

Combating Gangs

Defining the Issue

Gangs are organized groups, most often of juveniles, that use force and intimidation to commit crimes. Long considered an inner city problem, suburban and rural communities are experiencing heightened gang activity. Although gang activity declined in the 1990's, gang membership has changed. Most gangs today are neighborhood-based groups, as opposed to traditional, organized gangs such as the Crips and Bloods. An estimated 7 percent of inner-city juveniles are gang members today.

Community-based gang programs/strategies can be grouped into the following categories: prevention of gang membership; intervention by current gang members to address membership and behavior; suppression approaches; or comprehensive, mixed methods strategies.

- ✓ Examples of prevention programs include those designed to improve community conditions for youth and school classroom curricula that promote life skills and after-school programs.
- ✓ Intervention strategies include street worker programs, violence prevention and crisis intervention.
- ✓ Gang suppression strategies use law enforcement methods (e.g., surveillance, crackdowns, and multi-jurisdictional task forces), legislative measures (e.g., civil gang injunctions) and/or prosecution strategies (e.g., enhanced prosecution or vertical prosecution) to reduce gang activity.
- ✓ Comprehensive strategies combine multiple approaches including prevention, intervention and suppression activities in a concurrent manner.

State Examples

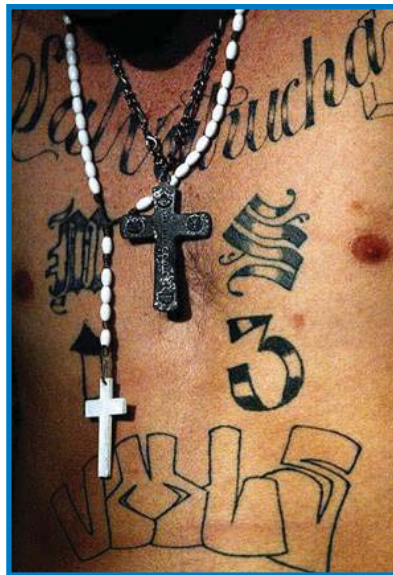
South Carolina - Byrne/JAG funding supported three local investigators whose primary purpose is to investigate juvenile and gang activity. These officers investigated 249 individuals in gang-related cases resulting in 53 arrests. A total of 175 individuals were investigated in juvenile-related cases resulting in 104 detentions/arrests. In addition, investigators used new photographic equipment to document gang graffiti, tattoos and other signs and this data is being used in community awareness presentations.

Wisconsin - Byrne funds have helped create a Gang Prevention Outreach program through the Boys and Girls Club of Kenosha. The Boys Girls Club works with local police, schools and social welfare organizations to create a program to divert membership in gangs throughout the community. The JAG-funded program also assists in youth gang assessments, mobilizes leaders and provides monitoring of at-risk youth.

California - Federal grant monies from this program provided funding for gang related intelligence that helped local agencies combat gang activity. The grant also funds gang violence suppression programs for local law enforcement.

Nevada - JAG funds programs like The Southern Nevada Community Gang Task Force, comprised of 25 local government and private corporations, and the Statewide Gang Focus Group, responsible for implementation of the statewide Gang Intelligence Database.

Maryland - In Maryland, funds were used for programs that target youth who are involved in or are at risk of involvement in criminal gangs. The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) utilized Byrne funds to support the development of local strategies specific to gang issues such as a program to gather gang intelligence within Maryland's prisons and jails. In addition, the GOCCP created a partnership with the local U.S. Attorney's Office to develop statewide gang initiatives such as a public gang website.



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