R) Caldwell (R) | \$100,000 | Street Smart Gang Violence Prevention Education |
| New Hanover | Urban | Pender (R) Brunswick (R) | \$276,807 | Gang Counselors and Intervention Activities |
| Gates | Rural | | \$27,660 | Gang Prevention Media Campaign & StarChild Prevention Education |
| Buncombe | Urban | | \$184,538 | Vocational Programs, Mentoring, After School Programs, Graduation Assistance & Gang Prevention Training |
| Totals | | | | |
| 15 counties | 9 Urban Counties 6 Rural counties | | \$2,000,000 | |

After these initial grants, additional funding has been allocated by the General Assembly to local communities through the Governors Crime Commission.

Although there are JCPC programs that directly identify strategies for working with and preventing gang violence, the vast majority are more focused on general delinquency prevention and intervention methods. The reason why most JCPC programs focus on the

prevention of risk behaviors instead of solely addressing gang involvement is because research indicates a high correlation between risk factors that lead a child to be delinquent and those risk factors associated with a youth becoming involved in a gang. Therefore by addressing risk factors for delinquency, programs are also addressing risk factors for gang involvement. These common risk factors include availability of drugs and alcohol, unstable living conditions, parents who tolerate or commit violence, failing or falling behind academically, and hanging out with delinquent youth.

JCPC consultants are DJJDP staff who work with the local JCPCs to help them develop and implement a comprehensive juvenile crime prevention plan in their community. All JCPC consultants were surveyed in October 2008 about available programs in their area for students that address gang association. Through this survey, 33 of the State's 445 JCPC programs were identified by the Department's JCPC consultants and through reviewing the program descriptions of the JCPC programs as specifically targeting gang prevention, intervention and/or awareness. Although few program specifically targeted gang prevention, intervention and/or awareness every JCPC program targets risk factors that lead to delinquency which can lead to gang involvement. Important to note here is that although funded through the JCPC, many of the programs identified, work collaboratively with the local school systems to provide services.

Alternatives to Suspension

JCPCs work to fill the gaps in services provided to youth in their communities. Sometimes these gaps in service exist in alternative learning programming for students who are suspended from school. At this time, there are nine JCPC funded alternative to suspension programs in place. However, it is important to note that most alternative programs and schools are funded through DPI and JCPCs only fund these programs when school funding does not sufficiently meet the needs of the community. Most alternatives to suspension programs are funded through at-risk dollars that are sent to each Local Education Agency (LEA). By State statute, each LEA is required to put in place an Alternative Learning Program (ALP) or school. Although ALPs are required, they are not required to serve all suspended students. School officials also serve on the JCPC. If alternatives to suspension are needed in a particular community, then one would expect the school officials to add that need to the list of programs to be funded in their county.

The Department of Public Instruction is currently updating their ALP and school directory which should soon provide policymakers a better understanding of where these programs and schools exist and which students are being served by them. These directories will also help policymakers determine which students are being underserved and where more resources may need to be dedicated.

Conclusion

The JCPCs are well established planning bodies and funding vehicles for addressing prevention and intervention programs for at risk youth at the local level in partnership with the State. Although there are very few JCPC funded programs that are strictly

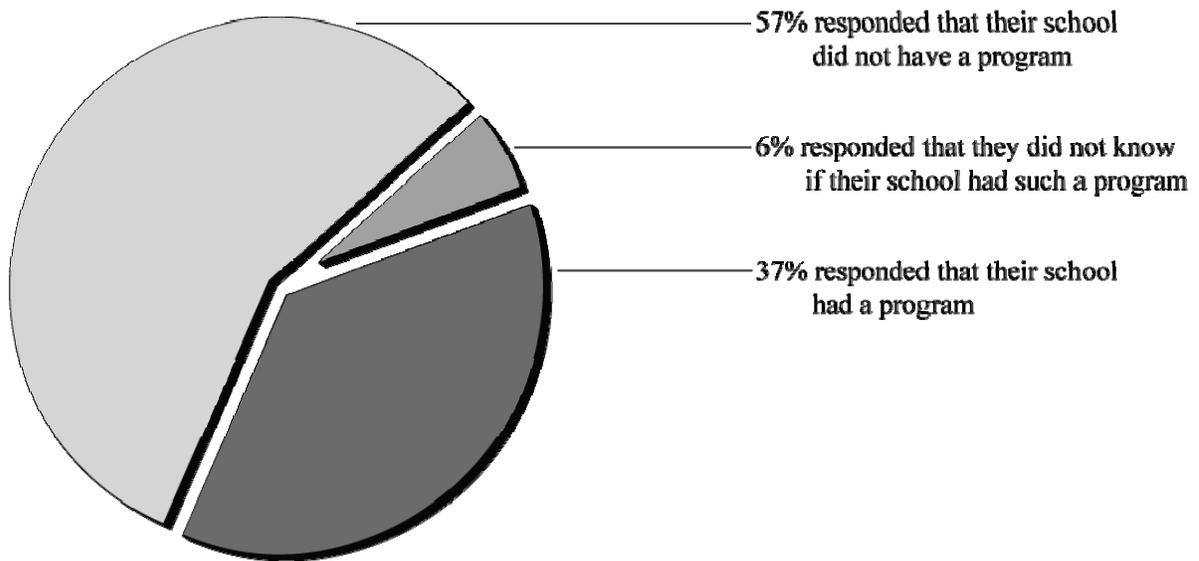
aimed at gang prevention/intervention or alternatives to suspension, there are a number of JCPC programs that are addressing the risk factors associated with suspension and other school related difficulties youth face.

(3) Current programs that are designed to educate school personnel and parents on signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang

I. Parents

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) – Center for the Prevention of School Violence (Center) surveyed a total of one hundred School Resource Officers (SROs) through a convenience sample. Of the SROs surveyed, 37% of the officers reported that the school in which they worked had a program in place to educate parents on identifying signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang. Of the one hundred SROs surveyed, 57% responded “No” their school did not have a program in place to educate parents, while 6% indicated that they did not know if their school had such a program.

Percentage of Schools with Gang Awareness Programs for Parents as Reported by their SRO



N = 100

Survey of 100 SROs conducted through a convenience sample by DJJDP - Center for the Prevention of School Violence

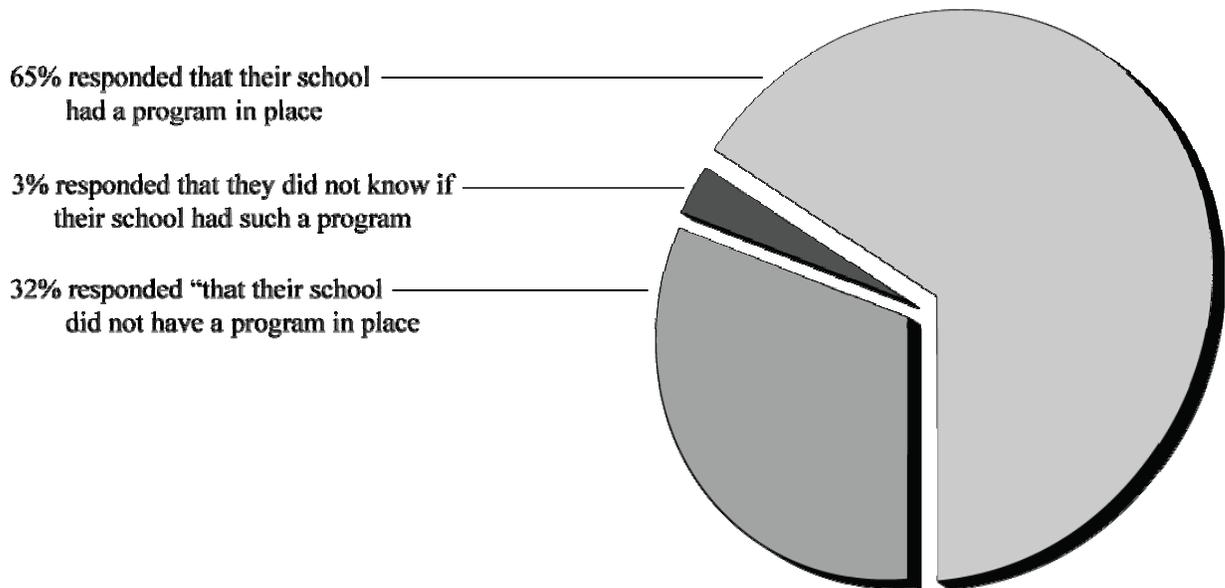
Chief Court Counselors are DJJDP’s staff that administer probation and facilitate services for the Department. Chief Court Counselors were asked to identify current programs that are designed to educate parents on signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang. Twenty six (66%) out of thirty nine Chief Court Counselors identified programs or practices currently taking place in their court districts to educate parents about gangs.

The information collected from both the SROs and the Chief Court Counselors identified over thirty programs or practices to educate parents; however, the programs and practices identified appeared to be limited in scope and lacked sustainable structure. These “one shot” practices, such as presentations, lectures, and community forums identified by the SROs do not meet what would commonly be understood to be the characteristics of “programs.” With the limited resources that schools and communities have, these practices are apparently addressing needs in these communities.

II. School Personnel

A survey of SROs (High School n=51, Middle School n=41, Elementary School n=2 and Other School n=6) revealed that 65% of the officers reported that the school in which they worked had a program in place to educate school personnel on identifying signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang. Of the one hundred SROs surveyed, 32% responded “No” their school did not have a program in place to educate school personnel while 3% indicated that they did not know if their school had such a program. In most instances, the SROs identified themselves as a program being utilized, clearly showing the misunderstanding of a programmatic approach to prevention and intervention.

**Percentage of Schools with Gang Awareness Programs
for School Personnel as Reported by their SRO**



N = 100

Survey of 100 SROs conducted through a convenience sample by
DJJDP - Center for the Prevention of School Violence

The survey of Chief Court Counselors from DJJDP identified over twenty seven programs or practices taking place to educate school personnel on signs that a student may be involved or associated with a gang. Similar to the programs and practices identified for educating parents, the programs and practices identified for school personnel appeared to also be “one shot” practices or not measurable or evaluated effective programs.

Conclusion

The data collected revealed that SROs and Chief Court Counselors often identified casual talks and one-time presentations to both parents and school personnel as “programs”. The “Yes” responses by most SROs and Chief Court Counselors regarding the presence of educational programs for school personnel and parents are likely not a valid reflection of actual programs because no definition of what constitutes a “program” was provided. Additionally, the programs mentioned are likely not evidence-based or have not been fully evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Though little to no structured programs were identified, the informal lectures, practices, and training sessions being conducted by the SROs, Law Enforcement, and others are being used to address needs given the fact that these activities are taking place.

(4) Effective practices for reducing school violence and gang activity that have been successfully implemented in other states

The complexities of school and gang violence are impacted by social conditions such as family dynamics, social economic factors, and a multitude of risk factors that challenge the development, and in particular the evaluation of school and gang violence prevention programs. Since the 1990s, there have been great strides in program development to amass the best practice approaches to reduce youth violence; however, there is still a lot of work to be done in the evaluation of program effectiveness.

Some requirements for effective anti-violence programming are already addressed, in part, through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) through which Local Education Agencies (LEAs) receive funding. Title IV, Part A, Subpart I of the SDFSCA requires that recipients use these funds to implement programs that meet the *Principles of Effectiveness*. The criteria for this standard includes the following:

1. Principle 1: Relating the goals of the program to the Needs Assessment
2. Principle 2: Setting measurable goals and objectives
3. Principle 3: Effective research-based programs
4. Principle 4: Program evaluation
5. Principle 5: Parent involvement

As a result, these identified programs are considered effective in preventing youth drug use, violence and /or disruptive behavior.

Below is a sampling of school violence prevention programs/curricula being implemented in schools throughout North Carolina.

- Project Alert
- PATHS (Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies)
- Life Skills
- Get Real About Violence
- Second Step
- Resistance Skill Training
- Character Education Programs
- Anger Management Life Skills
- Positive Behavior Support
- Peer and Conflict Mediation
- Positive Action
- Steps to Respect
- GREAT
- Bully Proofing Your School
- Olweus Bullying Prevention
- Safe Dates
- Project Class
- Media Literacy
- Risk Watch

In addition to the above mentioned programs and curricula being provided by the school systems, the Department of Public Instruction hosts an Annual Safe Schools and Character Education Conference which highlights many of the research-based programs and best practices for school and community violence prevention. The conference is available to community and school-based individuals, law enforcement, parents, students and security personnel.

I. Effective School Violence Prevention Programs

Although various scholarly reviews have identified exemplary programs, the methodological standards used in evaluating program effectiveness can vary. A few of these scholarly reviews have explicit standards, and one even scores each program evaluation on its methodological rigor, but for most the standards are variable and seldom made explicit. Blueprints programs have the highest standards and meet the most rigorous tests of effectiveness in the field. There are several important criteria to consider when reviewing program effectiveness. Three of these criteria are given greater weight:

- Evidence of deterrent effect with a strong research design,
- Sustained effect, and
- Multiple site replication.

Blueprints model programs must meet all three of these criteria, while promising programs must meet only the first criterion.³ This section begins by listing Blueprints model or promising practices for School Violence prevention and will be followed by other programs that have been determined to be effective by other reviews.

Blueprints Model Programs for School Violence Prevention
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/204274.pdf>

Bullying Prevention Program⁴

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is a universal intervention for the reduction and prevention of bully/victim problems. The main arena for the program is the school, and school staff has the primary responsibility for the introduction and implementation of the program.

Program Targets:

³ Mihalic, S., Fagan, A., Irwin, K., Ballard, D., Elliott, D. Blueprints for Violence Prevention. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 204274, July 2004

⁴ Olweus, D., Limber, S. & Mihalic, S.F. (1999). *Bullying Prevention Program: Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Nine*. Blueprints for Violence Prevention Series (D.S. Elliott, Series Editor). Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado.

Program targets are students in elementary, middle and junior high schools. All students within a school participate in most aspects of the program. Additional individual interventions are targeted at students who are identified as bullies or victims or victims of bullying.

Program Outcomes:

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been shown to result in:

- a substantial reduction in boys' and girls' reports of bullying and victimization;
- a significant reduction in students' reports of general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, fighting, theft and truancy; and
- significant improvements in the "social climate" of the class, as reflected in students' reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude

Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) - Model⁵

The PATHS (Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies) Curriculum is a comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom. This innovative curriculum is designed to be used by educators and counselors in a multi-year, universal prevention model. Although primarily focused on the school and classroom settings, information and activities are also included for use with parents.

Program Targets:

The PATHS Curriculum was developed for use in the classroom setting with all elementary school aged-children. PATHS has been field-tested and researched with children in regular education classroom settings, as well as with a variety of special needs students (deaf, hearing-impaired, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, mildly mentally delayed, and gifted). Ideally it should be initiated at the entrance to schooling and continue through Grade 5.

Program Outcomes:

The PATHS Curriculum has been shown to improve protective factors and reduce behavioral risk factors. Evaluations have demonstrated significant improvements for program youth (regular education, special needs, and deaf) compared to control youth in the following areas:

⁵ Greenberg, M.T., Kusché, C. & Mihalic, S.F. (1998). [*Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies \(PATHS\): Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Ten*](#). Blueprints for Violence Prevention Series (D.S. Elliott, Series Editor). Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado.

- Improved self-control,
- Improved understanding and recognition of emotions,
- Increased ability to tolerate frustration,
- Use of more effective conflict-resolution strategies,
- Improved thinking and planning skills,
- Decreased anxiety/depressive symptoms (teacher report of special needs students),
- Decreased conduct problems (teacher report of special needs students),
- Decreased symptoms of sadness and depression (child report – special needs), and
- Decreased report of conduct problems, including aggression (child report).

Incredible Years Series⁶

The Incredible Years Series is a set of three comprehensive, multi-faceted, and developmentally-based curriculums for parents, teachers and children designed to promote emotional and social competence and to prevent, reduce, and treat behavior and emotion problems in young children.

Program Targets:

Children, ages two to ten, at risk for and/or presenting with conduct problems (defined as high rates of aggression, defiance, oppositional and impulsive behaviors). The programs have been evaluated as “selected” prevention programs for promoting the social adjustment of high risk children in preschool (Head Start) and elementary grades (up to grade three) and as “indicated” interventions for children exhibiting the early onset of conduct problems.

Program Outcomes:

Multiple randomized control group evaluations of the parenting series indicate significant:

- Increases in parent positive affect such as praise and reduced use of criticism and negative commands.
- Increases in parent use of effective limit-setting by replacing spanking and harsh discipline with non-violent discipline techniques and increased monitoring of children.
- Reductions in parental depression and increases in parental self-confidence.
- Increases in positive family communication and problem-solving.
- Reduced conduct problems in children's interactions with parents and increases in their positive affect and compliance to parental commands.

⁶ Webster-Stratton, C., Mihalic, S., Fagan, A., Arnold, D., Taylor, T., & Tingley, C. (2001). **The Incredible Years: Parent, Teacher And Child Training Series: [Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Eleven](#)**. Blueprints for Violence Prevention Series (D.S. Elliott, Series Editor). Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado.

Multiple randomized control group evaluations of the teacher training series indicate significant:

- Increases in teacher use of praise and encouragement and reduced use of criticism and harsh discipline.
- Increases in children's positive affect and cooperation with teachers, positive interactions with peers, school readiness and engagement with school activities.
- Reductions in peer aggression in the classroom.

Multiple randomized control group evaluations of the child training series indicate significant:

- Increases in children's appropriate cognitive problem-solving strategies and more prosocial conflict management strategies with peers.
- Reductions in conduct problems at home and school.

Independent replications in England, Wales, Norway, Canada, and the US confirm these findings.

Conclusion of Effective School Violence Prevention Programs

Important to note is that this is not an all encompassing list of effective school violence prevention programs, but rather a sampling of some of the most rigorously evaluated programs in the country.

II. Effective Practices for Reducing Gang Activity

Approaches to reduce the risk factors for delinquency and gang involvement generally involve a single program approach. The following programs are nationally recognized as effective due to the types of research and methodology used through evaluation. The White House's "Helping America's Youth" (HAY) Initiative is one entity that maintains a repository of evidence/research-based programs to guide communities toward implementing evidence-based practices.⁷ The following requirements are used in evaluating the programs in the database.

- "Level 1" (L-1) programs have been scientifically demonstrated to prevent youth problem behaviors or to reduce or enhance risk/protective factors using a research design of the highest quality (i.e., an experimental design and random assignment of subjects).
- "Level 2" (L-2) programs have been scientifically demonstrated to prevent youth problem behaviors or to reduce or enhance risk/protective factors using either an experimental or a quasi-experimental research design with a comparison group, with the evidence suggesting program effectiveness.

⁷ The White House. Helping America's Youth Website: <http://helpingamericasyouth.gov>

There are also “Level 3” (L-3) programs which have been reviewed, but do not have enough evidence to be deemed “evidenced based”. Due to lacking evidence, the L-3 programs have been excluded from this report. The below mentioned programs are evidence-based and used in various states across the country.

Evidence-Based Gang Programs:⁸

Gang Resistance Education and Training (L-2)
Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Program (Comprehensive Gang Model site)
Building Resources for the Intervention and Deterrence of Gang Engagement (CGM site)
Aggression Replacement Training (L-2)
Lifeskills '95 (L-2)
Hardcore Gang Investigations Unit (L-2)
Tri-Agency Resource Gang Enforcement Team (L-2)
Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (L-2)
Comprehensive Gang Model (L-2)

The above programs are a mixed bag of prevention, intervention, and suppression approaches. To best address the risk factors for, and development of gang activity/involvement, a model has been created by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). OJJDP used the methodology of Dr. Irving Spergel of the University of Chicago in the development of the Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM). OJJDP set up pilot programs in hopes of finding the best strategies for handle the gang epidemic. The basic principles of the CGM follow.

Five Strategies in OJJDP’s Comprehensive Gang Model⁹

- **Community Mobilization:** Involvement of local citizens, including former gang-involved youth, community groups, agencies, and coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.
- **Opportunities Provision:** Development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeting gang-involved youth.
- **Social Intervention:** Involving youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other juvenile/criminal justice organizations in “reaching out” to gang-involved youth and their families, and linking them with the conventional world and needed services.
- **Suppression:** Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision and monitoring of gang-involved youth by agencies of the

⁸ See for more information: James C. Howell. (2008) *Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

⁹ Office of Juvenile justice and Delinquency Prevention, Best Practices To Address Community Gang Problem, Comprehensive Gang Model p. 2

juvenile/criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.

- **Organizational Change and Development:** Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem.

Initial Demonstration Sites¹⁰

In the first of its initiatives, OJJDP competitively selected five sites that demonstrated the capacity to implement the Comprehensive Gang Model: Mesa, AZ; Riverside, CA; Bloomington-Normal, IL; San Antonio, TX; and Tucson, AZ. Each of these projects was funded in 1995, and OJJDP anticipated that these sites would be funded for 4 or 5 years and would adopt the two main goals of the Model:

- To reduce youth gang crime, especially violent crime, in targeted communities.
- To improve the capacity of the community, including its institutions and organizations, to prevent, intervene against, and suppress the youth gang problem through the targeted application of interrelated strategies of community mobilization, social intervention, provision of opportunities, organizational change and development, and suppression.

The initial demonstration sites of the CGM had varied levels of success. A more recent, and successful example of CGM implementation comes from the state of Massachusetts. Eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000) were allocated to support the CGM implementation at 15 sites. The overall benefits of their efforts include many new gang related programs in localities; and many expanded programs to address gang involvement. Among both of these positive inclusions into programs options are services such as: vocational training, employment preparedness/support, alternative education, mental health services, use of outreach workers, among many others.^{11 12}

Conclusion

Although the programs listed in this section do not present an all encompassing representation of effective programs, this section does point out that a number of options are available to schools and communities to help them address school and gang violence.

¹⁰ Office of Juvenile justice and Delinquency Prevention, Best Practices To Address Community Gang Problem, Comprehensive Gang Model p. 39

¹¹ Jack McDevitt, et al. (2008) Shannon Community Safety Initiative, Year One Report. Northeastern University, Institute on Race and Justice.

¹² http://www.mapc.org/projects_initiatives/shannon_grant.html

(5) Any findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, for further implementation and coordination between the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Department of Public Instruction to address issues related to prevention and intervention of youth gang activity:

Finding: The information collected from the Annual Report on School Crime and Violence, the survey of School Resource Officers, the School Resource Officer census, and the survey of Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators and Alternative Learning School Principals (ALP)/Contacts all indicate that there is a presence of crime, violence, and gang activity in the schools of North Carolina. To garner a more precise picture of how prevalent these challenges are in regards to gangs, more specific data collection is necessary.

Recommendation: An additional category should be added to the existing seventeen reportable offenses specifically mandating that gang violence or gang crimes be reported. The State Board of Education must adopt a definition for a gang and gang offense so Local Education Agencies are able to consistently report these acts of violence on the Annual School Crime and Violence Report. A standard definition has already been determined by State statute and should be used as a guide to determine the statewide wording for school districts. This additional information will paint a more complete picture for policymakers, educators, and community members as to the existence of gang activity in their schools.

Finding: The Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs) are well established planning and funding vehicles for addressing prevention and intervention programs for at-risk youth at the local level in partnership with the State. Although there are very few JCPC funded programs that are strictly aimed at gang prevention/intervention, or alternatives to suspension, there are a number of JCPC programs that address the risk factors associated with suspension and other school related difficulties youth face. By addressing these risk factors, the underlying causes for youth joining gangs are being positively impacted as well.

Recommendation: Students who are suspended from school should continue to be provided services. This is especially true for those students who are gang involved, because both anecdotal and empirical research has shown that when the youth are removed from the school setting, they may seek out the gang as a replacement for structure. The legislature should consider funding additional services for suspended youth through both the JCPC and DPI existing structures. The funding should target at-risk behaviors and not be earmarked solely for gang prevention. This will allow local communities and schools to determine how to best address their own specific gaps.

Finding: DJJDP discovered that there is a lack of evidence based, sustainable programs in place to educate both parents and school personnel on the indicators that a student may be involved in or associated with a gang.

Recommendation: Funding should be made available for the development of educational prevention and intervention programs that are specifically designed to educate both parents and school personnel about how to identify a student that may be involved in or associated with a gang.

Finding: There are numerous evidence based school violence prevention programs available in other states and in North Carolina. However, currently, very few identified evidence based gang prevention programs are operating in North Carolina.

Recommendation: Both DJJDP and DPI will seek to raise the awareness level of school and communities of the availability of these programs. Additional financial support should be provided to Local Education Agencies and to communities through the JCPC's and DPI to ensure that the resources necessary to implement school violence and gang prevention programs are available.

Conclusion

Overall, DJJDP and DPI are in agreement that there is a presence of school violence and gang activity in some of the schools and communities of North Carolina. This presence is accentuated by gaps in services for youth in danger of delinquency and gang involvement. These gaps include: insufficient numbers of alternatives to suspension programs and schools to serve all suspended students; few programs to raise awareness of the warning signs of gang involvement for school personnel and parents; and a need for additional evidence based programs. Both Departments also agree better data is needed to help policymakers make informed decisions on how best to prevent gang involvement. Many of these gaps can be filled with targeted resources for schools and communities.