

**OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model**

**A Guide to Assessing  
Your Community's Youth  
Gang Problem**

Office of Juvenile Justice  
and Delinquency Prevention

June 2002

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**A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem**

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This guide relies heavily upon the research and practical experience of a number of professionals in the field of youth gangs. OJJDP is grateful for the work of Dr. Irving Spergel, University of Chicago, and his associates who, in the early 1990s, collected and analyzed the practices of agencies involved in combating gangs. From this research, Spergel developed a model comprehensive program to reduce gang violence. Implemented in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago by the Chicago Police Department, the “Spergel Model” has been tested, evaluated, and found to have positive results. With some adaptation, this design gave rise in 1995 to the OJJDP Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gangs. OJJDP’s Comprehensive Gang Model has been implemented in Bloomington, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; Riverside, California; and Mesa and Tucson, Arizona. OJJDP thanks the project directors, staff, and the many other individuals at these five sites who have contributed so materially to this program and, in the process, learned the “lessons” incorporated into this guide.

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# OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model

## A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem

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OJJDP also thanks the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Police Executive Research Forum, and the individuals who contributed to *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide*. Portions of this BJA publication appear throughout.

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# 1

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## Introduction

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In 1987, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) began supporting a research and development project to design a comprehensive approach to reduce and prevent youth gang violence. The initial phase of this project was directed by Dr. Irving Spergel at the University of Chicago. The project concluded in the early 1990s and resulted in the development of the “Spergel” Model of Gang Intervention and Suppression, also known as the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model (Model). The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model calls for five core strategies to be delivered through an integrated approach from a team of community agencies and organizations. The five strategies are: (1) community mobilization; (2) social intervention, including street outreach; (3) provision of opportunities; (4) suppression; and (5) organizational change. For a more detailed discussion of the Model, please refer to Chapter 2, “The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model,” on pages 7-11.

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model requires that these strategies be delivered in a focused manner, based on a thorough assessment of the current gang problem in a community, its potential causes, and contributing factors. Although the Model specifically and principally involves intervention and suppression, it is based on the premise that focused gang prevention efforts consistent with the assessment are or will be in place. It is this combination of strategies that ensures both short- and long-term reduction in gang crime and violence, and that the most cost-effective approach, prevention, can have an effect on those most at risk of gang involvement.

In 1995, OJJDP began to test the Model in five sites selected through a competitive process—Bloomington, Illinois; Mesa and Tucson, Arizona; Riverside, California; and San Antonio, Texas. These sites, part of OJJDP’s Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program, participated in a demonstration of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model in urban and suburban areas. In the process of establishing these sites, it was clear that to successfully implement the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, the lead agency and its partner agencies must fully understand the Model, the implementation process, and perhaps most important, the nature and scope of the community’s gang problems. Experience with these five sites reinforced the principle that a thorough assessment of the community’s gang problem was a prerequisite to implementation.

The nation's youth gang problem, as disclosed in the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS), continues to affect a large number of jurisdictions. Over 3,300 communities reported gang activity in 2000. Since 1996, all cities with a population greater than 250,000 and 86 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 reported persistent gang activity.

Between 1996 and 2000, the estimated numbers of gangs and gang members in the U.S. have fluctuated. In 2000, more than 24,500 gangs were estimated to be active in the U.S. While this was an overall decline nationally of 5 percent from 1999, cities with populations over 25,000 actually experienced an increase of 1 percent in the number of gangs.

Estimates of the number of gang members nationally have exceeded 750,000 in each of the past 5 years and, in 2000, counter to the overall national trend downward, cities over 25,000 saw a 2 percent increase.

Survey respondents reported a high degree of youth gang involvement in aggravated assaults, larceny/theft, burglary, and robbery (Egley 2002). These results are echoed by research findings from OJJDP and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) that suggest youth gangs continue to present a serious threat to public safety despite the recent downturn in juvenile crime. OJJDP's Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency (Browning et al., 1999) found that youth who are involved in youth gangs commit three to seven times as many delinquent and criminal offenses as youth who are not gang involved. The studies found this trend holds true even when comparing gang youth to non-gang youth who are delinquents.

Responding to the continuing problems of youth gangs and youth gang violence, OJJDP launched three programs based on the "lessons learned" from the original urban sites' demonstration of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model. Each site in these three programs is funded for one year to: (a) conduct an assessment and analysis of its gang problem and (b) develop a plan to implement the Model. OJJDP objectives for each of these programs are to:

- Assist the sites in developing an understanding of the local gang problem, its origins, potential causes, and contributing factors.
- Assist the sites in understanding how the Model can be adapted and applied to the local gang problem as identified and assessed, as a part of the planning process.

- Support the sites with relevant assistance, including technical assistance on the Model, data collection, data analysis, gang problem assessment, and implementation plan development.
- Assist the selected sites in documenting the processes used in this planning and assessment process.

In 1998, citing recent evidence that youth gangs were emerging in rural areas, OJJDP developed the *Rural Gang Initiative* (RGI). Based on the lessons learned from the urban sites, OJJDP limited first-year objectives for the RGI sites to an assessment of the community's gang problem and the development of a plan to implement the Model. No programs or services were funded in this first year. Two of the original four sites are currently implementing the Model.

In 2000, OJJDP, in collaboration with the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Treasury, announced two new gang programs designed to address and reduce youth gang crime and violence in schools and communities across America:

*Gang-Free Communities Program.* This program offers seed funding to replicate OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model.

*Gang-Free Schools Program.* This program supports demonstration sites that will develop an enhanced Model approach to address youth gang problems that exist in the community and community's schools. These enhancements will include current school and youth violence prevention efforts.

## Purpose of the Assessment Guide

Research has consistently shown that gang problems differ among and within communities. Unless communities explore and clearly understand the nature and scope of their gang problem based on multiple sources of information, they cannot begin to respond effectively or efficiently. A properly conducted assessment of the gang problem will:

- Identify the most serious and prevalent gang-related problems.
- Determine potential factors contributing to gang problems.
- Identify target group(s) for prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts.
- Shape community mobilization efforts and identify community members who should be involved.

- Identify various organizational or systems issues that must be addressed in order to have a long-term effect on the problem.
- Identify current efforts to address gangs and gang-involved youth.

This guide has been developed to assist policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders in assessing and understanding their youth gang problem and developing an integrated plan to reduce gang crime in their community. It is meant specifically to assist those individuals who will conduct the assessment, as well as those who will oversee the assessment effort and planning process.

The methodology described here draws from the best of tested techniques, including those described in the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) publication, *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide (1998)*. It also includes lessons learned from five years of implementing and evaluating the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model in five urban sites and the assessment process in four rural sites.

Data and information are the raw material of the assessment, and their collection and analysis are keys to the process. A major portion of this guide describes the data variables, sources, and data-collection instruments, as well as sources of perceptual and anecdotal data. It also provides suggestions on how to organize and analyze the data, and guidelines for preparation of the Assessment Report. Other portions of this guide deal with definitions of gang and gang crime, risk factors for gang membership, issues of confidentiality and consent, and other information relevant to conducting the assessment.

The guide provides a blueprint for an in-depth assessment and guidance throughout the process. It draws on the experience of communities that have developed and implemented an anti-gang program but is flexible enough to accommodate community differences. It has been developed with the five core strategies of OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model in mind. Upon completion of the assessment, a separate guide provides guidance as sites begin the planning process.

## Adapting the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model

The Model requires a thorough understanding of the nature, scope, and dynamics of the gang problem. The gang problem must be regarded as systemic in the sense that activities of youth in gangs and the community

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response to the gang problem are interactive. The behavior of youth and community organizations in relation to each other are expected to change in the course of implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.

Adapting the process used around the five core strategies in the Model is key to success. The following common elements also appear to be associated with sustained reduction of gang problems:

- Community leaders must recognize the presence of gangs and seek to understand the nature and extent of the local gang problem through a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the gang problem.
- A consensus on definitions (e.g., a gang, gang member, and gang incident) must be developed, as well as an implementation plan based on an assessment of the gang problem, not assumptions or perceptions.
- The combined leadership of the justice system and the community must focus on the mobilization of community resources and involvement of local citizens to address gang problems.
- Any approach must be guided by concern for safeguarding public safety. It should also provide support and supervision to gang youth and youth who are at risk of gang membership in a way that contributes to their prosocial development.

Although the assessment process can be an end unto itself, the process described in this guide is meant to be carried out as a preliminary step in implementing the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.

## **Conducting a Community-Wide Scan**

Throughout this guide, the term “community” – a word that has many meanings – is used. In the broadest sense, community can refer to a national or even international unit; e.g., the European Community. More commonly, the term is used as a synonym for city, town, village, or even neighborhood.

The Model was initially designed to be implemented in a section of a city, rather than throughout a city or county. In small towns and rural counties it may be possible, and even desirable, to collect data for the entire governmental unit before selecting the target area for the project.

In large cities and suburban counties, however, sheer volume of data precludes collecting and analyzing data citywide or countywide. It is first necessary to scan several indicators of gang activity in order to “home in” on the target area. Once the focus is narrowed, this smaller area becomes the “community” and data pertaining to it is collected intensively and scrutinized carefully.

This targeted community will not be a new entity. Likely, it will have existed for many years, although the population characteristics, businesses, and economic status may have changed over time. The community will probably have geographic boundaries that are commonly understood by residents and others in the city at large, but may be poorly delineated; e.g., “South Beach,” “Northeast,” or “Downtown.” In other cases, sections of a city have neighborhood names but defy easy demarcation. Examples are “Nob Hill,” “North Beach,” and “The Flats.” In addition to sharing geography, residents of a community will likely have mutual, but not necessarily common interests. These may be thematic; e.g., clean streets, low crime rate. The population does not have to be homogenous. Please refer to page 37 for a selection of indicators that may be used for the citywide scan.

The scan of the city should identify an area(s) that should be targeted for the more in-depth assessment. Once that area is selected, the assessment process can begin.

For the assessment, each site will first collect data in several “domains,” including individual, peer, family, community, and school. The data will be analyzed to answer a number of questions about the community’s gang problem. An Assessment Report will be written that describes the nature and scope of the youth gang problem. Once the assessment of the youth gang problem is complete, a planning process based on the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model will begin. Findings from the assessment will form the basis of an Implementation Plan.

It is essential that key community and agency leaders are involved at both the assessment and planning stages and committed to the Model so that the resulting Implementation Plan has broad support.

The following sections of this Assessment Guide provide detailed direction on all facets of the assessment process.

# 2

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## The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model

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The terms “youth gang” and “street gang” are commonly used interchangeably and refer to neighborhood or street-based youth groups that are made up substantially of individuals under the age of 24. While youth in this age group are most likely to be engaged in or at risk of committing serious or violent gang crimes, the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model focuses primarily on youth gang members less than 22 years of age, based on OJJDP’s authorizing legislation. Motorcycle gangs, prison gangs, ideological gangs, and hate groups comprised primarily of adults are excluded from the definition.

The Model holds that the lack of social opportunities available to this population and the degree of social disorganization present in a community largely account for its youth gang problem. The Model also suggests other contributing factors including poverty, institutional racism, deficiencies in social policies, and a lack of or misdirected social controls. Drawing principally on social disorganization theory to frame the development of the Model, a team from the University of Chicago expected the core strategies of the Model to address gang youth, their families, and the community institutions that purport to promote their transition from adolescence to productive members of society. With this in mind, law enforcement and other agency personnel in 65 cities reporting problems with gangs were surveyed. Analysis of that information, in conjunction with site visits and focus groups, led to a mix of five strategies that address key concerns raised by the theory upon which the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model is based.

**Community Mobilization:** Involvement of local citizens, including former gang youth, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies;

**Opportunities Provision:** The development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeted at gang-involved youth;

**Social Intervention:** Youth-serving agencies, schools, grass-roots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other criminal justice organizations

“reaching out” and acting as links among gang-involved youth, their families, and the conventional world and needed services;

**Suppression:** Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision or monitoring of gang youth by agencies of the criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grass-roots groups; and

**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.

These strategies were found to be present—to a lesser or greater degree—in the cities with identified gang problems that were having a positive impact on gangs. In addition to data from the surveys, extensive input from expert practitioners and gang researchers made it clear that a community’s gang violence problem required attention be paid to both gang-involved youth and gangs themselves. Long-term change would not be achieved without also addressing the institutions which support and control youth and their families.

The following program development process will facilitate implementation of the five core strategies:

1. *Acknowledgment of the problem.* The presence of a youth gang problem must be recognized before anything meaningful can be done to address it. If denial is present, it must be confronted.
2. *Assessment of the problem.* Those with responsibility for addressing the problem—representatives of police, schools, probation, youth agencies, grass-roots organizations, government, and others—participate in identifying its nature and causes and recommending appropriate responses. The assessment results in an understanding of who is involved in gang crime and where in the community it is concentrated. This, in conjunction with other data and information, enables targeting:
  - Gang-involved youth
  - The most violent gangs
  - The area(s) where gang crime most often occurs
3. *Setting goals and objectives.* Once the problem is described, goals and objectives based on the assessment findings are

established. These should emphasize changes the Steering Committee wants to bring about in the target area.

4. *Relevant services and activities.* Rationales for services, tactics, and policies and procedures that involve each of the key agencies are articulated and then implemented for each of the five core strategies. These activities must be closely coordinated or integrated to ensure that the work of collaborating agencies is complementary. Representatives of those organizations that will have the most direct contact with the target youth—police, probation, schools, and youth workers—should form an Intervention Team and have regular meetings to share critical information, plan, and act collaboratively on individual youth and gang activity in the target area. Thus, the resources of collaborating agencies are focused on a group of young people who are involved in gangs.

It is important to remember that while youth gang members must be held accountable for their criminal acts, they also must be provided with services for their academic, economic, and social needs. Gang members must be encouraged to control their behavior and to participate in legitimate mainstream activities. At the same time, external controls on gang and gang-member behavior must be exercised. For some gang members, secure confinement will be necessary. For others, graduated degrees of community-based supervision, ranging from continuous sight or electronic supervision to incarceration, will be appropriate. It is important that youth understand that they will face consequences if they do not follow rules, laws, conditions, or reasonable expectations of the program. It also may be important to develop a set of incentives for compliance with the program. Thus, a range of services and sanctions is required, often in some interactive way. To be effective in this approach, an understanding of how a youth's family, peers, and others are involved is important.

This approach is very consistent with community policing, which promotes and supports organizational strategies to address and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and community-police partnerships. In this Model, gang unit, community policing, or other officers are involved in the problem-solving process at the street level, while senior officers work with the policymakers.

The work of the collaborating agencies is overseen by a Steering Committee of policy or decisionmakers from agencies and organizations that have an interest in or responsibility for addressing the community's gang problem. These representatives should not only set policy and oversee the overall direction of the gang program, but they should take responsibility for spearheading efforts in their own organizations to remove barriers to services, and to social and economic opportunities; develop effective criminal justice, school, and social agency procedures; and promote policies that will further the goals of the gang strategy.

5. *Evaluation.* Results from the evaluation of the Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Project show that the Model is effective in lowering crime rates among youth gang members. Preliminary results from an evaluation of five communities chosen as demonstration sites for the Model show that a combination of intervention, suppression, and prevention strategies, along with a coordinated team approach to delivering services, are effective in having a positive impact on reducing gang crime. For these reasons, the incorporation of a strong evaluation component as the initiative is taking form and throughout the life of the program is critical to assessing the impact of the program.

**In summary**, the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model espouses a multi-faceted, multilayered approach that includes eight critical elements:

1. Initial and continuous problem assessment using qualitative and quantitative data
2. Targeting of the area and those populations of individuals most closely associated with the problem, as described in the assessment
3. Mix of the five key strategies: community mobilization, social intervention, opportunities provision, suppression, and organizational change/development
4. A Steering Committee to oversee and guide the project
5. Direct contact intervention team that includes police, probation, outreach staff, and others
6. A plan for coordinating efforts of and sharing appropriate information among those who work with the youth on a daily basis, the steering committee, and persons within the partner organizations

7. Community capacity building to sustain the project and address issues that are long-term in nature
8. Ongoing data collection and analysis to inform the process and evaluate its impact

While this chapter provides a brief discussion of the Model, it is recommended that project staff, including the Project Coordinator, Steering Committee members, and Research Partner, review chapters 11-17 of *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach* by Dr. Irving Spergel.

*Spergel writes that available data indicate that serious gang violence represents only a small percentage of serious crime, is concentrated in certain neighborhoods, and is committed by late adolescent youths. Gangs form when established institutional arrangements and social structures weaken or disintegrate, and they serve to organize the interests and needs of alienated youths. Youths join gangs for many reasons, including status, security, money, power, excitement, and new experiences, and especially under conditions of social deprivation or community instability.*

*In developing gang control strategies, it is important to define the problem and focus interventions to specific types and levels of the problem. Strategies used in the Model include community mobilization, social intervention, social and economic opportunities, and suppression. This book provides a more comprehensive description of the Model and the interrelationship among the five strategies. It also provides discussion about the importance of the planning process and development of appropriate activities for the Implementation Plan.*

**Appendix III**, “Characteristics of the Youth Gang Problem,” also provides further discussion of the youth gang problem and the Comprehensive Gang Model.

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## Why Assess the Gang Problem?

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America is a nation of problem solvers. We see something that is not working and put our energy into making it right. Often, however, our first idea of what might work does not. This is particularly true if time is not taken to understand the problem in as much detail as possible. Such is the case with gang crime. Too often, because gangs represent a serious threat to the safety of our communities, it is assumed that more police or tougher legislation alone will counter gangs when research and experience both suggest that a comprehensive approach will be more successful. In many communities, gang crimes are only the tip of an iceberg that includes an array of symptoms, risk factors, and bad outcomes. What makes the problem more complicated is its diversity: white, black, Hispanic, and Pacific-Asian gangs differ, even in the same city. Gangs, even when they have the same names, are different across cities and towns.

Upfront planning and assessment of the gang problem can save both time and resources. It also can prevent other pitfalls such as overstating the scope of the problem and alarming community residents unnecessarily, and wrongly labeling youth as gang members and possibly violating their civil rights.

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*Criminologists have consistently found that, when compared with both delinquent and non-delinquent youth who do not belong to gangs, gang members are far more involved in delinquency, especially serious and violent delinquency.*

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## Why Focus on Gangs and Not Juvenile Delinquency?

For years, youth-related gang crime has been growing, but the extent and nature of crimes committed by gang members are only now beginning to emerge. Are gangs really responsible for increases in crime, or are youth who are similarly at risk but do not join gangs committing just as many crimes? From the earliest to the most recent studies, criminologists have consistently found that, when compared with both delinquent and non-delinquent youth who do not belong to gangs, gang members are far more involved in delinquency, especially serious and violent delinquency (Esbensen, 2000; Battin-Pearson et al., 1998).

Few estimates exist of the proportion of all delinquent acts for which gang members are responsible; that is, although it is known that gang members have a higher rate of offending than non-members, the proportion of the

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total amount of crime that can be attributed to them is unknown. This is an important issue because, if gang members are responsible for a large proportion of all offenses, efforts to reduce the overall amount of crime in society will not be successful unless those efforts include effective gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs (Thornberry & Burch, 1997).

OJJDP-supported longitudinal studies in Denver, Seattle, and Rochester have shown that gang members are responsible for a large proportion of both violent and nonviolent delinquent acts, as self-reported in each study's sample. Gang members commit serious and violent offenses at a rate several times higher than non-gang youth. In Denver, gang members committed approximately three times as many serious and violent offenses as non-gang youth. In Rochester, the differences were even greater—gang members committed seven times as many violent acts, and in Seattle, five times as many. These same studies found that youth gang members reported committing a disproportionate share of non-violent offenses such as minor assaults, felony thefts, minor thefts, drug trafficking, property offenses, and serious delinquencies (Howell, 1998).

In the Seattle sample, gang members self-reported committing 58 percent of general delinquent acts, 51 percent of minor assaults, 54 percent of felony thefts, 53 percent of minor thefts, 62 percent of drug trafficking offenses, and more than 59 percent of property offenses (Battin-Pearson et al., 1998). In the Denver sample, gang members self-reported committing 43 percent of drug sales and 55 percent of all street offenses (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). In the Rochester sample, the gang members reported committing 70 percent of drug sales, 68 percent of all property offenses, and 86 percent of all serious delinquencies (Thornberry, 1998).

In conclusion, the purpose of the assessment is to identify the specific components of the problem, analyze their causes, identify resources currently available and those needed. A thorough assessment of the gang problem incorporates the data, the experience of service providers, and the views of parents, youth, and community residents. The problem of youth gang violence must in fact exist, be perceived, and be communicated as a problem or a threat to the community. An assessment is the most important step in the design and implementation of the community's plan to address the youth gang problem. Guided by data, the assessment reliably measures the scope and depth of the gang problem to provide the basic information needed to make wise judgements.

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*A thorough assessment of the gang problem incorporates the data, the experience of service providers, and the views of parents, youth, and community residents.*

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*An assessment is the most important step in the design and implementation of the community's plan to address the youth gang problem.*

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The assessment, if done correctly, will set the stage for the creation of goals, objectives, and activities, and will provide local policymakers and practitioners with an unbiased source of information. This information is vital if policymakers, law enforcement officials, and service providers are to spend time and money where it will do the most good. Three compelling reasons for conducting this assessment are: (1) each community is unique and needs “customized” programs and activities; (2) data bring an objective research-based perspective and help move the discussion from “what we think” to “what we know”; and (3) the data create a baseline against which progress can be measured and documented.

The assessment process consists of three general steps:

- Laying the Groundwork: Assembling those individuals who will oversee the entire process and providing direction for data-collection efforts
- Collecting and Interpreting the Data: Collecting and interpreting data on a range of indicators in multiple domains
- Writing the Assessment Report: Preparing findings and the final report

The remainder of this Assessment Guide discusses these components and provides detailed guidance on the assessment process.

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*The assessment will set the stage for the creation of goals, objectives, and activities, and will provide local policymakers and practitioners with an unbiased source of information.*

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## Laying the Groundwork

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Committed leadership must be available at the outset to oversee the assessment process, provide direction for the data-collection phase, and guide the community in a planning process. Two groups are key—the Steering Committee and the Assessment Team. The Steering Committee is a policy-making body, consisting of key community leaders who can exert influence and effect change. The Assessment Team is a small group of agency representatives that is primarily responsible for collecting and analyzing data during the assessment. The Research Partner is a member of the Assessment Team. Although the two groups have separate functions, they must work interdependently throughout the process.

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*Steering Committee membership should be diverse and represent key policy and administrative leaders of agencies and community organizations concerned with the youth gang problem, as well as other, more informal, community leaders.*

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### The Steering Committee

Assessments are of little use if the results or the recommendations are not accepted by those who have the authority to implement the approaches proposed to respond to the gang problem. Since these individuals must ultimately agree to a plan for addressing and solving gang problems, it is vital that they be involved in the effort from the beginning.

Steering Committee membership should be diverse and represent key policy and administrative leaders of agencies and community organizations concerned with the youth gang problem, as well as other, more informal, community leaders. The members should be those who have decision-making responsibilities, who are able to make agency policy changes, and those who are influential with community groups and/or neighborhood groups.

A critical aspect of eventual implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model is commitment to support the program by the primary law enforcement agency and the office of the mayor or county executive. The Steering Committee should also include representatives of:

- Probation (juvenile and adult)
- Parole (juvenile and adult)
- Prosecution
- Courts (juvenile and adult)
- Schools (mainstream and alternative)
- Youth and family agencies

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*A critical aspect of eventual implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model is commitment to support the program by the primary law enforcement agency...*

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- Business leaders
  - Faith community
  - Manpower and job training agencies
  - Grass-roots representatives
  - Public housing
  - Local neighborhood associations
  - Representatives of federal and state agencies, if appropriate

It is suggested that a well-respected and active member of the community assume the duties of Steering Committee chair. In Mesa, Arizona, the chair is the superintendent of schools; in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, a county board member; and in Elk City, Oklahoma, the mayor. An alternative approach is to have a committee elect the chair according to a set of bylaws such as those used for the comprehensive gang project in Riverside, California. For an example of the bylaws used in Riverside, California, please refer to **Exhibit 4.1** on pages 22-26.

The Steering Committee chair should ensure that each committee member is committed to the philosophy of the Model and the process. The chair is also expected to conduct each Steering Committee meeting.

The prestige and influence of Steering Committee members give the effort legitimacy. Each Steering Committee member must commit to the full implementation of the Model in both the short and long term. As a group, members have ultimate responsibility for implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, especially its strategies.

The committee's job during the assessment phase is to provide overall leadership to the entire effort, create or appoint the Assessment Team, provide some of the personnel and data needed to complete the technical work, and facilitate access to data and other resources. This guarantees assistance from organizations that are directly represented on the committee.

An important role for the committee at the beginning of the assessment process is to develop a consensus on gang-related definitions that will be used for collecting gang crime data. This consensus on definitions must be developed prior to the collection of the data. The Steering Committee should refer to **Exhibit 4.2** on pages 27-33 prior to developing definitions. It provides a discussion of: (1) what is a gang, (2) who is a gang member, and (3) what is a gang incident.

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*An important role for the committee at the beginning of the assessment process is to develop a consensus on gang-related definitions that will be used for collecting gang crime data.*

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Throughout the assessment process, the Steering Committee should meet periodically to discuss the progress of the assessment. The Assessment Team will provide periodic briefings to the committee on early findings from the data-collection effort. The committee should use this time to begin to familiarize themselves with the data.

The Steering Committee will return to center stage when it is time to develop the final product of the assessment process: a plan of action that addresses each of the five core strategies of the Model discussed on pages 7-11. The Steering Committee's role will change somewhat to focus more on policy changes, system reform, and interagency collaboration. An Implementation Guide will be provided to assist the Steering Committee and others in the process of developing an Implementation Plan.

## The Assessment Team

The Assessment Team has primary responsibility for collecting and analyzing data and preparing the Assessment Report for the Steering Committee. A few hard-working individuals can share these responsibilities. In fact, it is preferable to assign responsibility for this work to a core group of about four to six people. This usually improves communication among the team members, improves the quality of the work they do, and shortens the time needed to conduct the assessment by reducing the need for meetings, memos, and progress reports. Other workers will likely be needed occasionally to distribute and collect survey forms, conduct interviews, or participate in other data-collection activities. The Assessment Team should have key agency representation, such as youth and family agency, law enforcement, and schools. These are the agencies from which most needed data will be drawn.

Once the Assessment Team begins its work, it must seek the Steering Committee's advice early and often. In particular, the Assessment Team should apprise the committee of progress at all stages of the process—when the principal milestones will be reached, and when the final report will be completed. The Assessment Team also must keep the committee informed of barriers to the data-collection process. If barriers are encountered in collecting data from agencies, Steering Committee members should be willing and able to “troubleshoot” on behalf of the Assessment Team in order to obtain the relevant data.

The Assessment Team should ask the committee to review all major decisions about the data-collection methods to be used. Although it is the Assessment Team's job to work out the details, the Steering Committee

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*The Assessment Team has primary responsibility for collecting and analyzing data and preparing the Assessment Report for the Steering Committee.*

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must know about and have an opportunity to comment on the populations to be surveyed, the format of surveys and other instruments, and the types of data to be collected and analyzed. It is a good idea to hold a meeting early in the assessment process to discuss data-collection plans with the Steering Committee.

The Assessment Team also should provide committee members with periodic briefings on early findings from the data. For example, when the community resident survey has been completed, the Assessment Team could provide early findings from preliminary examination of that data. Or, as gang crime data are analyzed, a briefing could be provided on what the Assessment Team has found to be the most prevalent crimes gang members are committing and when they are committing them. Even though the data are not fully analyzed at this point, this gives the Steering committee an incremental look by type at individual data that will set the stage for eventual development of the Implementation Plan. Steering committees in the rural sites found that the vast amount of data from the assessment was somewhat overwhelming when presented to them all at once. These periodic briefings also will have the added benefit of keeping committee members engaged in the project.

After the data have been collected and analyzed, the team should prepare a final report detailing the findings of the assessment. See “Writing the Assessment Report” on page 111 for further guidance on the content of the report. Although the Assessment Team can and should offer a clear summary of the key findings, the final setting of priorities, identification of target group(s), area, gang(s), and resulting Implementation Plan are the responsibility of the Steering Committee, not the Assessment Team.

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*Steering committees in the rural sites found that the vast amount of data from the assessment was somewhat overwhelming when presented to them all at once.*

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## The Research Partner

The Assessment Team should include a Research Partner to assist in data collection and analysis and writing the final Assessment Report. The Research Partner should have demonstrated experience and skills with traditional data-collection methods, analysis practices, and ability to display and explain data in oral and written formats. It is recommended that someone from a local college, university, or other research-capable organization provide this assistance. The Research Partner should be a true “partner” with the Assessment Team and Steering Committee and provide support to both groups.

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In summary, it is important that the Steering Committee and the Assessment Team clearly understand their separate functions and how they work together during the assessment and planning year. As mentioned previously, the Steering Committee provides overall leadership for the entire effort, including appointing the Assessment Team and overseeing their work, developing an implementation plan, and publicizing the effort. The Assessment Team's primary responsibilities are to conduct the assessment and prepare a final report for the committee that describes the assessment findings the committee will use as they develop the Implementation Plan. Although the roles are clearly defined, the two groups must work closely together during the assessment and planning phases.

**The Steering Committee will**

- 1) Provide overall leadership for the entire effort,
- 2) Create and oversee the work of the Assessment Team,
- 3) Develop gang-related definitions,
- 4) Develop an implementation plan, and
- 5) Publicize the effort.

**The Assessment Team will**

- 1) Design a data-collection plan,
- 2) Conduct the assessment,
- 3) Provide periodic briefings to the Steering Committee on preliminary findings from the data, and
- 4) Prepare the Assessment Report for the Steering Committee.

**The Research Partner, as part of the Assessment Team, will**

- 1) Assist the Assessment Team in all phases of data collection,
- 2) Assist the Assessment Team in analysis and interpretation of data,
- 3) Assist the Assessment Team in preparation of the Assessment Report,
- 4) Format data for presentation to Steering Committee,
- 5) Provide data presentations to Steering Committee, and
- 6) Collect and/or analyze additional data at the request of the Steering Committee.

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*The Steering Committee provides overall leadership for the entire effort, including appointing the Assessment Team and overseeing their work, developing an implementation plan, and publicizing the effort.*

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## The Project Coordinator

The Project Coordinator is the key full-time, staff position. The Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the work of the Steering Committee and Assessment Team is proceeding in a timely manner. The Coordinator also works with directors of community agencies and organizations to negotiate possible turf issues and serves as the primary contact for all involved in the project.

During the assessment and planning year, the Coordinator will

- 1) Manage the day-to-day administration of the program,
- 2) Maintain appropriate records,
- 3) Arrange Steering Committee meetings, prepare appropriate minutes for each meeting, and other required/requested reports,
- 4) Coordinate and monitor all data collection by the Assessment Team,
- 5) Serve as liaison among the Steering Committee, Assessment Team, and Research Partner, updating personnel on progress and challenges, and arranging joint meetings as necessary.

The Coordinator may also be invited to make presentations about this initiative and the Model to community organizations, service clubs, schools, churches, and others. A sample job description is provided as **Exhibit 4.3** on pages 34-35.

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*The media can help keep the emphasis on local issues that this program is addressing, rather than focusing on regional or national issues that may be sensationalized and unrelated to local problems.*

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## Working With the Media

It may be useful for the Steering Committee and Project Coordinator to engage the media from the time the award is announced through the assessment and planning phases. The media exercise a powerful influence on society and play a major role in the public's awareness of gangs and gang activity. The media can be engaged early in the project to provide ongoing visibility for the effort and to help create a favorable community-wide environment for a comprehensive gang strategy.

The media also can help keep the emphasis on local gang issues that this program is addressing, rather than focusing on regional or national issues that may be sensationalized and unrelated to local problems.

When first approaching the media, the emphasis should be on the practical and ethical reasons for their involvement. Since they are community members, gang problems are theirs too, and they have an obligation to

provide a forum for discussion of community problems. Media involvement should continue for the duration of the project, changing the focus as the assessment and planning phases evolve.

Media reports should not be limited to the data. To elicit community support, the media also should be provided with information related to the program's purpose, intended outcomes, and the collaborative nature of the process. As a cautionary note, preliminary data should not be given to the media until after all data are collected, analyzed, and discussed by the Steering Committee. Also, great care should be taken to protect the privacy rights of individuals and the confidentiality of information.

In sum, the media should be considered a valuable partner in this effort by keeping the community aware of the program's goals and objectives (Hawkins et al., 1992).

## **Exhibit 4.1**

### **By-Laws of the Riverside Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Program**

#### **Article 1**

The name of the Task Force shall be the City of Riverside Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Program.

#### **Article II**

The overriding goal of the Riverside Community-Wide Program is to participate in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Program to implement and test a comprehensive program model design for gang prevention, intervention and suppression that will mobilize the multidisciplinary leadership of the community in reducing the incidence of gang-related crime and gang membership.

Objectives: (1) To engage the leadership of public agencies and community organizations to participate in a comprehensive gang program planning, strategy development, implementation and refinement process. (2) To accurately assess the nature and extent of a range of problem behaviors associated with law violating gangs. (3) To identify the range of serious risk factors for youth attraction to and sustained involvement in gang-related criminal and drug abuse activities. (4) To select for suppression strategies that target the identified risk factors. (5) To cooperate fully with national evaluators provided by the OJJDP in the assessment, implementation, and impact of program development. (6) To utilize interim evaluation findings to identify common structure, design, and program implementation weaknesses and to implement revised plans as necessary to maximize the desired program impact. (7) To utilize training and technical assistance resources to strengthen implementation and to develop appropriate staff in the demonstration model design. (8) To participate fully in the coordination activities of the OJJDP's Gang consortium.

#### **Article III**

Members: The Task Force shall consist of members of the community at large interested in gang prevention, intervention and suppression. The Task Force will be governed by the Steering Committee.

#### **Article IV**

Governing Body: The Steering Committee shall consist of not fewer than 18 members nor more than 24 members appointed in accordance with the requirements of the OJJDP grant, and with the approval of the Task Force. The Steering Committee will be comprised of representatives from the mandatory agency components under the general community design plus the City of Riverside, religious groups, the medical and the business community.

## Exhibit 4.1 (continued)

Representation is required from each of the following agencies:

1. Schools
2. Youth Employment Agencies
3. Grass-roots Organizations and Community Mobilization Groups
4. Community-Based Youth Agencies
5. Law Enforcement
6. Prosecution
7. Judiciary
8. Probation
9. Corrections/Parole
10. Public Housing
11. Mental Health

Additional representation may be appointed from the following organizations:

1. Religious
2. The City of Riverside
3. Medical Community
4. Business Community

A. Appointment: The members of the Steering Committee shall be selected by the agency/organization which they are representing.

B. Vacancies: Should a member of the Steering Committee that represents a required agency/group vacate the position, the agency/group which they are representing has 30 days to appoint another member to the Steering Committee. If the required group or agency fails to do so within 30 days, the Chair of the Steering Community will contact a member from the agency in order to comply with the terms of the federal grant.

C. Voting: A simple majority of the current Steering Committee membership is required in order to meet quorum. Each agency has the following number of representatives/votes on the Steering Committee:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Schools   | 2 |
| 2. Youth Employment Agencies                                   | 1 |
| 3. Grass-roots Organizations and Community Mobilization Groups | 6 |
| 4. Community-Based Youth Agencies                              | 2 |
| 5. Law Enforcement   | 1 |
| 6. Prosecution   | 1 |
| 7. Judiciary   | 1 |
| 8. Probation   | 1 |
| 9. Corrections/Parole  | 1 |
| 10. Public Housing   | 1 |
| 11. Mental Health  | 1 |
| 12. Religious  | 2 |
| 13. The City of Riverside                                      | 3 |
| 14. Medical Community  | 1 |

## **Exhibit 4.1 (continued)**

15. Business Community	1
TOTAL	25

Should an appointed member not be able to attend a Steering Committee meeting, they may send another representative from their agency in their absence, but that substitute may not vote on any issues that should arise in the Steering Committee meeting. Substitutions shall be limited to no more than two substitutions per calendar year.

D. Meetings: The Steering Committee shall hold 11 regular meetings per operating year and such special meetings as the Steering Committee may require. The Chair of the Steering Committee must give members at least 24-hours notice for special meetings.

E. Meeting Attendance: After a member has three absences from the 11 regular meetings, the Chair of the Steering Committee shall send a written notice to the member and the member's agency/group informing him/her that a recommendation for removal will be made to the Steering Committee if a fourth absence occurs. After four absences (for whatever reason) the member shall be removed from the Steering Committee.

F. The Steering Committee has no fiscal responsibility or decision-making power regarding expenditures as it applies to this project.

### **Article V Officers:**

A. The officers of the Steering Committee shall be the Chair and Vice-Chair. These officers shall preside over meetings with the parliamentary authority of Robert's Rules of Orders, appoint Steering Committee members to permanent and working committees, and other standing duties as prescribed by the Steering Committee.

B. No Chair or Vice-Chair shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

C. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected by members of the Steering Committee to serve for one year or until their successors are appointed should they need to vacate the position. Their term of office shall begin immediately upon election. Election of officers shall take place at the April regular meeting of the Steering Committee.

D. In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall succeed immediately to the office for the remainder of the Chair's term. A special election to replace the Vice-Chair shall be held at the regular meeting following the Chair's resignation.

E. In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of the Vice-Chair, the office shall be filled by election from the Steering Committee.

### **Article VI Committees:**

A. Each member of the Steering Committee shall be a participating member of at least one permanent committee or working group.

## **Exhibit 4.1 (continued)**

B. All permanent committees and working groups must have at least one member from the Steering Committee.

C. It shall be the duty of the Steering Committee to appoint the following permanent committees:

1. Budget and Finance
2. Personnel
3. Public Relations
4. Intergovernmental
5. Community-at-large
6. By Laws

The Steering Committee will also appoint any other permanent committees that are determined by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall have the option to appoint members from the community-at-large and other working groups.

D. There shall be no fewer than three and no more than seven members of permanent committees.

E. It shall be the duty of the Community-at-Large Task Force to appoint members to working groups and to decide the function, purpose, size, and duration of the working groups.

F. Committee meetings may be held as designated by a majority of committee members.

G. Such other committees/working groups, permanent or ad hoc, shall be commissioned by the Community-at-Large Task Force or Steering Committee as deemed necessary to carry on the work of the Program.

H. The meetings of the Steering Committee shall be closed to the public.

### **Article VII**

#### **Principal Investigator:**

The Principal Investigator shall have primary fiscal and contractual responsibility for the project and ensuring the fulfillment of all OJJDP and The Regents of the University of California requirements. The Principal Investigator is the individual who is responsible for the administration of the grant under which this program functions.

### **Article VIII**

#### **Program Directors:**

A. The Program Director shall serve as the UCR staff representative to the Steering Committee, working and permanent committees, and to the Community-at-Large Task Force. The Program Director is required to attend all regular Steering committee meetings at which he/she shall present updates on the progress of the Task Force and the UCR staff. The Program Director will not be a voting member of the Steering Committee.

## **Exhibit 4.1 (continued)**

B. The Program Director will report directly to the Principal Investigator and shall fulfill all duties and responsibilities as outlined in the job description.

C. The Program Director will be a paid position at the University of California Riverside, School of Education, Office of Educational and Community Initiatives, and will be selected by a sub-committee of members of the Task Force.

### **Article IX**

#### **Parliamentary Authority:**

The rules contained in the most recently revised edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the Steering Committee. The Chair of the Steering Committee shall make all necessary rulings.

### **Article X**

#### **Amendment of By-Laws:**

All proposed amendments to these By-Laws shall be submitted in writing to and reviewed by the By-Laws Subcommittee. The Subcommittee shall take one of three positions on the proposed amendment(s):

- 1) The Subcommittee may recommend approval or disapproval of the amendment to the Steering Committee.
- 2) The Subcommittee may discuss and approve revisions to the proposed amendment(s) before forwarding the amendment to the Steering Committee. In submitting a revised amendment, reasons for the changes shall be provided to the Steering Committee in writing.
- 3) A two-thirds majority vote of the Steering Committee is required to amend the By-Laws.

### **Miscellaneous**

#### **Section 1**

The fiscal year for the Community-at-Large Task Force and Steering Committee shall be from May 1st to April 30th.

#### **Section 2**

The University of California, Riverside, shall provide the Steering Committee with a summary fiscal report which shall include an accounting of the use of grant funds for the fiscal year as it corresponds to the terms and conditions of the OJJDP grant.

## Exhibit 4.2

### Gang Definitions

Many gang researchers believe that the success or failure of community-wide attempts to address gang problems is likely to rest, in part, on how problems are understood, defined, and diagnosed. Before the assessment can begin, one of the first tasks of the Steering Committee is to discuss and define key gang-related terms—gang, gang member, and gang incident. This is not an easy task. In fact, multiple meetings will probably be necessary to develop these definitions.

Diverse perceptions and definitions of gangs present particular challenges to communities as they attempt to deal with gang problems in their neighborhoods (Decker & Kempf-Leonard, 1995). The term “gang” carries with it many meanings and evokes a number of images for people. Citizens often mistakenly attribute general delinquent and juvenile criminal behavior to gangs. For some, a gang is a small group of four or five adolescents who loiter on a street corner. For others, the term may identify graffiti writers or taggers, drug users, skinheads, or a group of highly organized youth whose purpose is to make money from drug dealing.

Each community is different, as are its gang problems. What the Steering Committee should strive for is agreement on definitions for use within its community. Do not worry if total consensus is not achieved. What is most important is that those who are being asked for information know how words are being defined. In some sites, this work may appear to have been done already because many law enforcement agencies have established definitions (some by state statute or local ordinance). Nevertheless, existing law enforcement definitions should not be used in the assessment unless they have been validated by state statute or local ordinance and/or accepted by other agencies who will be involved in the project, and by residents of the community. Law enforcement representatives should be encouraged to be flexible and open to considering alternative views of gangs. It is recommended that the Committee start with how law enforcement defines a gang and then invite others to share their definitions or perspectives. Try to avoid the tendency to assign responsibility for the activities of one gang member to the entire gang without sufficient evidence that the act is connected to the gang. Individual gang members often engage in activities that are not connected to the gang as a whole. Many activities that are labeled “gang related” may not, in fact, be connected to a gang at all (Klein, 1995).

Over the years, many attempts have been made to develop standardized and uniform definitions for these terms. Much of this work is summarized below.

#### What is a Youth Gang?

The media, the public, and the community often use the term “gang” more loosely than do law enforcement agencies. Through sensationalized media accounts, some citizens equate gangs with highly organized drug distribution networks (Fagan, 1993). While drug use and selling have been features of gang life for many years, the perception has arisen that all gangs are highly organized and heavily involved in the drug trade (Decker, 1996; Klein, 1995). Indeed, gangs are more visible than in the past, and gang violence has increased, along with involvement in drug trafficking and other crimes (Howell & Gleason, 1999; Howell & Decker, 1999; Huff, 1990). However, drug trafficking does not appear to be a major cause of gang violence (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Drive-by shootings also are commonly perceived by many citizens as features of gang life (Sanders, 1994), but in most communities, they are infrequent. The public’s definition of a gang describes a group of individuals—mostly, but not exclusively, inner-city youth—who are highly organized and heavily involved in the drug trade, serious property crimes, and violence.

## Exhibit 4.2 (continued)

As the Steering Committee considers definitions of gang, gang member, and gang incident, the following should be kept in mind. Youth gangs are considered to consist of adolescents and young adults from the ages of 12 to 24. Unfortunately, there is no commonly accepted parameter of either the age range or proportion of individuals below a certain age (i.e., a youth) that can be used to differentiate youth gangs from adult gangs. This makes definitive conclusions from the research difficult and exacerbates the difference between research findings and real world experiences of practitioners concerned with the prevention of gang involvement and the suppression of gang activities. The term “youth gang” is commonly used interchangeably with “street gang,” referring to neighborhood or street-based youth groups that are substantially made up of individuals under the age of 24. Motorcycle gangs, prison gangs, ideological gangs, and hate groups comprised primarily of adults are excluded from the definition (Howell & Decker, 1999). It is important for sites to remember, however, that the data should describe the gang problem, and communities should not focus data collection on a limited age group.

It is also important to differentiate between drug gangs and other gangs. Not all gangs are involved in drug distribution as a primary activity. Drug gangs are vertically organized for the specific purpose of distributing drugs and are regarded by their members as an “organization.” Although recruitment of members usually occurs within an identifiable neighborhood, drug gangs are less neighborhood-centered and more business-focused (Skolnick, 1995).

Law enforcement respondents to the 1999 National Youth Gang Survey estimated that 40 percent of their youth gangs are drug gangs organized specifically for trafficking drugs (Egley, 2000). Respondents to the survey also estimate that 46 percent of the gang members were involved in the street sale of drugs for the specific purpose of generating profits for the gang (Egley, 2000). Although youth gangs appear to be increasing their involvement in drug trafficking, research has not documented extensive networks of drug trafficking as an organized activity managed by youth gangs (Howell, 1998).

Many gang researchers concur that the organizational structure of the typical gang is not particularly suited to the business of drug trafficking (Klein, 1995; Moore, 1990; Spergel, 1995; Waldorf, 1993). However, other observers, notably federal and local law enforcement, believe there is a strong link between youth gangs and drug sales, and that the activities are well organized and have national connections (Skolnick, 1995).

Law enforcement officials tend to rely on departmental or statutory definitions to describe a gang. In fact, most formal definitions of street gangs come from various law enforcement agencies or state statutes. From the law enforcement point of view, criminal behavior involving a group of individuals is a key component of the definition. However, statutes and law enforcement definitions normally do not distinguish among youth gangs, drug gangs, and adult criminal gangs (which sometimes have features characteristic of traditional organized crime groups).

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC), operated by the FBI, contains a “pointer” system or database called the Violent Gang and Terrorist Organizations File (VGTOF). The NCIC definition of a “gang” is:

*An ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons that have a common interest and/or activity characterized by the commission of or involvement in a pattern of criminal or delinquent conduct.*

## Exhibit 4.2 (continued)

These acts of criminal/delinquent conduct are defined as:

- Narcotics distribution
- Firearms or explosives violations
- Murder
- Extortion
- Obstruction of justice, including witness intimidation and/or tampering

And any other violent crimes such as:

- Assault
- Threats
- Burglary
- Carjacking

NCIC's definition of a gang also has been adopted by the FBI in conjunction with collection of gang crime data through the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the follow-on to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) System.

In 1994, the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) invited 16 law enforcement practitioners and researchers to a meeting to discuss definitional issues. The consensus of the group was that a "street 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, or as a juvenile commits an act that if committed by an adult, would be a criminal act.*

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department defines a gang as:

*A group of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.*

A variation of the NDIC and Los Angeles County definitions of a gang has been approved by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations:

*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, which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile acts that if committed by an adult would be a crime.*

Increasingly, state statutes and penal codes contain gang-related definitions. A selection of these state laws and definitions as well as gang-related municipal codes can be found at the National Youth Gang Center Web site: <http://www.iir.com/nygc>.

## Exhibit 4.2 (continued)

In some states, definitions have been developed in order to enhance penalties for certain types of crimes if committed by a gang member. An example is the California “Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act” (STEP) of 1988 (California Penal Code, sec.186.20 et seq.), which, with some modifications, has been adopted by a number of other states.

The STEP Act defines a “criminal street gang” as:

*Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, (a) having as one of its primary activities one or more criminal acts including (1) assault with a deadly weapon, (2) robbery, (3) unlawful homicide or manslaughter, (4) the sale, possession for sale, transportation, manufacture of controlled substances, (5) shooting at an inhabited dwelling or occupied motor vehicle, (6) arson, (7) victim or witness intimidation; (b) which has a common name or common identifying symbol; (c) whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity.*

Researchers who study gangs also have great difficulty in reaching consensus on what constitutes a gang, partly because youth gangs and delinquent groups show some similarities. In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers viewed the delinquent gang and the delinquent group as identical (Spergel, 1990). The tendency to consider youth gangs and delinquent groups as the same continues today, especially when juveniles are studied. However, when older adolescents and young adults are considered, researchers are quick to point out that distinctions need to be made (Spergel, 1990). One way to distinguish between the two is to compare gang behavior with delinquent-group behavior. As previously discussed, research has shown that gang members engage in significantly more criminal behavior than members of delinquent groups; they have higher rates of police contact, more arrests, and more drug-related offenses (Huff, 1998; Battin-Pearson et al., 1998).

In order to appreciate the variety of definitions that have emerged from gang research, the following examples are offered:

*Any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as distinct aggregation by others in their neighborhood; (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariable with a group name); and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies (Klein, 1971).*

*A self-formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes, which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise (Miller, 1980).*

*Groups containing law-violating juveniles and adults that are complexly organized, although sometimes diffuse, and sometimes cohesive, with established leadership and membership rules. The gang also engages in a range of crime (but with significantly more violence) within a framework of norms and values in respect to mutual support, conflict relations with other gangs, and a tradition of*

## Exhibit 4.2 (continued)

*turf, colors, signs, and symbols. Subgroups of the gang may be deferentially committed to various delinquent or criminal patterns, such as drug trafficking, gang fighting, or burglary (Curry and Spergel, 1988).*

### Who is a Gang Member?

Gang membership involves very different levels of commitment and participation on the part of the individual. Like “beauty,” membership in a gang is often “in the eye of the beholder,” and the observer’s perceptions and biases heavily influence characterization of gang members. Establishing criteria for membership in a gang is critical to measuring the nature and scope of a community’s gang problem and must precede initiation of the assessment.

Once again, law enforcement agencies have attained greater agreement on membership criteria than have researchers. Some agencies have developed gang intelligence systems; and federal guidelines, state laws, departmental policy, or concern about infringement of civil liberties have caused departments to establish criteria for adding gang members to these databases. Documented evidence of gang membership also is required if enhanced penalties are sought under statutes such as the STEP Act.

Increasingly, a law enforcement definition of a gang member begins with a “reasonable suspicion” that the individual is involved in the criminal activity of a gang. Once that criterion is satisfied, there are usually other criteria to be met before the individual is classified as a member. For example, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department requires that at least one of the following criteria be met before classifying an individual as a gang member:

- When an individual admits membership in a gang
- When a reliable informant identifies an individual as a gang member
- When an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an individual as a gang member and identity is corroborated by independent information
- When an individual resides in or frequents a particular gang’s area; or affects their style of dress, use of hand signs, symbols, or tattoos; or maintains ongoing relationships with known gang members; and where the law enforcement officer documents reasonable suspicion that the individual is involved in gang-related activity or enterprise
- When an individual has been arrested in the company of identified gang members for offenses that are consistent with usual gang activity

The NCIC definition of a gang member is very close to that of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, as is the definition recently adopted by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations.

Many law enforcement agencies have developed criteria not only for so-called hard-core gang members, but also for those on the periphery of the gang. It is important that such individuals also be identified, for they may represent better targets for diversion and often can be valuable sources of information. NCIC defines a “Street Gang Affiliate” as “an individual who does not meet the criteria for a ‘Street Gang Member,’ but is known to affiliate with active gang members, and law enforcement personnel have established a reasonable suspicion that the individual is involved in criminal activity or enterprise, or promotes the criminal activity of a gang.”

## Exhibit 4.2 (continued)

### What is a Gang Incident?

Compounding the definition problem is the inconsistent use of the term “gang related,” which often is used to describe the criminal activities of individual gang members as well as the coordinated activities of the gang itself (Horowitz, 1983). While some definitions of gang-related behavior do, in fact, properly use the term, much of what is labeled as gang-related behavior is really not gang “related” at all (Maxson and Klein, 1990). Much of what appears to be gang-related behavior is, in reality, gang members acting on their own.

Two general definitions of gang incidents predominate: *member-based* and *motive-based*. A motive-based incident is generally thought to be one that furthers the ends of the gang; a member-based incident is simply one that involves a gang member, regardless of what prompted the commission of the crime. Thus, if a member-based definition is used, the assault of a father by his gang-member son in a domestic dispute would be considered gang-related simply because the youth is a gang member. On the other hand, if a motive-based definition is used for the same incident, it would not be considered gang-related. Each definition has its advocates, and the community must decide how to define a gang incident. Whichever definition is adopted, its consistent use is what is most important when collecting data on gang incidents.

### Gang Diversity

As Steering Committee members work through developing gang-related definitions, they must recognize the wide diversity that exists among gangs. It is important to characterize individual gangs accurately. Not all gangs are the same, and not all gangs are involved in the same types of activities. The Steering Committee must clearly understand the nature of their gangs and the particular problems associated with them prior to developing strategies to address gang activity in their community.

To understand the issue of gang diversity, which in turn affects how a gang is defined, it is helpful to discuss how gangs differ in terms of organization, ethnicity, and specialization. Media accounts of gang activities and gang life have led many people to believe that gang membership always involves drive-by shootings and sophisticated drug-trafficking networks. As noted previously, this is not generally the case. There are gangs and gang members for whom violence is a way of life, and a number of gangs are involved in drug trafficking, which presents a host of problems for some communities. However, there are other types of gangs that are not heavily involved in violence or drug trafficking, but still may raise issues of public concern.

The popular image of youth gangs is that they are becoming more formally organized, more threatening to society and, therefore, should be feared. Large “supergangs” with thousands of members have existed since the 1960s and, like other gangs, grow in times of conflict or crisis and decrease in size at other times. In recent years youth gangs have been influenced by several trends. In the 1970s and 1980s, many gangs became more dangerous because of increased mobility and access to more lethal weapons. Gangs of the 1980s and 1990s seemed to have had more younger and more older members than before, more members with prison records or ties to prison inmates, and more weapons of greater lethality. They were less concerned with territorial affiliations, used alcohol and drugs more extensively, and were more involved in drug trafficking. Some youth gangs appear to have been transformed into entrepreneurial organizations by the crack cocaine epidemic that began in the mid 1980s. But, the extent to which they have become drug-trafficking organizations is unclear. Some youth groups, many of

## Exhibit 4.2 (continued)

which are not considered bona fide gangs, are not seriously involved in illegal activities and provide mainly social opportunities for their membership. Some gangs seldom use drugs and alcohol, and some have close community ties (Howell, 1998).

The average age of youth gang members is about 17 to 18 years, but tends to be older in cities in which gangs have been in existence longer, like Chicago and Los Angeles. The typical age range is 12 to 24 and, although younger members are becoming more common, it is the older membership that has increased the most (Hagedorn, 1988; Moore, 1990; Spergel, 1995). Survey respondents to the 1999 National Youth Gang Survey (Egley, 2000) placed youth gang members in the following age groups:

- Under 15 years old – 11%
- 15 to 17 years old – 26%
- 18 to 24 years old – 50%
- Over 24 years old – 13%

With respect to race and ethnicity of gangs, there is often concern that racial and ethnic minorities are over-identified as gang members. National surveys of police departments provide strong evidence that racial and ethnic minorities, especially African Americans and Latinos, are the primary members of gangs (Curry, Ball, & Fox, 1994). Although police data are corroborated by the results of field studies and surveys, the data are subject to the charge that they are biased and over-represent the participation of minorities (Curry & Decker, 1998).

According to the 1999 National Youth Gang Survey of law enforcement agencies, the ethnicity of gang members is about 46% Hispanic/Latino, 31% African American, 13% Caucasian, 7% Asian, and 2% other ethnicities (Egley, 2000). In a survey of 8th grade students, 31% of the students who said they were gang members were African American, 25% were Hispanic, 25% were white, 5% were Asian, and 15% were of other racial and ethnic groups (Esbensen and Osgood, 1997).

Despite the disproportionate representation of minority group members in gangs as compared with white youth, African Americans, and Hispanics have no special predisposition to gang membership. Rather, they simply are over-represented in those areas most likely to lead to gang activity. There is recent evidence that gangs are becoming more interracial. The 1998 National Youth Gang Survey noted that 36% of gangs are estimated to be racially “mixed”; i.e., significant mixture of two or more racial/ethnic groups (Moore & Cook, 1999). Curry and Decker (1998) note that gangs tend to draw their members from their neighborhoods and, to the extent that neighborhoods are comprised of diverse residents, gang members will represent that diversity.

Numerous ways of classifying gangs have been devised, although gangs’ complexity, variations, and changing structure practically defy static categories. One way of viewing gangs is along a continuum of degree of organization, from groups which hang out in shopping malls; to small clusters of friends who band together to commit crimes; to street gangs composed of groups of adolescents and young adults who form a semi-structured operation and engage in delinquent and criminal behavior; to adult criminal organizations which engage in criminal activity for economic reasons. In contrast to adult gangs, youth gangs exist mainly for social reasons linked to the adolescent period. They give adolescents a feeling of belonging to a peer group and a special identity, which adolescents often describe as a “family feeling.”

## Exhibit 4.3

### Project Coordinator Sample Job Description

#### SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED:

Receives direction from the Steering Committee and (insert lead agency); exercises direct supervision over professional and technical/clerical staff.

#### EXAMPLES OF DUTIES: Duties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Coordinates meetings and activities of the Steering Committee and Assessment Team and prepares appropriate materials for meetings.
- Coordinates, monitors, and assists with all data collection by the Assessment teams, and assists with compiling of information required for Assessment Report and evaluation reporting.
- Coordinates and/or performs the completion and submission of quarterly and annual reports.
- Works as a liaison between the Research Partner, Steering Committee and Assessment Team, updating personnel on progress and challenges, and arranging joint meetings as necessary.
- Confers with participating agencies, including schools, juvenile courts, law enforcement officials, probation officers, government agencies, local elected officials, grass-roots groups, and others.
- Develops public awareness documents and publicity materials. Provides public training on the assessment process.

Develops plans for allocating fiscal, personnel, and inventory resources for project implementation.

#### QUALIFICATIONS:

##### *Desired Knowledge:*

- Familiarity with local agencies (schools, social services, law enforcement, courts/corrections), local units of government, and grass-roots organizations.
- Principles and practices of budget preparation.
- Principles and practices of strategic planning.
- Principles of supervision, training, and performance evaluation.
- Basic understanding of gang intervention, suppression, and prevention strategies.
- Basic knowledge of youth gang involvement and gang-related activities.
- Basic understanding of statistical principles and data analysis.

## **Exhibit 4.3 (continued)**

### *Ability to:*

- Network effectively with a variety of types of organizations, including government agencies, law enforcement agencies, schools, social service agencies, courts/probation/corrections, and grass-roots organizations.
- Demonstrate organization, administration, and personnel management skills.
- Work effectively with key community leaders and residents, diverse population groups, and youth.
- Work with high-risk, gang-involved populations.
- Identify community resources to assist in implementation of the project.
- Interpret and apply federal, state, and local policies, procedures, laws, and regulations.
- Analyze problems, identify alternate solutions, project consequences of proposed actions, and implement recommendations in support of goals of the project.
- Gain cooperation and collaboration through discussion and persuasion.
- Exercise judgment regarding appropriate information sharing, confidentiality requirements, and human relations.
- Assist in selection of project staff and train, supervise, and evaluate those staff.
- Communicate clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing.
- Provide training on the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.
- Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with those contacted in the course of work.
- Set priorities and work independently in the absence of supervision.

### **EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING GUIDELINES:**

#### *Experience:*

Three [3] years of increasingly responsible project planning and coordination experience with social service programs, grass-roots organizations, community advocacy, youth intervention, professional law enforcement, and/or juvenile court/probation, including prior supervisory experience, is desired.

#### *Training:*

Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with major work in social work, criminal justice, psychology, sociology, public administration, or related field.

#### *Other:*

- Knowledge of word processing and spreadsheet software.
- Valid driver's license.

# 5

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## Collecting the Data

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The assessment of the community's gang problem must be based on data, not anecdote. The assessment is concerned with which gang members are committing serious and violent crimes and which other youth are likely to join gangs. These are the primary populations the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model has been developed to address—not the general population of youth in the community who also may be responsible for non-gang delinquent acts.

The comprehensive assessment of a community's gang problem will address five general lines of inquiry:

- (1) *General descriptive and demographic data regarding the community to provide a context for the assessment as a whole*
- (2) *The nature and extent of gang crime*
- (3) *Characteristics of school students who are involved in and/or at risk of involvement in gangs*
- (4) *Community members' perceptions of the gang problem*
- (5) *Current and historical responses to the gang problem*

The data collected will span several domains, including individual, family, community, and school. These data relate to the theory that underlies the Model, as well as the five core strategies of the Model. Simply collecting data on youth gang crime is insufficient because the youth gang problem and its causes are not limited to a single domain or dimension. Nor is the Model one-dimensional. The assessment will collect a broad array of data such as:

**Individual and Peer:** Substance abuse, crime, delinquency and victimization data; aggregate data regarding youth problems and experiences; risk factors for gang membership.

**Family:** Family unit composition data, employment stability data, family involvement with the criminal justice system, and transiency history.

**Community:** Population and demographic data, data on youth gang crimes and violent incidents, services available, service characteristics, agency capacities for working with gang youth, and other organizational level indicators.

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*The assessment is concerned with which gang members are committing serious and violent crimes and which other youth are likely to join gangs.*

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**School:** School attendance data, free or reduced lunch program eligibility, academic performance, disciplinary incidents, drugs/weapons problems on school campuses, and student demographics.

## Narrowing the Focus of the Assessment

As previously discussed, for large jurisdictions (major cities, heavily populated counties) collection of such a large amount of data would be an immense task. Therefore, it is recommended that such jurisdictions scan several broad indicators of gang activity to help identify certain areas of the city as possible targets for the more in-depth assessment. These data should be those that can be easily captured in a short period of time for the entire city. Because the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model is a gang violence reduction approach, the initial scan should consider Part I crimes (as defined by the FBI) committed by gang members. If several areas of the city appear to be similar in terms of a high proportion of crimes being committed by gang members, then additional indicators should be used to further identify a “community” in which to conduct the assessment and, ultimately, implement the Model. Other indicators to consider are:

- Information from intelligence databases on high gang crime neighborhoods/areas
- Geo-coded maps of gang activity across the city
- “Neighborhoods” where gang members live and/or congregate

After the target area is identified, the assessment can proceed using the guidance provided in this document.

A thorough assessment of a community’s youth gang problem will include data from official sources and information provided by individuals who have particular knowledge of one or more facets of gang activity in the community—police, probation, service providers, parents, school personnel, community members, and youth themselves. Research and the experience of veteran practitioners suggest that gang crime tends to be concentrated in some geographic areas more than others. Therefore, identification of target areas and prospective target populations and gangs most involved in violent crime are two intended outcomes of the assessment.

In general, data collected should be the most recent available in a form that permits analysis below the community level. While some data will be available through routine reports and recent studies, this may not be sufficient. Certain data, such as gang and non-gang crime data, will need to be collected or cross-tabulated in a manner that allows for the observation of certain patterns, such as offense locations and time of day, and race, age, and

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*Identification of target areas and prospective target populations and gangs most involved in violent crime are two intended outcomes of the assessment.*

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gender trends. In cases where this level of detail is necessary, some original data collection and/or analysis may be necessary.

Because of the importance of law enforcement-based crime and delinquency data, especially youth gang incident data, the law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction in the area affected by the gang problem must already be collecting youth gang incident data in some form or have the capacity and willingness to begin doing so. In both the urban and rural sites, it has been necessary to adapt an existing data-collection system or introduce a new system to collect these crime data.

For consistency and comparability across the assessment, the following race/ethnicity and age categories should be used, where possible, when reporting the data; i.e., in the Assessment Report and reports to the Steering Committee. Census data may not reflect these particular breakdowns.

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*The law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction in the area affected by the gang problem must already be collecting youth gang incident data in some form or have the capacity and willingness to begin doing so.*

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<b>Race/Ethnicity Categories</b>	<b>Age Categories</b>
- African American/black	- Less than 10 years
- Hispanic/Latino	- 10-14 years
- Caucasian/white	- 15-17 years
- Asian	- 18-21 years
- Native American/American Indian	- 22-24 years
- Other (specify)	- Over 24 years

Chapters six through ten provide the information necessary to conduct the assessment to address the five lines of inquiry listed above. Each chapter provides questions the assessment must address and discuss in the Assessment Report. In some cases, formats to be used in the Assessment Report for data presentation are included in the chapters. Please refer to Chapter 12 for a discussion of the types of analyses that will be necessary to complete the Report.

# 6

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## General Descriptive Data

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Although the focus of the data collection is gangs and gang activity, some basic demographic information about the community should be collected. Most of that information will be available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census or other government agencies. Collecting and comparing data for the last several years will enable the community to see short-term trends in the age and ethnic distribution of the community's population, as well as its social and economic structures. It is also important that all those working on the project have an up-to-date profile of their community. Often, changes in population composition and economic status of neighborhoods occur very gradually, over time. Current data will preclude judgements being made based on outdated perceptions. These data also should be compared to city-level information.

Descriptive information should be collected in geographic areas or sectors of the jurisdiction, utilizing the unit of analysis the community uses when conducting planning studies; e.g., for new schools, parks, services, etc. The unit of analysis needs to be small enough to distinguish differences within the community. The following data should be collected:

- Population
- Age/gender
- Race
- Mobility/transience
- Education attainment
- Median household income
- Female headed households
- Unemployment rates
- Families receiving public assistance
- Other general risk factor data such as substance abuse, teen birth rate, etc.
- Other critical variables as determined locally

Some 2000 census data became available during 2001. Intercensal estimates of income and poverty also are available on the Internet for counties and school districts. An annual Statistical Abstract provided by the U.S. Census updates most of the demographic information and is available at public libraries. Other data will be available directly from various state and local agencies or

from public or university libraries. Much of the data are available on the Internet. Although collecting these data for the community as a whole is useful, collecting the data for the smallest geographic area—preferably the census tract, where available—is more useful for making area comparisons within the community.

**Table 1** identifies the questions to be answered about the community, the information that will be needed to answer those questions, and the sources of that information.

<b>Table 1: General Descriptive Data – Multiyear</b>			
<b>Questions to Be Answered</b>	<b>Information Needed to Answer</b>	<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>How to Obtain</b>
1. How is the community described?	Age, race, gender, mobility, income, and education levels for the most current year	Census	Hard copy or electronic search
2. Has the population of the community changed?	Age, race, mobility, income, and education levels as percent of the total population over the last 10-15 years (compare community and city)	Census	Hard copy or electronic search
3. Have service needs of population changed?	Unemployment, public assistance, teen parent rates, demand for drug/alcohol services over the last 10-15 years	Various state or local agencies	Phone contact with various organizations or reports

After the data are organized, they should be included in the Assessment Report in a format similar to **EXHIBIT 6.1** on page 41. Answers to the following questions should be fully discussed in the Assessment Report:

1. How is the community described?
2. How has the population of the community changed?
3. Have the service needs of our community's residents changed? In what ways?
4. What social or demographic factors (including changes or shifts) may be adding to the gang problem?

## Exhibit 6.1

General Descriptive Data		
Category	Year	
	Community	City
Total Population		
% Males		
% Females		
% African American/black		
% Hispanic/Latino		
% Caucasian/white		
% Asian		
% Native American/Indian		
% Other		
% Under 10 Years		
% 10 - 14 Years		
% 15 - 19 Years		
% 20 - 24 Years		
% 25 - 34 Years		
% 35 - 64 Years		
% Over 64 Years		
Median Household Income		
Average Household Income		
Poverty Threshold (family of 4)		
% Families Below Poverty		
% Female Households Below Poverty (with children below 18 years)		
% Unemployed		
% High School Graduates (25 years or older)		
% Single Parent Households		
Teen Birth Rate (per 1,000)		
High School Drop-Out Rate		
Child Abuse & Neglect Confirmed Reports		
Number of Persons on Food Stamps		
Sources:		

# 7

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## Gang Data

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This chapter provides guidance for collecting information on characteristics of gangs and gang crime data, and interviews with gang members. It is divided into two separate sections:

- (1) Law enforcement gang data (gang characteristics and gang crime)
- (2) Information collected through interviews of gang members (gang-involved youth)

### Law Enforcement Gang Data

Law enforcement agencies are the best source of information about the type and level of gang crime or gang incidents in a community. All law enforcement agencies collect information about crimes that occur in their communities, usually by police beat or district, as well as for the community as a whole. They also collect information about the people arrested for committing crimes and some information about the victims of crime. Some agencies have begun segregating gang crime from non-gang crime. Even if the law enforcement agency is not identifying gang incidents separately, they are likely gathering intelligence—often from encounters with gang members themselves—about the gangs that are present in the community, their members, their strength, and their activities.

Monthly or seasonal variations in crime also should be considered when collecting the data. For example, gang activity may be seasonal—some months may be “heavier” than others for gang crime. Day of the week and time of day, as well as location(s) of gang crime also are important factors in assessing local gang crime problems.

Finally, information about the victims of gang crime should be collected. If possible, data should be collected about their age, gender, race, gang affiliation (if any), and involvement in the crime that was committed. The purpose of this information is to determine if victims are other gang members, rival gang members, and the age, race, and gender of the victim. If victim information is not available from law enforcement, it may be obtained through focus groups, from individual interviews with youth, community surveys, or, in some communities, from hospital emergency rooms.

Crime data should be collected for the last three calendar years and by the smallest geographic area—census tract, police beat or reporting district, or community area.

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*Crime data should be collected for the last three calendar years and by the smallest geographic area—census tract, police beat or reporting district, or community area.*

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If local law enforcement agencies collect offense and arrest information and record it electronically, it may be necessary to write a program to generate the reports necessary to analyze the data. If data and individual incidents are identified by the location at which they occurred and are stored electronically, it may be possible to “map” incidents using one of several available software packages. This will allow for immediate visual representation of crime patterns. Members of the Steering Committee will be able to quickly see where in the community gang crime is concentrated.

If data are recorded but not stored electronically, it will be necessary to conduct a manual search of the agency’s hard copy files. After they are collected manually, the data should be entered into a relational database to allow for a variety of analyses.

If gang crime cannot be segregated from non-gang crime, then a plan for the capture and transfer of the required data will need to be developed and put in place immediately. Such a plan will require the support of the chief executive officers of the law enforcement agencies that police the community being assessed. It will also be likely that all affected personnel will require training regarding what information is to be gathered, how it is to be recorded, and how it should be handled. If gang-specific data are not available, it may be possible to collect data on crimes closely associated with gang activity, such as shots fired, aggravated assaults, or homicides. At a minimum, this approach will provide some basis for determining the type and extent of gang crime if data have not been previously collected.

Whatever method is chosen, the law enforcement agency should make and implement a plan to capture gang versus non-gang offense data throughout assessment and into implementation. This may require not only the acquisition of technology but also the training of all staff who will participate in collection and analysis of the crime data. Determining which incidents may have been gang related and which were not requires significant expertise. Therefore, the support of law enforcement is essential.

Gang intelligence gathered by police through observation, informants, or questioning of suspects or other persons is also important information to use in describing the community’s gang crime problem. This information takes into account verified information, as well as suspected but unconfirmed information, and must be used with caution. Gang intelligence will identify active gangs in the community, the size of their membership, and the level of threat they pose to the community’s safety. In addition to data on number of gangs and current activities, intelligence can add an enhanced picture of rivalries and propensity for violence.

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*If gang crime cannot be segregated from non-gang crime, then a plan for the capture and transfer of the required data will need to be developed and put in place immediately.*

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*The law enforcement agency should make and implement a plan to capture gang versus non-gang offense data throughout assessment and into implementation.*

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Gang intelligence may be stored electronically or in hard copy. Generally, access to this type of information, because of its sensitive nature, is limited to those individuals with a need for the information. Therefore, it may be necessary for someone with access to this information to cull through it to complete the necessary analysis. Law enforcement officials should ensure that no information is furnished that would compromise sensitive sources or methods and disseminate only that which does not violate law or regulation governing intelligence system operations.

**Table 2** identifies the questions to be answered about gang characteristics and gang crime in the community, the information that will be needed to answer those questions, and the sources of that information.

<b>Table 2: Gang Crime Data</b>			
<b>Questions to Be Answered</b>	<b>Information Needed to Answer</b>	<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>How to Obtain</b>
1. What gangs are active? How many members in each gang? What is their age, race, gender?	Name of gang, number of members, age, race, gender makeup of each gang	Law enforcement records/ intelligence files	Retrieve from existing hard copy or automated data, or established system to collect
2. What crimes are gangs/gang members committing? How has this changed over time?	Offenses and arrest data —gang versus non-gang broken out by crime		
3. Where are gang crimes being committed? How has this changed over time?	Locations of gang crime activity by gang		
4. When are gang crimes being committed?	Month, time(s) of day and day(s) of week gang offenses are being committed		
5. Who is committing gang crimes?	Age, race, gender		
6. Who are the victims of gang crime?	Age, race, gender of victim, status (innocent bystander, rival gang members, same gang members)		

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The remainder of this chapter describes data to be collected regarding:

- Gang Characteristics**
- Gang Crime by Type**
- Gang Crime Incidents**
- When and Where Gang Crimes Are Committed**
- Victims of Gang Crime**

## Gang Characteristics

For each gang identified in the community conducting the assessment, provide the information for the most current year. The following data variables will be needed to describe each gang:

- Name of gang
- Gender (# males, # females)
- Racial composition (%) – use categories as defined on page 38
- Age (%) – use categories as defined on page 38

After these data are organized, the Assessment Report should include aggregate gang data and should fully discuss answers to the following questions.

1. How many gangs are active in the community?
2. Which gangs are most active?
3. How many members are in each gang?
4. What is each gang's makeup by age, race, and gender?
5. Have any of these demographics changed over time?  
In what ways?

## Gang Crime By Type

In order to determine the proportion of gang crime to overall crime in the community, gang crime must be segregated from non-gang crime. For purposes of this assessment, the number of overall offenses in the community by type, as well as the number and percentage of offenses committed by gangs, should be collected. Data should be collected for Part 1 Offenses, as defined by the FBI. These federal definitions should be used as guidelines, recognizing that individual states may use slightly different terminology to describe these offenses.

Overall crime and the proportion committed by gang members should be collected by the following types of offenses for each year data are being collected.

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*In order to determine the proportion of gang crime to overall crime in the community, gang crime must be segregated from non-gang crime.*

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Part 1 offenses, as defined by the FBI:

- ✓ Criminal Homicide
- ✓ Forcible Rape
- ✓ Robbery
- ✓ Aggravated Assault
- ✓ Burglary – Breaking/Entering
- ✓ Larceny/Theft
- ✓ Motor Vehicle Theft
- ✓ Arson

Communities should also collect gang crime data on other offenses typically associated with gangs. Any other offenses thought to be gang related can be included. They should be collected and reported on in the same manner as Part 1 offenses. These offenses include:

- ✓ Simple Assault
- ✓ Vandalism
- ✓ Weapons Offenses (Carrying/Possessing)
- ✓ Drug Offenses (Possession/Sale/Use/Manufacturing)
- ✓ Curfew and Loitering
- ✓ Graffiti
- ✓ Stolen Property-Related Crimes

After these data are organized, the Assessment Report should display the data for each year data are collected. **EXHIBIT 7.1** on page 47 provides the format to be used in the Assessment Report to display non-gang crime v. gang crime by type of crime by individual year. Using the data, answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Assessment Report.

1. How much of the overall crime problem is attributed to gangs?
2. What crimes are gang members committing?
3. Has this changed over time? In what ways?

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*Gang crime data will also provide information on offenders and the incidents in which they were involved, whether or not an arrest was made.*

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## Exhibit 7.1

Gang Crime By Type (complete for each year crime data are collected)			
Category	Year		
	Total Number of Crimes (Gang + Nongang)	Total Gang Crime	
		Number	Percentage
Part 1 Crime			
Criminal Homicide			
Forcible Rape			
Robbery			
Aggravated Assault			
Burglary (Breaking/Entering)			
Larceny/Theft			
Motor Vehicle Theft			
Arson			
Other Crimes			
Simple Assault			
Weapons Offenses (Carrying/Possessing)			
Vandalism			
Drug Offenses (Possession/Sale/Use/Manufacturing)			
Curfew and Loitering			
Graffiti			
Stolen Property-Related Crimes			
Sources:			

### Gang Crime Incidents

The gang crime data will also provide information on offenders and the incidents in which they were involved, whether or not an arrest was made.

Key variables are:

- Type of incident (use offense categories defined above)
- Age and Race of offender (as defined on page 38)
- Gender
- Gang affiliation (if any)
- Residence

The Assessment Report should display aggregated data using appropriate graphs, charts, or other appropriate formats. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Report.

1. Who is committing gang crimes by age, race, and gender?
2. Which gangs commit the most serious (violent) crimes?
3. Which gangs are most involved in drug-related crimes?
4. How has the offender profile changed over time (older/younger offenders, race, gender)?

## When and Where Gang Crimes Are Committed

The crime data will also provide information about when and where each gang offense occurs in the community. This information should be broken down by month, day of the week, and time of day for each year the data are collected, as well as the location of each offense. The types of offenses should be the same as those identified earlier (Part 1 offenses and other crime listed on page 46).

Key variables are:

- Offense (use crime categories as defined on page 46)
- Month offense took place
- Day of week offense took place
- Time of day (use three-hour increments described below)
- Location of crime (address or other description)

The time of day should be broken down into three-hour increments, for example:

12:01 a.m. – 3:00 a.m.

3:01 a.m. – 6:00 a.m.

6:01 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

9:01 a.m. – 12:00 Noon

12:01 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

3:01 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

6:01 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

9:01 p.m. – 12:00 Midnight

---

Using the data on when and where gang crimes are committed, the Assessment Report should display aggregated data using appropriate tables, charts, or other graphics. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Report.

1. When are gang crimes being committed (month, day of week, time of day)?
2. Where are gang crimes being committed?
3. Are gang crimes more concentrated in particular areas of the community?
4. Are the patterns similar for Part 1 and other gang crimes? Where are the differences?

## Victims of Gang Crime

If available, information about the victims of gang crime should also be collected. The purpose of these data is to determine if victims are affiliated with gangs, innocent bystanders, age, race, gender, etc.

Key variables are:

- Age (use categories as defined on page 38)
- Race (use categories as defined on page 38)
- Gender
- Description of victim (non-gang victim, gang affiliation, if any, supply name of gang)

After these data are organized, the Assessment Report should include aggregate information from the data. Using the data, the Assessment Report should display data using appropriate tables, charts, or other graphics. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Report:

1. Who are the victims of these crimes (age, race, gender)?
2. How often are the victims other gang members?
3. What are the patterns of offender and victim gang affiliation over time?

The following section discusses information to be gathered from current gang members, through individual interviews. An interview form is provided at the end of this chapter.

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*Information about the victims of gang crime also should be collected.*

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## Gang-Involved Youth

Gang members face problems beyond those posed by the gang itself. Most lack job skills and many cannot read and write very well. Few have the self-control needed to hold down a steady job, even if they qualify for one.

As part of the assessment process, an effort should be made to interview at least 25 to 50 gang-involved youth, and more if possible, to determine their demographic profiles and type of criminal activity and other gang-related behavior they engage in as gang members. Interviews of gang members can provide a variety of information including:

- What crimes gang youth are committing
- Youths' perceptions of the gang problem
- Involvement in high-risk behaviors
- Their views on why youth join gangs
- Their relationships with peers, teachers, police, and other community members
- What can be done to prevent or reduce gang problems in their community

Gang-involved youth are often those who have been in or are in contact with the justice system and can usually be identified through that system. However, gang-involved youth may be difficult to locate: they may no longer be in school; they may work; they may be homeless or unemployed. Although some gang youth under 16 will still be attending mainstream schools, others can be found in alternative schools, GED programs, job-training programs, or community-based programs. Some can be located in juvenile detention centers and residential treatment centers, while others can be located through the juvenile probation agency. It may be possible to locate gang members through a "snowball" sampling technique; that is, each gang member interviewed is asked to suggest a gang friend or member of his/her gang to be interviewed. The gang members interviewed should reflect the racial/gender/age mix of gangs in the community.

When planning the interview process, it is important that personal interviews with gang members be conducted by a neutral party and in a neutral setting. For example, gang members will likely be unwilling to volunteer the type of information that is being sought in the interview to law enforcement or others associated with the justice system. A gang member interview should be held in a place where the interview is private and cannot be overheard by others. It may be desirable to offer a small monetary incentive for participating in the interview.

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*An effort should be made to interview at least 25 to 50 gang-involved youth.*

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The survey of gang-involved youth is to be conducted as a personal, face-to-face interview using the interview form, **EXHIBIT 7.2**, on pages 53-54 and includes sample consent forms for the respondent and for the parent/guardian if the gang member is a minor. **EXHIBIT 7.3**, on pages 55-61 is the gang member interview.

**Table 3** identifies the questions to be answered about gang-involved youth in the community, the information that will be needed to answer those questions, and the sources of that information.

<b>Table 3: Gang-Involved Youth</b>			
Questions to Be Answered	Information Needed to Answer	Sources of Information	How to Obtain
1. Who is involved in gangs?	Profile information – age, gender, race school status, job status, family life	Gang member survey	Interviews with gang youths
2. What crimes are gang youth committing?	Involvement in criminal activities		
3. Why did the youth join a gang? Why would they leave?	Reasons for joining, potential reasons for leaving		
4. What do gang youth say causes the gang problem?	Causes of the gang problem		

The Assessment Report should display aggregated data from the interviews with gang members. Report information from the interviews using the following variables where appropriate:

Gender: Male/Female

Race: Use categories as defined on page 38.

Age: Use categories as defined on page 38.

Use appropriate graphs, charts, and tables to present the information in the Assessment Report. Answers to the following questions should also be discussed in the Report.

- 1) Who is involved in gangs (age, gender, race)?
- 2) What is their school/education status?

- 3) What is their family status?
- 4) What is their employment status?
- 5) What crimes do gang youth report committing?
- 6) What are gang youth's perceptions about the gang problem?
- 7) Why do youth join a gang?
- 8) Why would youth leave a gang?

The Report should also include any additional information from the gang member interviews that may shed light on the nature of gang activity in the community.

## Exhibit 7.2

### SAMPLE Consent Form and Receipt for Gang Member Interview

#### Respondent's Copy

This form is to acknowledge that I have been informed about the purpose of this interview and agree to participate.

I understand the purpose of this community assessment is to learn more about gang problems in (*name of community*). I also understand that the purpose of this interview is to provide information that will assist this assessment and is part of a community-wide data-collection effort.

I understand that the purpose of this interview is to provide information that will assist this assessment in learning more about gang activities in my community, about my life and experiences, as well as my involvement in a gang.

I understand that this information is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question.

I will not discuss any of the following activities as part of this interview because I understand that the interviewer will be required by law to disclose such information. (*Note: The Research Partner should research which activities fall under this state requirement—each state may be different. Each activity must be listed on this consent form.*)

I have received a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_

Respondent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Exhibit 7.2 (continued)

### SAMPLE

#### Consent Form and Receipt for Gang Member Interview

Parent/Guardian Copy

This form is to acknowledge that I have been informed about the purpose of this interview and agree to let my son/daughter participate.

I understand the purpose of this assessment is to learn more about gang problems in *(name of community)*. I understand that the purpose of interviewing my son/daughter is to provide information that will assist this assessment and is part of a community-wide data-collection effort.

I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary and that my son/daughter may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question.

I also understand that he/she will not discuss any of the following activities as part of this interview because I understand that the interviewer will be required by law to disclose such information. *(Note: The Research Partner should research which activities fall under this state requirement—each state may be different. Each activity must be listed on this consent form.)*

-----  
Parent/Guardian Signature

-----  
Date

-----  
Interviewer Signature

-----  
Date

## Exhibit 7.3

### SAMPLE

#### Introduction to Gang Member Interview

To be read by interviewer:

I would like to ask you some questions that will help us learn more about gang activities in (*your community*). We are interested in learning something about your life and experiences, as well as your involvement in a gang.

One section of the interview asks about criminal activity. Only give us the information that we ask for. Do not give us any additional information, including names or dates, connected to any crimes.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. That is, it will not be shared with anyone. The answers you give us will be added to the information we receive from others we are interviewing and then analyzed together.

You may refuse to answer any question in this interview, and you may end your participation in the interview at any time.

We are asking your permission (and that of your parent or guardian, if you are under the legal age of adult) to conduct this interview. Again, this information will be kept strictly private and confidential.

Are you willing to proceed?

**Exhibit 7.3 (continued)**

# Gang Member Interview

## Demographics

1. What is your date of birth? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you:

- Female  Male

3. What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?

(Choose one best answer.)

- White/Caucasian  
 Black/African American  
 Asian  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 Native American/American Indian  
 Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the language you use most often at home?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the intersection (cross streets) nearest your place of residence?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your current marital status?

- Never married  Married  
 Divorced  Widowed  
 Separated  Do Not Know

7. Do you have any children?

- No  Yes, If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Has any family member ever been in a gang?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

If yes, specify number of family members and relationship

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Are you currently employed?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

If yes, do you have a full-time job? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, do you have a part-time job? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

## School

10. Are you currently in school?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

11. If you are currently in school, what grade are you in?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. If you are not in school, what is the highest grade you have completed?

- Grade \_\_\_\_\_  Do Not Know  
 No Response

13. Generally, what are/were your grades like?

- Mostly As  Mostly Bs  
 Mostly Cs  Mostly Ds  
 Mostly Fs

14. For your current/most recent school, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Use a 5-point scale:

- (1) Strongly Disagree  
(2) Disagree  
(3) Neither Disagree Nor Agree  
(4) Agree  
(5) Strongly Agree

\_\_\_ If I have/had a problem, there is/was a teacher or staff member I could talk to.

\_\_\_ I often feel/felt that no one at school cares/cared about me.

\_\_\_ Even though there are lots of students around, I often feel/felt lonely.

\_\_\_ I do/did not feel that I am/was part of this school.

\_\_\_ I often feel/felt like my teachers respect/respected me.

\_\_\_ In school I often feel/felt put down by other students.

\_\_\_ Most of my teachers really listen/listened to what I have/had to say.

\_\_\_ Most of my teachers are/were fair in supervising me if I step/stepped out of line.

**Continue to the next page**

## Exhibit 7.3 (continued)

**15. Have you ever dropped out of school?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, what were the most recent reasons for dropping out?

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**16. Have you ever been suspended from school?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, what were the most recent reasons for suspension?

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**17. Have you ever been expelled from school?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, what were the most recent reasons for expulsion?

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**18. In the past year, how often have you witnessed any of the following gang activities at your school or on school grounds?**

- Use a 7-point scale:
- (1) Never/No Times
  - (2) 1 to 3 Times
  - (3) 4 to 10 Times
  - (4) 11 to 26 Times
  - (5) More than 26 Times
  - (6) Do Not Know
  - (7) No Response

- \_\_\_ Gang members selling drugs
- \_\_\_ Fights between members of different gangs
- \_\_\_ Fights between members of your own gang
- \_\_\_ A drive-by shooting
- \_\_\_ Gang intimidation
- \_\_\_ Gang recruiting
- \_\_\_ Not in school

## Community

**19. Are there areas right now in your community where you are afraid to walk alone?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, is it because of gang-related concerns?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**20. In the last year, how often have you witnessed any of the following gang activities in your community?**

- Use a 7-point scale:
- (1) Never/No Times
  - (2) 1 to 3 Times
  - (3) 4 to 10 Times
  - (4) 11 to 26 Times
  - (5) More than 26 Times
  - (6) Do Not Know
  - (7) No Response

- \_\_\_ Gang members selling drugs
- \_\_\_ Fights between members of different gangs
- \_\_\_ Fights between members of your own gang
- \_\_\_ A drive-by shooting
- \_\_\_ Gang intimidation
- \_\_\_ Gang recruiting

**Continue to the next page**

## Exhibit 7.3 (continued)

**21. In the last year, for each crime, please rate how serious a crime problem you think this is in your community?**

Use a 7-point scale:

- (1) No Problem
- (2) A Small Problem
- (3) A Moderate Problem
- (4) A Serious Problem
- (5) A Very Serious Problem
- (6) Do Not Know
- (7) No Response

- \_\_\_ Vandalism/Graffiti
- \_\_\_ Burglary
- \_\_\_ Car Theft
- \_\_\_ Robbery
- \_\_\_ Threats/Intimidation
- \_\_\_ Gang to Gang Confrontations
- \_\_\_ Drug Dealing
- \_\_\_ Alcohol Use
- \_\_\_ Drive-By Shooting
- \_\_\_ Possession of Knife
- \_\_\_ Possession of Gun
- \_\_\_ Firearms Use
- \_\_\_ Firearms Dealing
- \_\_\_ Arson
- \_\_\_ Assault/Battery
- \_\_\_ Homicide/Murder
- \_\_\_ School Disruption
- \_\_\_ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Do you think there is a gang problem in your community?**

- Yes
- No
- Do Not Know
- No Response

**23. If so, what do you think are the top three causes of the gang problem in your community?**

- \_\_\_ Poverty
- \_\_\_ School problems
- \_\_\_ Police labeling
- \_\_\_ Gang members move to community from other places
- \_\_\_ Boredom
- \_\_\_ Family problems
- \_\_\_ Power
- \_\_\_ Protection
- \_\_\_ Lack of activities
- \_\_\_ Prejudice
- \_\_\_ Family/friends in gangs
- \_\_\_ To feel loved/sense of belonging
- \_\_\_ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**24. What do you think should be done about the gang problem in your community?**

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**25. About how many adults have you known personally who in the past year have:**

- \_\_\_ Used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs?
- \_\_\_ Sold or dealt drugs?
- \_\_\_ Done other things that could get them into trouble with police such as stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging or assaulting others?
- \_\_\_ Gotten drunk?

**26. Are any of your friends gang members?**

- Yes
- No
- Do Not Know
- No Response

**27. If you wanted to get a handgun, how easy would it be for you to get one?**

- Very Hard
- Somewhat Hard
- Somewhat Easy
- Very Easy
- Do Not Know
- No Response

**28. If you wanted to get drugs like cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, crack, etc., how easy would it be for you to get some?**

- Very Hard
- Somewhat Hard
- Somewhat Easy
- Very Easy
- Do Not Know
- No Response

**29. Are there adults in your neighborhood you can talk to about something important?**

- Yes
- No
- Do Not Know
- No Response

**Continue to the next page**

## Exhibit 7.3 (continued)

### Gang-Related Activities

30. Are you currently a gang member?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

31. In the last 6 months, have you been an active gang member?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

32. What is your most recent position or rank in the gang?

- Leader  
 Core member/influential (with gang all of the time)  
 Regular member (involved most of the time)  
 Peripheral member (minimally hangs out)  
 Wannabe  
 Veteran/Heavy/Old Gangster/Senior Gang Member  
 Do Not Know  
 No Response

33. Why did you join or associate with a gang? Please rank your answers from 1 - Most Important to 9 - Least Important

- \_\_\_ For fun  
\_\_\_ For protection  
\_\_\_ A friend was in the gang  
\_\_\_ A brother or sister was in the gang  
\_\_\_ I was forced to join  
\_\_\_ To get respect  
\_\_\_ For money  
\_\_\_ To fit in better  
\_\_\_ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

34. How old were you when you first belonged to a gang?

About \_\_\_\_\_ years old

35. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Use a 7-point scale:

- (1) Strongly Disagree  
(2) Disagree  
(3) Neither Agree nor Disagree  
(4) Agree  
(5) Strongly Agree  
(6) Do Not Know  
(7) No Response

- \_\_\_ Being in my gang makes me feel important.  
\_\_\_ My gang members provide a good deal of support and loyalty for one another.  
\_\_\_ Being a member of a gang makes me feel respected.  
\_\_\_ Being a member of a gang makes me feel like I am a useful person to have around.  
\_\_\_ Being a member of a gang makes me feel like I really belong somewhere.  
\_\_\_ I enjoy being a member of my gang.  
\_\_\_ My gang is like a family to me.  
\_\_\_ Being in a gang is a good way to make money.

The next few questions ask about your activities involving crime, drugs, and alcohol.

36. In the past year, have you:

Written gang graffiti on school property, neighborhood houses, stores, etc.?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Thrown rocks or bottles at persons, vehicles or property?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Destroyed property worth less than \$300?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Destroyed property worth \$300 or more?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Set fire to building or property?

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

**Continue to the next page**

## Exhibit 7.3 (continued)

Stolen bicycle or bike parts?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Stolen a motor vehicle?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Stolen parts or property from a vehicle (hubcaps, stereo, cell phone, etc.)?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Fenced or sold stolen goods (other than weapons)?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Shoplifted?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Entered a house, store, or building to commit a theft?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Broken into a house, store, or building to commit a theft?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Fenced or sold weapons or firearms?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Threatened to attack a person without using a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Threatened to attack a person using a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Robbed someone by force or by threat of force without using a weapon?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Robbed someone by force or by threat of force using a weapon?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Beaten up or battered someone without using a dangerous weapon?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Beaten up or battered someone using a dangerous weapon?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Forced someone to have sex with you (rape)?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Participated in a drive-by shooting?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Participated in a homicide?

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

Participated in other crimes (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**37. In the past year, have you used or tried any drugs?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, about how many days per month do you use any drugs?

\_\_\_ Days      \_\_\_ Do Not Know      \_\_\_ No Response

**38. In the past year, have you sold any drugs?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, did the money go to:

- Benefit the Gang       Personal Use  
 Do Not Know             No Response

**39. In the past year, have you used any kind of alcohol?**

- Yes                       No  
 Do Not Know             No Response

If yes, have you drunk:

- Wine  
 Beer  
 Hard Liquor

**Continue to the next page**

## Exhibit 7.3 (continued)

**40. In the past year, have you had any arrests or police contacts? This may include being stopped, searched, questioned, or being brought to the police station at any time.**

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

If yes, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please describe the incident(s).

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**41. For the incident(s) described above, please indicate if you were:**

- Treated fairly by the police MOST of the time.  
 Treated fairly by the police SOME of the time.  
 NOT treated fairly by the police SOME of the time.  
 NOT treated fairly by the police MOST of the time.  
 Do Not Know  
 No Response

**42. Do you think you will ever leave the gang?**

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

**43. If you would leave the gang, which of the following are reasons likely to get you out of a gang? Identify all that would apply.**

Advice/pressure from a family member/relative

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Advice/pressure from someone else (specify who \_\_\_\_\_)

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Move out of neighborhood

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Because of a steady girlfriend/boyfriend/spouse

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Get married

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Become a parent

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Family responsibilities (specify what \_\_\_\_\_)

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Obtain a job

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Get into school/education program

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Recreation/sports program

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Go to jail/prison

- Yes  No  
 Do Not Know  No Response

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

# 8

## Student and School-Level Data

Data collected from and about students, including school-level data, are an important part of the assessment. These data are useful in the identification of the proportion of youth in the community who claim gang membership or who are at high risk for gang membership. School-level data and information from school staff is vital to rounding out the picture of gang activity in the community. This chapter provides guidance on collecting data on the following:

- Student characteristics and disciplinary actions
- School-age youths' perceptions of gangs and gang activity (student survey)
- School staff perspectives on gang activity on campus

**Table 4** identifies the questions to be answered about students, student involvement in gang activities, risk and protective factors, school staff perceptions, the information that will be needed to answer the questions, and the sources of that information.

Questions to Be Answered	Information Needed to Answer	Sources of Information	How to Obtain
1. What are the overall characteristics of each school?	Attendance trends, disciplinary statistics, free/reduced lunch rates, race/gender make-up	School/district records, and reports to state department of education	Retrieve from existing hard copy or automated data, or establish a system to collect information
2. What delinquent behaviors are students involved in?	Data on expulsion/suspensions by category and type, school disciplinary records, police reports, data from student survey	School records, staff, administrators, school resource officers, juvenile court statistics	Retrieve from existing hard copy or automated data, school resource officer, school/district police department records, student survey
3. What are the characteristics of students involved in gangs?	Perceptions of school staff, student self-reports	Staff in targeted schools, student survey	Focus groups, personal interviews with staff, student survey
4. What issues seem to be contributing to student gang involvement or risk for gang involvement?	Perceptions of school staff, administrators, and school resource officers	Staff in targeted schools	Focus groups or personal interviews with staff members
5. What risk and protective factors are impacting local youth?	Information on school, family, community, and individual risk and protective factors	Youth in local schools	Student survey
6. What are in-school youths' perceptions about gangs?	Perceptions about gang activity		

## Student Characteristics and Disciplinary Incidents

Data on student characteristics and disciplinary incidents should be collected at selected schools and grade levels for the past three to five years. The number of schools and grades included in this data set will be negotiated at each site. Alternative schools, if applicable, should also be included.

### Student Characteristics

Student/school data to be collected include the following:

- Enrollment of school
- Racial composition of school
- Gender composition of school
- Number of students who receive free/reduced lunch
- Other critical variables as determined locally

The majority of this information will be collected from the school or school district. Agencies outside the school system, including the juvenile court or police department, may keep information on school-based disciplinary incidents. Many large school districts maintain their own police department that may keep statistics relating to crime and gang-related incidents occurring in schools. School personnel may believe they are legally forbidden to share certain information about students and school-related incidents. However, certain staff or offices (i.e., law enforcement units) affiliated with the school are permitted to share data that can prove instrumental in completing the picture of a community's gang problem. Refer to **EXHIBIT 8.4**, "Consent and Confidentiality" on page 85 at the end of this chapter.

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## Disciplinary Incidents

Data should also be gathered on the types of disciplinary incidents and resulting action, such as suspension or expulsion taken by school staff. These data should be collected for each school involved in the assessment for the most current (full) school year. Disciplinary incident data to be collected include the following:

- Type of incident (see list below)
- Gang related or not gang related
- Disciplinary action taken (suspension, expulsion, etc.)

Disciplinary Incident List	
- Fighting	- Smoking
- Hitting/Kicking	- Pornography
- Disobeying School Officials	- Disruption of School/Class
- Truancy	- Cursing
- Alcohol/Drugs	- Throwing Objects
- Threats	- Extortion
- Weapons	- Vandalism/Graffiti
- Harassment	- Other (specify)
- Theft	

After data on student characteristics and disciplinary data are organized, the data should be displayed using appropriate charts or other formats. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Assessment Report:

1. What are the overall demographics of each school?
2. Are there any particular trends (enrollment, racial composition, percent free/reduced lunch, others)?
3. What are the trends regarding disciplinary incidents—gang activity, weapons, fighting, or other violent incidents, as well as incidents of a non-violent nature such as drugs?

---

## Student Survey

It is recommended that data be collected through a survey of students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 regarding their perceptions about gangs and gang participation. It is recommended that a sample of in-school youth—including students in alternative schools—participate in a survey designed to:

- Identify differences between students who self-report gang membership and those who do not.
- Identify risk factors which may make it more likely that a youth will develop a problem behavior, including joining a gang.
- Identify protective factors which may moderate the effects of risk factors for gang membership or increase resistance to them.
- Identify students' perceptions about gang activity and gang crime.

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*Gang presence also seems to be linked to weapons, violence, and drugs in the school setting.*

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Gathering data about gang activity in schools has historically been difficult, but it is a vital facet of the Assessment Team's efforts. The threat of gang crime and violence posed by gang-involved youth is not limited to the streets, but also exists in many schools. The School Crime Supplement to the 1989 and 1995 National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS), analyzed in *Youth Gangs in Schools* (Howell and Lynch, 2000), found that the percentage of students reporting street gangs in schools increased by 100 percent between 1989 and 1995.

This analysis found that gang activity is not solely limited to urban schools. In 1995, almost one-fourth (25 percent) of students in rural school districts and 36 percent of students in suburban school districts reported the presence of gangs in their schools, compared to 43 percent of students in urban areas (Howell and Lynch, 2000). Gang presence also seems to be linked to weapons, violence, and drugs in the school setting. When students reported the presence of gangs in their school, they were three times more likely to report a student who brought a gun to school (25 percent vs. 8 percent) and twice as likely to report that drugs were readily available (35 percent vs. 14 percent). In schools where gangs were present, the odds that a student would be a victim of violence more than doubled (from 3 percent to nearly 8 percent), and 51 percent of students who reported that they had been violently victimized reported gang presence at school vs. 37 percent who said gangs were not present (Chandler et al., 1998). Violent victimization included physical attacks or taking property from the student directly by force, weapons or threats.

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The connection between schools and gangs is reinforced by Wiebe, Meeker, and Vila's (1999) analysis of reported gang arrests by 22 law enforcement agencies within Orange County, California. Data from this report show that violent gang crimes escalate sharply early in the school day and peak in the early afternoon hours, compared to overall juvenile violence, which peaks immediately after the school day ends. The Orange County data indicate that gang activity in schools may play a role in gang-related violence in the community, and vice versa.

School-based risk factors such as poor school performance and poor school attachment are primary factors for eventual gang involvement (Howell, 1998; Kosterman et al., 1996). Recent research also indicates that data gathered from school-aged youth about their perceptions of gangs and gang participation may vary substantially from police data about gangs (Esbensen, 2000). This research data does not negate the truthfulness of police data, but simply indicates that different groups within the same community may have different perceptions about gangs, and also that gangs impact community members differently.

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*School-based risk factors such as poor school performance and poor school attachment are primary factors for eventual gang involvement.*

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Decker and Van Winkle (1996) view gang-joining dynamics as consisting of both "pulls" and "pushes" for youth. Pulls pertain to the attractiveness of the gang. Some view gang membership as enhancing their prestige or status among friends, and joining a gang provides opportunities to be with them. Gangs provide other attractive opportunities such as excitement, selling drugs, and making money (Howell, 1998; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Pennell et al., 1994).

Social, economic and cultural forces push other adolescents in the direction of gangs (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Protection from other gangs and general well being is a key factor. Some researchers contend that minority youths' marginal feelings in multiple arenas of society give them a sense of identity and feeling of belonging (Vigil and Long, 1990). Some research suggests that many youth join gangs because they have been "injured" by social and family disorder, including abuse and neglect (Fleisher, 1998). For some youth, gangs provide a way of solving social adjustment problems, including the trials and tribulations of adolescence (Short & Strodbeck, 1965).

One manner of predicting youth who may become involved in gangs is to identify youth who display risk factors for future gang membership (Howell, 1998).

**OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model**  
**A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem**

<b>Risk Factors for Gang Membership</b>	
<b>Community</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social disorganization, including poverty and residential mobility</li> <li>- Organized lower-class communities</li> <li>- Underclass communities</li> <li>- Presence of gangs in the neighborhood</li> <li>- Availability of drugs in the neighborhood</li> <li>- Availability of firearms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Barriers to and lack of social and economic opportunities</li> <li>- Lack of social capital</li> <li>- Cultural norms supporting gang behavior</li> <li>- Feeling unsafe in the neighborhood; high crime</li> <li>- Conflict with social control institutions</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family disorganization, including broken homes, and parental drug/alcohol abuse</li> <li>- Troubled families, including incest, family violence, and drug addiction</li> <li>- Family members in a gang</li> <li>- Lack of adult male role models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of parental role models</li> <li>- Low socioeconomic status</li> <li>- Extreme economic deprivation, family management problems, parents with violent attitudes</li> <li>- Sibling antisocial behavior</li> </ul>
<b>School</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academic failure</li> <li>- Low educational aspirations, especially among females</li> <li>- Negative labeling by teachers</li> <li>- Trouble at school</li> <li>- Few teacher role models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educational frustration</li> <li>- Low commitment to school, low school attachment, high levels of antisocial behavior in school</li> <li>- Low achievement test scores, and identification as being learning disabled</li> </ul>
<b>Peer Group</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High commitment to delinquent peers</li> <li>- Low commitment to positive peers</li> <li>- Street socialization</li> <li>- Gang members in class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Friends who use drugs or who are gang members</li> <li>- Friends who are drug distributors</li> <li>- Interaction with delinquent peers</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prior delinquency</li> <li>- Deviant attitudes</li> <li>- Street smartness; toughness</li> <li>- Defiant and individualistic character</li> <li>- Fatalistic view of the world</li> <li>- Aggression</li> <li>- Proclivity of excitement and trouble</li> <li>- <i>Locura</i> (acting in a daring, courageous, and especially crazy fashion in the face of adversity)</li> <li>- Higher levels of normlessness in the context of family, peer group, and school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social disabilities</li> <li>- Illegal gun ownership</li> <li>- Early or precocious sexual activity, especially among females</li> <li>- Alcohol and drug use</li> <li>- Drug trafficking</li> <li>- Desire for group rewards such as status, identity, self-esteem, companionship, and protection</li> <li>- Problem behaviors, hyperactivity, externalizing behaviors, drinking, lack of refusal skills</li> <li>- Victimization</li> </ul>

Other research supports that, along with risk factors, protective factors, or certain conditions in the individual or environment, can mediate or moderate the effects of risk factors (Pollard et al., 1997; Howell and Hawkins, 1998).

**OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model**  
**A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem**

<b>Risk and Protective Factors</b>	
<b>Risk Factors</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
<b>Community</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low neighborhood attachment</li> <li>- Community disorganization</li> <li>- Transitions and mobility</li> <li>- Law and norms favorable to drug use</li> <li>- Perceived availability of drugs and firearms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rewards for community involvement</li> <li>- Opportunities for community involvement</li> </ul>
<b>School</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor academic achievement</li> <li>- Low degree of commitment to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for school involvement</li> <li>- Rewards for school involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor family supervision</li> <li>- Poor family discipline</li> <li>- Family conflict</li> <li>- Family history of antisocial behavior</li> <li>- Parent attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior</li> <li>- Parent attitudes favorable to drug use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family attachment</li> <li>- Opportunities for family involvement</li> <li>- Rewards for family involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Individual/Peer</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rebelliousness</li> <li>- Early initiation of antisocial behavior</li> <li>- Attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior</li> <li>- Attitudes favorable to drug use</li> <li>- Peer antisocial behavior</li> <li>- Sensation seeking</li> <li>- Peer rejection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Religiosity</li> <li>- Belief in the moral order</li> <li>- Social skills</li> <li>- Peer attachment</li> </ul>

The student survey offers two distinct benefits to communities. First, it affords the opportunity to take advantage of prevention science. Delinquency prevention science incorporates the risk- and protective-focused prevention model pioneered in public health research, in the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. Risk and protective factors predict increased or decreased probability of developing problem behaviors, such as gang involvement. Risk factors are conditions in the individual or environment that predict an increased likelihood of developing a problem. Protective factors, on the other hand, are conditions in the individual or environment that buffer or moderate the effects of risk factors or increase resistance to them, and thus inhibit the development of problems even in the face of risk exposure. "It is possible now to move to outcome focused prevention, that is, to design systems for risk reduction and protective factor enhancement to achieve specified [delinquency] prevention outcomes" (Hawkins, 1999). For example, a comprehensive Seattle program for children aged 6 to 12

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*Risk factors are conditions in the individual or environment that predict an increased likelihood of developing a problem. Protective factors, on the other hand, are conditions in the individual or environment that buffer or moderate the effects of risk factors or increase resistance to them.*

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prevented violence, heavy alcohol use, sexual activity, and teen pregnancy by age 18, by reducing shared risks and enhancing protection in the family and school environments (Hawkins et al., 1999).

The second benefit of the student survey is that it produces valuable information that helps determine the seriousness of gang problems and what level of intervention is needed to reduce involvement of active gang members, and control the influence and delinquent and criminal activities of gangs. In addition to providing information on the characteristics of gangs in the community, the student survey measures the degree of bonding to gangs—among students who indicate gang membership. In an 11-city student survey that identified nearly a thousand gang members, each level of gang bonding was associated with progressively more frequent involvement in serious and violent delinquency, drug use, and drug trafficking (Esbensen et al., 2001). The survey items measure five levels of gang bonding:

Level one—Ever involved in a gang

Level two—Currently a gang member

Level three—Currently a member of a delinquent gang

Level four—Currently a member of a delinquent gang that is organized

Level five—Currently a core member of a delinquent gang that is organized

The student survey can make a significant contribution to each community's assessment of its specific gang problem. Analysis of survey information will make it easier to identify areas or populations that are experiencing high levels of multiple risk factors or low levels of protective factors associated with gang involvement (Pollard et al., 1997). This information will ultimately guide prevention planning and strategy development in the community.

## Conducting the Survey

Surveying all youth in the target grades may be too costly and/or time prohibitive. It is suggested that at least a sample of youth from each school and in each target grade be surveyed. For example, 100 students in each school could be sampled. A consistent sampling strategy is recommended across schools/grade levels at each site. Technical assistance will be provided to select the sample population.

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The student survey can be completed within the normal one-period classroom setting, using a self-administered anonymous questionnaire. Sample consent letters for active and passive consent can be found at **EXHIBIT 8.1** on page 73-82. The student survey can be found at **EXHIBIT 8.2** on pages 73-82. Information on consent and confidentiality can be found in **EXHIBIT 8.4** on page 85.

The Assessment Report should include charts, table, or graphs displaying the following information from the student survey.

#### Comparison of gang versus non-gang students

- Age, race, gender of total surveyed at each school
- Prevalence/frequency of delinquent behavior by age, race, gender
- Good/bad things about gangs by age, race, gender
- Risk/protective factors by age, race, gender

#### Students who admit gang membership

- Why they joined a gang by age, race, gender
- Participation in gang activities by age, race, gender
- Benefits of gang membership by age, race, gender
- Disadvantages of gang membership by age, race, gender

After data from the student survey are organized, answers to the following questions should be provided in the Assessment Report:

1. Who admits to involvement in gang activity?
2. How do students who self-report gang membership differ from those who say they are not in a gang?
3. How do school-age youth perceive gang activity in the school?
4. What specific risk factors are present in students' environment that may lead to gang membership or involvement?
5. What specific protective factors are present?
6. What high-risk behaviors do gang youth engage in? How does this compare to those who do not report gang involvement?

## Exhibit 8.1

### Sample PASSIVE CONSENT Letter

(Student Survey)

Dear *(Parent/Guardian)*:

*(Community)* is conducting an assessment of youth gang activity in the community. As part of this assessment, we are surveying school-age youth in grades ( ) to ask their opinion about a number of things in their life. This information will gather opinions the youth in *(name of school)* have about their neighborhood and community, including friends, family, and school life. We also are surveying different groups in the community such as social service agencies, community leaders, law enforcement, parents, and others about their views on gang activity.

We would like your permission to survey your child, along with his or her classmates, to gather this information. The information your child provides will be kept strictly confidential. That is, it will absolutely not be shared with anyone. Because neither your name nor your child's name will appear on the survey, your child's response to any question cannot be attributed to him/her.

Your child's participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Only those children and parents who wish to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part in the survey at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact *(name)* at *(phone number)*. **If you do not want your child to participate in this survey, please sign the enclosed form and mail it back to**

\_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you very much for helping us with the important information that your son/daughter can provide.

Enclosure

## Exhibit 8.1 (continued)

### Sample ACTIVE CONSENT Letter

(Student Survey)

Dear *(Parent/Guardian)*:

*(Community)* is conducting an assessment of youth gang activity in the community. As part of this assessment, we are surveying school-age youth in grades ( ) to ask their opinion about a number of things in their life. This information will gather opinions the youth in *(name of school)* have about their neighborhood and community, including friends, family, and school life. We also are surveying different groups in the community such as social service agencies, community leaders, law enforcement, parents, and others about their views on gang activity.

We would like your permission to survey your child, along with his or her classmates, to gather this information. The information your child provides will be kept strictly confidential. That is, it will absolutely not be shared with anyone. As neither your name nor your child's name will appear on the survey, your child's response to any question cannot be attributed to him/her.

Your child's participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Only those children and parents who wish to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part in the survey at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact *(name)* at *(phone number)*. Thank you very much for helping us with the important information that your son/daughter can provide.

Parent or Guardian, please check your decision below, sign, and return this form within \_\_\_\_ days.

\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my child to participate in this survey.

\_\_\_\_ **I do not** give permission for my child to participate in this survey.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Exhibit 8.2

# Student Survey

**Thank you** for agreeing to participate in this survey. The survey asks your opinion about a number of things in your life, including your friends, your family, your neighborhood, your community, and your activities.

Your answers to these questions will be **CONFIDENTIAL**. This means your answers will stay secret. Your name will never be asked. Please **DO NOT** write your name on this survey.

**This survey is completely voluntary.** You can skip any question that you do not wish to answer.

Other students have said that this survey is very interesting and they enjoy filling it out. We hope you will also. Be sure to read the instructions below before you begin to answer.

1. This is not a test, so **there are no right or wrong answers.**
2. Answer by marking in the answer space and use the closest answer to the truth. If you are not sure what a question means, leave it blank.
3. Please follow these instructions carefully.

It is best to use a pencil.

Make heavy marks inside the circles.

Erase cleanly any answer you wish to change.

Make no other marking or comments on the answer pages.

4. Some of the questions have the following format:

Please mark the circle next to the word that best describes how you feel about that sentence.

Example: Pepperoni pizza is one of my favorite foods.

NO!    no    yes    YES!

Mark “NO!” if you think the statement is definitely not true for you.

Mark “no” if you think the statement is mostly not true for you.

Mark “yes” if you think the statement is mostly true for you.

Mark “YES!” if you think the statement is definitely true for you.

In the example above, the student marked “yes” because he or she thinks the statement is mostly true. (Please mark only one answer.)



# Time to Begin

**These questions ask for some general information about the people completing the survey. Please mark the response that best describes you.**

**1) How old are you?** Please circle the correct answer.  
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 or older

**2) What grade are you in?** Please circle the correct answer.  
6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> 12<sup>th</sup>

**3) Are you:**  
 Female  Male

**4) Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?**  
 No  
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano  
 Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino  
 Yes, Puerto Rican  
 Yes, Cuban  
 Other Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

**5) If you are not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, please mark what race you are.**  
 White  
 Black, African American, or Negro  
 American Indian or Alaska Native  
 Chinese  Japanese  
 Filipino  Asian Indian  
 Native Hawaiian  Samoan  
 Korean  Guamanian or Chamorro  
 Vietnamese  
 Other Asian \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_  
 Some other race \_\_\_\_\_

**6) Think of where you live most of the time. Which of the following people live there with you? (Choose all that apply.)**

- |                                     |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Mother        | <input type="radio"/> Grandfather    |
| <input type="radio"/> Stepmother    | <input type="radio"/> Uncle          |
| <input type="radio"/> Foster mother | <input type="radio"/> Other adults   |
| <input type="radio"/> Grandmother   | <input type="radio"/> Brother(s)     |
| <input type="radio"/> Aunt          | <input type="radio"/> Stepbrother(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> Father        | <input type="radio"/> Sister(s)      |
| <input type="radio"/> Stepfather    | <input type="radio"/> Stepsister(s)  |
| <input type="radio"/> Foster father | <input type="radio"/> Other children |

**7) How many brothers and sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters, do you have that are older than you?** Please circle the correct answer.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

**8) How many brothers or sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters, do you have that are younger than you?** Please circle the correct answer.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

**9) What is the language you use most often at home?**  
 English  Spanish  Another language (\_\_\_\_\_)

**10) What is the highest level of schooling your father completed?**

- Completed grade school or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Don't know
- Does not apply

**11) What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed?**

- Completed grade school or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Don't know
- Does not apply

**Continue to the next page**

12) Where are you living now?

- On a farm  
 In the country, not on a farm  
 In a city, town, or suburb

**This section asks about your experiences in school.**

13) Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?

- Mostly Fs       Mostly Ds       Mostly Cs  
 Mostly Bs       Mostly As

14) In my school, students have lots of chances to help decide things like class activities and rules.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

15) Teachers ask me to work on special classroom projects.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

16) My teacher(s) notices when I am doing a good job and lets me know about it.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

17) There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk with a teacher one-on-one.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

18) I feel safe at my school.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

19) The school lets my parents know when I have done something well.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

20) My teacher(s) praise me when I work hard in school.

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

21) Are your school grades better than the grades of most students in your class?

- NO!     no     yes     YES!

22) How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?

- Almost always     Often     Sometimes  
 Seldom     Never

23) How interesting are most of your courses to you?

- Very interesting     Quite interesting  
 Fairly interesting     Slightly dull     Very dull

24) How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?

- Very important     Quite important  
 Fairly important     Slightly important  
 Not at all important

Now, thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you...

25) Enjoy being in school?

- Never     Seldom     Sometimes  
 Often     Almost always

26) Hate being in school?

- Never     Seldom     Sometimes  
 Often     Almost always

27) Try to do your best work in school?

- Never     Seldom     Sometimes  
 Often     Almost always

**Continue to the next page**

**These questions ask about your feelings and experiences in other parts of your life.**

Think of your **four best friends** (the friends you feel closest to.) In the past year (12 months), how many of your best friends have:

**28) Been suspended from school?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**29) Carried a handgun?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**30) Sold illegal drugs?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**31) Stolen or tried to steal a car or motorcycle?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**32) Been arrested?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**33) Dropped out of school?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**34) Been members of a gang?**  
 None  1  2  3  4

**How old were you when you first:**

**35) Smoked marijuana?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**36) Smoked a cigarette, even just a puff?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**37) Had more than a sip or two of beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**38) Began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**39) Got suspended from school?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**40) Got arrested?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**41) Carried a handgun?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**42) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**43) Belonged to a gang?**  
 Never have  10 or younger  11  
 12  13  14  
 15  16  17 or older

**How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to:**

**44) Take a handgun to school?**  
 Very wrong  Wrong  
 A little bit wrong  Not wrong at all

**45) Steal anything worth more than \$5?**  
 Very wrong  Wrong  
 A little bit wrong  Not wrong at all

**46) Pick a fight with someone?**  
 Very wrong  Wrong  
 A little bit wrong  Not wrong at all

**47) Attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?**  
 Very wrong  Wrong  
 A little bit wrong  Not wrong at all

**48) Stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?**  
 Very wrong  Wrong  
 A little bit wrong  Not wrong at all

**49) It is all right to beat up people if they start the fight.**  
 NO!  no  yes  YES!

**50) It is important to be honest with your parents, even if they become upset or you get punished.**  
 NO!  no  yes  YES!

**51) I think it is okay to take something without asking if you can get away with it.**  
 NO!  no  yes  YES!

**Continue to the next page**

**How many times have you done the following things?**

**52) Done what feels good no matter what.**

- Never    I've done it, but not in the past year  
 Less than once a month    About once a month  
 2 to 3 times a month    Once a week or more

**53) Done something dangerous because someone dared you to do it.**

- Never    I've done it, but not in the past year  
 Less than once a month    About once a month  
 2 to 3 times a month    Once a week or more

**54) Done crazy things even if they are a little dangerous.**

- Never    I've done it, but not in the past year  
 Less than once a month    About once a month  
 2 to 3 times a month    Once a week or more

**How many times in the past year (12 months) have you:**

**55) Been suspended from school?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**56) Carried a handgun?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**57) Sold illegal drugs?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**58) Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**59) Been arrested?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**60) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**61) Been drunk or high at school?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**62) Taken a handgun to school?**

- Never    1 or 2 times    3 to 5 times  
 6 to 9 times    10 to 19 times    20 to 29 times  
 30 to 39 times    40+ times

**63) I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**64) Sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**65) I sometimes find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**66) Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**67) I think sometimes it's okay to cheat at school.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**68) Are there any gangs at your school?**

- No    Yes    Don't Know

**69) Do any of the students at your school belong to a gang?**

- No    Yes    Don't Know

**70) What about gangs that don't have members attending your school...have any of those gangs come around your school in the past six months?**

- No    Yes    Don't Know

**If you answered YES to any of the three previous questions, please answer these questions, otherwise continue on to the next section.**

**71) How often have gangs been involved in fights, attacks, or violence at your school in the past six months?**

- Never    Almost every day  
 Once or twice a month    Don't know  
 Once or twice a week

**72) Have gangs been involved in the sale of drugs at your school in the past six months?**

- No    Yes    Don't Know

**Continue to the next page**

73) Have any gang members brought guns to your school in the past six months?

- No     Yes     Don't Know

Do the gangs around your school do the following things?

- |                                       | No                    | Yes                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 74) Help out in the community         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 75) Get in fights with other gangs    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 76) Provide protection for each other | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 77) Steal things                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 78) Rob other people                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 79) Steal cars                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 80) Sell marijuana                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 81) Sell other illegal drugs          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 82) Damage or destroy property        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The next section asks about your experiences with gangs. (A "crew" or a "posse" is considered a gang.) If you have NEVER been in a gang, please skip to the next section.

83) Have you ever belonged to a gang?

- No     Yes

84) If you have ever belonged to a gang, did that gang have a name?

- No     Yes

85) Are you a gang member now?

- No     Yes

86) How many members are there in your gang?

- Not in a gang     11 to 20  
 1 to 5     21 to 30  
 6 to 10     More than 30

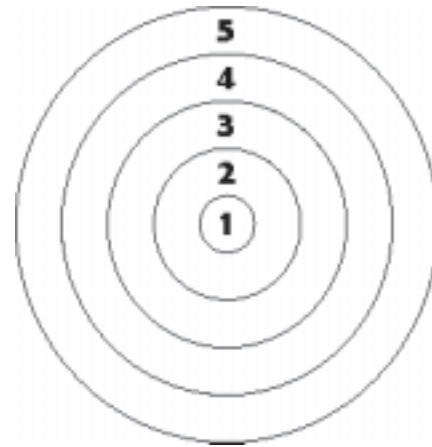
87) How many boys belong to your gang?

- No boys     11 to 20  
 1 to 5     21 to 30  
 6 to 10     More than 30

88) How many girls belong to your gang?

- No girls     11 to 20  
 1 to 5     21 to 30  
 6 to 10     More than 30

89) If you belong to a gang, suppose the circle below represents your gang. How far from the center of the gang are you? (circle the number that best describes your place in the gang)



If you are in a gang, do the following describe your gang?

- |   | No                    | Yes                   |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 90) You can join before age 13.           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 91) There are initiation rites.           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 92) The gang has established leaders.     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 93) The gang has regular meetings.        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 94) The gang has specific rules or codes. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 95) Gang members have specific roles.     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 96) There are roles for each age group.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 97) The gang has symbols or colors.       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 98) There are specific roles for girls.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

99) Why did you join the gang? Mark all that apply.

- For fun  
 For protection  
 A friend was in the gang  
 A brother or sister was in the gang  
 I was forced to join  
 To get respect  
 For money  
 To fit in better  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Not in a gang

Continue to the next page

**If you are in a gang, does your gang do the following things?**

- |  | No                    | Yes                   |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 100) Help out in the community         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 101) Get in fights with other gangs    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 102) Provide protection for each other | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 103) Steal things                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 104) Rob other people                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 105) Steal cars                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 106) Sell marijuana                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 107) Sell other illegal drugs          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 108) Damage or destroy property        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**109) You're looking at CD's in a music store with a friend. You look up and see your friend slip a CD under her coat. She smiles and says, "Which one do you want? Go ahead, take it while nobody's around." There is nobody in sight, no employees and no other customers. What would you do now?**

- Ignore her
- Grab a CD and leave the store
- Tell her to put the CD back
- Act like it's a joke, and ask her to put the CD back

**110) It's 8:00 p.m. on a weeknight and you are about to go over to a friend's house when your mother asks you where you are going. You say, "Oh, just going to go hang out with some friends." She says, "No, you'll just get into trouble if you go out. Stay home tonight." What would you do now?**

- Leave the house anyway
- Explain what you are going to do with your friends, tell her when you'd get home, and ask if you can go out
- Not say anything and start watching TV
- Get into an argument with her

**111) You are visiting another part of town, and you don't know any of the people your age there. You are walking down the street, and some teenager you don't know is walking toward you. He is about your size, and he is about to pass you, he deliberately bumps into you and you almost lose your balance. What would you say or do?**

- Push the person back
- Say, "Excuse me" and keep on walking
- Say, "Watch where you're going" and keep on walking
- Swear at the person and walk away

**112) You are at a party at someone's house, and one of your friends offers you a drink containing alcohol. What would you say or do?**

- Drink it
- Tell your friend, "No thanks, I don't drink" and suggest that you and your friend go and do something else
- Just say, "No thanks" and walk away
- Make up a good excuse, tell your friend you had something else to do, and leave

**The next questions ask about the neighborhood and community where you live.**

**113) If you wanted to get some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin), how easy would it be for you to get some?**

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

**114) If you wanted to get some cigarettes, how easy would it be for you to get some?**

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

**115) If you wanted to get a drug like cocaine, LSD, or amphetamines, how easy would it be for you to get some?**

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

**116) If you wanted to get a handgun, how easy would it be for you to get one?**

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

**117) If you wanted to get some marijuana, how easy would it be for you to get some?**

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

**118) If a kid smoked marijuana in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?**

- NO!
- no
- yes
- YES!

**Continue to the next page**

119) If a kid drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

120) If a kid carried a handgun in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

How wrong would most adults in your neighborhood think it was for kids your age to:

121) Use marijuana

- Very Wrong  Wrong  
 A Little Wrong  Not wrong at All

122) Drink alcohol

- Very Wrong  Wrong  
 A Little Wrong  Not Wrong at All

123) Smoke cigarettes

- Very Wrong  Wrong  
 A Little Wrong  Not Wrong at All

About how many adults (over 21) have you known personally who in the past year have:

124) Used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs?

- None  1 adult  2 adults  
 3 or 4 adults  5 or more adults

125) Sold or dealt drugs?

- None  1 adult  2 adults  
 3 or 4 adults  5 or more adults

126) Done other things that could get them in trouble with the police like stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others, etc.

- None  1 adult  2 adults  
 3 or 4 adults  5 or more adults

127) Gotten drunk or high?

- None  1 adult  2 adults  
 3 or 4 adults  5 or more adults

128) If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood where I now live.

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

129) My neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know.

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

130) I like my neighborhood.

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

131) There are lots of adults in my neighborhood I could talk to about something important.

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

How much do each of the following statements describe your neighborhood.

132) Crime and/or drug selling

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

133) Fights

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

134) Lots of empty or abandoned buildings

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

135) Lots of graffiti

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

136) How many times have you changed homes since kindergarten?

- Never  1 or 2 times  3 or 4 times  
 5 or 6 times  7 or more times

137) There are people in my neighborhood who are proud of me when I do something well.

- NO!  no  yes  YES!

Which of the following activities for people your age are available in your community?

138) Sports teams  No  Yes

139) Scouting  No  Yes

140) Boys & girls clubs  No  Yes

141) 4-H clubs  No  Yes

142) Service clubs  No  Yes

143) Have you changed schools (including changing from elementary to middle and middle to high school) in the past year?

- No  Yes

**Continue to the next page**

- 144) How many times have you changed schools (including changing from elementary to middle and middle to high school) since kindergarten?**  
 Never       1 or 2 times       3 or 4 times  
 5 or 6 times       7 or more times

- 145) Have you changed homes in the past year (the last 12 months)?**  
 No       Yes

- 146) I feel safe in my neighborhood.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 147) I'd like to get out of my neighborhood.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 148) There are people in my neighborhood who encourage me to do my best.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

**The next few questions ask about your family.**

**How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to:**

- 149) Steal anything worth more than \$5?**  
 Very Wrong       Wrong  
 A Little Wrong     Not Wrong at All
- 150) Draw graffiti, or write things or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission?)**  
 Very Wrong       Wrong  
 A Little Wrong     Not Wrong at All
- 151) Pick a fight with someone?**  
 Very Wrong       Wrong  
 A Little Wrong     Not Wrong at All

**Have any of your brothers or sisters ever:**

- 152) Drunk beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin?)**  
 No       Yes  
 I don't have any brothers or sisters
- 153) Smoked marijuana?**  
 No       Yes  
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 154) Smoked cigarettes?**  
 No       Yes  
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 155) Taken a handgun to school?**  
 No       Yes  
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 156) Been suspended or expelled from school?**  
 No       Yes  
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 157) The rules in my family are clear.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 158) Has anyone in your family ever had a severe alcohol or drug problem?**  
 No       Yes

- 159) People in my family often insult or yell at each other.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 160) When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and who I am with.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 161) We argue about the same things in my family over and over.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 162) If you drank some beer, wine, or liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 163) My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

- 164) If you carried a handgun without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?**  
 NO!     no     yes     YES!

**Continue to the next page**

**165) If you skipped school, would you be caught by your parents?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**166) My parents notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it.**

- Never or almost never  
 Sometimes  
 Often  
 All the time

**167) Do you feel very close to your mother?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**168) Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**169) My parents ask me what I think before most family decisions affecting me are made.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**170) How often do your parents tell you they're proud of you for something you've done?**

- Never or almost never  
 Sometimes  
 Often  
 All the time

**171) Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your father?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**172) Do you enjoy spending time with your mother?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**173) Do you enjoy spending time with your father?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**174) If I had a personal problem, I could ask my mom or dad for help.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**175) Do you feel very close to your father?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**176) My parents give me lots of chances to do fun things with them.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**177) My parents ask if I've gotten my homework done.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**178) People in my family have serious arguments.**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**179) Would your parents know if you did not come home on time?**

- NO!    no    yes    YES!

**End of Survey**

## School Staff Perceptions

The experiences and perceptions of school staff can supplement a community's understanding of its local gang problem as school staff members and administrators have contact with a wide variety of students daily.

It is recommended that school personnel be interviewed to provide insight into the nature and prevalence of gang activity in and around the school. Those interviewed should include not only teachers and administrators, but others who have different types of contact with students: school resource officers, school health services personnel, counselors/mental health specialists, prevention/intervention program staff, secretaries, custodians, and bus drivers.

It should be understood prior to beginning the interviews that more than any other agency's staff, school personnel may feel uncomfortable discussing their institution's gang problem. They may feel that they are being disloyal to other staff or school administrators, or that any problems are a sign of personal or institutional failure. Therefore, steps should be taken to promote a comfortable environment and ensure that school staff members can speak candidly. One way to ensure this privacy is through a confidential interview using the interview instrument provided in **Exhibit 8.3** on page 84.

After data from the interviews are organized, data should be displayed in the Assessment Report using appropriate tables, charts, or other formats. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Assessment Report:

1. Do school personnel believe there is a gang problem in their school? Does this vary according to type of school personnel?
2. What types of problems do gang members present on the school campus?
3. What issues are contributing to gang activity in the school?

# Exhibit 8.3

## School Staff Perceptions Interview

**1. Do you believe gangs are a problem in your school?**

- Yes
- Do Not Know
- No
- No Response

If so, what signs do you see that lead you to believe that gang members are present in the school?

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**2. When were you first aware of gang problems in your school?**

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**3. What types of problems do gang members present in or around the school?**

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**4. When and where are the gang activities occurring most frequently in and around the school? (time of day, classroom, outside classroom, etc.)**

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**5. What issues do you think contribute to gang activity?**

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**6. Do you believe gang activity is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same level in your school as in previous years? Why?**

- Increasing
- Decreasing
- Staying the same

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## Exhibit 8.4

### Consent and Confidentiality

When conducting the student surveys, either active or passive consent of the parent or guardian should be sought. As difficult as it may be to get parents to return consent forms, the effort must be made. Schools or districts may have different policies and preferences. Passive consent generally yields 90 to 100 percent participation. Active yields about 40 to 50 percent, and about 10 percent simply never return the form. Check state, local, and school regulations to determine if active consent is required or if it is permissible to use passive consent. Please refer to **Exhibit 8.1** on pages 71-72 for sample active and passive consent letters.

If seeking active consent, parents or guardians should receive a letter explaining the survey and asking permission for the student to fill out the questionnaire. The parent/guardian must return the signed letter indicating that permission to participate is granted before a student may complete the survey.

For passive consent, parents or guardians of each student should receive a letter explaining the survey and asking permission for the student to fill out the questionnaire. The parent/guardian should be given the option to return the signed letter indicating refusal to participate; otherwise, permission is to be considered granted for the child to participate in the survey.

The consent form should be written to be understandable to the person who signs it. Use commonly understood words, not jargon. Consider that languages other than English may be spoken in the home, and consent forms may have to be translated into languages other than English. Participation cannot be coerced and the consent form must state that participation is voluntary and may cease at any time.

Prior to conducting the student survey, school personnel, including teachers and administrators, should be consulted well in advance. School districts and individual schools may have varying policies regarding non-school-related surveys such as time of day they can be administered or location. School personnel also may have to provide alternative arrangements for students who are not participating in the survey.

Some of the questions on the student survey may be of a sensitive nature; e.g., drug use, weapons possession, gang activities, and family life, etc., which argues that the protection of participant's identity is a key concern.

Two approaches satisfy this requirement—anonymity and confidentiality—although the two often are confused. A respondent may be considered anonymous when the interviewer or researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. The student survey should be considered anonymous; i.e., individual students cannot and will not be identified. In a confidential survey, the interviewer or researcher is able to identify a given person's responses but essentially promises not to do so. In order to guarantee confidentiality or anonymity, all names, addresses, or other personal identification should be removed from survey or interview forms.

The student survey will provide aggregate data from each school—individual students cannot be identified. However, the Assessment Team will likely face the confidentiality issue. The disclosure of certain education information regarding youth under the age of 18 is safeguarded by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Educators typically approach participation in student surveys with caution because they have legitimate concerns about the privacy of their students and the disclosure of certain kinds of information.

## Exhibit 8.4 (continued)

FERPA protects the privacy interests of students and parents only with respect to education records and does not apply to student surveys that do not contain personally identifiable information (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997). Please refer to “Sharing Information: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs.”

FERPA allows an exemption, however, to provide student information from the school’s law enforcement unit records. Under FERPA, schools may disclose information from “law enforcement unit records” to anyone—federal, state, or local law enforcement authorities, social service agencies, or even the media—without the consent of the parent or eligible student. A “law enforcement unit” is an individual, office, department, division or other component of a school or school district—such as a unit of commissioned police officers or noncommissioned security guards—that is officially authorized or designated by the school district to (1) enforce federal, state, or local law, or (2) maintain the physical security and safety of schools in the district. The Family Policy Compliance Office, which administers FERPA, is available at (202) 260-3887 to answer further questions regarding FERPA.

# 9

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## Community Perceptions of Gang Crime

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No picture of a community's gang crime problem would be complete without the views of *community leaders*, *community residents*, and *parents*. This information should be collected through a variety of surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups. The extent of the effort will be largely determined by the time and funds available. If time and money permit, it also may be useful to conduct focus groups with social service workers, detention center staff, and others whose clients are gang-involved. At a minimum, information from the following groups should be collected:

- Community leaders, both formal and informal
- Community residents
- Parents (including parents of gang members, if possible)

The primary reason for gathering this type of information is to determine how community members view gang activity and how they think gangs affect the community. Some of the questions developed for this type of information gathering are open-ended, and interviewers should encourage respondents to freely elaborate. These questions give respondents an opportunity to relate their own experience or beliefs about gangs and gang activity in their community.

Care should be taken to ensure that respondents represent the community being assessed in terms of demographics.

**Table 5** identifies the questions to be answered about the community's perceptions of gang crime, the information needed to answer the questions, and the sources of that information.

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*Care should be taken to ensure that respondents to the community resident survey represent the community being assessed in terms of demographics.*

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<b>Table 5: Community Perceptions of Gang Crime</b>			
<b>Questions to Be Answered</b>	<b>Information Needed to Answer</b>	<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>How to Obtain</b>
1. Do community leaders perceive a gang problem? If so, what is that problem? Are they prepared to respond?	Feedback from community leaders about the gang crime problem	Police chief, sheriff, mayor, school principal, county prosecutor, probation, chief judge, youth agency director, county board members, all Steering Committee members, other community leaders	Community leader interviews
2. Do parents perceive their children to be involved in or at risk of involvement in gangs?	Input from sample of parents	Parents, parents of gang members	Parent focus groups
3. How do community residents perceive the gang problem? Are community residents satisfied with the current response to gangs? Are residents willing to get involved?	Input from community residents	Community residents	Community resident survey

Data collection instruments provided in this chapter include:

- Exhibit 9.1** Interview form for community leaders (page 90)
- Exhibit 9.2** Survey form for community residents (pages 91-92)
- Exhibit 9.3** Focus group questions for parents and parents of gang members (page 93)

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Information from the interviews, surveys, and focus groups should be compared across the different groups, when possible. Use appropriate charts, tables, and other graphics to display the data in the Report. After the data are organized, answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Assessment Report.

1. Do community leaders, parents, and community residents believe a gang problem exists in the community? If so, what is that problem(s)?
2. Are there significant differences across the groups? What are those differences?
3. Do parents believe their children to be involved in gangs or at risk for gang involvement?
4. What do the respondent groups think should be done about the gang problem?
5. In what ways are the respondent groups willing to respond to the gang problem?

# Exhibit 9.1

## Community Leader Interview

**1. Do you believe gangs are a problem in your community?**

- Yes
- No
- Do Not Know
- No Response

If so, what kinds of problems do gangs present in your community? Please choose your top three problems.

- Increase in property crime
- Increase in vandalism/graffiti
- Increased fear in community
- School disruption
- Increase in drug crimes
- Public nuisance
- Family disruption
- Increase in violent crime against persons
- Increase in weapon crimes
- Increased fear for safety
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Why do you believe there is gang activity in your community? Please choose your top three reasons.**

- Poverty
- School problems
- Police labeling
- Gang members move to community from other places
- Boredom
- Family problems
- Power
- Protection
- Lack of activities
- Prejudice
- Family/friends in gangs
- To feel loved/sense of belonging
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What is the general community response to gangs by (law enforcement, parents, educators, other community leaders, etc.)?**

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**4. What should be done to reduce the gang problem in the community? Please choose your top three choices.**

- Jobs and job training
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Recreation programs
- School programs
- More police presence
- More parental involvement
- New laws/ordinances
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Are you satisfied with the current response to gangs by law enforcement, social service agencies, schools, etc.?**

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**6. Have you had any personal experiences with a gang member? Please specify.**

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**7. How can you help to improve the community's response to gangs?**

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## Exhibit 9.2

### Community Resident Survey

**1. Are you:**

- Female  Male

**2. What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?**

- White/Caucasian  
 Black/African American  
 American Indian  
 Hispanic/Spanish  
 Asian  
 Native American/American Indian  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What is your current marital status?**

- Never married  
 Married  
 Widowed  
 Separated  
 Divorced

**4. What is the intersection (cross streets) nearest your place of residence?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Do you feel safer in your community than you did 2 years ago?**

- NO  YES

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Please pick the top 3 concerns that you have about your community, if any.**

- Unemployment  Graffiti  
 Homicide  Truancy  
 Gang activity  Vandalism  
 Loud music  Domestic violence  
 Unkempt property  Insufficient street lighting  
 Drug dealing  Low police activity  
 Burglary or robbery  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Do you think there are gangs in your community?**

- NO  YES

**8. Do you think your child(ren) is in a gang or at risk of being in a gang?**

- NO  YES

**9. In the past year, has gang activity in your community:**

- Increased  
 Decreased  
 Remained about the same

**10. Please pick the top 3 problems, if any, that gangs present in the community:**

- Gangs are not a problem here  Fighting  
 Increase in violent crime  School disruption  
 Increase in drug crimes  Public nuisance  
 Increase in weapon crimes  Family disruption  
 Increase fear for safety  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Please pick the top 3 reasons you believe gang activity exists in your community:**

- Gangs are not a problem here  Boredom  
 School problems  Poverty  
 Lack of activities  Power  
 Family/friends in gangs  Protection  
 Police labeling  Family problems  
 Gang members move from other areas  
 To feel love/sense of belonging  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Please pick the top 3 things you believe should be done about gangs and gang activity in your community:**

- Gangs are not a problem here  Programs/recreation  
 More police protection  Mentoring  
 Jobs provision & Job training  Tutoring  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Continue to back page**

## Exhibit 9.2 (continued)

**13. Please rank the following organizations from most responsible (1) for dealing with gangs and gang activity to least responsible (12) for dealing with gangs and gang activity:**

- \_\_\_ Police
- \_\_\_ Church
- \_\_\_ Court/Criminal Justice System
- \_\_\_ Family
- \_\_\_ Service Providers
- \_\_\_ Neighborhood Association
- \_\_\_ School
- \_\_\_ Housing Authority
- \_\_\_ Office of Juvenile Affairs
- \_\_\_ Treatment Providers
- \_\_\_ Community Residents
- \_\_\_ Office of Youth & Family Services

**14. How satisfied are you with the current response to gang activity?**

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**15. How has your community responded to gang activity?**

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**16. What are you willing to do, if anything, to help deal with gangs and gang activity in your community? (Please check all that apply):**

- Nothing
- Neighborhood outreach
- Become a youth group leader
- Tutor
- Form sports leagues/teams
- Mentor
- Teach skills (i.e., auto mechanics, crafts, music, computerskills, electronics, etc.)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?**

- Completed grade school or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Vocational or technical training

**Thank you for your participation.  
Your opinions and comments are appreciated.**

**If you would like to leave any additional comments for us,  
please use this area or attach another sheet of paper.**

# Exhibit 9.3

## Parent Focus Group Questions

### 1. Do you believe gangs are a problem in your community?

- Yes
- No
- Do Not Know
- No Response

If so, what kinds of problems do gangs present in your community? (Use list below as prompts if necessary)

- \_\_\_ Increase in property crime
- \_\_\_ Increase in vandalism/graffiti
- \_\_\_ Increased fear in community
- \_\_\_ School disruption
- \_\_\_ Increase in drug crimes
- \_\_\_ Public nuisance
- \_\_\_ Family disruption
- \_\_\_ Increase in violent crime against persons
- \_\_\_ Increase in weapon crimes
- \_\_\_ Increased fear for safety
- \_\_\_ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Why do you believe there is gang activity in your community? (Use list below as prompts if necessary)

- \_\_\_ Poverty
- \_\_\_ School problems
- \_\_\_ Police labeling
- \_\_\_ Gang members move to community from other places
- \_\_\_ Boredom
- \_\_\_ Family problems
- \_\_\_ Power
- \_\_\_ Protection
- \_\_\_ Lack of activities
- \_\_\_ Prejudice
- \_\_\_ Family/friends in gangs
- \_\_\_ To feel loved/sense of belonging
- \_\_\_ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. What should be done to reduce the gang problem? (Use list below as prompts if necessary)

- \_\_\_ Jobs and job training
- \_\_\_ Tutoring
- \_\_\_ Mentoring
- \_\_\_ Recreation programs
- \_\_\_ School programs
- \_\_\_ More police presence
- \_\_\_ More parental involvement
- \_\_\_ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. In reference to question 3, who is responsible for taking action in the reduction of the gang problem?

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### 5. Do you think that your child(ren) are at risk of gang membership?

- Yes
- No
- Do Not Know
- No Response

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

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## Include the following questions for parents of gang members:

### 6. Why do you think your child joined a gang?

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### 7. What concerns or problems has your child faced since joining a gang?

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### 8. What effect has your child's gang membership had on you?

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# 10

## Current Activities and Resources

It is important to identify the services and programs that exist in the community that are currently serving or could serve gang members and youth at risk of gang membership. The Steering Committee will need to know what resources are available to provide education, employment, and social services, and other support to gang youth and youth likely to join a gang. This chapter provides guidance on:

- (a) Conducting a resource inventory of organizations and agencies
- (b) Collecting information on the justice system agencies past and current responses to gang crime

**Table 6** identifies the questions to be answered, the information needed to answer the questions, and sources of that information.

Table 6: Current Activities and Resources			
Questions to Be Answered	Information Needed to Answer	Sources of Information	How to Obtain
1. What services are being provided (or could be provided to gang members)?	Organization profile – purpose, target population, service area, funding source, anti-gang focus	Organizations, neighborhood groups, faith-based groups	Organization survey, key informant interviews
2. What law enforcement strategies are in place to prevent, intervene, and suppress gang activity?	Program and strategy profiles, focus (prevention, intervention, suppression), resources, collaborative efforts	Law enforcement agency, probation, corrections, and prosecution personnel	Key informant interviews
3. Do courts, detention centers, and corrections departments conduct risk assessments that include membership?	Program profiles, resources, policy and procedures	Court, detention center, corrections personnel	Key informant interviews
4. How has the community historically responded to gang activity?	Previous studies and reports	Law enforcement, university, and task force reports	Review of reports

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## Community Agency Resources

It will first be necessary to identify those organizations that provide (or could provide) services to gang youth or other youth who may be at risk of gang membership. Many of these services are formal and delivered through established organizations. Others are informal or offered through community or grass-roots groups to neighborhood residents. There also may be opportunities to identify additional organizations while conducting interviews with community leaders or hosting focus groups. The agency or organization director or other key personnel in each identified agency with knowledge about the agency's gang-related programs, as well as the agency's governance and funding structure, should be interviewed. Once organizations are identified, information can be gathered through phone or personal interviews.

At a minimum, any public or private organization that provides the following services should be surveyed:

- Counseling
- Drug treatment
- Job training
- Education and vocational training
- Mentoring
- Recreation
- Youth development

**Exhibit 10.1** is provided for collecting information on existing resources from community agencies and organizations. After these data are organized, a summary of these programs should be provided in the Assessment Report. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Report:

1. What services are being provided to gang members?
2. Are these services adequate? If not, what services would be needed to meet the needs identified through this assessment?
3. What services are in place that could be extended to gang members? What, if anything, would be needed to do so?

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*The Steering Committee will need to know what resources are available to provide education, employment, and social services, and other support to gang youth and youth likely to join a gang.*

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# Exhibit 10.1

## Community Resource Inventory (Complete for each agency/organization surveyed)

1. Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Agency Name: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

4. Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_, Extension: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Program Purpose:

6. Service(s) Provided:

7. Target Population:

8. Eligibility Criteria:

9. If risk assessments are conducted, do they include gang membership?

Yes  No

10. Program Capacity:

11. Service Area:

12. Does the program focus on gang-involved youth?

Yes  No

13. Does the program focus on youth at risk of gang involvement?

Yes  No

14. Funding Sources:

15. Total Annual Program Budget:

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## Justice System Programs

In the course of gathering information about gang-related programs or services, information should be gathered about any special justice system programs and strategies—particularly those in *police, probation, or corrections agencies*—that are currently in place to deal with gangs. Also, information about the historical response to gangs should be collected. This information can be summarized from prior reports and surveys on gangs and related problems that may be available from schools, police, and local and state governmental agencies.

**Exhibit 10.2** is provided for collecting information from justice system programs. After these data are organized, a summary of the justice system programs should be provided in the Assessment Report. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the report.

1. What law enforcement strategies are in place to prevent, intervene with, and suppress gang activity?
2. What other justice system programs, services, or activities are provided to gang members?
3. When were these programs started? How have these programs changed over time? What success have they had?
4. Do juvenile justice agencies conduct individual risk assessments that include gang membership?
5. How has the community historically responded to gang activity? Has this worked? Why has the problem not gone away?

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*Information should be gathered about any special justice system programs and strategies—particularly those in police, probation, or corrections agencies—that are currently in place to deal with gangs.*

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## Exhibit 10.2

### Justice System Program Inventory (Complete for each agency/organization surveyed)

1. Agency Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Program Name (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Program Purpose:

4. Service(s) Provided:

5. Target Population:

6. Eligibility Criteria:

7. Program Capacity:

8. Service Area:

9. Does the program focus on gang-involved youth?

Yes

No

10. If risk assessments are conducted, do they include gang membership?

Yes

No

11. Funding Sources:

12. Total Annual Program Budget:

# 11

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## Data-Collection Tools

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Depending on the nature of the information to be gathered, different instruments are used to conduct the assessment: forms for gathering data from official sources such as police or school records; surveys/interviews to gather information from youth, community residents, and others; and focus groups to elicit free-flowing perspectives.

For purposes of the data-collection process, the following discussion provides information on the types of data-collection tools most commonly used.

### Self-Administered Survey

Self-administered surveys have special strengths and weaknesses. They are useful in describing the characteristics of a large population and make large samples feasible. In one sense, these surveys are flexible, making it possible to ask many questions on a given topic. This also provides flexibility in the analysis of the responses. On the other hand, standardized questionnaire items often represent the least common denominator in assessing people's attitudes, orientations, circumstances, and experiences. By designing questions that will be appropriate for all respondents, it is possible to miss what is most appropriate to many of the respondents (Babbie, 1992).

Some advantages of the self-administered survey are:

*Low Cost.* Extensive training is not required to administer the survey. Processing and analysis are usually simpler and cheaper than for other methods.

*Reduction in Biasing Error.* The questionnaire reduces the bias that might result from personal characteristics of interviewers and/or their interviewing skills.

*Greater Anonymity.* Absence of an interviewer provides greater anonymity for the respondent. This is especially helpful when the survey deals with sensitive issues such as questions about involvement in a gang, because respondents are more likely to respond to sensitive questions when they are not face-to-face with an interviewer.

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Some of the disadvantages are:

*Requires Simple Questions.* The questions must be straightforward enough to be comprehended solely on the basis of printed instructions and definitions.

*No Opportunity for Probing.* The answers must be accepted as final. Researchers have no opportunity to clarify ambiguous answers.

## Personal Interviews

The interview is an alternative method of collecting survey data. Rather than asking respondents to fill out surveys, interviewers ask questions orally and record respondents' answers. This type of survey generally decreases the number of "do not know" and "no answer" responses, compared to self-administered surveys. Interviewers also provide a guard against confusing items. If a respondent has misunderstood a question, the interviewer can clarify, thereby obtaining relevant responses (Babbie, 1992). As noted previously, personal interviews are a good way to gather information from community leaders, particularly those who might be unwilling or too busy to complete a written survey.

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*Personal interviews are a good way to gather information from community leaders, particularly those who might be unwilling or too busy to complete a written survey.*

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Some of the advantages of the personal interview are:

*Flexibility.* Allows flexibility in the questioning process and allows the interviewer to clarify terms that are unclear.

*Control of the interview situation.* Can ensure that the interview is conducted in private, and respondents do not have the opportunity to consult one another before giving their answers.

*High response rate.* Respondents who would not normally respond to a mail questionnaire will often respond to a request for a personal interview.

Some of the disadvantages are:

*Higher cost.* Costs are involved in selecting, training, and supervising interviewers; perhaps in paying them; and in the travel and time required to conduct interviews.

*Interviewer bias.* The advantage of flexibility leaves room for the interviewer's personal influence and bias, making an interview subject to interviewer bias.

*Lack of anonymity.* Often the interviewer knows all or many of the respondents. Respondents may feel threatened or

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intimidated by the interviewer, especially if a respondent is sensitive to the topic or some of the questions (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

## Focus Groups

Another method of collecting information is the focus group. Focus groups are useful in obtaining a particular kind of information that would be difficult to obtain using other methodologies. A focus group typically can be defined as a group of people who possess certain characteristics and provide data of a qualitative nature in a focused discussion.

Focus groups generally are composed of seven to twelve people. The size is conditioned by two factors: it must be small enough for everyone to participate, yet large enough to provide diversity. This group is special in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic at hand, such as parents of gang members and, generally, the participants are unfamiliar with each other. Typically, more than one focus group should be convened since a group of seven to twelve people could be too atypical to offer any generalizable insights on the gang problem.

A trained moderator probes for different perceptions and points of view, without pressure to reach consensus. Focus groups have been found helpful in assessing needs, developing plans, testing new ideas, or improving existing programs (Krueger, 1988; Babbie, 1992). **Exhibit 11.1** provides guidelines for conducting focus groups.

Focus groups offer several advantages:

- Flexibility allows moderator to probe for more in-depth analysis and ask participants to elaborate on their responses.
- Outcomes are quickly known.
- May cost less in terms of planning and conducting than large surveys and personal interviews.

Limitations include:

- A skilled moderator is essential.
- Differences between groups can be troublesome to analyze because of the qualitative nature of the data.
- Groups are difficult to assemble. People must take the time to come to a designated place at a particular time.

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*Focus groups are a good method to get people involved in this assessment process by having them provide input on the topic.*

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## **Exhibit 11.1**

### **Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group**

Focus group discussions are a popular method of obtaining information and opinions. They can provide insight into issues that cannot be covered through surveys or interviews. Focus groups are a good method to get people involved in this assessment process by having them provide input on the topic.

The following discussion provides a general overview of the focus group process. It is recommended that a person with experience with focus groups (preparing the discussion guide, moderating, and preparing the report) be contacted to assist in the process.

When preparing for the focus group discussions, there are several considerations: What questions will be asked? Who will participate? Where will the discussions be held? Who will conduct the sessions? The first order of business is to develop a discussion guide.

#### **Develop the Discussion Guide**

The discussion guide contains the questions that will be posed to participants during the focus group sessions. A limited number of questions should be used for each discussion. Avoid spending too much time on background information and concentrate on the important issues. There are two elements that should be considered when drafting the guide: (1) whom you wish to obtain information from and (2) what information you wish to obtain.

When developing the questions, keep in mind that all groups should follow the same discussion format. By using a general format for each question, it allows an analyst to make comparisons among the responses of various groups.

#### **Reserve a Time and Place**

Reserving a time and place to conduct the discussion is something that should be done well in advance of the actual date of the discussion sessions. By finding a location quickly, it will allow time to contact potential participants with the necessary logistical information. When selecting a location, try to find the most convenient and accessible location for the participants.

#### **Provide an Incentive for Participation**

Individuals taking part in a focus group session should be compensated for their participation. When contacting potential participants, use an incentive to encourage or persuade an individual to take part in the discussion session. Various forms of compensation can be used with the more common being a cash payment, lunch, or dinner. Snacks and beverages also may be provided. This often eases the tension created by the focus group setting and makes participants more open to discussing the topic.

#### **Selection of Focus Group Participants**

It is necessary to identify each group that will participate in the discussion sessions; e.g., parents, community residents, school personnel. This will provide an indication as to the number of discussion groups that will be conducted. Time, money, and the number of potential participants available will determine the number of groups that are feasible for each community.

## Exhibit 11.1 (continued)

A good size for a focus group is between seven to twelve participants per session. However, the discussion can still take place if fewer than seven participants show up. The size is conditioned by two factors: it must be small enough for everyone to participate and large enough to provide diversity of perceptions. Group participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. For example, if the assessment is interested in finding out parents' perceptions of gangs in school, a focus group might consist of parents who have school-age children.

### Moderating the Discussion

An experienced focus group moderator should conduct the sessions. Moderating the discussion is difficult, and effective leadership is essential if the group is to accomplish its purpose. The moderator must not only be in tune with the purpose of the group but also have the necessary skills to effectively guide the group process. If it is not possible to use an experienced moderator, the following are a few key points that should be considered when moderating a focus group.

Keep the conversation flowing. The moderator needs to keep control of the discussion session.

If participants get off track, it is the role of the moderator to pull the group back together.

The moderator should keep the discussion as informal as possible and should encourage all participants to speak what is on their minds. The moderator is in charge of the discussion, and it is his or her duty to draw information from the participants.

Length of discussion. The session should last approximately 1 ½ hours. The participants will most likely dictate the length of the sessions based on the amount of information they have and their willingness to participate.

Be neutral. One benefit of having an outside person moderate the discussion is that the person can be neutral. People may disagree during the discussion, and the moderator must give equal time to all viewpoints. The moderator should not provide information. It is not the moderator's place to offer or convince participants of any particular point of view.

### Analysis of the Results

After each focus group, the moderator or a neutral observer should write a report describing the discussion for the Assessment Team. The written report should follow the questions contained in the discussion guide. The report can be broken down into the following sections.

Background and objectives. This section provides basic information regarding the initiative, the purpose, and objectives of the assessment.

Methodology. This section should describe how, when, and where the focus groups were conducted. It should describe the characteristics of the focus group participants and why they were selected. It should inform readers of this report that the results from the discussions are the opinions of a small sample size and should be viewed with caution.

Summary. The summary is approximately one or two pages in length and should provide the reader with a summary of the important findings. It is suggested that this section be a bullet or number format.

Highlights of findings. This section provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of the questions contained in the discussion guide. This is the section where quotes and comments should be used to support the research finding.

# 12

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## Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

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Throughout Chapters 6-10 in this Assessment Guide, a series of questions has been provided to guide the assessment. Based on the data collected through the assessment, answers to these questions will provide a picture of the community's gang problem.

The Assessment Report will describe themes identified through the assessment. In preparation for that, each data set should be examined independently, and then examined across all data sets. The objective is to weigh the strength of all the data: examine the quantitative data of law enforcement, estimates from student surveys, and the opinions expressed through interviews. Do other sources of data confirm the gang crime data from the police department? In what ways do they differ? In what ways do different respondents confirm or contradict police department data?

The challenge for communities is to identify data variables and combinations of variables that, when analyzed, reveal information useful for answering questions critical to the assessment. The Assessment Team, with help from the Research Partner, should attempt to find the best analytical methods for each type of data in order to best answer these questions. As this process is being completed, sites may determine other questions that need to be answered or answers to questions not yet asked.

Once data are collected, they must be put into a format that is suitable for effective storage and retrieval. This will be critical for completing the analysis stage of the assessment and setting priorities among the needs and problems in the community. In addition, the data collected through this assessment will serve as the foundation for an ongoing database that includes official records and public perceptions of gang activity. Although forms of data that are collected may vary as a community moves from the assessment stage to the stages of program planning, implementation, and refinement, the basic procedures for managing data will remain the same.

As has been noted previously, describing a community's gang problem requires the capture and analysis of data from a variety of sources. Each will shed light on some facet of the problem—the level of gang crime, who is involved in gangs and criminal activity, and who is at risk of gang involvement. Because the gang problem is complex and different segments of the community perceive gangs and gang youth differently, the assessment

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*The challenge for communities is to identify data variables and combinations of variables that, when analyzed, reveal information useful for answering questions critical to the assessment.*

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process has been designed to gather information which reflects multiple perspectives. For instance, law enforcement, residents, and youth will all be asked about their knowledge of gangs within the community and may respond with different answers. This process will reflect the reality with which the Assessment Team and Steering Committee must come to terms as a plan to address gangs is developed. Conflicting responses should be viewed as an opportunity to engage in discussions, to educate, and inform community leaders and residents.

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*The assessment process has been designed to gather information which reflects multiple perspectives.*

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## Quantitative Data

Quantitative data will be collected through a variety of sources including census data, police records, and school records. It is important that data are organized in such a way that they may be analyzed efficiently. Therefore, it is highly recommended that a relational database or computerized spreadsheet program be used to store information. Such programs allow users to quickly sort information and look at the data from different angles. Computer software programs with database spreadsheets are widely available. Microsoft Access, Lotus 1-2-3, Corel Quattro Pro, and Microsoft Excel are just a few of the available programs that can be used. More advanced statistical programs such as SPSS are also suitable for data storage, but they require greater technical skill to use the more sophisticated statistical analyses. Communities may have existing software that may be modified or used for these purposes. At minimum, computer software must allow for sorting of cases by different fields and should at least be compatible with software that can produce descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, etc.), cross tabulation, and basic graphic displays (for example, bar charts or pie graphs).

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*At minimum, computer software must allow for sorting of cases by different fields and should at least be compatible with software that can produce descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, etc.), cross tabulation, and basic graphic displays (for example, bar charts or pie graphs).*

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Generally, data will be collected in written form (such as surveys or official reports) and have to be keyed into the database. However, the paper forms should not be discarded. An identifier should be used in the computerized database to link it back to the paper form. This is done by creating a data field called ID#, assigning a sequential number to each paper form, and writing that number directly on the form. These "hard copies" should be stored in a locked file for use in verifying accuracy of data entry.

## Qualitative Data

The types of analyses and data management that have been discussed thus far will not be appropriate for all data collected. Focus group interviews, open-ended interviews, open-ended questions on written surveys, and qualitative analysis of existing documents are important components of a community problem assessment. Only from such methods will certain types of information come to the surface. Analysis of qualitative data may shed light on seeming contradictions in the quantitative data. For example, official data from the police and local schools may indicate that gang-related offenses in a given area are uncommon and generally of low severity when they do occur. However, a survey of school children's parents in the same area may reveal a very high level of concern and fear about gang violence. Individual or group interviews with police, school officials, and parents might reveal that a single highly-publicized offense is driving a great deal of the parents' fears. Alternatively, such interviews might reveal that parents' fears are based on high levels of bullying and intimidation that police and school officials are not aware of.

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*The analysis process starts with simple descriptive statistics and then moves to cross-sectional and time-series comparisons.*

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As with quantitative data, analysis of qualitative data may range from rather simple to highly sophisticated. The most basic essential element is recording. It is not an absolute requirement that every word of an interview or focus group is recorded on audiotape. Field notes may be taken or notes may be made immediately following the interview. The accuracy of the information, which is recorded, is imperative as are the conclusions that are drawn. Experts on qualitative research recommend using "member checks" to verify the accuracy of data. Member checking is a process in which interpretations are verified with participants who are allowed to make corrections if errors exist. Thus, a report that results from a focus group would be shared with the focus group participants before it is finalized. Similarly, a brief contact may follow an individual interview to make sure that interpretations are accurate. Member checks are even more important when actual quotes are going to be used to help make a point.

## Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Once data have been collected, entered, and cleaned of errors, it will be time to begin analysis and interpretation of the data in preparation for writing the Assessment Report. The analysis process starts with simple descriptive statistics and then moves to cross-sectional and time-series comparisons. Of course, statistical analysis techniques may be far more sophisticated than this, but for the purpose of this assessment simple descriptive, cross-sectional, and time-series analyses are all that will be required. After these

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analyses have been conducted with the data collected from all sources, *triangulation* can be used to answer some of the more difficult questions.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple forms of data, collected in different ways from different sources, to understand a single phenomenon. The purpose of triangulation is to improve the quality of the answers to difficult questions. For many of the questions that are being asked in this assessment, clear answers are not readily available and no perfect sources of data exist. Every form of data has limitations. Therefore, multiple sources of data are used with the recognition that even imperfect assessment tools can yield highly reliable information if they are used in combination. Essentially, this approach is used throughout the assessment. Triangulation should be used when possible to enhance descriptive statistics, cross-sectional analyses, and time-series analyses.

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*Triangulation refers to the use of multiple forms of data, collected in different ways from different sources, to understand a single phenomenon. It should be used when possible to enhance descriptive statistics, cross-sectional analyses, and time-series analyses.*

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## Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics usually take the form of frequencies, percentages, or averages. They may be used to describe the profile of a sample or the group from whom data were collected. As an example, consider a survey of 200 community residents. Even if participants were selected for the sample in the most scientific ways to be representative of the community, response rates are frequently low for such surveys. Assume the 200 responses represent a 50 percent response rate. Descriptive statistics should be used to determine the extent to which those residents who responded to the survey are representative of the community on the whole. To make this determination, percentages of survey respondents of each sex, ethnic category, or even geographic area can be compared to public records such as census data.

Descriptive statistics also may be used as a form of stand-alone analysis. Frequencies of events can be broken down across multiple categories. **EXHIBIT 12.1** shows how the frequency of gang-related offenses can be broken down by the age of offender. Among other things, this table suggests that older gang members are more heavily involved in violent gang offenses. Tables similar to this can be developed crossing gang-related offenses with geographical location, sex of offender, ethnicity of offender, identity of gang, and so on.

Gang-Related Offense:  
Police D

Age	< 10
Part 1 Offenses	
Criminal Homicide	
Forcible Rape	
Robbery	
Aggravated Assault	
Burglary – Breaking/Entering	
Motor Vehicle Theft	
Arson	
Larceny/Theft	
<b>Total</b>	

## Cross-Sectional Analysis

Although they serve an important purpose, descriptive statistics alone are rather dry. Comparisons are what most people are interested in when they conduct research. Cross-sectional comparisons are useful when you want to know how something differs across groups. They are also referred to as “between-group comparisons.” Groups are generally distinguished using common categorical data fields like gang membership, student grade, age, race, or geographic location; and comparisons are frequently made between average scores on some kind of measure. Categories like age and race are particularly useful because they are collected across many existing data sources.

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*Cross-sectional comparisons are useful when you want to know how something differs across groups.*

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When making comparisons between or among groups, caution must be used to avoid using sub-groups that are too small. Statistical averages may be calculated for any size group; however, they become unstable as the number of cases in each group gets smaller. That is, the addition or subtraction of even a single case could dramatically affect the average. Continuing with the community survey example, the 200 community respondents might reveal a seemingly high level of concern about gang-related drug sales. Several analyses could be done to determine who is most concerned about this issue and where this issue seems to be most pressing. One common approach is to make comparisons among respondents of different ethnic groups. Although the number of Asian Americans who responded to the survey might be consistent with the 5

percent that live in the community, it would not be wise to draw conclusions from only 10 responses to a single survey question. In this case, it might be better to aggregate Asian-American responses with other minority groups. Other methods would be required to draw conclusions about Asian-American concerns on this issue.

Geographic comparisons are very useful in conducting assessments. This is particularly true for gang problems because geographic comparisons serve to identify “hot spots” or potential target areas. **Exhibit 12.2** shows a comparison of youth risk factors broken down by location (school/district). By linking youth survey data to other data, further comparisons may be made using triangulation among data sources.

Although geographic indicators are widely collected, there are difficulties with triangulating across sources. Most government agencies collect information for areas smaller than a city. However, different agencies use different methods to define neighborhoods. Census tracts are standard units for collecting and reporting social indicators, but not all government agencies use them. Some rely instead on ZIP codes, which may contain as many as a dozen census tracts; others (police departments in particular) rely on geographic areas they have constructed themselves (such as police districts or precincts). For these agencies, data can usually be broken down by census tract as well, but at considerable expense. A map of the target area, showing the boundaries used by each agency, is critical for keeping track of these different boundaries and making comparisons between geographic areas.

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*When making comparisons between or among groups, caution must be used to avoid using sub-groups that are too small. Statistical averages may become unstable as the number of cases in each group gets smaller.*

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<b>Exhibit 12.2: Average Risk Factor Scores by District Survey of School-Aged Youth Grade 7 Only</b>				
	<b>District 1 (n = 234)</b>	<b>District 2 (n = 302)</b>	<b>District 3 (n = 265)</b>	<b>All Districts (n = 801)</b>
Community	3.20	2.95	3.86	3.32
Family	2.77	2.53	3.58	2.95
School	2.23	2.11	3.33	2.55
Individual	2.64	2.32	3.29	2.73
Peers	3.14	2.68	3.6	3.12
<b>District Average</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>2.93</b>
Note: Possible risk scores ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater risk.				

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## Time-Series Analysis

Time-series analysis can demonstrate how a problem or condition has changed over time, using repeated measures of a single group. Comparisons across time also are referred to as “within-group comparisons.” Using this approach, time periods serve as the level of analysis and earlier measures serve as a baseline. Such comparisons are frequently used to track trends. Of course, care must be taken in labeling a series of changes in the same direction a “trend.” Suppose, for example, a community kept a record of the number of gang offenses that occur every month in a high crime area. If a chart of such offenses showed a consistent increase from the months of January through June, it might look like an increasing trend in offending, at least for the first six months of the year. However, as crime analysts are well aware, there are seasonal effects on crime, and this apparent trend in gang activity may be no different than the regular changes in overall offending. See **Exhibit 12.3** for an example of a time series analysis graphic.

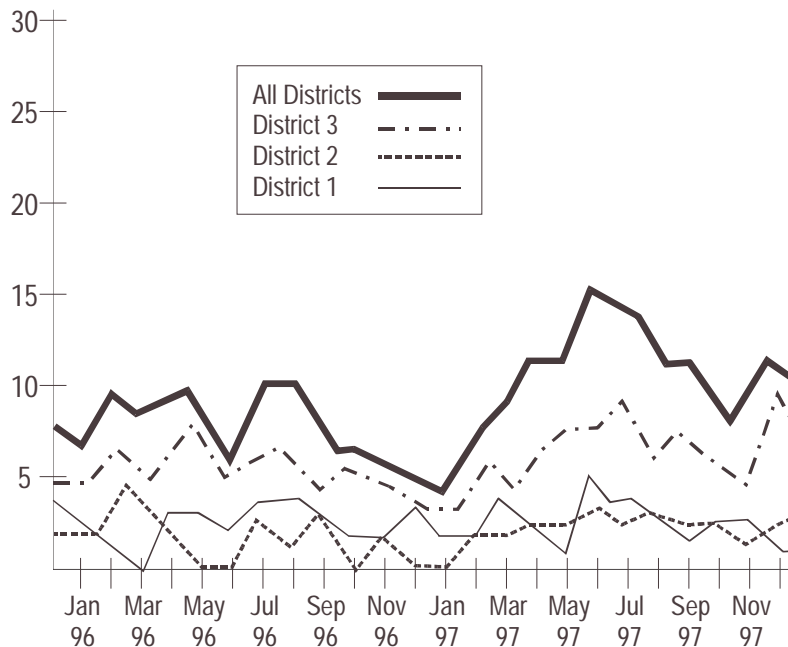
---

*Time-series analysis can demonstrate how a problem or condition has changed over time, using repeated measures of a single group. Such comparisons are frequently used to track trends.*

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### Exhibit 12.3

**Violent Gang-Related Offenses by Month  
January 1996 - December 1998**



# 13

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## Writing the Assessment Report

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The final stages of the assessment involve presenting the results, in the form of an Assessment Report, to the Steering Committee. Once the information is organized, the Assessment Team must examine the data looking for:

- Types of gang-related crime.
- Patterns or changes in gang incident rates.
- Locations of gang crime.
- Increases/decreases in gangs and gang members.
- Heightened citizen concern with gang activity.
- Community perceptions of gang activity.
- Gang-related activity in schools.
- Changes in community demographics.

Since these findings will be the basis of discussion by the Steering Committee about the nature and extent of the community's gang problem, the Committee will need a written report that describes the results of the assessment. Based on the data in the Assessment Report, the Steering Committee will develop a plan to implement the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.

It is neither necessary nor especially helpful that the Assessment Team achieves a consensus of its own at this stage. The team must agree on the facts; i.e., data, and on their limitations and the conflicts among them. The Assessment Report should include graphic displays of the data, supporting analyses, and key findings. It is not the purpose of the Assessment Report to describe priority problems or issues, or to identify the target populations and target areas. Development of the implementation plan—identification of priority problems and target population, and responses to the problem—requires application of values to the facts. The Assessment Team can help, but this is the Steering Committee's job.

Even the most thorough and comprehensive assessment will remain incomplete. There will always be conflicts in the data. For example, youth may say that jobs are the biggest problem, while their parents and teachers are more worried about gang violence. Other vital data may be simply

unavailable. Additionally, opinions and observations are not as accurate a basis for decision making as hard facts, and may even be self-serving, but they may be the best data available. The Assessment Team should be up front in describing the assessment's limitations.

The substance of the report itself depends on the Assessment Team's methods and findings, but a few guidelines apply:

- The purpose of the report is to help the Steering Committee develop priorities in dealing with the gang problem. Thus, the report should be organized around the key findings identified by the data.
- It is rarely helpful to organize the results by the method used; i.e., a section on youth surveys, another on statistical indicators, etc. This focuses attention on what the Assessment Team did, not on what it found. Findings, of course, are what the report is all about.
- The questions posed in Chapters 6-10 should be fully discussed. Tables, charts, and/or graphs illustrating the findings should be utilized throughout the report.
- Few board members will care about methodological details. The report should describe the basic methods used, but a separate methodology section should be provided as an appendix to the report.
- Do not leave out important findings because it may not seem that the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model can apply. The identification of these issues is important for the overall community assessment and should be reported.

The Assessment Team should not think that its work is over when the report is written. It is important to satisfy the Committee that all the important bases have been covered, and this may mean that parts of the assessment must be rewritten or even that further data must be collected. The willingness of the Assessment Team to satisfy the Committee's concerns and curiosity can be an important factor in developing a consensus around the findings, though doing so can be frustrating. It is better to hold several meetings to satisfy any concerns the Steering Committee may have than to launch a major effort with stiff opposition.

The following outline should be used for preparing the Assessment Report.

## Assessment Report Outline

1. **Executive Summary:** This section should provide a brief summary of the key findings of the assessment. If more than one community was assessed, highlights for each should be provided.

2. **Introduction:** This section should provide: (1) purpose of the Assessment Report, (2) a description of the scanning process and the criteria for choosing communities to be assessed, and (3) definitions of gang, gang member, and gang incident as defined by the Steering Committee.

3. **Description of Each Community Being Assessed:** This section of the report should provide a description of each assessed community using data collected through the assessment. Any relevant changes or trends in the demographics should be discussed in this section. The following questions should be answered using the data collected in the General Descriptive Data domain in the Assessment Guide.

- How is the community population described?
- Has the population of the community changed? In what ways?
- Have service needs of the community changed? In what ways?
- What social or demographic factors (including changes or trends) may be adding to the gang problem?

4. **Key Findings (for each community assessed):** This section is key to the report and subsequent development of the Implementation Plan. It should highlight the key findings, drawing upon all the information gathered in each of the data domains for each assessed community.

- Community demographics
- Crime statistics/gang member information
- Student/school/school staff information
- Community perceptions
- Current resources

This section should be organized around the key findings that appear to be contributing to the gang problem in each assessed community. The questions contained in the Assessment Guide (Chapters 6-10) from each domain should be fully discussed and relevant data should be displayed in appropriate tables, graphs, or other displays.

The discussion of each of the key findings should include:

- a. ***Why is this an important finding?*** Why should the Steering Committee consider this relevant?
- b. ***Detailed narrative discussion of the data that led to the identification of the finding.*** Use multiple data sources (both qualitative and quantitative) to discuss each. Data relevant to this finding should also be displayed using appropriate charts, graphs, tables, or other graphics, supported by the data that appears as part of Appendix A.
  - Which area(s), populations, or groups in the community are affected by this finding? Generally, gang problems are likely to be more associated with one or more groups of youth, one or more areas of the community, and one or more gangs. These will become the focus—the “target population,” the “target area,” and the “target gang(s)” – of program efforts.
  - What are the public perceptions about this issue? Does public opinion vary across different groups (community leaders, residents, parents, gang members, students, etc.)? In what ways are these perceptions similar or different?
- c. ***Limitations of the data.*** This section should discuss assumptions that can and cannot be made based on the data and should point out where the data are limited in quality and quantity. For example, gang members to be interviewed were not randomly chosen and do not represent gang members who commit violent crimes; thus less weight should be placed on these interviews. This section should also discuss any inability in obtaining data, whether by policy decisions or unavailability of data.

**5. Summary of Resources (for each assessed community):** This section should provide a summary of the resources in the community that address gangs and gang-related issues. The discussion should center on answers to the questions provided in the Assessment Guide. A complete list of the agencies, organizations, and other sources should be provided as an appendix to the Assessment Report.

6. **Appendices:** This section should include:

- a. Answers to questions from each domain of data (see attached list of questions) – Also provide the data sets used to answer each question.
- b. List of Steering Committee members – Name, agency/organization affiliation
- c. List of Assessment Team members – Name, agency/organization
- d. List of community resources that provide (or could provide) services to gang members (agencies, organizations). List of law enforcement and other justice system programs, services, or activities.
- e. Methodology – For each of the domains in which data were collected (community demographics, gang crime, school, community perception, and current resources), provide the following information:
  - Types and kinds of data collected
  - A description of the process used to collect the data (survey, personal interview, focus group, existing records, police records, etc.)
  - How participants were chosen to participate in each data-collection process (community residents, parents, gang members, community leaders, and all other groups included in the data-collection process)
  - Who collected the data (interviewers, focus group leaders, etc.)
  - The response rate for each type of data-collection process

The methodology section also should include a copy of each data-collection instrument (gang crime data, interview forms, surveys, focus group questions, etc.).

## Questions to Be Answered

### General Descriptive Data

1. How is the community described?
2. Has the population of the community changed?
3. Have the service needs of the population changed?

### Gang Data

4. What gangs are active? How many members in each group? What is their age, race, and gender?
5. What crimes are gangs/gang members committing? How has this changed over time?
6. Where are gang crimes being committed? How has this changed over time?
7. When are gang crimes being committed?
8. Who is committing gang crimes?
9. Who are the victims of gang crime?

### Student and School Data

10. What are the characteristics of each school?
11. What delinquent behaviors are students involved in?
12. What are the characteristics of students involved in gangs or at risk for gang involvement?
13. What issues seem to be contributing to student gang involvement or risk for gang involvement?
14. What risk and protective factors are impacting local youth?
15. What are in-school youths' perceptions about gangs?

### Community Perceptions Data

16. Do community leaders perceive a gang problem? If so, what is that problem? Are they prepared to respond?
17. Do parents perceive their children to be involved in or at risk of involvement in gangs? Why?
18. How do community residents perceive the gang problem? Are community residents satisfied with the current response to gangs? Are residents willing to get involved?

### Current Resources Data

19. What services are being provided (or could be provided to gang members)?
20. What law enforcement strategies are in place to prevent, intervene, and suppress gang activity?
21. Do courts, detention centers, and corrections departments conduct risk assessments that include membership?
22. How has the community historically responded to gang activity?

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