

# **Gangs in South Carolina: An Exploratory Study**

## **Executive Summary**

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# **Gangs in South Carolina: An Exploratory Study**

## **Executive Summary**

This research project was funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics as a supplemental grant to the State Justice Statistics Program for Statistical Analysis Centers through the South Carolina Department of Public Safety's Office of Justice Programs. Project objectives included describing the presence of gangs in South Carolina, examining the nature and extent of gang activity, and discussing the environmental conditions and resources related to gang activity.

Although the state collects gross measures of criminal activity by juveniles, there is no collated source of data that directly relates criminal activity to gangs. Moreover, previous statewide studies of gang activity in South Carolina that might provide a foundation or guide for the current study have not utilized extensive data collection. Consequently, this was an exploratory study, aimed at providing a broad overview of perceptions of gang activity within the state.

Our approach was to look at the perceptions of those who might have the best knowledge of gang activity: police chiefs and sheriffs from across the state and county agents from the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon. Obtaining data from relevant criminal justice professionals across the state allowed us to examine

perceptions of gang activity by region and profession. For an inside look, we subsequently interviewed incarcerated juveniles from selected jurisdictions to obtain their perceptions of gang problems in their home communities. The results of this study provide an initial foundation for future research and policy development in attempting to address gang-related problems.

## **Methods**

The primary method of data collection included a mail survey of field officers from the Department of Juvenile Justice; agents-in-charge from the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon; and sheriffs and police chiefs throughout the state. In total, more than 600 law enforcement professionals, with representatives from every county, returned the survey for a 55% return rate. In addition, face-to-face interviews were held with 50 juveniles detained at the Department of Juvenile Justice.

## **Overview of Results**

From the mail survey of law enforcement; juvenile justice; and probation, parole and pardon professionals, a statewide picture of gangs begins to emerge. Criminal justice professionals perceive that some level of gang activity exists throughout the state, ranging from mostly gang “wannabes” in rural areas to the presence of more organized gangs in metropolitan settings.

According to perceptions of respondents, the majority of gangs are loosely organized, with a sprinkling of a few more highly organized gangs in urban areas. Gangs are perceived to consist mostly of teens with a few adult members. Females, for the most part, have not yet played

a big part in gang makeup or activity in South Carolina. According to perceptions of respondents, the activities of most gangs center around drugs: buying drugs, using drugs, selling drugs. Other activities frequently perceived by respondents as being associated with gangs arguably relate to illegal drug activity: gun possession, assault, and burglary. Illegal drug activity and associated violence by gangs are perceived to have very important negative impacts on communities.

Although a statewide picture of gang activity is important for policy development, some communities are perceived to be more at risk for criminal behavior from gangs than others, and thus may require a more immediate community response. Gangs are perceived to be especially problematic in urban areas, though several rural areas also indicated unwelcome activity of gangs. There is a less clear picture of the extent of gang problems in schools. Although respondents in all counties indicated gang activities in schools, the exact nature and extent of such activity is unknown.

Of possible approaches to address gang problems, suppression was the least favored method, with prevention and intervention methods more often favored, even by law enforcement officers. Whatever approach is taken, there are obstacles: Most respondents from both rural and urban counties perceived a high degree of denial by community leaders of gang problems in their jurisdictions.

A final note of caution: Despite all these data, when asked specifically, few of the hundreds of mail respondents claim to be very knowledgeable about gangs.

## Data Sources

- *There is no direct systematic statewide collection of gang activity data.* Although no statewide data exist, communities that are engaged in various juvenile delinquency prevention efforts do collect some measures of gang activity. These efforts are part of larger efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency. Unfortunately, these efforts are not collated in any one place to present a statewide picture of gang activity.
- *The best indirect measures for gang activity come from those who work most closely with juvenile delinquents.* Law enforcement officers and others who have contact with juveniles notice the presence and activity of gangs. For this reason, a statewide survey was mailed to sheriffs and police chiefs from all counties, county field representatives from the Department of Juvenile Justice, and agents-in-charge at the Department of Probation, Pardon, and Parole. A total of 659 professionals from the three departments responded to the mail survey. Response rates were as follows:

Department of Pardon, Probation and Parole	361/582	62%
Department of Juvenile Justice	156/297	52%
Sheriffs and Police Chiefs	142/263	54%



- *Juvenile delinquents are also a valuable source of knowledge of gang activity.*

Forty-five face-to-face interviews were conducted with juveniles detained at the Department of Juvenile Justice. The juveniles were selected on the basis of their prior residence in highly populated counties (Charleston, Greenville, and Richland) and one other community (Florence).

### **Limits of Data Sources**

- *Very few survey respondents report being “very knowledgeable” regarding gang activity, or having a “great deal of contact” with gangs.* Of 518 mail survey respondents, only 68 (7.6%) reported that they were very knowledgeable. This finding suggests that for most communities, either there is not a sufficient amount of gang activity for people to be knowledgeable or juvenile delinquency is not being addressed as primarily a “gang issue.” Those who responded as being the most knowledgeable were in counties where a higher rate of gang presence was noted.
- *Because of the lack of hard data, respondents’ perceptions may reflect popular stereotypes.* Given the absence of direct knowledge of gang activity or hard data documenting gang activity, respondents’ perceptions may be influenced by common stereotypes of gangs, rather than actual experience.
- *The number of respondents from each county varied, ranging from just a few from*

*rural counties to over 70 in Greenville County. Given the small number of respondents from rural counties, and the significant number of respondents indicating the absence of gangs in their jurisdiction, caution must be used to guard against overinterpretation of the data.*

## **Key Findings**

### **□ Gang Presence in South Carolina**

- *Gang “wannabes” were perceived to be present and a minor problem across the state. Gang “wannabes” are often identified as juveniles who mimic the appearance of known gangs by wearing similar dress and adopting signs and symbols. They are not organized and have not committed gang-related crimes. Respondents from the mail survey perceive the presence of “wannabes” in every county. For the majority of counties, “wannabes” were perceived to be either a minor problem or no problem.*
- *Gang “wannabes” were seen as most problematic in urban and a few rural counties. In the most populated counties in South Carolina (Greenville, Richland, Charleston) and a few rural counties, mail survey respondents indicated the highest degree of problematic behavior from “wannabes.”*
- *Loosely associated gangs were perceived to be present and a minor problem across the state. Loosely associated gangs are identified as groups of youth who*

hang together and occasionally commit crimes as part of gang-related activity, but are not highly organized. Although criminal activity is not the main activity of these groups, they do pose some problems for communities. The absence of police force intelligence on these groups and the fluid nature of group membership make it difficult to discern the exact nature and extent of any illegal activity. Still, mail survey respondents reported the presence of these loosely associated gangs in every county. For the majority of counties, they were perceived as not a problem or a minor problem.

- *Loosely associated gangs were seen as most problematic in urban and some rural counties.* According to respondents, loosely associated gangs were perceived to present problems for some communities, particularly urban counties and a small number of rural counties.
- *Organized gangs were perceived to be rare in almost all rural counties.* Organized gangs typically have a group name, a leader, their own turf, special clothes, signs and symbols that indicate a specific affiliation, and engage in illegal activities as a primary function of the group. Most mail survey respondents indicated the absence or minimal presence of organized gangs in rural communities.
- *When respondents noted the presence of organized gangs, they were more often*

*reported as being present in urban areas.* Consistent with national reports, organized gangs appear more often in urban settings, and indeed, were more identified in South Carolina urban areas.

- *Respondents from the Department of Juvenile Justice were more likely to report the presence of gangs than either respondents from the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon or law enforcement officers.*

#### ❑ **Gang Typology in South Carolina**

- *Reports of loosely associated gangs outnumbered organized gangs by a ratio of five to two (5:2).* Respondents reported wide variations in the number of loosely associated and organized gangs that are present in their jurisdiction. On average, mail survey respondents indicated that there are 1 to 10 loosely organized gangs and 0 to 5 organized gangs in their jurisdiction. Respondents in urban counties tended to report higher numbers of gangs than those in rural communities.
- *To the extent that gangs are perceived to exist, they usually number from 5 to 20 members.* Of the mail survey respondents, 88% reported that gangs range from 5 to 20 members. Some mail survey respondents indicated that some gangs in urban areas exceeded 20 members.

- *Respondents indicated that most gangs are comprised of males under the age of 18.* National surveys indicate that most gangs have a mix of adolescents and young adults (over the age of 18), but South Carolina survey respondents indicated that for the majority of reported gangs, membership consisted of younger males.
- *Few, if any, female members are reported as being involved in gangs.* National surveys indicate that there is a slight rise in the number of female gang members and the establishment of all female gangs. South Carolina survey respondents indicated that for the majority of reported gangs, membership consisted of males with only minor involvement by females. The presence of all female gangs was very rarely reported.

#### ❑ **Gang Activity in South Carolina**

- *Gangs are engaged in a variety of criminal activities.* Mail survey respondents were asked to indicate the frequency (never, rarely, sometimes, often) with which they perceived gangs to be engaged in a variety of criminal activities. The results indicate that:
  - Gang members are sometimes or often involved in drug sales, drug use, illegal gun possession, vandalism, assault, and burglary.
  - Gang members are rarely or sometimes involved in robbery, graffiti, car theft, retail theft, fighting other gangs, bias crimes, and

murder.

- Gang members are never or rarely involved in rape, prostitution, extortion, and arson.

- *In response to an open-ended question—“What are the two or three most important problems or impacts caused by gangs in your community?”—illegal drug activity, property crimes, and violent crime were the three most frequently cited problems. The sale, use, and distribution of drugs were by far the most common problems identified by mail survey respondents, with 242 responses. Next, 141 respondents indicated property crime, theft, or some variant of property offense as having an important impact on the community. Third, a category of crimes best labeled as personal violent offenses (e.g., assault) was identified by 136 respondents as an important problem caused by gangs.*
- *In responding to the open-ended question, mail survey respondents identified a wide variety of other problems as having an important impact on the community. In order of descending rank, these problems included: vandalism, fear and intimidation, guns/weapons, graffiti, school disruption, negative influence on youth, community annoyance, school dropout, and the negative effect on families.*
- *There is variability in the degree of gang activity perceived to exist in schools. Mail survey respondents were asked whether there was no activity, little activity,*

some activity, or a great deal of activity by youth gangs in schools. Across the state in every county, criminal justice professionals report at least a little activity by youth gangs in schools. Some counties report higher levels of activity than others in school. On a scale of 1 (no activity) to 4 (great deal of activity) the statewide average of gang activity reported in schools was 2.73.

## □ **Juvenile Responses**

- *Juveniles identified peer pressure and peer influences as the number one cause of adolescents getting involved in delinquent activity.* Of the juveniles interviewed, seventy percent (70%) cited peer pressure as the most frequent cause of adolescents getting involved in delinquent activity. Follow-up questions revealed that direct peer pressure and desires to “fit in” and to be like older kids and adults contributed to delinquent activity.
- *Juveniles identified several problems within families that make it more likely that adolescents will get involved in delinquent activity.* Lack of parental attention and support (46%) was at the top of the list. Other problems included abusive family members (23%); alcohol, drugs in the family (20%); family in-fighting (16%); no father, single parent (16%); and separation and divorce (12%).
- *Juveniles identified several problems with schools that make it more likely that*

*adolescents get involved in delinquent activity.* The most frequently cited problem was fighting, including fights over girls, cited by 34% of the juveniles interviewed. Other problems included peer pressure, treatment by teachers, skipping classes, and related problems of not being able to keep up with schoolwork and a dislike of school.

· *Juveniles identified several problems in neighborhoods that make it more likely that adolescents will get involved in delinquent activity.* The presence of drugs in neighborhoods (e.g., drug houses, street dealing, and the money from drug dealers) was the leading problem cited by juveniles. Other neighborhood problems identified included witnessing violence, burglary, the presence of gangs, peer pressure, and fights over girls, turf, and money.

· *Juveniles identified property theft as the most serious problem caused by gangs in their communities.* Other problems identified by at least 20% of the respondents include illegal drug activity, fights, and shootings.

· *Juveniles identified drugs as the biggest problem caused by adolescents in their communities.* Of the juveniles interviewed for this study, 74% of them identified drugs as the leading problem caused by adolescents (in contrast to problems caused by gangs). Stealing (48%) was the next biggest problem identified by juveniles.



## □ **Community Challenges and Resources**

- *Respondents perceive that gang problems are staying about the same or getting worse statewide.* In response to the question of whether over the last few years the gang problem has gotten better, stayed the same or gotten worse, the majority of mail survey respondents stated that the problem has stayed the same or gotten worse. Only 5% of the mail survey respondents indicated that the problem had gotten better; 44% indicated the problem had stayed the same; and 51% indicated the gang problem had worsened in their jurisdiction.
- *In contrast, juveniles were much more optimistic about the direction of gang problems in their communities.* Only 15% of respondents indicated that the gang problem was getting worse, 45% indicated the problem had stayed the same, and 28% reported gang problems to be improving.
- *Respondents indicate a fairly high level of perceived denial by leaders of gang problems by community leaders.* On a scale of one to ten, the statewide average for perceived denial by community leaders was six, with a standard deviation of 2.45. The level of denial by community leaders was perceived consistently across the three groups surveyed - Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of

Probation, Parole and Pardon, and law enforcement officers.

- *Results from mail surveys show a preference for intervention and prevention approaches over suppression as the best strategy to decrease gang activity.* Mail survey respondents were asked to rank order preferences where resources should be placed in their community. Choices were for prevention (e.g., gang awareness programs), intervention (e.g., mentoring), or suppression (e.g., anti-gang law enforcement) efforts.
  - 49% Intervention should have the highest priority.
  - 25% Suppression should have the highest priority.
  - 24% Prevention should have the highest priority.
  
  - 14% Intervention should have the lowest priority.
  - 30% Prevention should have the lowest priority.
  - 55% Suppression should have the lowest priority.
  
- *The preference for intervention, prevention and suppression varied by county.* Within individual counties there was not complete consensus on the priorities for resources, and in different counties, different priorities emerged. For example, in metropolitan areas, suppression was given a higher priority than intervention or prevention.

- *Juveniles preferred prevention and intervention programs over suppression programs.* When asked which types of programs should receive the most resources, 58% of the juveniles indicated intervention programs and 31% indicated prevention programs. Only 8% of the juveniles indicated suppression programs.
- *The most frequently identified ideas by juveniles to reduce juvenile delinquency were to increase the number of activities to occupy juveniles' time, including jobs and recreational opportunities.* Less frequently stated ideas included providing more positive role models and counseling.

### **Concluding Observations**

First, the results of this report underscore the need for more detailed study of gangs in South Carolina. As indicated previously, because of the absence of “hard” data that specifically links criminal activity to gang membership, the results of this study reflect only people’s perceptions of gang activity in various communities. Depending on the population surveyed, these perceptions will vary. A case in point is the difference in perceptions between the juveniles and the criminal justice professionals regarding the level of gang activity in schools and the perception of whether gang problems were worsening. Criminal justice professionals’ views were more pessimistic, but it is hard to know who has the more accurate understanding.

Second, it is difficult to distinguish ordinary delinquent acts committed by juveniles from delinquent acts that are the direct result of gang membership. Such a distinction is necessary

when considering appropriate policy and community responses.

Third, the results only hinted at the potential problems caused by gangs in schools. Although respondents from all counties indicated at least some gang activity in schools, the exact nature and extent of problems caused by gangs in schools remains unknown.

Fourth, the results of the study clearly indicate that problems of juvenile delinquency and gang related criminal activities are perceived to be community-specific. Counties have different levels of problems and may have alternate ideas about the best way to address them. Thus, although a statewide survey provides some foundation for understanding the nature and magnitude of problems caused by gangs, policy responses might include allowing community-specific responses.

Finally, some communities have already begun to address gang problems. Anti-gang initiatives and community-wide efforts to prevent juvenile violence are underway in a number of communities across the state. Although cataloging such initiatives was beyond the scope of this research, future researchers might study how community-driven crime prevention initiatives can reduce juvenile delinquency and gang-related criminal behavior.

## **Recommendations**

*Define Gangs.* As noted throughout this report, there is no common definition of what constitutes a gang or gang related behavior. Thus, delinquent acts by juveniles appear inconsistently attributed to membership in a gang, though the juvenile may or may not be a member of a gang and the delinquent behavior may or may not be the result of gang membership.

The denial of gang activity contained in this report may be a reflection of different definitions of what constitutes gangs and gang activity. A recommendation is made to have some community and statewide discussion focusing on defining gangs and gang related behavior.

*Collect Data.* The absence of systematic data collection of gang related incidents by law enforcement and community agencies presents problems for understanding the nature and trends of gang activity. The result may be an inadequate understanding of gangs within a community and the potential for perceptions of gang activity to be distorted by stereotypes. A recommendation is made to address data collection deficiencies. Specifically, a recommendation is made to develop strategies within communities to collect data. Such strategies might include creating or expanding gang task forces to work with neighborhoods, schools and other community organizations to develop common understanding and reporting of gang activity. Another strategy would be to work within currently existing community groups or agencies to coordinate sharing of gang-related information. The strategies might be coordinated at the state level to allow meaningful exchanges of information between communities and among state agencies.

*Develop Community-specific Gang Reduction Approaches.* The variance in perceptions of gang activity within and between communities suggests that no single approach will be effective across all communities. For those communities in which there is a more serious gang problem, a combination of suppression, intervention and prevention strategies might be utilized. For those communities in which there is little or no perceived gang activity, incorporating gang prevention

and intervention within broader juvenile violence prevention efforts may be sufficient. A recommendation is made to encourage community-specific responses to gang problems.

*Decrease Factors that Put Juveniles at Risk for Gang Membership, Increase Protective Factors.*

The perceptions of juveniles interviewed in this report confirm the scholarly literature's account of the factors that put juveniles at increased risk for gang membership and gang activity. Those factors typically identified are individual, peer, family, school, neighborhood, and community factors. The two most salient factors reported by juveniles were peer pressure and lack of parental support. Thus, a recommendation is made to consider implementing programs with demonstrated efficacy at providing prosocial peer interventions and strengthening family supports.

*Target At-risk Schools.* There was considerable variance in the perceived gang activity in schools. Clearly, some schools are more at risk for gang related activity than others. A recommendation is made to identify schools at risk for increased gang activity and explore options for reducing gang related behavior. One program possibility is the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program, endorsed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which has shown some early positive results.

*Gather Information on Current Gang Reduction Efforts.* Communities are engaged in a variety of suppression, intervention, and prevention efforts aimed at reducing gangs and gang related activity. Some of these efforts originate from grassroots leadership, some from state agency

initiatives and some from non-profit organizations. A recommendation is made to discover what ongoing efforts are underway in communities to address gang problems throughout South Carolina.

*Evaluate Promising Community Gang Reduction Efforts.* Research and program evaluations will help to determine the efficacy of existing gang suppression, intervention and prevention efforts. This information will aid other communities in addressing similar gang problems. Thus, a recommendation is made to conduct research and evaluate those programs which appear most promising at addressing gang related behavior.

*Establish a Statewide Dissemination Plan of Useful Information on Gangs.* Assuming there are efforts made to collect data and design and evaluate gang suppression, prevention, and intervention programs, a plan is called for to disseminate useful information to interested parties. Federal-government-sponsored web sites on the Internet currently host many useful publications and bibliographies related to gangs (see e.g., [www.ncjrs.org](http://www.ncjrs.org)). A recommendation is made to make available information that is of particular relevance to South Carolina's ongoing state and community efforts to address gang problems.

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## Appendix A Mail Survey

**The 1998 South Carolina Youth Gang Survey**  
**A survey of law enforcement officers conducted by the**  
**USC College of Criminal Justice and the USC Institute for Families in Society**  
**with funding by the SC Department of Public Safety**

**The information gathered from this survey will help policy makers understand and properly address the issue of gangs in South Carolina. We would like you to answer the following questions as accurately as possible. All of your individual answers will be kept strictly confidential, only overall summaries and percentages will be reported. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. When you have completed this survey please return it to us in the envelope we have provided. We thank you for your cooperation.**

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**To start we would like to find out whether or not each of the following is a problem in your jurisdiction.**

Gang “wannabes” = juveniles who mimic the appearance of known gangs by wearing similar dress, adopting signs and symbols, but who are not organized and any crimes committed are not gang related.  
 Loosely associated gangs = groups of youth who hang together and occasionally commit crimes as part of gang related activity, but who are not highly organized, and criminal activity is not the main activity of the group.  
 Organized gangs = groups that have a name, a leader, their own turf, special clothes, signs and symbols that indicate a specific affiliation, engage in illegal activities as the primary function of the group.

1. In your opinion, to what extent are wannabes, loosely associated gangs and organized gangs present in your jurisdiction and how much of a problem do they pose for law enforcement?  
 (For each type of gang, circle the “X” below the response you believe is most accurate)

	Not Present	Present but not a problem	Present and a minor problem	Present and a moderate problem	Present and a major problem
Gang “Wannabes”	X	X	X	X	X
Loosely associated Gangs	X	X	X	X	<b>X</b>
Organized gangs	X	X	X	X	X

**If you answered “Not Present” for all three kinds of gangs PLEASE STOP NOW and return this survey to us.**

**If gangs are present in your jurisdiction PLEASE FINISH THIS SURVEY.**

2. Over the last few years how has the gang problem in your jurisdiction changed? That is, would you say that the gang problem in your jurisdiction is getting worse, is staying the same, or is getting better? **(Circle the most appropriate response)**

Getting worse

Staying the Same Getting Better

3. Approximately how many of the three types of gangs are there in your jurisdiction?

Wannabes \_\_\_\_\_  
Loosely associated gangs \_\_\_\_\_  
Organized gangs \_\_\_\_\_

4. To the extent that there is a gang problem in your jurisdiction, what is the average size of a gang? **(Circle the most appropriate response)**

5-20 members

21-30 members

31-40 members

over 40 members

**Next we would like to ask you a few questions about who belongs to gangs in your jurisdiction and what impact they have in your jurisdiction.**

5. In your opinion, roughly what percentage of youth gang members in your jurisdiction are juveniles (16 and under), roughly what percent are young adults (17 to 25), and roughly what percent are older adults (26 and older).

Gang members 16 and under account for \_\_\_\_\_ percent of gang members

Gang members 17 to 25 account for \_\_\_\_\_ percent of gang members

Gang members 26 and older account for \_\_\_\_\_ percent of gang members

6. In your jurisdiction, to what extent are females involved in gangs?

No involvement

Minor involvement

Moderate involvement

Major involvement

**7. How frequently do the gangs in your jurisdiction engaged in the following criminal activities? (For each type of crime circle the most appropriate response)**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	
Drug sales	X	X	X		X
Drug use	X	X	X		X
Graffiti	X	X	X	X	
Burglary	X	X	X	X	
Robbery	X	X	X	X	
Car theft	X	X	X	X	
Fighting other gangs	X	X	X		X
Arson	X	X	X		X
Retail theft	X	X	X		X
Prostitution	X	X	X		X
Extortion	X	X	X		X
Vandalism	X	X	X		X
Illegal gun possession	X	X	X	X	
Murder	X	X	X	X	
Assault	X	X	X	X	
Rape	X	X	X		X
Hate/bias crimes	X	X	X	X	



8. In your community, what are the 2 or 3 most important problems or impacts caused by gangs?

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9. To what extent are youth gangs in your jurisdiction active in local schools? Would you say that there is a great deal of activity, some activity, little activity or no activity at all by youth gangs in local schools? **(Circle the most appropriate response)**

Great deal of activity    Some activity    Little activity    No activity at all

10. In your opinion, to what extent do community leaders in your jurisdiction deny the gang problem? **(Check one rating, the lower the number the lower the level of denial, the higher the number the higher the level of denial)**

NO										HIGH
DENIAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 DENIAL

11. Please rank order (1= highest priority, 2= middle priority, 3= lowest priority) where you think resources should be placed to address gang-related problems in your jurisdiction.

Rank (1,2,3)

\_\_\_\_\_ Prevention programs (such as gang awareness programs for all youths)

\_\_\_\_\_ Intervention programs (such as after school programs, mentoring, etc. for at-risk youths and current gang members)

\_\_\_\_\_ Suppression programs (anti-gang law enforcement efforts)

12. How knowledgeable are you about the gang problem in your jurisdiction?

Not at all            Somewhat            Very  
knowledgeable    knowledgeable    knowledgeable

13. In the course of your regular duties, how much contact do you have with juveniles and with gang members?

	No contact	Very little contact	Moderate contact	A great deal of contact
Juveniles	X	X	X	X
Gang members	X	X	X	X

14. If there is anything else you would like to tell us about gangs in jurisdiction and/or the response of your community to them please do so below and/or on the back of the survey.

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**THIS CONCLUDES OUR SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORTS.**

**DATA CONTROL NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B Youth Questionnaire

Understanding and Preventing Juvenile Delinquency  
*Youth Version*

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group?

- 1 White/Caucasian
- 2 Black/African-American
- 3 Hispanic/Latino
- 4 Asian American
- 5 Native American
- 6 Mixed race (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
- 7 Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

3. How long have you been here at DJJ?

4. What town or city were you living in when you came to DJJ? \_\_\_\_\_

5. In your community, what are the 2 or 3 biggest problems caused by adolescents?

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6. What sorts of things do you think lead adolescents to get involved in delinquent activity?

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7. What sorts of problems **within families** do you think make it more likely that adolescents will get involved in delinquent activity?

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8. What sorts of problems **with peers (other adolescents)** do you think make it more likely that adolescents will get involved in delinquent activity?

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9. What sorts of problems **related to school** make it more likely that adolescents will get involved in delinquent activity?

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10. What sorts of problems **in neighborhoods** make it more likely that adolescents will get involved in delinquent activity?

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**We are interested in whether or not you think that gangs are a problem in your community. There are different ways of talking about juveniles and their involvement in gangs:**

**Gang “wannabes”** are adolescents who may look like members of gangs (for example, wearing similar clothes, using signs and symbols), but who are not actually members of organized gangs. Any crimes that these adolescents commit are not gang related.

**Loosely associated gangs** are groups of youth who hang together and occasionally commit crimes as part of gang related activity, but who are not highly organized. Criminal activity is not the main activity of the group.

**Organized gangs** are groups that have a name, a leader, their own turf, special clothes, signs and symbols that indicate a specific gang membership. A major activity of the gang is committing crimes.

11. In your opinion, to what extent are **gang wannabes, loosely associated gangs, and organized gangs** present in your home community and how much of a problem are they? **(Indicate the most appropriate number for each.)**

	Not Present	Present but not a problem	Present and a minor problem	Present and a moderate problem	Present and a major problem	I don't know
Gang “Wannabes”	1	2	3	4	5	6
Loosely associated Gangs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Organized gangs	1	2	3	4	5	6

12. Over the last few years how has the gang problem in your community changed? That is, would you say that the gang problem in your home community is getting worse, is staying the same, or is getting better? **(Indicate the most appropriate response)**

Getting worse                  Staying the Same                  Getting Better                  I don't know

13. In your community, what are the 2 or 3 most serious problems caused by gangs?

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14. To what extent are youth gangs in your community active in local schools? Would you say that there is a great deal of activity, some activity, little activity or no activity at all by youth gangs in local schools?

Great deal of activity      Some activity      Little activity      No activity at all      I don't know

15. In your community, what would you say are the most effective programs to reduce juvenile delinquency?

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16. In your community, what do you think needs to be done to reduce juvenile delinquency?

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17. There are different types of programs to try to reduce juvenile delinquency in communities. Some are prevention programs (such as school-based programs to help kids avoid getting involved in drugs and violence), others are intervention programs (such as after-school programs or mentoring programs for kids who have gotten in trouble), and still others are suppression programs (such as law enforcement efforts to suppress gangs).

In your community, which of these types of programs (prevention, intervention, or suppression programs) do you think should receive the most resources (time, money, and effort)? Which should receive the least resources?

(Rank order 1 = most resources, 3 = least resources)

\_\_\_\_\_ Prevention programs

\_\_\_\_\_ Intervention programs

\_\_\_\_\_ Suppression programs

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about delinquency in your community and/or the response of your community to delinquency?

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