



Plan to Prevent Youth Gang Activity & Violence in Wake County

Report prepared by:
Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership

February 6, 2006

**PLAN TO PREVENT
YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY & VIOLENCE
IN WAKE COUNTY**

REPORT PREPARED BY:

WAKE COUNTY GANG PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP

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Vision Statement

Creating a community where youth and their families reject gangs and where gangs can no longer exist.

Mission Statement

To prevent youth gang activity and violence in Wake County through community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, gang suppression, and organizational change and development.

Below is a list of agencies and organizations that participated in Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership meetings in 2005:

4-H Youth Development	NC Attorney General's Office
Alianza Latina Pro Educación en Salud (ALPES)	NC Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Boys & Girls Clubs of Wake County	NC Governor's Crime Commission
Cary Police Department	NC State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Centro para Familias Hispanics/Catholic Social Ministries	NCSU/Recreational Resource Services
Curtis Media Group	Neighbor-to-Neighbor
El Pueblo, Inc.	Parentscope
Fuquay-Varina Citizens Against Drugs	Radio One WQOK-K97.5 FM
Cary Parks & Recreation Department	Raleigh Parks & Recreation Department
Fuquay-Varina Police Department	Raleigh Police Department
Fuquay Youth Initiative	Re-Entry, Inc.
Garner Parks & Recreation Department	South East Raleigh Weed & Seed
Garner Police Department	Southlight
Garner Road YMCA	Strengthening the Black Family
Haven House	Triangle Family Services
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Wake County	Triangle United Way
Hip Hop Haven	UNC – Chapel Hill School of Nursing
Hispanic Advocate & Activist	US Attorney's Office – Eastern District of North Carolina
HopeLine	Wake County Human Services
Interact	Wake County Public School System
Knightdale Public Safety	Wake County Sheriff's Office
Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC)	Wake County Smart Start
Latin American Resource Center	WakeMed
Methodist Home for Children	<i>Others joining monthly</i>
Multicultural Community Advocate	

Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership Info Line: (919) 256-0919

PLAN TO PREVENT YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY & VIOLENCE IN WAKE COUNTY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wake County is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, because it offers many of the things people look for in a great community. The county has had magnetic appeal to business and industry, research, families, entrepreneurs, and workers. Wake County enjoys a great economy and the lifestyle here makes it a great place to live, work, and do business. With world-class options and opportunities in cultural arts, sports, education, and recreation, Wake County continually ranks as one of America's best places.

Problem Statement

During a time of relative economic growth and prosperity in Wake County, the county is facing an escalating and dangerous threat to its economic vitality and its citizens' quality of life – youth gangs. Wake County has an escalating youth gang problem at a time when such gangs are well established in some other communities.

Numerous indications suggest that the number of youth gangs and the number of gang members are growing. The formation of a community galvanized to fight gang membership and the gang activity that inevitably results, is imperative to avoid a full-blown gang problem that has undermined the quality of life in other areas.

Plan for A Community-Based Response

The Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership developed the "Plan to Prevent Gang Activity & Violence in Wake County" in response to the escalating youth gang problem in the county. This plan outlines priorities, strategies and action steps to achieve the Partnership's vision of a community where youth and their families reject gangs and where gangs can no longer exist. The planning process included the assessment of the gang problem in Wake County and the development of this strategic plan for addressing the key issues.

The plan is based on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model "A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem." Research that the OJJDP model is based upon finds that in implementing a comprehensive strategy to address issues related to gangs, communities must integrate prevention, intervention and suppression activities and strategies to respond most effectively to the many aspects of the gang problem.

Strategic Plan Overview

The OJJDP model calls for five specific strategy areas to address the key concerns that largely account for the youth gang problem. These strategy areas are: Community Mobilization, Opportunities Provision, Social Intervention, Gang Suppression, and Organizational Change and Development. The Partnership recommends the following strategies, which address the specific challenges to preventing gang activity and violence in Wake County:

Strategic Plan Overview

Community Mobilization Component – Key Strategies

1. Seek endorsement and ongoing support of this plan from policy- and decision-makers.
2. Ensure successful implementation of the strategic plan.
3. Develop new and maintain current means of engaging organizations and communities in the implementation of this plan to increase awareness of the gang problem in Wake County, familiarize these organizations and communities with this strategic plan, and encourage their role in reducing gang activity in our community.
4. Develop financial support for the activities of the Partnership.

Opportunities Provision Component – Key Strategies

1. Increase opportunities for job-related education, such as special educational, vocational skills and readiness training, within the context of regular programming, for targeted youth.
2. Increase involvement of grass-roots organizations (including faith-based) in the training, educational and job development programs for targeted youth.
3. Increase involvement of community organizations to provide tutoring, remedial education, job development and placement for targeted youth.
4. Develop financial support to sustain job-related educational opportunities for targeted youth.

Social Intervention Component – Key Strategies

1. Increase the capacity of the existing youth services provider community to implement evidence-based and best practice prevention and intervention strategies to address gang risk factors and gang behavior with youth and their families in the community and in schools.
2. Increase awareness and accessibility of available resources and activities for youth and families.
3. Identify and obtain financial support to sustain the ongoing work of service providing organizations.

Gang Suppression Component – Key Strategies

1. Increase capacity of Wake County juvenile and criminal justice system agencies to identify and suppress youth gang violence and membership.
2. Increase capacity of Wake County community-based agencies, schools and grass-roots agencies to identify and suppress youth gang violence and membership, both formally and informally.
3. Provide information concerning the benefits of gang legislation that establishes stiffer criminal penalties and of legislation that provides funding for prevention, intervention and suppression initiatives.

Organizational Change & Development Component – Key Strategies

1. Ensure the maximum sharing of information among partners in order to share responsibility for implementation of the multiple strategies necessary for effective programming and to modify programming when needed.
2. Increase the capacity of youth-serving organizations to provide services to targeted youth and their families.
3. Conduct ongoing comprehensive research regarding gang-related issues in Wake County.

INTRODUCTION

Escalating & Dangerous Threat to Wake County

Wake County is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, because it offers many of the things people look for in a great community. The county has had magnetic appeal to business and industry, research, families, entrepreneurs, and workers. Wake County enjoys a great economy and the lifestyle here makes it a great place to live, work, and do business. With world-class options and opportunities in cultural arts, sports, education, and recreation, Wake County continually ranks as one of America's best places.

During a time of relative economic growth and prosperity in Wake County, the county is facing an escalating and dangerous threat to its economic vitality and its citizens' quality of life – youth gangs.

Wake County has an escalating youth gang problem at a time when such gangs are well established in some other communities. Historically, the growth of youth gangs in the county has been constrained. This has been due to the lack of a major gun or drug trafficking highway corridor bisecting the county, the absence of charismatic youth gang leaders determined to organize gangs, and law enforcement suppression efforts. Because youth gangs have not established a stronghold on our community, ***we have not yet seen a major problem of multi-generational gang families.***

Yet, despite such factors in the county's favor, numerous indications suggest that the number of youth gangs and the number of gang members in Wake County are growing. The formation of a community galvanized to fight gang membership and the gang activity that inevitably results, is imperative to avoid a ***full-blown gang problem that has undermined the quality of life in other areas.***

At a time when resources are needed to address gang activities and thwart gang recruitment, government and non-profit agencies are faced with tough budget decisions and limited funding opportunities. To the greatest extent possible, the community must find solutions that utilize underleveraged resources or expand on existing resources to address the growing need for gang prevention, intervention, and suppression activities.

Definition of Youth Gangs

Youth gangs are considered to be gangs comprised primarily of members at or below the age of 24 years.

Members typically "age out" of the gang with no further expectation of involvement, so they must continue to recruit younger members for their gangs to survive.

The North Carolina Gang Investigators Association defines a youth/street gang as:

A group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity that creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Strategic Plan Overview

The Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership (Partnership) developed this community-based, comprehensive plan to prevent youth gang violence, illegal activities and membership in Wake County. ***This plan outlines priorities, strategies and action steps to achieve the Partnership's vision of a community where youth and their families reject gangs and where gangs can no longer exist.*** The planning process included an assessment of the gang problem in Wake County and the development of this strategic plan for addressing the key issues.

The plan is based on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model "A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem." Research that the OJJDP model is based upon finds that in implementing a comprehensive strategy to address issues related to gangs, communities must integrate prevention, intervention and suppression activities and strategies to respond most effectively to the many aspects of the gang problem. No one strategy or approach will resolve the problem, therefore the OJJDP model calls for five specific strategy areas to address the key concerns that largely account for the youth gang problem. These strategies are: ***Community Mobilization, Opportunities Provision, Social Intervention, Gang Suppression, and Organizational Change and Development.*** The model further calls for a mix of these strategies across the juvenile and criminal justice system, social service agencies, schools, community groups, and citizens.

Research-Based Methodology

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model holds as a key principle incorporating ***prevention, intervention and suppression as essential components*** in the development of an effective anti-gang strategy. Also essential is integrating plan implementation activities so that they address the diverse aspects of the gang problem. No single program or approach can eliminate the problem. The model calls for a mix of these strategies across the juvenile and criminal justice system, social service agencies, schools, community groups, and citizens.

Each component of the plan (e.g., community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, gang suppression, and organizational change and development) will be briefly defined in the following pages with priority statements, key strategies and preliminary action steps to be taken in Wake County to begin addressing the escalating issue of gangs in our community. A detailed, tactical implementation plan will be developed based on this plan.

Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership Overview

The Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership (Partnership) began in April 2003 by Wake County Human Services, in partnership with ALPES ("Alianza Latina Pro Educación en Salud" – Latin Alliance for Health Education) to address the escalating youth gang problem in Wake County. The vision of the Partnership is to create a community where youth and their families reject gangs and where gangs can no longer exist. The Partnership's mission is to prevent youth gang activity and violence in Wake County through community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, gang suppression, and organizational change and development.

Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership

Vision Statement

Creating a community where youth and their families reject gangs and where gangs can no longer exist.

Mission Statement

To prevent youth gang activity and violence in Wake County through community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, gang suppression, and organizational change and development.

Membership is open to any organization or agency in Wake or surrounding counties committed to the Partnership's vision and mission. The Partnership considers the role of prevention, intervention and suppression in each strategy developed. Members commit to attending monthly meetings and participating on a subcommittee. A list of 2005 Partnership members can be found at the beginning of this plan.

The following terms are used throughout the strategic plan and are defined as:

- Community Mobilization is the involvement of local citizens, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies. (Source: OJJDP)
- Gang Prevention represents those strategies that address the presence of specific risk factors for gang involvement and the lack of protective factors in the young person's life. Prevention activities typically focus on ways to attempt to keep youth from joining gangs, but might also seek to interrupt gang formation. (Source: OJJDP)
- Gang Intervention represents those strategies that seek to reduce the criminal activities of gang members by coaxing youth away from gangs and reducing criminality among gang members. Intervention activities focus on providing alternative opportunities for youth and applying rehabilitative measures. Intervention activities focus primarily on short-term, more immediate actions such as crisis intervention, counseling, or education/job skills training. (Source: OJJDP)
- Gang Suppression is the "formal and informal social control procedures of the justice systems and community agencies and groups. Community-based agencies and local groups must collaborate with juvenile and criminal justice agencies in surveillance and sharing of information under conditions that protect the community and the civil liberties of youth." Suppression activities tend to target a particular youth gang member who is already involved in criminal activity or is identified as a "hard-core" gang member. Suppression activities also use the full force of the law generally through a combination of police, prosecution and incarceration to deter the criminal activities of entire gangs, dissolve them and remove individual gang members from them by means of prosecution and incarceration. (Source: OJJDP)
- Organizational Change and Development involves the 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. (Source: OJJDP)
- Social Intervention involves youth-serving agencies, schools, grass-roots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other juvenile and criminal justice organizations reaching out and acting as links among gang-involved youth, their families and the community and needed services. (Source: OJJDP)
- Youth Gang is "a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity that creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation". (Source: NC Gang Investigators Association)

YOUTH GANG ASSESSMENT PROCESS & KEY FINDINGS

Partnership's Strategic Planning Team

The Partnership organized a core strategic planning team to lead the planning process for the development of the countywide comprehensive plan to prevent youth gang activity and violence in Wake County. The planning process included an assessment of the gang problem in Wake County and the development of a strategic plan for addressing the issues discovered, with specific strategies and action steps. The core strategic planning team represents various Partnership member agencies including community-based organizations, law enforcement, schools, and several divisions from Wake County Human Services. Activities of the core team were endorsed by Partnership members and their input and feedback regarding these activities was sought throughout the process. In addition, Partnership and core team members were responsible for soliciting input from the community-at-large.

Members of the core strategic planning team are:

Pepe Caudillo	Boys & Girls Club of Wake County, Hispanic Outreach Coordinator; ALPES, Chairperson; Nuevas Líneas, Director
Dennis Davis	Wake County Public School System, Senior Director – Prevention Services
Gibbie Harris	Wake County Human Services, Community Health Director
Mary Jordan	Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Wake County, Youth Specialist
Alan Muriera	Wake County Human Services, HIV Health Education Supervisor
Beth Nelson	Wake County Human Services, Manager – Child Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, Local Management Entity (LME) Provider & Community Development Team; Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Member
Ricardo Perez	Multicultural Community Advocate
MariaRosa Rangel	Wake County Public School System, Hispanic/Latino Outreach & Prevention Services
Kristen Rosselli	Raleigh Police Department, Strategic Initiatives Manager
Matt Schnars	Haven House Services, Program Director – Preparation for Independent Living Program
Mary Urzi	Wake County Human Services, Director, Family Support

Strategic planning process facilitated by:

Ginny Satterfield	Wake County Human Services, Community Initiatives Program Consultant – Planning Team Facilitator
Leticia Mendez	Wake County Human Services, Community Initiatives Program Consultant – Assistant Planning Team Facilitator

Data Collection & Assessment Process

The planning team used the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model “A Guide to Assessing Your Community’s Youth Gang Problem” to direct their assessment of the level of youth gang activity in Wake County. Using this model, the team targeted several assessment areas in order to gain the necessary insight into the issue of youth gangs in the county prior to development of this plan.

The assessment areas included:

1. Law enforcement data and perceptions
2. School staff perceptions
3. Community perceptions
4. Youth perceptions (including gang-involved youth)
5. Service provider perceptions
6. Available resources in the community to serve the target population

The core planning team, in partnership with others in the community, engaged in a number of activities to assess the level and extent of youth gang activity and gauge perceptions of community members.

The process involved:

- Collecting and analyzing law enforcement gang data from surveys
- Gathering input from Wake County Chiefs of Police and the Sheriff, dedicated gang officers, school resource and DARE officers, the State Highway Patrol, the Governor’s Crime Commission, and the SBI
- Surveying Wake County Public School principals
- Surveying community members
- Facilitating focus group discussions with community members in three Wake County locations
- Receiving input throughout the year from community members participating in the Partnership’s gang awareness presentations
- Surveying youth (including self-defined gang members)
- Assessing the inventory of existing community programs that address specific needs of this target and at-risk youth population
- Receiving input throughout the year from Partnership members during monthly meetings
- Researching successful gang prevention, intervention and suppression programs

Key Findings: Law Enforcement Data & Perceptions

To assess the scope of the gang problem in Wake County, available gang data (1999 – 2005) from local law enforcement agency surveys were analyzed. Based on this analysis, the planning team sought further input and clarification from Wake County Chiefs of Police and the Sheriff, dedicated gang officers, school resource and DARE officers, the State Highway Patrol, the Governor's Crime Commission, and the SBI. A complete report, "*Gangs in Wake County: A Law Enforcement Overview*," is included in the Appendix.

Below are the key findings of the law enforcement assessment:

- Limited reliable data on gangs and gang members, coupled with a lack of standardized gang definition and validation criteria, have made it difficult to accurately analyze Wake County gang data.
- Most Wake County gangs are loosely organized and undisciplined, and have been relatively incapable of attaining control over large geographic areas and populations. Wake County youth gangs tend to be in the development stage and membership is somewhat fluid.
- Youth gang members are responsible for a wide range of crimes against persons and property throughout the county, including violent crimes. Gangs are involved in the sale and distribution of illegal drugs.
- Law enforcement identified 12 primary gangs in our county, some of which may have two or more cliques.
- Gang members tend to be male, between the ages of 13 and early 20s, and reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the county. African American and Hispanic/Latino youth, however, are disproportionately overrepresented in gangs compared to the county's demographic profile.
- Approximately half of the gang members known to law enforcement grew up in this area.
- Most Wake County law enforcement agencies do not have officially designated gang units, gang officers or formally-adopted gang strategies. Three law enforcement agencies within Wake County have trained gang units, ranging from one to six sworn officers; these units gather gang intelligence and investigate gang-related crimes and threats.
- Although the efforts of local law enforcement and its partners have done and will do much to reduce the threats posed by gangs, additional resources are needed that go beyond the scope and abilities of the police.

Key Findings: School Data & Staff Perceptions

School staff and administrators are in contact with a variety of young people on an ongoing basis. As a result, their experiences and perceptions can provide additional information about the county's youth gang problem. The OJJDP gang assessment model recommends gaining an understanding of the perception of school staff. Therefore, the Wake County Public School System agreed to survey all 129 school principals. The school principal survey instrument and results are included in the Appendix.

Below are the key findings from the school principal survey:

- Harassment, intimidation and bullying appear to be the most prevalent gang-related behaviors observed by principals.

- Gang related behaviors are more likely to occur at times and in places where students are least well supervised – lunch time, before school, in the hallways, parking lots or lavatories.
- High schools expressed the greatest concern about perceived gang activity in their schools.
- Intensity and prevalence of gang-related behaviors appear to increase with students' age.
- The data suggest intervention should begin in the lower grades.
- The occurrence and/or prevalence of gang activity appear to be increasing or staying the same, as opposed to last school year.
- Gang activity is a threat in the Wake County Public School System.

In April 2005, the Wake County Public Schools' Board of Education adopted a new policy, "Gang and Gang Related Activities." The policy defines what a gang is and specifically prohibits several activities often associated with gangs or gang membership. The policy also requires the superintendent to consult with law enforcement officials to identify gang-related items, symbols and behaviors and to provide each principal with this information. The new policy went into effect on July 1, 2005.

As a result of this policy, from July 1 to December 21, 2005, 268 students received suspensions for infractions of the Gang and Gang Related Activities policy. Nine of the suspensions were elementary school students, 102 were middle school students and 157 were high school students.

Key Findings: Community Perceptions

The community plays a significant role in preventing and reducing gang membership and activity. Public perceptions regarding local gang issues help shape our community's understanding of Wake County's gang problem and our response to it. In order to assess these perceptions, community members completed surveys, provided input during the Partnership's gang awareness presentations, and participated in focus groups.

Focus Groups

The planning team and partners held focus groups in three locations in Wake County and invited community residents and leaders to participate. Forums were held in October and November 2005 at the DuBois Center in Wake Forest, the Wake County Commons building in Raleigh and the Fuquay Varina United Methodist Church. The primary focus of each forum was to gain input and understanding of how community members view local gang activity and their thoughts about how gangs affect their community. Of the 119 community members participating in the focus groups, most (111) also completing a 2-page survey at the close of the focus groups. The focus group questions and a summary of the responses can be found in the Appendix.

Common themes from focus group responses included:

- Concern about youth getting involved with gangs and about the youths' safety.
- Fear about the violence, retaliation and drug use associated with gangs.
- Low-level signs of gang activity were commonly mentioned – escalated signs (force, power) were rarely mentioned by focus group members who completed surveys.
- Lack of awareness about what to do about the issue of gangs.
- A perception that young people get involved in gangs due to a lower awareness of positive alternative activities and the lack of positive adult role models, to name a few. Their responses were consistent with what research shows.

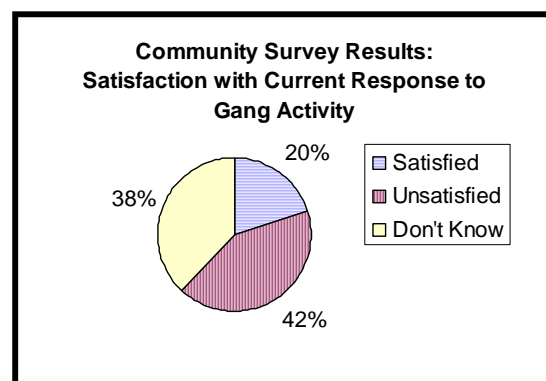
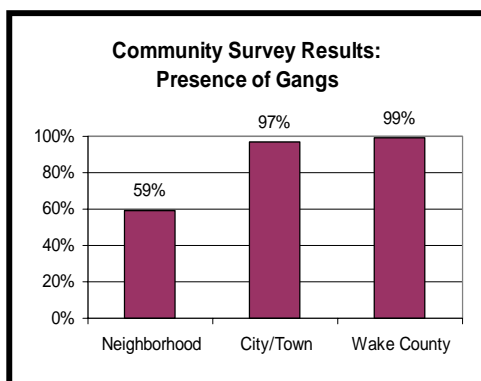
- A perception that organized activities, family involvement, church involvement, neighborhood involvement, and positive adult role models were the types of activities/programs that work best to respond to the gang issue. Their responses were consistent with what research shows.
- Participants emphasized the importance of adults learning to listen to kids and engaging in positive relationships with them.
- Several groups identified schools as part of the problem, but also part of the solution.
- Need for further community education and awareness about gang activity and signs.
- Gang activity is perceived to be an escalating threat in the community.

Community Surveys

In addition to the focus groups, participants were asked to complete a survey related to their views on gang activity and what they were experiencing in their community. There were 118 total responses to the survey, 111 from focus group participants and 7 from community members who were not a part of the focus groups. The survey instrument and data related to the responses can be found in the Appendix.

Below are the key findings from the community survey:

- Concern was expressed in every community surveyed that there is some level of gang activity, although concerns differed depending upon demographics and the community in which the respondent lived.
- Over one-third of the respondents expressed concern about problems caused by gangs in communities including:
 - Increase in fear for safety
 - Property damage
 - School disruption
- Over half of the respondents believed that the main reasons youth get involved in gangs are lack of positive youth activities and to gain a sense of belonging.
- When asked about satisfaction with the current response to gang activity in their community, 42% reported that they were not satisfied.
- Over half of the respondents believed that viable solutions for preventing or reducing youth involvement in gangs are increased family involvement and early prevention programs



Key Findings: Youth Perceptions

Youth gangs are comprised predominantly of persons under the age of 24 years, but gang members have recruited children as young as 9 years old in Wake County. In order to have a better understanding of the prevalence and danger of gangs in Wake County and in our schools, and their perceived appeal to our children, youth must be involved in assessing the problem and developing solutions. Therefore, a youth survey was conducted in Wake County to: (1) identify differences between young people who self-report gang involvement and those who do not; (2) identify risk factors that increase the likelihood that a young person will develop problem behaviors including gang involvement; (3) identify protective factors that may reduce risk factors for gang involvement; (4) and identify the young person's perceptions of gang activity, crime and violence.

Close to 300 surveys (291) were completed by high school-aged youth, with 45 young people identifying themselves as currently or previously being involved in a gang. The survey instrument was modeled after the OJJDP instrument and adapted to meet Wake County needs. The survey instrument and a summary of the results from the survey can be found in the Appendix.

Below are the key findings from the youth survey:

- Responses from the survey show a lower awareness among youth of positive alternative activities in their communities and a lower perception of safety in schools. These results are consistent with research findings regarding youth involvement in gangs.
- Responses suggest a correlation between gang involvement and academic failure rates; however, survey results do not identify a causal association.
- Responses show that youth gang members lack discipline with respect to a gang's code of conduct, initiations into the gangs are not consistently required, members play limited roles within gangs, and firearms are easy to obtain. These results are consistent with local law enforcement's assessment.
- A high percentage of gang-involved respondents have adults in their lives associated with illegal activity.
- The size of gangs reported by the youth surveyed was larger than law enforcement data indicated.
- Responses suggest the importance of prevention components.
- Responses support the claim that gang activity is an escalating threat in Wake County.

Key Findings: Youth Service Provider Resource Inventory

The Partnership's assessment of resources involved first researching successful models of prevention and intervention services and strategies shown to be effective in addressing behaviors related to gangs and gang behavior and then comparing these results to existing community programs serving Wake County youth. The planning team gathered data using a Community Resource survey adapted from the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model "A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem."

Best Practice Research

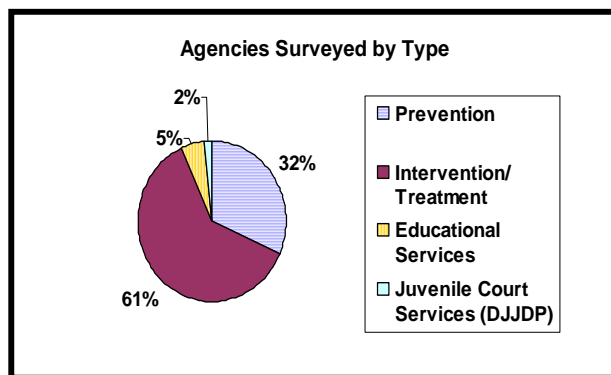
The Partnership supports initiatives that are research-based, data-driven, and outcome-focused. A list of best practice prevention and intervention strategies for specific ages can be found in the Appendix. Below are the key findings from the best practices research:

- Prevention activities shown to be effective attempt to prevent youth from joining gangs by responding to risk factors and increasing protective factors.
 - Prevention activities can be either universal (generic for all youth, such as self-esteem building) or targeted to address specific risk factors related to gang involvement.
 - Overall strategies include skill development, recreational and other activities designed to attract youth participation. Most strategies are specific to age ranges.

- Intervention programs shown to be effective seek to reduce the criminal activities of gangs by coaxing youth away from gangs and reducing criminality among gang members. These programs provide opportunities for youth AND apply rehabilitative measures (i.e. behavioral health treatment services).
 - Intervention strategies primarily affect individual gang members or targeted youth at risk, but do not affect the community as a whole.
 - In order to achieve positive outcomes it is important to complete a thorough risk assessment to match the individual to the appropriate strategy (i.e. intervention vs. suppression).
 - Professionals in youth-serving agencies should be appropriately trained to complete risk assessments.
 - Most studies have determined that group programming is NOT effective for intervention services. In fact, many studies conclude that group programming leads to increased cohesiveness, which leads to increased gang identification and gang crime. If there are services where group activities are likely to occur with gang involved youth, it is imperative to have clear rules and boundaries making the setting a “gang free zone”.

Youth Service Provider Resource Inventory Surveys

The survey instrument used in the assessment was modeled after an OJJDP instrument and was adapted to Wake County needs. The survey was sent to several hundred youth service providers in the county to identify programs or services that currently provide or are willing to provide services to gang-involved youth or those at-risk of gang involvement. Forty-two agencies (representing 57 youth-serving programs) completed the survey; these agencies represented a mix of prevention and intervention/treatment services including community based skill-building, juvenile court services, child mental health, and substance abuse outpatient and residential treatment programs. The number of youth and families served by these programs range from six in some residential programs to over 200 in some outpatient treatment services. The results of this survey can be found in the Appendix.



Below are the key findings from the youth-service provider resource inventory survey:

- Many existing youth serving agencies (prevention and treatment) are serving youth who are at risk of or already involved in gang activity.
 - 36 of 42 (86%) agencies reported serving suspected gang-involved youth. Of those, the percentage of suspected gang-involved youth in their programs ranged from 2% to 50%.
 - 26 of the 36 (72%) agencies reported serving known gang-involved youth. The percentage of known gang-involved youth in their programs ranged from 3% to 50%.
 - 23 out of 42 (55%) agencies complete risk assessments with questions about gang activity or involvement.
- Respondents reported a lack of knowledge and expertise about what is effective in achieving positive outcomes with this population. Although 30 agencies reported providing services to address gang involvement or gang-related issues, 13 of these agencies reported that their staff do not have experience, knowledge, or expertise in gang issues (many report having other “experts” come in to train staff).
- There is a strong desire by agencies to develop and enhance the capacity to address gang-related youth issues in their programs. 40 out of 42 agencies expressed an interest in developing the capacity of their staff and programs to address gang issues.
- Many of the services reported in the survey do not meet best practice standards for the population being served.
- The compilation of responses from the agencies indicates that gang activity is an escalating threat in Wake County.

Data Limitations

Tools and methods used to complete Wake County’s youth gang assessment were modeled after the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, “A Guide to Assessing Your Community’s Youth Gang Problem.” However, data used to inform this plan must be used cautiously. No scientific research methods were used to collect the data. Standardization of terms did not exist. Not all geographic areas, agency types or demographic groups in the county were represented in each assessment process. Until recently, data were not collected specifically on gang activity and membership, so baseline data for the county have not been established. Given the limitations in the initial assessment, the Partnership recognizes a need for an on-going youth gang assessment in the county. **However, the data support the claim that Wake County has an escalating gang problem and there is a need for countywide concern and an immediate response.**

PLAN TO PREVENT YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY & VIOLENCE IN WAKE COUNTY:

KEY STRATEGIES & ACTION STEPS

WAKE COUNTY GANG PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP

Vision Statement

Creating a community where youth and their families reject gangs and where gangs can no longer exist.

Mission Statement

To prevent youth gang activity and violence in Wake County through community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, gang suppression, and organizational change and development.

Wake County Gang Prevention Information Line

For information and referrals, call (919) 256-0919

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION COMPONENT

“Community Mobilization” is the involvement of local citizens, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.

PRIORITY

The Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership will create and preserve interagency and community relationships that facilitate program development specific to youth at risk of or involved in a gang. The Partnership will facilitate coordinated outreach and policies and practices to meet the needs of targeted youth and their families.

Key Strategies and Action Steps

1. Seek endorsement and ongoing support of this plan from policy- and decision-makers.

Action Steps:

- a. Present the recommendations of the plan to Commissioners and City Councils in the County
- b. Present to the Wake County Board of Education.
- c. Present updated gang information and status reports on the Plan to Prevent Gang Activity and Violence in Wake County to the County Commissioners and the Town/City Councils, as requested.

2. Ensure successful implementation of the strategic plan.

Action Steps:

- a. Develop an implementation plan.
- b. Develop an infrastructure that supports the ongoing work of the Partnership (see attached).
- c. Create dedicated staff position that coordinates, facilitates and administers the activities of the Partnership.
- d. Continuously assess gang-related issues and community perceptions in Wake County.

3. Develop new and maintain current means of engaging organizations and communities in the implementation of this plan to increase awareness of the gang problem in Wake County, familiarize these organizations and communities with this strategic plan, and encourage their role in reducing gang activity in our community.

Action Steps:

- a. Hold forums to educate community members about and involve them in the implementation of the strategic plan.
- b. Maintain ongoing partnership with the Wake County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.
- c. Develop and launch the Wake County Gang Prevention Partnership’s bi-lingual (English & Spanish) print and radio public awareness campaign.
- d. Make targeted agency and community presentations, as appropriate, on the warning signs of gang activity and involvement.
- e. Provide gang awareness information and community-based action steps on combating gangs on City/Town and local law enforcement websites.

4. Develop financial support for the activities of the Partnership.

Action Steps:

- a. Educate public and private funding sources regarding prevention and intervention strategies that are proven effective with this population and partner with them to access new resources.
- b. Make appropriate requests of the Board of Commissioners, Municipalities and the business community for support of Partnership activities.

OPPORTUNITIES PROVISION COMPONENT

“Opportunities Provision” involves the development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs for targeted youth.

PRIORITY

Youth at risk of gang involvement and those already involved will have access to economic opportunities in Wake County.

Key Strategies and Action Steps

1. Increase opportunities for job-related education, such as special educational, vocational skills and readiness training, within the context of regular programming, for targeted youth.

Action Steps:

- a. Form partnerships between employers and the business community to assist in providing youth job experiences and internships.
- b. Perform effective street outreach to link youth with vocational and job readiness services.
- c. Encourage the development and/or strengthening of effective and accessible alternatives to suspension programs for target youth.

2. Increase involvement of grass-roots organizations (including faith-based) in the training, educational and job development programs for targeted youth.

Action Steps:

- a. Encourage grass roots organizations to closely align with alternate educational programs to assist youth in completing educational goals.
- b. Support grass roots organizations’ efforts to ensure that local charter and alternative educational schools are accessible to gang involved youth and those youth at risk for gang involvement.
- c. Encourage grass roots organizations to provide educational opportunities that offer individual attention by teachers/tutors.

3. Increase involvement of community organizations to provide tutoring, remedial education, job development and placement for targeted youth.

Action Steps:

- a. Engage the Capital Area Workforce Development Board and Workforce Investment Act funded programs to encourage them to increase opportunities for job provisions and training for older youth.
- b. Develop a partnership with Chamber of Commerce regarding provision of employment opportunities for older youth exiting gang life.
- c. Partner with JobLink Center and the Employment Security Commission to identify employment opportunities for older youth who have left the gang.

4. Develop financial support to sustain job-related educational opportunities for targeted youth.

Action Steps:

- a. Educate public and private funding sources regarding strategies for job-related educational opportunities that are proven effective with this population and partner with them to access new resources.
- b. Partner with Wake County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) regarding funding opportunities.
- c. Collaborate with other youth service funding resources to identify funds to address gang risk factors.

SOCIAL INTERVENTION COMPONENT

“Social Intervention” involves youth-serving agencies, schools, grass-roots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other juvenile and criminal justice organizations reaching out and acting as links among gang-involved youth, their families and the community and needed services.

PRIORITY

Youth and their families will be provided an array of services that will assist them in adopting pro-social values and access to organizations that will meet their social, educational, and vocational needs including health, housing and income needs.

Key Strategies and Action Steps

- 1. Increase the capacity of the existing youth services provider community to implement evidence-based and best practice prevention and intervention strategies to address gang risk factors and gang behavior with youth and their families in the community and in schools.**

Action Steps:

- a. Create an infrastructure for training and support for the implementation of evidence-based and best practice prevention and intervention strategies.
- b. Develop a plan to ensure adequate and appropriate training and support for youth service providers.
- c. Encourage the development of new program components and activities within existing services that address exposure to risk factors and that attract youth and their families.

- 2. Increase awareness and accessibility of available resources and activities for youth and families.**

Action Steps:

- a. Develop Street Outreach Services to link gang-involved youth to pro-social activities and other services available in the community.
- b. Encourage community-based programs to be placed in close proximity (in neighborhoods) to offer services to target youth.
- c. Encourage faith-based organizations to develop strategies for involving high-risk youth in their programs.
- d. Encourage local parks & recreation departments to develop strategies for dealing with gang-involved persons using park property.
- e. Encourage community based programs to address transportation concerns that might serve as barriers to accessing services.

- 3. Identify and obtain financial support to sustain the ongoing work of service providing organizations.**

Action Steps:

- a. Partner with Wake County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) regarding funding opportunities.
- b. Collaborate with other youth service funding resources to identify funds to address gang risk factors.
- c. Collaborate with WCHS Local Management Entity to develop evidence based services to address gang behavior that Child Mental Health/Substance Abuse providers can integrate into billable service definitions.

GANG SUPPRESSION COMPONENT

“Gang Suppression” is the “formal and informal social control procedures of the justice systems and community agencies and groups. Community-based agencies and local groups must collaborate with juvenile and criminal justice agencies in surveillance and sharing of information under conditions that protect the community and the civil liberties of youth.” Suppression activities tend to target a particular youth gang member who is already involved in criminal activity or is identified as a “hard-core” gang member. Suppression activities also use the full force of the law generally through a combination of police, prosecution and incarceration to deter the criminal activities of entire gangs, dissolve them and remove individual gang members from them by means of prosecution and incarceration. (Source: OJJDP)

The Wake County’s juvenile and criminal justice system includes law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney’s Office, magistrates and judges, the courts, the jail, and probation/parole supervision for adults and juveniles.

PRIORITY

The community, in partnership with juvenile and criminal justice system agencies, will minimize the presence, illegal activities and violence of youth gangs in Wake County. Gang members who commit crimes will be identified, arrested, jailed, prosecuted, and sentenced, with conditions of close supervision for any probation or parole.

Key Strategies and Action Steps

1. Increase capacity of Wake County justice system to identify and suppress youth gang violence and membership.

Action Steps:

- a. Increase the number of Wake County’s juvenile and criminal justice system personnel dedicated to identifying, arresting, jailing, prosecuting, judging, sentencing, incarcerating, and/or supervising gang members who commit crimes.
- b. Provide on-going, consistent training to Wake County’s juvenile and criminal justice system personnel as to how to identify youth gang members and intervene early (formally and informally) in their lives to suppress youth gang violence.
- c. Create a unified gang intelligence sharing network that allows Wake County gang data and intelligence to be collected, analyzed and shared among the county’s law enforcement agencies and with other elements of the juvenile and criminal justice system, as appropriate.
- d. Improve communication and collaboration within the juvenile and criminal justice system on matters relating to gang issues and information.
- e. Improve communication and collaboration between the juvenile and criminal justice system and community-based agencies, schools, and grass-roots agencies.
- f. Work to ensure that adequate and secure facilities exist throughout the juvenile and criminal justice system to appropriately and safely deal with gang members involved in crimes.
- g. Jointly and independently seek local, state and federal resources to increase the capacity of the Wake County juvenile and criminal justice system, including personnel, data and intelligence sharing systems, secure spaces, and equipment.

2. Increase capacity of Wake County community-based agencies, schools, and grass-roots agencies to identify and suppress youth gang violence and membership, both formally and informally.

Action Steps:

- a. Provide on-going, consistent training to personnel from Wake County's community-based agencies, schools, and grass-roots agencies as to how to identify youth gang members and intervene early (formally and informally) in their lives in order to suppress youth gang violence.
- b. Inform personnel on how to identify and report suspected gang-related activity to their local law enforcement agency.
- c. Improve communication and collaboration between the juvenile and criminal justice system and community-based agencies, schools, and grass-roots agencies.
- d. Jointly and independently seek local, state and federal resources to increase capacity of these agencies.

3. Provide information concerning the benefits of gang legislation that establishes stiffer criminal penalties and of legislation that provides funding for prevention, intervention and suppression initiatives.

Action Steps:

- a. Inform decision-makers about the benefits of legislation that standardizes the definition of a criminal gang and provides a schedule of penalties or enhancements to existing penalties for crimes committed for furtherance of the gang.
- b. Inform decision-makers about the benefits of appropriated funding for a statewide gang intelligence database and for prevention, intervention and suppression initiatives.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT

“Organizational Change and Development” involves the 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.

PRIORITY

Organizational policies and procedures will be inclusive, will be family and community oriented, and will focus on the interests, needs and cultural background of Wake County’s residents, including the targeted youth.

Key Strategies and Action Steps

- 1. Ensure the maximum sharing of information among partners in order to share responsibility for implementation of the multiple strategies necessary for effective programming and to modify programming when needed.**

Action Steps:

- a. Develop a system of collecting and sharing information.
- b. Develop a system of evaluation and accountability for the strategic plan.
- c. Develop a system of evaluation and accountability for programmatic outcomes of organizations serving targeted youth and their families.
- d. Continue to identify best practices and provide ongoing feedback regarding local prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts.

- 2. Increase the capacity of youth-serving organizations to provide services to targeted youth and their families.**

Action Steps:

- a. Provide ongoing organizational development opportunities (training and support) to agencies serving targeted youth.
- b. Ensure training opportunities for professionals who work with youth regarding service provision for the target population.
- c. Train Partnership and workgroup members on collaborative roles, responsibilities and efforts.
- d. Develop a plan for reducing racial profiling of youth for perceived gang involvement.

- 3. Conduct ongoing comprehensive research regarding gang-related issues in Wake County.**

Action Steps:

- a. Engage university researchers and form partnerships with appropriate agency leadership.
- b. Perform long-term outcome studies on the effectiveness of programs at reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors for gang involved youth in Wake County.
- c. Involve researchers in evaluating the county’s strategic plan outcomes.

APPENDIX

Because of the size of the Appendix to the “Plan to Prevent Gang Activity & Violence in Wake County,” all documents referenced in the Appendix can be found at:

<http://www.wakegov.com/humanservices/partnerships/gangprevention/>



www.wakegov.com/humanservices/partnerships/gangprevention/