

# COUNCIL OF JUVENILE JUSTICE ADMINISTRATORS TOOLKIT:

## Gang Reduction Strategies for Juvenile Justice Facilities

May 2023



This toolkit was prepared by the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA) with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children and young people with respect to their educational, economic, social and health outcomes. Their work focuses on strengthening families, building stronger communities, and ensuring access to opportunity.

**Workgroup Members:**

- Michael Dempsey, Executive Director, CJJA
- Wendi Davis, Assistant Executive Director, CJJA
- Natalie Walker, Director of Administration, CJJA
- Tanya Washington, Senior Associate, Juvenile Justice Strategy Group, The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Sharon Pette, CJJA Consultant/Lead Author (Effective System Innovations, LLC [ESI]); [www.rapidesi.com](http://www.rapidesi.com); [sharon@rapidesi.com](mailto:sharon@rapidesi.com)
- Felix Mickens, CJJA Consultant/Co-Author (Mickens and Associates); [felix@mickensassociates.com](mailto:felix@mickensassociates.com)

**CJJA would like to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the technical guidance and expertise provided during the development of this toolkit. Their contributions and support led to the development of this valuable resource for the field of juvenile justice. We acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this release are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.**

Copyright © 2023 Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA)  
All rights reserved.

Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means or stored in any database or retrieval system, without prior permission of CJJA.

**Suggested citation:**

Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators. (2023). *Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators toolkit. Gang Reduction Strategies for Juvenile Justice Facilities*. Hingham, MA: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.cjja.net/resources/>.

Copies of this toolkit and its appendices can be downloaded at <https://www.cjja.net/resources/>.

Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators  
350 Lincoln Street, Suite 2400 | Hingham, MA 02043 | Tel: 781-843-2663 | Fax: 781-843-1688

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Gang-Related Legislative Actions .....</b>                                      | <b>14</b> |
| Federal government resource allocation. ....                                       | 14        |
| Federal legislation.....   | 14        |
| Developing and providing access to research-based resources.....                   | 14        |
| Changes to state regulations .....   | 15        |
| <b>Gang Definitions and Criteria.....</b>  | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Factors Influencing Gang Involvement.....</b>                                   | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Risk Factors and Embeddedness.....</b>  | <b>22</b> |
| Risk Factors.....  | 22        |
| Push/Pull Factors.....   | 27        |
| Embeddedness .....   | 28        |
| <b>Assessments .....</b>   | <b>31</b> |
| Risk Needs Assessments .....   | 32        |
| Program Screening and Diagnostic Tools .....                                       | 34        |
| <b>Role of Race .....</b>  | <b>36</b> |
| <b>Girls in Gangs .....</b>  | <b>41</b> |
| <b>OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.....</b>   | <b>45</b> |
| OJJDP Gang Model Components .....  | 47        |
| <b>Treatment Interventions: Effective Strategies and Promising Practices .....</b> | <b>56</b> |
| Prevention .....   | 56        |
| Intervention.....  | 61        |
| Mentoring Programs and Credible Messengers .....                                   | 66        |
| Transition Planning and Reentry .....  | 71        |
| Social Embeddedness Scales and Program Screening Tools.....                        | 75        |
| The Role of Relationships .....  | 79        |
| Suppression .....  | 82        |

**Exiting Gangs** ..... 90

**Gang Intelligence: Using Data**..... 93

**Future Considerations**..... 96

**Additional Resources** ..... 99

**Appendices** ..... 99

    Alameda County (CA) Probation Department ..... 99

    Massachusetts DYS ..... 99

    Ohio DYS..... 99

**References** ..... 125

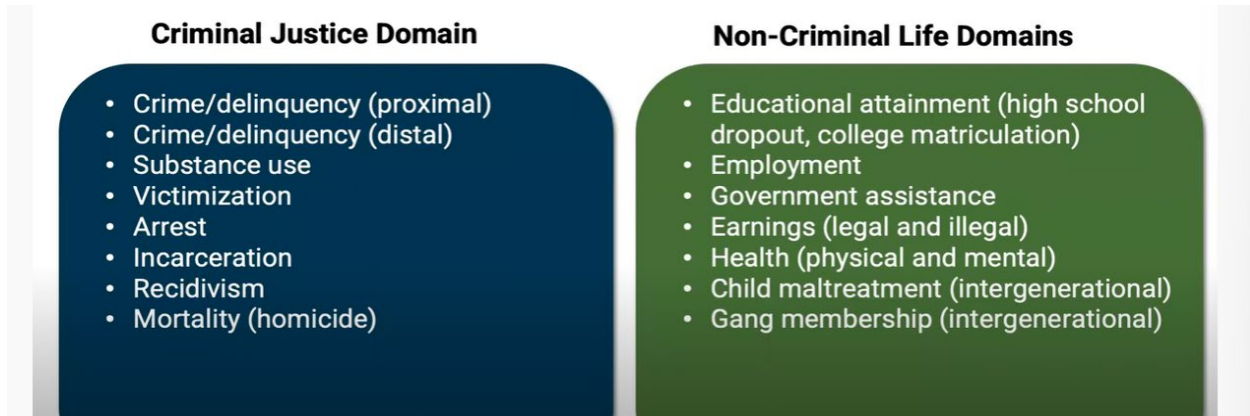
## Executive Summary

Gang violence is a critical issue that continues to plague individuals, families, and communities throughout the United States. The issue of gang-violence is not specific to a particular race or ethnicity and the impacts of gang involvement are far-reaching and often, devastating.

Research shows that gang affiliation has criminal and non-criminal consequences on individuals as well as communities at large. We know that gang violence leaves community members in fear for their safety. Additionally, acts of violence drain resources from communities due to an increased burden placed on police officers, emergency response teams, hospitals, and criminal justice partners (i.e., court officials, parole/probation officers, etc.) when responding to gang-related incidents. Additionally, studies have shown that gang violence negatively impacts real estate prospects as families seek to leave gang-affected neighborhoods and other individuals resist moving into these areas.

Gang violence is not unique to the community. Over the past quarter century there has been a steady ebb and flow of gang violence within juvenile justice facilities. This gang-induced violence has led to a never-ending cycle of violence where staff and youth fear for safety inside facilities. This dynamic has incubated conditions that fuel an increase in the use of force; isolation/room confinement practices; and staff and youth injuries. The net result is poor conditions for the most needy and troublesome youth in our care. This toolkit offers policy and practice considerations to help fracture the cycle of gang-related incidents in juvenile justice facilities.

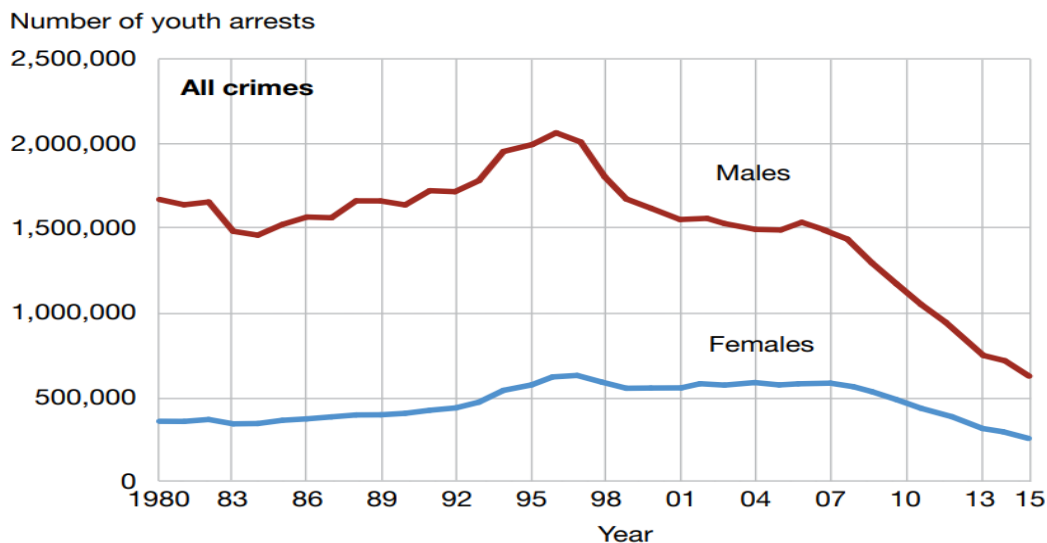
On an individual level, gang involvement threatens to set youth on a negative life trajectory. Gang involvement steers youth away from pro-social activities and creates a “ceiling” on opportunities as youth attempt to navigate life choices. Research shows that youth involved in gangs are more likely to commit acts of violence; are more at risk for substance abuse; and are more likely to be incarcerated than peers who are not involved in gangs.<sup>1</sup> Among the secondary long-term consequences of gang involvement for youth are future employment restrictions; decreased financial earnings; increased reliance on government assistance<sup>1</sup>; increased *“...health-risk behaviors, such as substance use and high-risk sexual behavior...[and] high levels of chronic stress and mental health problems...that may, in turn, lead to chronic health conditions.”*<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, these issues fall on local communities and public agencies to address, causing further resource drain for communities who are already operating with deficiencies. It is apt to say that gang involvement is not a “his, her, or they” problem but rather a public health crisis to which communities must respond.



Pyrooz, D. (2021, July 29). *Community Violence Intervention – Addressing Gangs: Understanding Youth Gang Involvement* [PowerPoint Slide].<sup>3</sup>

Data detailing the prevalence and trends of gang activities within communities across the United States is limited at best. This is in part due to inaccurate tracking mechanisms; inconsistent definitions of gang membership and activities; and lack of funds to support research on the topic of gang reduction. *During the 1980s, the gang problem in the United States became widespread and communities around the country were struggling with an increase in associated youth violence.*<sup>4</sup> In the 1980's and 1990's the nation saw a significant trend upward "....in the gang problem in large-, mid-, and small-sized cities, in suburban areas, small towns, rural areas and on Indian reservations in almost all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the territories."<sup>5</sup> A recent study showed "...from 2009 through 2015, the relative decline in arrests for boys and girls was the same (down 49%)."<sup>6</sup> The graphical representation below highlights this overall decline, with 2015 having an all-time low in the number of arrests for girls and boys.<sup>6</sup>

### Arrest trends differed between girls and boys



Ehrmann, S., Hyland, N., & Puzzanchera, C. (April 2019). Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. *Juvenile Justice Statistics National Report Series Bulletin*. Page 4. Retrieved from <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/pubs/251486.pdf><sup>6</sup>

While arrests of juveniles have been declining, the impacts of gang involvement have held steady. The ripple effect that gang-involvement has on families and society warrants consistent attention and appropriate resource allocation. Much of the gang research to date focuses on gangs in community settings and in adult prisons. There are very few studies on gangs in juvenile justice facilities. Yet, facility administrators and staff can testify to the litany of challenges they face on a day-to-day basis when managing gang members and related incidents in secure custody settings. Some of the collateral impacts gangs have on facilities include:

- **Gang violence within facilities can heighten staff and youth fear for safety and negatively impact overall staff wellness. Ultimately, the increased safety risks can prompt an increase in staff turnover.** Staff who do not feel safe in the workplace because of continued gang violence may increase their use of sick time and may eventually choose to leave their positions. Reduced staff-to-youth ratios resulting from vacancies increases risk of youth and staff injuries. Custodial settings operate 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week. As such, staff are often mandated to work overtime to cover vacancies which can lead to staff burnout, decreased staff morale, and subsequent incidents.
- **In a secure custody setting, staff turnover resulting from an increase in violent incidents within facilities is financially costly.** High staff turnover costs agencies money (often unanticipated expenses) – i.e., overtime to cover vacancies; legal fees resulting from an increase in the number of incidents; workers compensation claims; etc. In the long-run, gang violence in facilities can make it difficult and perhaps, impossible to recruit new direct care staff in the future.
- **Gang violence within facilities threatens the agency and facility missions, as serious incidents disrupt regular therapeutic interactions and interventions.** Juvenile justice research literature supports a therapeutic approach to working with youth and much of the “treatment” that transpires does so in the context of daily interactions with youth. When serious incidents occur, regular programming is halted until the incident is completely resolved and order is restored to the living unit. Sometimes regular programming can be paused for several days and/or weeks, until facility administrators feel confident they can adequately ensure youth and staff safety. In addition, it is well understood by practitioners that the staff-to-youth relationship is paramount in facilitating a youth’s ability to achieve his/her goals. Facilities that consistently operate at lower staffing levels and/or use mostly temporary staff to cover vacancies, will inevitably experience less than optimal outcomes.

Although specific data on gangs in juvenile justice facilities is scarce, existing research has shown most gang-involved youth join gangs between the ages of 13 and 15 and that most youth leave the gang lifestyle before early adulthood (early 20s).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, while this author’s research revealed no gang-specific assessments or treatment curriculum have earned the title “effective,” there are a handful of practices, tools, and curricula that have shown promising outcomes in reducing gang-involvement in young offenders. The purpose of the

toolkit is to provide research and information to juvenile justice agency leaders and facility practitioners to inform their work with gang-involved youth residing in custodial settings. This toolkit provides detailed information on why youth join gangs; assessments; effective treatment interventions; the role of data in managing and preventing gang activities; anecdotal stories from former gang-involved youth; and policy and practice considerations, to name a few. The ultimate objective of this toolkit is to guide facility administrators to examine and create the infrastructure to reduce gang-related incidents and increase overall facility safety.

It is important to note that this toolkit is not intended to be all encompassing guide but rather a catalyst to deepen agencies' understanding of the complex nature of the gang reduction work. As mentioned, the toolkit is intended to serve as a launching pad for developing a comprehensive strategy to prevent, intervene, and suppress gang activities in facilities and ultimately, reduce incidents of gang-related violence. In addition to the many resources provided in this toolkit, readers are encouraged to consult the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: Planning for Implementation ([implementation-manual.pdf \[ojp.gov\]](#)).<sup>4</sup> This manual serves as a detailed roadmap for implementing the five core strategies detailed in the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model. It is also suggested that readers consult the National Gang Center ([National Gang Center | National Gang Center \[ojp.gov\]](#)) which is a project funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). This website offers a wealth of information including research and tools to aid organizations and communities in successfully tackling their gang issues. The most recent research on working with gang-involved youth can be found in the book "On Gangs" (2022) by S.H. Decker; D.C. Pyrooz, and J.A. Densley.<sup>7</sup> These three resources have been paramount in shaping the contents of this toolkit.

Because of the complexity of gangs and the information needed to effectively work with gang-affiliated youth, this toolkit has been structured with the reader in mind. Each of the key topics below are equipped with a brief description of the toolkit section and related research. Readers are invited to click on the areas of interest below. Doing so will take the reader to the section for more detailed information and resources. Additionally, a number of policy and practice implications are provided in several of the toolkit sections. These implications are meant to serve as a starting point to consider when making improvements in the specified topic area. The project sponsors hope this toolkit will serve as a foundation for agencies to build their own unique and comprehensive gang reduction strategy.

**[Gang-Related Legislative Actions](#)** – Over the past several decades beginning in the 1980s, the federal government passed legislation to support community strategies for reducing gang violence. Federal entities such as the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) have continued to allocate resources to states to tackle gang issues. Additionally, in recent years, several states have passed legislation to support effective transition planning for youth who are released from juvenile justice facilities.

For more detailed information about gang-related legislative actions [click here](#).

**Gang Definitions and Criteria** – Definitions and criteria used to identify youth as a gang member varies by state and local jurisdiction. For the purpose of consistency, this toolkit uses the National Gang Center (NGC) criteria: a) the group has three or more members, generally aged 12–24; b) members share an identity, typically linked to a name, and often other symbols; c) members view themselves as a gang and they are recognized by others as a gang; d) the group has some permanence and a degree of organization; and e) the group is involved in an elevated level of criminal activity.<sup>8</sup>

For additional information about gang definitions including policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**Factors Influencing Gang Involvement** - Researchers cannot predict whether a particular individual will join a gang, but certain risk factors increase the chance youth will become gang-involved. Risk and protective factors can be categorized into five main categories (i.e., individual, family, peer, school, and community). *“Youth are at higher risk of joining a gang if they engage in delinquent behaviors, are aggressive or violent, experience multiple caretaker transitions, have many problems at school, associate with other gang-involved youth, or live in communities where they feel unsafe and where many youth are in trouble.”*<sup>9</sup> Data show youth with multiple risk factors are more likely to join a gang.

Research shows that trauma is a key factor influencing many juvenile justice youth. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network ([www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org)) offers a comprehensive explanation of the relationship between trauma and gang involvement:

*“Early trauma and traumatic stress reactions can increase a youth’s susceptibility to becoming involved with a gang. Abuse and neglect can undermine a child’s ability to succeed in school or to form long-term healthy relationships. A child who has been abused and neglected may not trust authority, schools, or other social institutions to protect or take care of people....While traumatic stress is certainly not the sole cause for gang involvement and delinquency, it can increase a youth’s vulnerability to a gang’s appeal. Gangs can offer a sense of safety, control, and structure often missing in the lives of traumatized youth. Gangs can also provide a place for youth to re-enact learned patterns of behavior such as violence. Faced with school failure and a lack of positive options, traumatized youth may find some semblance of success, belonging, and affirmation through gangs. Gangs may also provide these youth with an outlet for their often pessimistic or cynical beliefs that their parents, adults, or society in general cannot keep them safe or provide for their basic needs.”*<sup>10</sup>

For additional information about factors influencing gang involvement, [click here](#).

**Risk Factors and Embeddedness** – Gang joining much like gang desistance, happens slowly over time (i.e., it is not an in-the-moment decision). *“The most common age for gang-joining is 13 to 15 years old, and boys are more likely than girls to join a gang. Joining a gang should be understood as part of a life course that begins from the time a child is born (or even before).”*<sup>11</sup> Gang-involved youth can be “pulled” or “pushed” into a gang. Scott Decker (2014) explains *“Pushes” are the negative factors that push youth into gangs; they are found in characteristics*

*or conditions of neighborhoods, families, schools, peer groups and individuals. “Pulls” draw or attract youth to gangs; these include being part of a group and the perceived benefits of a gang lifestyle, such as excitement, the chance to make money, and the perception of protection.”<sup>12</sup>*

Research shows gang membership “...usually lasts for a relatively short period of time, generally less than two years....and joining often coincides with early adolescence.”<sup>12</sup> The term criminal embeddedness “...refers to individual immersion within deviant networks at the cost of restricted prosocial networks.”<sup>13</sup> Essentially, embeddedness is the level or degree of affiliation with the gang lifestyle and its members. The goal of interventions strategies should not be to convince youth to exit the gang but rather, to work with youth to decrease the level of involvement with gang members. In addition, because most youth join gangs between the ages of 13 and 15 years old and membership is short, juvenile justice professionals must evaluate whether gang-involved youth need formal interventions. Interestingly, gang involved youth report that their first exposure to gangs occurs very early on in childhood, as early as five years old, making the need for early intervention strategies within communities critical. Research shows that most gang-involved youth will likely not need interventions as they often leave the gang on their own accord.

For additional information about push/pull factors and embeddedness including policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**Assessments** - Currently, there is no standardized gang-specific assessment for juvenile justice facilities. Research shows using a standardized and validated risk needs assessment is sufficient to target the root causes of gang involvement (risk and protective factors). Some of the most common tools currently used in the field are – Youth Level of Services/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI); Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI); and the Structure Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY). Research also suggests the benefits of using a trauma assessment such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) to supplement a standardized risk/needs tool. Additional diagnostic and screening tools for gang-involved youth in a community setting include: Youth Services Eligibility Tool (YSET); Social Embeddedness Tool (SET); and Gang Risk of Entry Factors (GREF).<sup>14</sup>

For additional information about assessments including policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**Role of Race** - Research shows that “...race is not a risk factor for joining a gang. Instead, recruitment into a gang is influenced by compounding factors such as where youth live, family issues, under-resourced school systems, a youth’s mind-set, and other individual characteristics, especially peers with whom a youth associates.”<sup>15</sup> Researchers have found one of the most common factors among gang involved youth is environment. More specifically, “...living in a deteriorating community without jobs and quality schools and with high crime rates represent risk factors for gang membership — and youth from any racial/ethnic group exposed to this type of environment would be more likely to join a gang. The difference is that minority youth are more likely than whites to grow up in communities with these characteristics, thus

*increasing their chances of gang involvement. So, the risk factors are not necessarily different for minority individuals, but the rate at which they are exposed to risk factors does differ.”<sup>16</sup> As with all interventions, it is critical that facility administrators implement culturally relevant programming – i.e., infusing culturally relevant examples and scenarios into treatment curricula.*

For additional information about the role of race and policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**Girls in Gangs** - Girls join gangs at lower rates than male counterparts and join for different reasons than boys. Boys often see the gang as an avenue to make money while girls often join because of a perceived sense of safety and security that they cannot find at home, often because of abuse. A NGC study found *“96% of participants reported that they had at least one family member who had been arrested...[and] 86% participants reported that they had at least one gang-involved family member, which may include extended family or close friends.”<sup>17</sup> The study found that family involvement was one of the most common reasons girls joined a gang and often these young women did not feel they had a choice (i.e., because the gang was an extension of their existing family.) Facility administrators should consider providing additional treatment activities for girls that focus on life skills classes, mentors, and peer support. It is also important that resources be dedicated to effective transition planning and execution. Research indicates that *“...as girls transition from gangs, they continue to experience high levels of trauma, need to locate sustainable employment and reliable housing, and may struggle with addiction issues.”<sup>17</sup>**

For additional information about girls in gangs including policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model** –The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model has been implemented in numerous jurisdictions throughout the country. Studies have consistently reported the positive effects the model has had on reducing youth gang membership and activities in a community setting. The model includes Program Elements; Core Strategies; and Implementation Principles.

For additional information about the community OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model including policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**Treatment Interventions: Effective Strategies and Promising Practices** – Although no “effective” rated gang curriculum exists specifically for juvenile justice youth in facilities, several existing practices have shown promising outcomes in helping youth desist from the gang lifestyle. Trauma-informed approaches and other research-based curricula such as Cognitive Behavioral Treatment (CBT) and Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) have shown positive outcomes for gang-involved youth. In addition, structured mentoring programs using “credible messengers” have also been identified as promising. Group facilitators must infuse culturally appropriate and relevant examples/scenarios based on the population served. Facility administrators must ensure staff are formally trained on key topics such as building rapport

with youth; healthy boundaries/relationships; motivating youth in treatment; approaches that convey trust, respect, empathy, and support; and gang signs and symbols, to name a few.

Research is consistent in highlighting the importance of ongoing family engagement and effective transition planning. Transition should begin at intake and include identifying life coaches; mentors; mental health services; securing housing; employment; continued education; prosocial networks; etc. Using standardized assessments to identify youth needs is a critical factor to success. In addition, youth and family should have input and a voice regarding the course of treatment in the facility and planned services post-release.

This section includes information about treatment approaches; transition planning credible messenger programs; experiences from formerly gang-involved youth; the role of relationships; and policy and practice implications, to name a few. For more detailed information on these topic areas readers are encouraged to [click here](#).

**[Exiting Gangs](#)** – The goal of gang interventions is to decrease the degree of embeddedness in the gang, not to convince youth to leave the gang. Gang membership is often short, lasting less than two years. Staff must be formally trained on strategies to assist youth in moving through the four stages of exiting a gang (i.e., Doubting; weighing alternatives; turning points; and post-exit validation). In the absence of a standardized tool to measure embeddedness (a tool at the time of publication for this toolkit does not currently exist for a custodial setting), facility administrators can assess the degree of gang-affiliation through self-reports of gang-identification (Status); review of incident reports of gang-violence and tagging/graffiti (Association); observations of a youth's peer group/friends (Behavior); and influence gang has on a youth (Power). Staff should be trained to make these observations on a regular basis to informally assess the level of embeddedness throughout a youth's stay in custody.

For additional information about exiting gangs including policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**[Gang Intelligence: Using Data](#)** – Agency leaders and facility managers should have an established system to regularly monitor and track gang activities and trends (to predict and prevent future gang-related incidents). Since gang membership changes frequently, data should be reviewed regularly (i.e., weekly) including reviewing classification reports and updating youth status. In addition, it is important that facilities have a clear communication pathway outlined in their policies regarding how sensitive information will be disseminated and which individuals are authorized to receive this information. Juvenile justice agencies/facilities should develop and foster relationships “...with other state, county, local, and private (nonprofit) agencies/ organizations that may be able to aid in gang prevention, intervention, and mitigation strategies.”<sup>15</sup> Two criminal/gang databases used to share information with law enforcement are *RISSIntel™* or *RISSGang™*.<sup>15</sup> Some other possible sources for gathering gang intelligence include: Interviews with gang members at intake and while in custody; information from law

enforcement and other networks; media coverage; social media websites; review of criminal records and co-defendants; and confidential informants, to name a few.

For additional information about gang intelligence, using data, and policy and practice implications [click here](#).

**[Future Considerations](#)** - A few steps are offered to help juvenile justice agencies begin their journey to reduce and manage gang youth and activities within their facilities.

For additional information about future considerations [click here](#).

**[Additional Resources](#)** – Several resources have been provided throughout the toolkit.

## **[Appendices](#)**

### **Alameda County (CA) Probation Department**

- “Classification System” policy
- Juvenile Hall Classification form

### **Massachusetts DYS**

- “Advisory on Protecting Sensitive Gang-Related Information” policy
- Screen shots of gang database/data collection instrument

### **Ohio DYS**

- Transition policy
- Checklist

## Gang-Related Legislative Actions

Recognizing the drastic implications of gang violence, the federal government, state jurisdictions, local communities, and private organizations have devoted significant resources to addressing these issues. Some actions taken include, but are not limited to:

**Federal government resource allocation.** Over the past decade, the federal government has devoted significant resources to raising the level of awareness about gang affiliation and reducing gang activities. *“Between fiscal years 2017 and 2019, OJJDP awarded \$16.5 million to strengthen anti-gang initiatives nationwide”*<sup>18</sup>. In 2020, OJJDP allocated over \$18 million to support local anti-gang programs and the National Gang Center (NGC) which provides training, technical assistance, and resources related to gang suppression.<sup>19</sup> As part of the NGC resource bank, the NGC and OJJDP created six webinars titled, “Community Violence Intervention—Addressing Gang Series.” These webinars were launched in 2021 and are rooted in the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM). The OJJDP CGM is discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this toolkit. Readers are encouraged to explore these valuable [National Gang Center webinar series](#).

**Federal legislation.** The Juvenile Justice Reform Act (JJRA) of 2018 was signed into law in December 2018, revising and reauthorizing the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act (2002). More specifically, the revised law (Title 34. Crime Control and Law Enforcement; Subtitle I. Comprehensive Acts; Chapter 111. Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) requires 75 percent of relative funding be prioritized for evidence-based or promising programs to include *“...community-based alternatives (including home-based alternatives) to incarceration and institutionalization including...for youth who need specialized intensive and comprehensive services that address the unique issues encountered by youth when they become involved with gangs.”*<sup>20</sup> In addition, the revised act prioritizes *“projects designed both to deter involvement in illegal activities and to promote involvement in lawful activities on the part of gangs whose membership is substantially composed of youth.”*<sup>20</sup> Federal legislation supports juvenile justice agencies in prioritizing resources for gang reduction programs.

In 2018, the federal government also enacted the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-391). *“The Second Chance Act aims to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety by increasing reentry programming and improving outcomes for individuals returning to their families and communities.”*<sup>21</sup> The act allows federal grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to be used for employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, victim support, and other services to individuals returning to the community from prison or jail.<sup>21</sup>

**Developing and providing access to research-based resources** including gang intervention curricula and community assessment tools. Gang reduction resources are publicly available through many known websites such as OJJDP National Gang Center ([Library | National Gang Center \(ojp.gov\)](#)). A comprehensive list of resources and references is provided in the [Resources](#) section of this toolkit.

Changes to state regulations in support of gang reduction programs and strategies. According to the National Gang Center “Highlights of Gang-Related Legislation” (2020) statistics<sup>22</sup>:

- *“41 jurisdictions (including 39 states, DC, and the U.S. [federal government]) have passed laws that may be used to prevent gang violence, reduce gang involvement, and suppress gang-related crime.*
- *33 jurisdictions (including 31 states, DC, and the U.S.) have laws on gangs in schools and establishment of education programs/courses.*
- *37 jurisdictions (including 35 states, DC, and the U.S.) have enacted laws to establish a funding mechanism to support the prevention of gang violence, reduction of gang involvement, and suppress gang-related activity.*
- *29 jurisdictions (including 27 states, DC, and the U.S.) have laws that authorize, fund, or require training or technical assistance related to gang prevention, intervention, or suppression.”<sup>22</sup>*

State legislative bodies have continued to enact laws to support gang reduction strategies. The passage of gang-related legislation indicates that states, counties, stakeholders, and advocates understand the devastating impacts of gang-involvement. Examples of recent legislation are provided below for reference.

- In Georgia, House Bill 750 and its companion Senate Bill were enacted into law on April 21, 2021. The GA House Bill 750 titled, “Legislative Gang Prevention and Intervention Commission” created the Chatham County Legislative Gang Prevention and Intervention Commission. The bill requires the commission *“...to submit an annual report recommending strategic efforts between educational institutions and community social services organizations for the implementation of programs and initiatives to prevent and intervene in criminal gang participation by youth.”<sup>23</sup>*
- On March 23, 2020, VA House Bill 422 was enacted into law, establishing the Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Grant Fund and Program. The grant funded program is sponsored by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The DCJS has awarded grants to five cities in Virginia (i.e., Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond, and Roanoke). The law directs grant recipients to allocate funds to implementing *“...community assessments for youth and gang violence prevention.”<sup>24</sup>*
- In 2020, the Massachusetts legislature enacted Chapter 227 of the MA Acts of 2020, which specified that youth violence prevention program grants administered by the executive office of health and human services *“...shall be targeted at reducing youth violence among young persons at highest annual risk of being perpetrators or victims of gun and community violence.”<sup>25</sup>* The Massachusetts law also requires the secretary of health and human services to submit an annual report to include but not limited to: Criteria for selecting grant recipients; clear goals and benchmarks for evaluating grant recipients; and outcomes and findings related to program success.<sup>24</sup> The law also requires the health and human services entity to make funds

*“...available to those municipalities with the highest number of annual youth homicides and serious assaults.”<sup>25</sup>*

- In California, CA A 1603 (2019) was enacted into law in October 2019. The original bill titled, “State Violence Intervention and Prevention” established the Board of State and Community Corrections that addressed statewide leadership, grant administration, and efforts to address gang issues at the state and local levels. The law also established the California Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program.<sup>26</sup>

## Gang Definitions and Criteria

Although there is no standard definition of what defines a “gang,” definitions provided by researchers and sociologists have similarities. The National Gang Center (NGC) provides the following criteria that can be used to classify groups as gangs<sup>27</sup>:

- *The group has three or more members, generally aged 12–24.*
- *Members share an identity, typically linked to a name, and often other symbols.*
- *Members view themselves as a gang, and they are recognized by others as a gang.*
- *The group has some permanence and a degree of organization.*
- *The group is involved in an elevated level of criminal activity.*<sup>27</sup>

Regardless of the definition used to identify gang members, the identification process can be challenging. This is in part due to the degree of variation among local gang symbols, initiation rituals, leadership, etc. According to a report by Spergel et al. (2003), *“What generally distinguishes the youth gang are group symbolism and cohesion, identification with turf, commitment to violence and (increasingly) drug use and drug selling, and a chronic and wide range of delinquent activity.”*<sup>25</sup> The National Gang Center conducted an annual “National Youth Gang Survey” to assess gang violence in communities throughout the United States. The survey was completed by randomly selected police and county sheriff’s departments in rural and urban areas over a 16-year period (between 1996 and 2012). The analyses found that *“...among the characteristics of greatest importance in defining a gang are group identity and criminal activity, a group name, and accompanying signs and symbols that outwardly represent the group to others.”*<sup>28</sup>

Further complicating the issue of defining and identifying gang involvement is the fact that gang types and level of gang involvement (known as “embeddedness”) varies greatly. For simplicity purposes, we will briefly discuss two main types of gangs – “street gang” and “prison gang.” It is important to note, due to the limited number of studies conducted on youth gangs in the community and in secure juvenile justice facilities, some of the information provided has been extracted from studies on adult gangs. That said, although differences may exist, the framework can be applied since the environments are similar – i.e., secure confinement facilities and community settings.

The National Gang Center offers the following distinction and related definitions for the first type of gang – a “street gang.”

*“The term ‘street gang’ is often used interchangeably with ‘youth gang’ as well as ‘criminal street gang,’ with the latter explicitly denoting the element of criminal activity found almost universally in gang-related legislation. However, the term “street gang” carries two specific meanings that increase its practical value. First, it suggests a common feature of gangs: They commonly have a street presence. Street socialization is a key feature of adolescent gangs. Second, this term also refers to ‘street crimes,’ that is, serious and violent crimes (e.g., assaults, drive-by shootings, robberies, homicides) that occur on the streets and that often are of concern to citizens and policymakers.”<sup>8</sup>*

On the contrary, “prison gangs” are those groups who pledge allegiance to a gang inside the walls of a confined correctional setting. It is critical for professionals to know with which type of gang members they are working, to ensure the appropriate interventions are applied. Researcher Ortiz (2018) conducted a qualitative study to explore prison gangs on the East Coast, primarily in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The study consisted of 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated gang members who were 18 years of age and had gang experience both in the community and prison. The research examined differences between street and prison gangs. Ortiz (2018) found<sup>28</sup>:

- Reasons why individuals joined the gang were different for street gang members versus prison gang members.
- Gangs have different goals within prison walls versus the gang in the community despite the fact that the gang name is the same in the two environments.
- Leadership structure appeared to be more fluid in street gangs when compared with that within the prison setting.
- Prison gang members often did not recognize street gang membership as legitimate and therefore, required individuals to “earn” their way into the prison gang.
- Because prison gang members are more constrained in their living quarters, it is difficult to ignore orders from gang leaders and/or leave the organization. When a rule is broken or non-compliance occurs, the gang will punish the dissenter (i.e., stabbing, sexually assaulting, etc.) and the victim is expected to rejoin the gang once they are recovered from the discipline.
- Prison gang members must “...acquire permission to attack or retaliate against another inmate, even inmates from rival gangs”<sup>28</sup> because any form of violence may result in “...a loss of privileges for both his organization and all inmates within the facility. Within street gangs, members are free to attack anyone who is not a member of their own organization.”<sup>28</sup>

One influential factor in promoting prison gang culture is facility staff. In a qualitative study of adult prisons, Ortiz (2018) uncovered the complex relationship between correctional officers and prison gang members. Interviews with inmates revealed that there were three types of correctional officers. More specifically, “...the typology consisted of three types of officers:

*greasy, gang affiliated, and sadistic. Greasy officers were corrupt and often used gang members to control other prisoners. Gang affiliated officers were gang members who were able to earn positions as correctional officers. These officers were loyal to their organizations and protected their organizations. Sadistic officers were analogous to street-level law enforcement. These officers held negative views of inmates and used their authority to abuse inmates.*”<sup>28</sup> While it is the hope that juvenile justice facilities employ high-quality individuals who are rooted in helping youth make positive changes in their lives, it would be remiss and perhaps dangerous, to ignore the fact that some facility staff members may not be acting in accordance with agency policy and expectations. It is therefore critical that facility administrators carefully screen potential applicants and implement controls to prevent and detect staff misconduct.

### **Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations:**

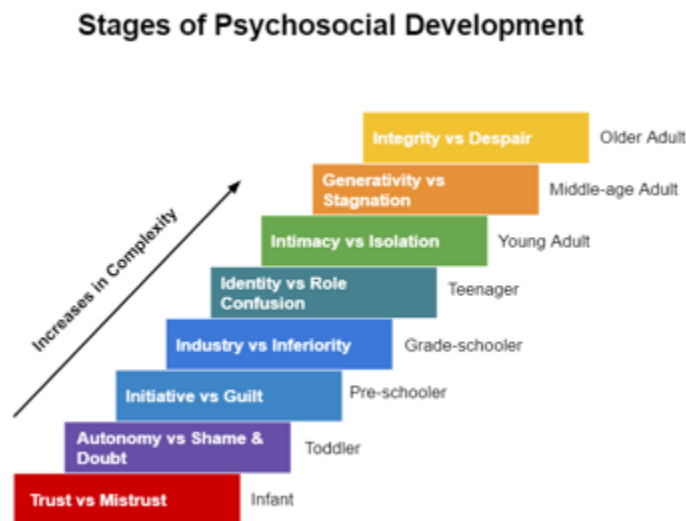
- 1) Agencies should consider creating formal structures to help monitor and reduce gang-related activities. This may involve creating an agency or statewide gang reduction task force made up of diverse professionals (i.e., facility managers, law enforcement, advocates, etc.). The goals and responsibilities of the task force should be clearly delineated in an agency policy and committee charter. Agencies should also consider raising the level of awareness on a statewide level by working with legislators to introduce bills that will help prevent and reduce gang activities in facilities and in local communities.
- 2) It is important that agency policies and facility procedures direct designated staff members to report all forms of retaliation, including gang-related retaliation. This may require frequent check-ins with vulnerable youth (including those youth resisting gang involvement) by case managers and/or mental health staff to assess for safety.
- 3) Agencies must have a vigorous screening process to screen out potential staff who are prone to control, aggression, and excessive use of force. The CJJA Toolkit: Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Qualified Staff ([CJJA-Staff-Retention-Toolkit.pdf](#)) can provide additional guidance on common screening tools. It is important that agency and facility policies uphold a zero-tolerance policy for staff misconduct and include formal controls to prevent, detect, manage, and address inappropriate staff behaviors.

## **Factors Influencing Gang Involvement**

To determine which strategies to use to target gang issues, it is critical to understand what drives a youth’s decision to join a gang. Over the past four decades, researchers have illuminated a multitude of factors influencing a youth’s decision to join gangs. Researcher and author Howell (2010) explains: “*Youth join gangs for protection, enjoyment, respect, money, or because a friend is in a gang.*”<sup>9</sup> Other researchers have organized into five risk factor levels: individual (antisocial beliefs, externalizing behaviors, life stressors), family (family antisocial behavior, family structure and supervision), school (negative labeling, low attachment or commitment to school and teachers), peer group (association with delinquent and/or aggressive peers), and community (feeling unsafe in the neighborhood, neighborhood

poverty).<sup>29</sup> It is not surprising that gang involvement is often the result of several complex factors. When coupled with changes in brain development as a young person grows and expands their understanding of the world around them, a confluence of factors can strengthen the likelihood a youth will become gang involved.

An evaluation report of the OJJDP-funded Juvenile Gang Suppression and Intervention Programs found that while the root source of gang issues within a community varied, there were common themes that emerged. The analyses highlighted that gang problems were “a result of a combination of interactive factors: poverty, rapid population movement, racism, segregation and social isolation of minority groups, weak family structure, adolescent youth in crisis, the development of youth-gang subcultures, and, in particular, community disorganization, or fragmentation of levels and types of community efforts to address the problem.”<sup>30</sup>



Makuch, G. (June 13, 2021). The Clearing. *Addiction and Psychosocial Development in Early Childhood*. Retrieved from <https://www.theclearingnw.com/blog/psychosocial-development-early-childhood-sets-stage-addiction><sup>30</sup>

A study by Taylor (2013) examined the factors influencing youth who adopt the gang lifestyle beginning from age seven years old through adolescence. The researchers explain Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development (1950) and critical points in the development of personality: “The preadolescent and adolescent periods of joining a gang coincides with Erikson’s (1950) industry versus inferiority and identity versus role confusion stages of psychosocial development. It is in these adolescent stages of identity development that people change in the way they think and feel about themselves.”<sup>31</sup> The study by Taylor also verified that inner conflict and frustrations may increase a youth’s tendency towards deviant behavior and that gangs may offer a “...release from, and/or expression of, frustrations and bad feelings, protection from hostiles in the neighborhood, a peer group, and ways to make money, especially during the recruitment and socialization phases of gang membership.”<sup>31</sup>

Taylor (2013) found several underlying themes across study subjects. These were: “(1) *frustration and anxiety stemming from family problems such as fatherlessness*, (2) *sadness, frustration, and anxiety in home life* (3) *the feeling that they wanted an end to the frustration* (4) *expression of hostility through defiance of authority in the industry versus inferiority stage and physical violence in the identity versus role and confusion stage of psychosocial development and*, (5) *misconduct at school, mostly for fighting or bullying schoolmates*, and (6) *gang membership as a salient opportunity for peer recognition in their immediate neighborhood and community.*”<sup>31</sup> In addition, research indicates that youth who have a network of close friends and family members who are gang members may be one of the main reasons youth join gangs. Taylor explains that youth who have family members affiliated with a gang, see the gang as an extension of their immediate family and “...therefore a primary source of their social reality, especially during the socialization process.”<sup>31</sup>

In addition, researchers concluded that there are three primary factors that strongly influence gang affiliation. These are “(a) *interest, which may include fantasizing about benefits and advantages of joining the gang* (b) *contact with members, which provides an opportunity to interact with a gang and* (c) *willingness to perpetrate violence upon others...*”<sup>31</sup> When these factors exist in addition to the driving factors previously described, the gang lifestyle may seem more appealing to youth.

Study subjects from Taylor 2013 reported they felt joining a gang was “...a way they believed they could have friends and participate in delinquent activities and proactive aggression and violence which they thought were fun. The joining of a street gang was presented to them by the gang recruiters as being a panacea.”<sup>31</sup>

Research supports that significant traumatic events can negatively impact a youth’s sense of safety, sense of belonging, and feelings of self-worth. This in turn, may contribute to a youth turning toward a gang lifestyle to fulfill these unmet needs. It is therefore important for agencies and facilities to include tools to assess past traumas as part of their comprehensive intake process (i.e., the [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACE\)](#)). The information gathered can inform treatment strategies and potentially prevent or limit gang involvement while youth are in a juvenile justice facility. Additional information is discussed in the [Assessments](#) section of this toolkit.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network ([www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org)) offers a comprehensive explanation of the relationship between trauma and gang involvement:

*“Early trauma and traumatic stress reactions can increase a youth’s susceptibility to becoming involved with a gang. Abuse and neglect can undermine a child’s ability to succeed in school or to form long-term healthy relationships. A child who has been abused and neglected may not trust authority, schools, or other social institutions to protect or take care of people...While traumatic stress is certainly not the sole cause for gang involvement and delinquency, it can increase a youth’s vulnerability to a gang’s appeal. Gangs can offer a sense of safety, control, and structure often missing in the lives of traumatized youth. Gangs can also provide a place for youth to re-enact learned patterns of behavior such as violence. Faced with school failure and a lack of positive*

*options, traumatized youth may find some semblance of success, belonging, and affirmation through gangs. Gangs may also provide these youth with an outlet for their often pessimistic or cynical beliefs that their parents, adults, or society in general cannot keep them safe or provide for their basic needs.”<sup>10</sup>*

Research also suggests that for many gang members there is a progressive pattern of delinquency from early years. The progression typically begins with what the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) classifies as oppositional defiance disorder (ODD), evolves into conduct disorder (CD), and sometimes graduates to antisocial disorder (APD) in adulthood.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, it is important to understand a youth’s trauma history and use effective treatment approaches to help youth develop new coping skills for dealing with life’s adversities. Researcher Tim Decker (2019) encourages organizations to focus on six key principles when implementing a trauma-informed approach<sup>32</sup>:

*“A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in youth, families, staff, and others involved with the system; responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2014).”<sup>32</sup>*

- **“Safety** being defined by those served and actively promoted throughout the organization and among staff, youth, and families. Settings must be both physically and emotionally safe.
- **Transparency** in organizational operations and decisions with the goal of building and maintaining trust with staff, youth, family members, and others involved in the organization.
- **Peer support and mutual self-help** as key vehicles for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing stories and lived experience to promote rehabilitation and healing.
- **Leveling of power differences** between youth, families, and organizational staff from clerical and housekeeping personnel and professional staff to administrators. Healing happens in relationships and through the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.
- **Empowerment, voice, choice, and the experience of trauma as a unifying force** in the lives of those who run the organization, provide the services, and come to the organization for assistance and support.
- **Cultural, historical, and gender responsiveness** to actively move past cultural stereotypes and biases (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender identity, and geography). This includes access to responsive services; leveraging the healing value of traditional cultural connections; incorporating policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and culturally-based needs of individuals; and recognizing and addressing historical trauma.”<sup>32</sup>

Additional information regarding factors influencing gang-joining and effective treatment approaches is provided in subsequent sections of this toolkit.

*“Trauma-informed conditions and physical and emotional safety create the opportunity for self-expression and discovery, healing, empathy, conscious choice, natural logical consequences, hope, accountability, and corrective experiences.”<sup>32</sup>*

## Risk Factors and Embeddedness

### Risk Factors

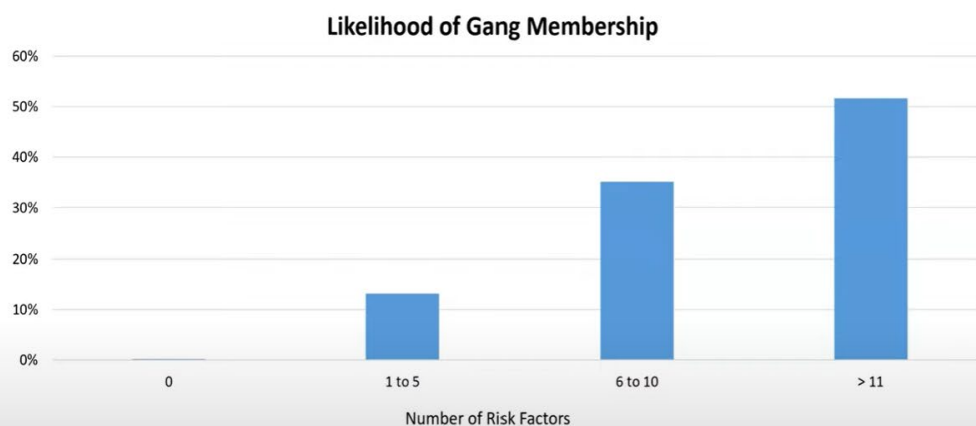
There are several factors that influence whether youth will involve themselves in the gang lifestyle. According to the National Gang Center, *“...there are no risk factors that uniquely predict a high probability of gang membership.”<sup>33</sup>* In fact, research shows that *“...The same factors that predict gang membership also predict other problem behaviors.”<sup>33</sup>*

However, while *“...researchers cannot predict whether a particular individual will join a gang...research shows that individuals who possess certain risk factors have an elevated chance of joining a gang. Gang research has identified several ways in which risk factors increase the likelihood of gang membership.”<sup>33</sup>* Research has also shown there is a compounding effect of multiple risk factors that can push youth toward gang involvement. In other words, the more risk factors a youth has the greater likelihood s/he may become gang involved. According to the National Center (NGC) *“In a Seattle study, elementary school children exposed to 7 or more of 19 measured risk factors were 13 times more likely to join a gang than children exposed to none or to only one risk factor.”<sup>33</sup>* In addition, NGC found *“The presence of risk factors in multiple developmental domains produces the greatest risk of gang membership.”<sup>33</sup>*

Similarly, in a recent [NGC webinar](#), Dr. David Pyrooz of the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado Boulder, presented research from Esbensen et al. (2009) which showed the relationship between the number of risk factors and likelihood of gang involvement. The data shows that when a youth presents between one and five risk factors, they have approximately a 13% likelihood of joining a gang. When a youth has six to ten risk factors, this number jumps to 35%. And when 11 or more risk factors are present, the risk for gang membership increases to almost 52%.<sup>34</sup>

A graphical representation of the compounding effects of risk factors regarding the likelihood of gang joining is provided for reference.<sup>34</sup>

## WHAT ELEVATES/LOWERS THE “RISK” OF GANG JOINING?



**Cumulative, not independent, risk**

Esbensen, F.-A., Peterson D., Taylor, T.J., & Freng, A. (2009). Similarities and differences in risk factors for violent offending and gang membership. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 42(3), 310–335.



Research suggests there are upward of 80 potential factors that could influence a youth's decision to join a gang.<sup>35</sup> Some of these factors have a stronger impact than others. For simplicity purposes, this toolkit describes a few key factors that research has shown to be strongly influential with the decision to join a gang. A comprehensive set of risk factors can be found by clicking on the following link: [Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model | National Gang Center \(ojp.gov\)](https://www.ojp.gov/national-gang-center/comprehensive-gang-prevention-intervention-and-suppression-model).

Research by Howell (2010) found that *“Youth are at higher risk of joining a gang if they engage in delinquent behaviors, are aggressive or violent, experience multiple caretaker transitions, have many problems at school, associate with other gang-involved youth, or live in communities where they feel unsafe and where many youth are in trouble.”*<sup>9</sup> Similarly, other research studies have found that *“...children residing in single-parent mother headed households have higher rates of gang involvement”*.<sup>31</sup>

Raby and Jones (2016), as presented by Dr. David Pyrooz in a webinar sponsored by National Gang Center (NGC), provide additional insight into the five main risk areas most correlated with gang membership. These are: Individual; family; peer; school; and community.<sup>3</sup> Research has consistently shown the power of family and parenting in shaping a child's life. In fact, some studies have pointed to *“...the role of poor parental management, such as inconsistent and/or harsh discipline, permissiveness, and poor supervision has a significant effect, engendering both youth violence and gang affiliation.”*<sup>31</sup> The chart below provides some of the most influential factors associated with gang involvement.

| What Elevates/Lowers the “Risk” of Gang Joining? <sup>3</sup> |  |
|---|--|
| Domains   | Risk and Protective Factors  |
| Individual  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem</li> <li>• Interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Self-control</li> </ul>          |
| Family  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental supervision</li> <li>• Familial gang involvement</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul> |
| Peer  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social peers</li> </ul>  |
| School  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low academic performance</li> <li>• School failure</li> </ul>                           |
| Community   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• High crime rate</li> <li>• Low socioeconomic status (SES)</li> </ul>   |

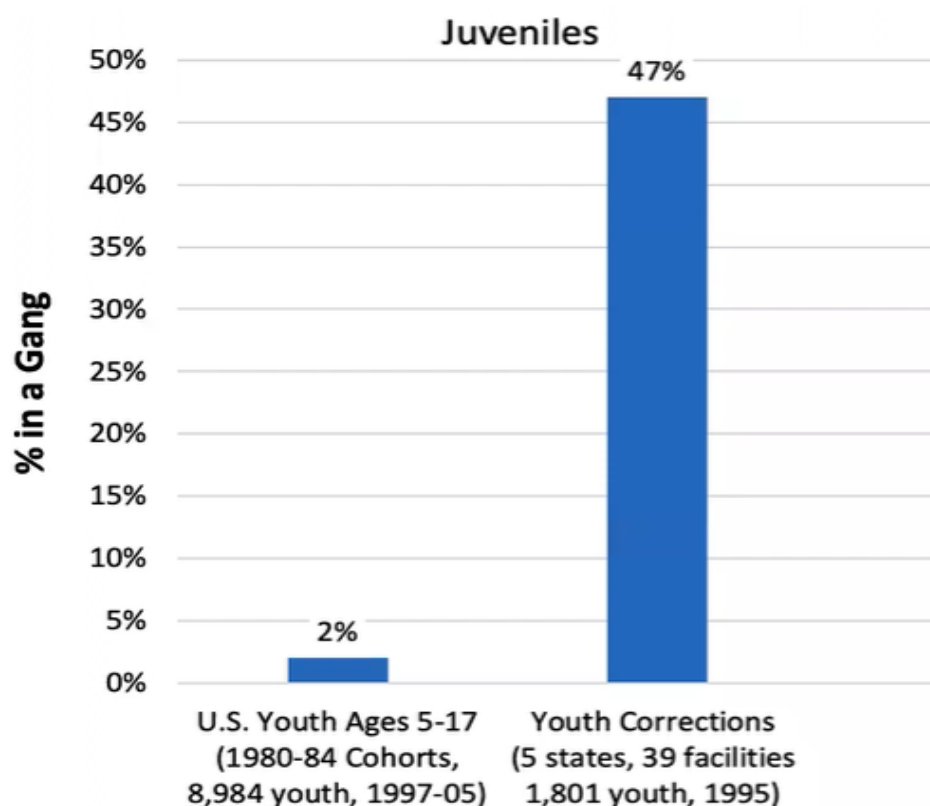
The following excerpt explains the impact of parental, peer, and community influences:

*“Effective parenting — consistent discipline, close parental monitoring and engagement, warmth and strong connection — are considered protective factors; they decrease the likelihood of involvement with delinquent peers. Poor family functioning — inconsistent and harsh discipline, low parental monitoring, poor communication, and low emotional engagement and attachment — is related to risk for aggression and increases the likelihood of involvement with delinquent peers. A lack of parental monitoring can lead to children associating with negative peers. This is compounded with neighborhood and community risk factors that make parenting skills even more important.”<sup>36</sup>*

Recent research by Dr. David Pyrooz of the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado Boulder, highlights another powerful factor influencing gang membership in youth: Incarceration. A detailed data comparison of youth ages 5-17 years old in five states within 39 facilities revealed that youth who are incarcerated are significantly more likely to claim gang-affiliation.<sup>1</sup> The figure below shows that approximately 2% of youth in the community claimed to be gang involved compared with 47% of incarcerated youth claiming gang membership. While some of the facility youth were in community gangs prior to incarceration, other youth joined the gang while in secure custody. These data support the need for gang prevention and early intervention programs to prevent and interrupt gang involvement and youth incarceration. It is also important that facility administrators and designated staff understand the “why” youth claims membership so that treatment strategies can be identified to address youth issues. This is discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this toolkit.

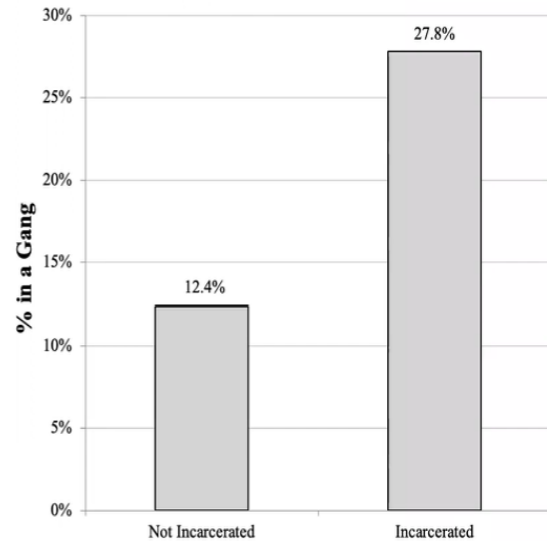
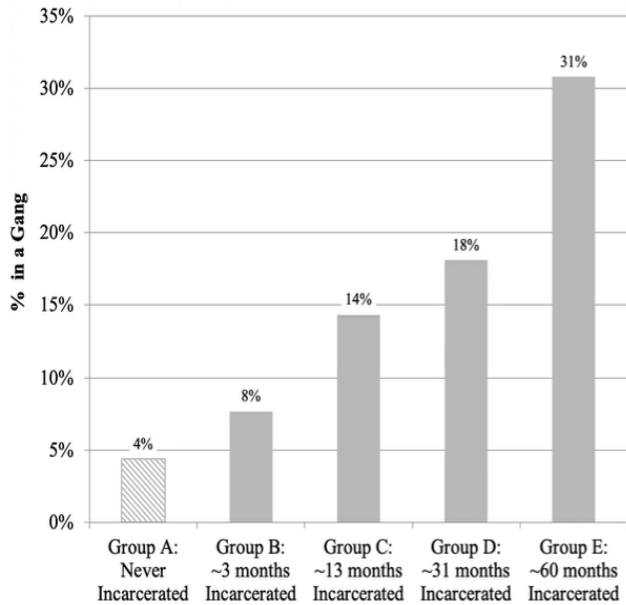
Research shows that social bonds become stronger the longer individuals are incarcerated with gang members. A study of youth with felonies and serious misdemeanors verified that youth

who are incarcerated for longer periods of time were more likely to be gang-involved. In fact, when incarcerated youth were compared with the control group, youth who were incarcerated were twice as likely to be involved in gangs.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, data show that the longer an individual is incarcerated the more likely they are to claim gang affiliation. Specifically, one study by Dr. David Pyrooz found that approximately 8% of youth who were incarcerated for three months claimed gang-involvement. When youth were incarcerated for 31 months this number increased to 18%. When youth were incarcerated for five years, researchers found 31% of youth were gang-involved.<sup>39</sup> These findings support that the juvenile justice facility environment may strengthen youth bonds to gangs and that recruiting gang members inside the walls may be accelerated by incarceration. The results also highlight the need for agencies to align with best practices regarding minimizing length of stay whenever possible.



Left bar in the above graph: Pyrooz, D.C. and Sweeten, G. (2015). Gang Membership Between Ages 5 and 17 Years in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*; XXX: 1-6.

Right bar in the above graph: Morris, R.E., Harrison, E.A., Tromanhauser, E., Marquis, D.K., & Watts, C.C. (1994) Health Risk Behavioral Survey from 39 Juvenile Correctional Facilities in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*; 17:334-344



Pyrooz, D.C., Gartner, N. & Smith, M. (2017) Consequences of Incarceration for Gang Membership: A Longitudinal Study of Serious Offenders in Philadelphia and Phoenix. *Criminology*; 55(2): 273-306

In addition to considering length of stay, facility administrators shall be mindful about younger youth. As mentioned, prolonged exposure to gangs will increase youth likelihood of joining. Research on the age of gang initiation varies, although it is widely accepted that gang joining is a progression that happens slowly. In other words, it is not common for youth to wake up in a single morning and decide to join a gang. Risk factors are the unseen forces that are at play behind the scenes and that overtime leads to a youth's decision that the gang lifestyle is beneficial to them. Research shows: *"The most common age for gang-joining is 13 to 15 years old, and boys are more likely than girls to join a gang. Joining a gang should be understood as part of a life course that begins from the time a child is born (or even before)."*<sup>11</sup>

It is important to understand that *"...early risk and protective factors (for children ages 0-12) for gang-joining are very similar to those for aggressive and delinquent behaviors; these behaviors increase the chances that youth will join gangs, particularly in neighborhoods with many gangs."*<sup>11</sup> More specifically, authors Guerra, Dierkhising, and Payne (2014) identified factors associated with acting out behaviors and future delinquent involvement, including gang-joining:<sup>11</sup>

- Ages 0-5 include: *"...hypervigilance to threat, cognitive impairments, insecure attachment to a caregiver and early aggressive behavior."*
- Ages 6-12 include: *"...poor school performance, social information-processing skill deficits and antisocial beliefs, poor parental monitoring, and negative relationships with peers, including being rejected and victimized by peers."*<sup>36</sup>

Authors Guerra, Dierkhising, and Payne (2014) have also keenly noted that “*protective factors for youth growing up in high-risk communities include higher levels of social-emotional competence, academic success, secure attachment and effective parenting.*”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is critical that prevention and early intervention efforts aim to increase protective factors while diminishing those risk factors shown to be of greatest influence.<sup>11</sup>

*“Parental anxiety, depression, neurotic dispositions and tendencies are often the result of families’ inability to deal effectively with socioeconomic factors such as substance abuse, fatherless homes, mother-headed households where it is difficult to provide adequate supervision, and a host of other ecological factors well-documented as being associated with low-income communities. These and other risk factors associated with low-income families and the underclass can hinder a child’s balanced psychosocial development. These risk factors can also be the catalyst to start a progression from oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) through to antisocial disorder (APD) and sociopathic behavior, especially if not counter-balanced by protective factors such as after school or athletic programs, which provide positive role models.”<sup>31</sup>*

### Push/Pull Factors

One approach to understanding risk factors associated with gang involvement is the “push/pull” paradigm. The author Scott Decker (2014) defines “pushes” and “pulls” as those factors “...that make gang membership attractive to some youth”.<sup>12</sup> The author Scott Decker (2014) further explains:

*““Pushes” are the negative factors that push youth into gangs; they are found in characteristics or conditions of neighborhoods, families, schools, peer groups, and individuals.*

*“Pulls” draw or attract youth to gangs; these include being part of a group and the perceived benefits of a gang lifestyle, such as excitement, the chance to make money, and the perception of protection.”<sup>12</sup>*

Research supports that pull factors or selective incentives are often more common in terms of what motivates youth in joining gangs<sup>3</sup> although there are plenty of examples of how push factors may play a key role in a youth’s decision to join a gang. Examples of “pull” factors include<sup>3</sup>:

- Normative influences (family, friends, and neighborhood)
- Protection, safety, and fear
- Material influence (i.e., money)
- Belonging and comradery
- Excitement, lifestyle, and status
- “Ideology” – this can be race, ethnicity, religious reasons, etc.

Having a clear understanding of risk factors (both push and pulls) can help inform intervention strategies that target specific youth needs. The most effective interventions are those that strategically target identified push and pull factors and that address other factors related to

criminogenic risk and trauma. Additionally, increasing opportunities to develop pro-social relationships and networks (i.e., mentors, credible messengers) as well as offering training and skill development opportunities (i.e., job-based interventions) have both been shown to have positive effects on gang-involved youth. More information on effective and promising treatment approaches are discussed in subsequent sections of this toolkit.

### Embeddedness

Another important concept to understand is that of “embeddedness.” *“Criminal embeddedness refers to individual immersion within an enduring deviant network, restricting involvement in prosocial networks.”*<sup>40</sup> Put simply, the term embeddedness describes the degree to which an individual is ingrained or affiliated with a gang. Dr. David Pyrooz explains that the goal of intervention strategies should not be to convince youth to exit the gang but rather should be to decrease the degree of association with the gang.<sup>1</sup>

Pyrooz et al. (2013) describes three qualities of criminal embeddedness put forth by Hagan (1993). These are “...ties to criminal others, involvement in criminal acts, and isolation from prosocial networks.”<sup>40</sup> Researchers provide a more in-depth description of criminal embeddedness by describing it as multidimensional, meaning there are many factors that influence the degree of embeddedness. Pyrooz et al. (2013) explains that embeddedness encompasses “....not only conventional network characteristics such as density of network ties or centrality within a deviant network but also the level of involvement in crime, isolation from prosocial networks, positions of leadership within a deviant network, and adoption of deviant values and identities.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, embeddedness involves connection/ties to deviant networks (i.e., peers, family, etc.); level of criminal involvement; anti-social values and beliefs; and a separation from pro-social peers and role models.

According to Pyrooz there are four main components influencing gang embeddedness. These include<sup>3</sup>:

- 1) *Status* – which involves the individual’s identity or position in the gang. Some people may identify with gangs but they are not fully embedded (since they don’t have the other components listed below).
- 2) *Associations* – how much contact youth have with the gang and how many friends are in the gang.
- 3) *Behavior* – gang symbols, flashing gang signs or colors, participating in gang fights, etc.
- 4) *Power* – the degree of influence the gang member has over the gang and how much influence the gang has over other members.

Pyrooz et al. (2013) and his fellow researchers explain that gang membership can be conceptualized “...as a trajectory because it follows a pathway across time and is marked by onset and termination—or identification and deidentification with the gang”.<sup>40</sup> They hypothesized that gang embeddedness is a dynamic factor and the most embedded gang

members would be least likely to desist or leave the gang lifestyle.<sup>40</sup> To do this work Pyrooz (2012) and his team created a gang embeddedness scale to gather information from gang members including: Frequency of contact with the gang; position in the gang; importance of the gang to respondent; proportion of friends in the gang; and frequency of gang-involved assaults as the baseline.<sup>40</sup> The study included 1,670 individuals.

Study results allowed researchers to conclude that there was “...a robust relationship between embeddedness and continuity in gang membership. That is, individuals weakly embedded in gangs desist at a faster rate than those more deeply embedded in gangs...In particular, gangs constrain rather than facilitate connections to other (pro)social networks. As embeddedness increases so too will the constraining forces of the gang. Efforts devoted to maintaining a social connection to the gang will preclude growth in social and human capital in other important social realms, such as education and employment. In this sense, embeddedness acts as an evolving, cumulative disadvantage making the successful transition to adulthood problematic due to being undereducated, undertrained, and socially isolated.”<sup>40</sup>

As previously mentioned, studies suggest agencies and facilities should target a reduction in gang embeddedness rather than attempting to convince youth not to identify as a gang member or to exit the gang. Since adolescents are strongly influenced by their peers and family members (especially if they have familial gang ties), it is likely that telling youth to disengage from the gang lifestyle will not be effective. In addition, research supports the most effective interventions are those that target youth at greatest risk for staying in the gang for a longer period of time.

Contrary to some evidence, recent bodies of research uphold that gang membership “...usually lasts for a relatively short period of time, generally less than two years....and joining often coincides with early adolescence.”<sup>42</sup> A much smaller percent of youth, usually those who join gangs at 18 years or older, remain in gangs four years or more.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, findings from one



Pyrooz, D. (2022). *Five Facts About Gangs Everyone in Juvenile Corrections Should Know*. [Webinar]. Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators.

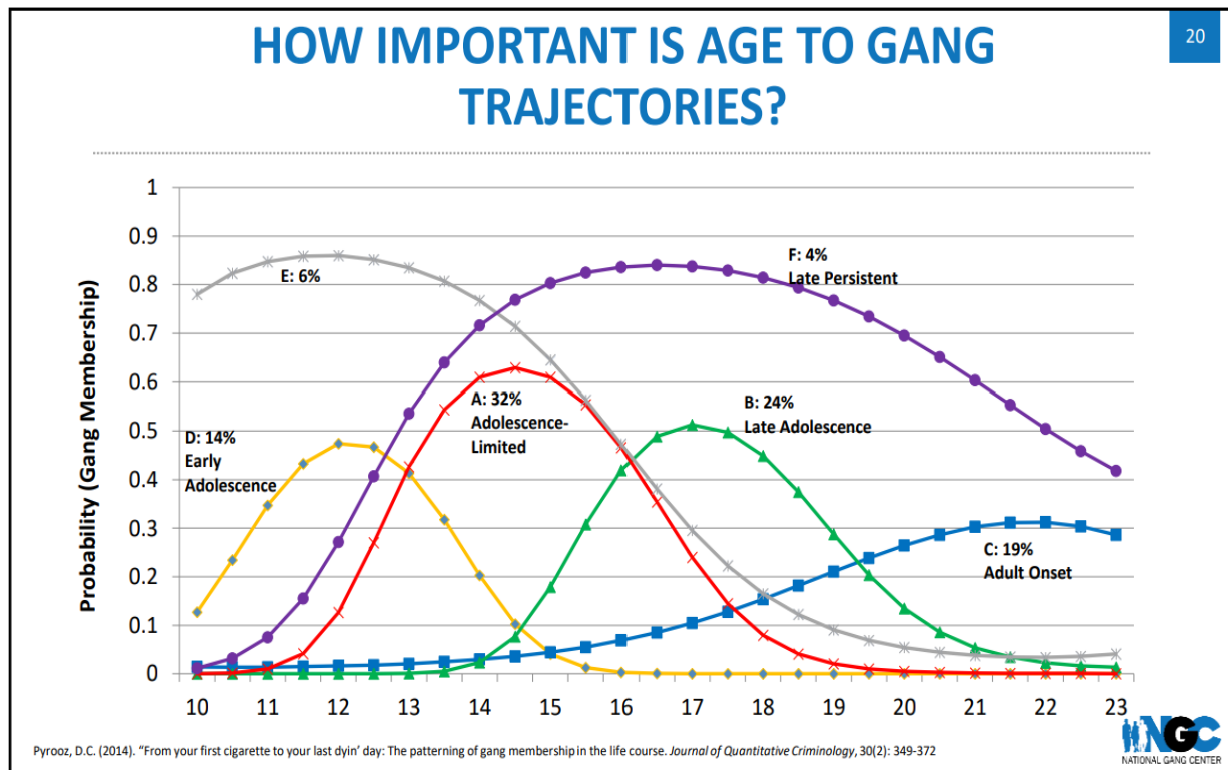
“Research suggests that a focus on the development of personal skills and self-differentiation can reduce gang influence. These individual-level factors affect gang identity and involvement in violence.... At the group level...services seek to reduce gang identify by strengthening identification and cohesion with family, given a positive valence of family norms....as well as by strengthening identification with one or more conventional groups such as a fire crew, sports team, or other group with prosocial goals such as a conventional career objective.”<sup>41</sup>

longitudinal study which included participants from several cities (i.e., Denver, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Seattle, etc.), verified that “...trajectories of gang membership are relatively brief. Indeed, the majority of gang youth remained involved with gangs for only one year or less (48 percent to 69 percent). However, many youth reported two (17 percent to 48 percent), three (6 percent to 27 percent), and even four or more (3 percent to 5 percent) years of gang membership...suggesting considerable variability in trajectories of gang membership.”<sup>40</sup>

Another study by Dr. David Pyrooz et al. (2013) found “our most and least conservative estimates indicate that 50 percent to 62 percent remain in gangs for one year, 21 percent to 22 percent for two to three years, and 16 percent to 28 percent for over three years.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, based on these data, approximately 71 to 84 % of gang members leave the gang lifestyle in three years or less.

The length of gang-involvement is a particularly useful finding as it suggests that most gang-involved youth will likely not need intervention but rather may “grow out of” the gang lifestyle (with or without some positive guidance). The challenge for the field is to identify those youth with multiple risk factors and who are at the greatest risk for long-term gang involvement and intervene as early as possible.

The following chart shows the trajectories for gang joining and desistance related to the research previously described.<sup>43</sup>



**Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations:**

- Understanding an individual’s unique set of risk factors in the context of “push” and “pull” factors is critical to ensure agencies/facilities are employing interventions that target individual and familial risk factors. Additionally, research suggests agencies/facilities should work to decrease the level of “embeddedness” in the gang lifestyle (i.e., decreasing the degree of involvement with the gang), rather than focusing on the ultimate outcome of gang desistance. Because most youth join gangs between the ages of 13 and 15 years old and that this involvement is short (often two years or less), it is important that juvenile justice professionals evaluate whether gang youth need formal interventions. Research shows that many youth leave gangs on their own accord. Therefore, prevention and early intervention efforts should aim to increase protective factors while diminishing those risk factors shown to be of greatest influence.
- To supplement youth testimony, agencies must effectively assess risk and need factors using standardized instruments. Agencies and facilities are encouraged to explore the trove of risk need assessment instruments supported by research and use agency-specific data to identify risk factors at intake. More information about formal assessment instruments and related policy considerations are provided in the [Assessment](#) section of this toolkit.
- Additional resources should be allocated to schools and local communities to develop gang prevention and early intervention programs. Since youth do not typically join gangs before the age of 13, there are years of opportunity in early childhood to prevent future gang involvement. Schools can be particularly influential since peers and teachers serve as positive or negative influences in a youth’s life. Academic engagement and success have been highlighted as a risk/protective factor. In addition, providing resources to address familial factors such as parenting styles and skills; poverty; community connections; and access to pro-social activities (especially after school hours) are important factors to address.

**Assessments**

The following section focuses on individual assessments that may be used to gather information about gang involvement of individual youth. Following a detailed review of the research, the toolkit authors were unable to identify any validated gang-specific assessments in the existing literature at the time of publication. However, research suggests that using a standardized and validated risk/needs assessment to identify known risk factors and targeting those factors in treatment, can produce positive outcomes (including decreasing gang embeddedness). Information from a standardized and validated risk/needs instrument should drive youth treatment plans and placement within the facility.

A brief summary of three standardized risk/needs assessments are discussed below. A “promising” assessment tool used to determine the likelihood for gang involvement in community settings, the Gang Risk of Entry Factors (GREF) instrument, is also discussed.

Readers are encouraged to conduct additional research and adopt a tool that meets the unique needs of its facilities.

### Risk Needs Assessments

Measuring risk and need factors when a youth arrives to a facility provides valuable information that can be used in treatment planning and placement decisions. Typically, a standardized risk/needs assessment consists of two main components – criminogenic risk factors that predict the likelihood a youth will recidivate and criminogenic Need factors which are individual factors “...that can be changed through individualized treatment or programming to reduce the likelihood that the youth will reoffend.”<sup>44</sup> Examples of criminogenic risk factors include “...early onset of aggressive behavior; patterns of high family conflict; school-related problems such as truancy; gang involvement; and availability of drugs or firearms in the neighborhood”.<sup>44</sup> An example of a need factor is substance abuse, if the substance abuse is a significant factor contributing to delinquent behavior. Risk/needs factors can be static (not able to be influenced – i.e., age of first offense) or dynamic (treatment can impact changes). Most risk/needs tools have scores in individual domains as well as an overall risk score.

It is important to understand two additional concepts related to risk/needs assessments: Protective factors and Responsivity. OJJDP describes protective factors as “...characteristics of the youth or the environment surrounding the youth that interact with risk factors to reduce the odds of involvement in delinquent or criminal activities. Some examples of protective factors are the presence of caring and supportive adults in the community and at school; having a stable family; and having a positive/resilient temperament.”<sup>44</sup>

Responsivity factors are non-criminogenic factors (factors not directly associated with a likelihood to offend) that should not be included when estimating risk level but that should be considered when determining appropriate treatment and services for the youth.<sup>44</sup> Responsivity factors are “...factors that may affect a youth’s ability to respond to treatment and programming, such as motivation to change, cognitive functioning, and access to transportation.”<sup>44</sup> Best practices support using information derived from a standardized risk/needs assessment to make treatment/programming and placement decisions.

By way of summary, the Risk/Needs/Responsivity (RNR) framework upholds<sup>44</sup>:

- **Risk Principle** - the level of service should match the risk level of the offender, with the highest-risk offenders receiving the most intensive services.
- **Need Principle** – treatment should target criminogenic needs factors associated with criminal or delinquent behavior.
- **Responsivity Principle** – treatment and interventions should “...be guided by characteristics of the offender that may affect his or her ability to respond and change (such as learning style or motivation).”<sup>44</sup>

There are several different risk/needs assessments that can be used to identify factors placing youth at greater risk for gang involvement. Three examples of risk/needs tools are briefly described below.<sup>44</sup>

- **The Youth Level of Services/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI)** is an assessment instrument that estimates a youth's risk to recidivate and the need for services. The YLS/CMI is a 42-item risk/needs assessment *"...designed to assess a juvenile offender's risk level, identify criminogenic needs that may be targeted by treatment or program services, and inform decisions regarding community supervision and case management."*<sup>44</sup> The YLS/CMI measures eight domains associated with criminogenic risk and needs including: Prior and current offenses/adjudications; family circumstances and parenting issues; education and employment; peer relations; substance abuse; leisure and recreation; personality and behavior; and attitudes and orientation. Youth are classified as low, moderate, high, or very high risk.
- **The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)** uses a pre-screen to measure static and dynamic factors and identify moderate or high-risk youth, who are then administered the full assessment. *"The Prescreen also provides an overall protective factor rating of low, moderate, and high. The Full Assessment consists of 88 items across 10 domains: legal history, family, school, community and peers, alcohol and drugs, mental health, aggression/violence, attitudes, skills, and employment/use of free time (Baird et al. 2013). The YASI assessment is based on reviewing the juvenile's official criminal record, conducting a semi-structured interview with the youth, and looking at any information from additional sources such as family, service agencies, police, and school officials (Orbis Partners, Inc., 2011)."*<sup>44</sup>
- **The Structure Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY)** is *"...a risk assessment designed to assess violence risk in adolescents. It includes 24 items in three risk domains: historical risk factors, social/contextual risk factors, and individual/clinical factors. All of the risk items are rated on a three-point scale. The SAVRY also includes six protective factor items, which are rated as present or absent. Some of the items included on the SAVRY are violence history, poor school achievement, peer delinquency, risk taking/impulsivity, and substance abuse (Meyers and Schmidt 2008). SAVRY uses a structured professional judgment approach and guides practitioners to make informed decisions about a juvenile's risk for future violence or violent offending (low, moderate, or high). The SAVRY also identifies dynamic risk factors that can help guide treatment and intervention planning (Meyers and Schmidt 2008)."*<sup>44</sup>

It is important when selecting a risk/needs assessment instrument that agencies consider the instrument's predictive validity, reliability, equity, and cost.<sup>44</sup> Studies on the YASI and YLS/CMI show a high percentage interrater reliability on static risk factors but show mixed results regarding validity and equity of the risk assessments.<sup>44</sup> Agencies should conduct a thorough review of risk needs assessment instruments to determine which instrument would best meet their needs.

## Program Screening and Diagnostic Tools

A small number of tools exist that measure the degree of embeddedness in the gang lifestyle. While none of these instruments were designed specifically for juvenile justice facilities and none have yet to earn the “effective” rating, some studies show these tools may be useful in identifying areas to target in treatment and tracking youth progress. Examples of community-based embeddedness tools are described below.

### Youth Services Eligibility Tool (YSET)

All prevention programs should have an assessment tool to determine whether youth qualify for the program. This eligibility criteria should also include “exclusionary criteria” – a list of behaviors, clinical diagnoses, safety situations, etc. which would prohibit the youth from participating in the program. An example of one screening tool used by the GRYD (Gang Reduction and Youth Development) secondary prevention services program is the Youth Services Eligibility Interview<sup>51</sup>

(<https://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/gangs-test-05202009.pdf>).

### Social Embeddedness Tool (SET)

Based on the YSET, the Social Embeddedness Tool (SET) was created and piloted by the University of Southern California in April 2013. The SET allows staff to understand the relationship of participants to gangs. The assessment affords staff the opportunity to measure client progress in reducing gang affiliation throughout the program and upon program completion. The SET gathers information via structured interviews and focuses on client attitudes and behaviors.<sup>41</sup>

The SET assesses three main constructs: 1) *“Identification: How strongly youth identifies with each group; 2) Time spent: How much time youth spends with each group per week; and 3) Connection: How connected youth feels to each group.”*<sup>45</sup> The tool also assesses a client’s beliefs and behaviors in the past six months to a year related to traumas or significant events. Additional information gathered includes the level of family engagement; risk taking tendencies; ethical/criminal thinking and behaviors (stealing, lying, carrying weapon, violence towards others, etc.); loyalty to friends; and whether friends are involved in gangs, illegal drugs, alcohol use, etc. to name a few. It is important to note that each prevention or intervention program will have a unique assessment based on the goals and objectives of that particular program and the specific population targeted.

Preliminary research on the SET showed<sup>41</sup>:

- *“Impulsivity was associated with greater gang identity and involvement in violence, suggesting that it is a significant risk factor to recognize and address.*

- *Self-investment and self-differentiation appeared to act as protective factors. Self-investment, as defined by engagement in positive activities such as school and work, was negatively associated with gang identity and involvement in violence; in other words, greater self-investment was linked to less extensive gang identity and involvement in violence. Similarly, self-differentiation (from the gang) was also negatively associated with gang identity, though based on these initial assessments it did not appear to have a significant relationship to violence.”*
- *“....many of the clients who have strong emotional ties to their family also have strong identification with the gang, perhaps reflecting the multigenerational nature of gang involvement in Los Angeles. However, clients whose families are highly organized and close knit (some might describe these as more functional families) reported lower gang involvement and less involvement in violence.”<sup>41</sup>*

#### Gang Risk of Entry Factors (GREF)<sup>14</sup>

The GREF was designed to help identify those youth most likely to join a gang in their community. Information gathered via the GREF can be used to target intensive secondary prevention services to those youth at greatest risk for gang involvement. The GREF includes key risk factors and a self-report delinquency scale that matches youth to risk profiles based on multiple longitudinal studies. The scales included in the GREF are: Impulsive risk taking; guilt neutralization; antisocial tendencies; negative peer influences; peer delinquency; parental monitoring; family gang influence; critical life events; early involvement in delinquent activities, and substance use. The GREF allows providers to limit the number of youth served in prevention programs by providing services to higher risk youth (since research shows low risk offenders often need minimal or no interventions). The tool’s validity was tested over a 12-to-18-month period in a high-risk sample of 11- to 16-year-old youth in Los Angeles County. Results show the GREF assessment can be used to predict gang involvement.

#### Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

- Agencies and facilities should use a standardized risk/needs assessment tool to assess risk and protective factors associated with propensity for delinquent behavior and gang joining. Information obtained from assessments should serve as the basis for a youth’s individual treatment plan. It is important that agencies/facilities consider creating policies and procedures to support the new assessment practices, including requiring formal staff training (initial and ongoing refreshers). Policies should also address how identified information from these assessments will be communicated to appropriate staff and how sensitive information will be protected.

- Agencies should have an established classification system to consistently and accurately identify Security Threat Groups (STGs). This classification information should be based on known risk and need factors and should involve information regarding the degree of gang embeddedness. Gathering this information allows facilities to place youth safely throughout the facility and to develop effective youth treatment plans.

#### From the Field: Assessment and Treatment

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (MA DYS) recently implemented a new process for assessing gang-affiliated youth. MA DYS facilities conduct a security threat assessment and a full risk/needs assessment when youth first arrive to a juvenile justice facility. This assessment includes questions regarding gang status, tattoos/markings, and other gang-related information. Youth are also assessed periodically throughout their custody stay. Ideally, these assessments are also conducted every six months and when a youth is moved to another program while youth is in the community.

During an interview with MA DYS leaders and staff (conducted by toolkit authors in July 2022), MA DYS emphasized the importance of staff-to-youth relationships. To this end, MA DYS staff are formally trained on developing healthy relationships with youth and maintaining professional boundaries. Although MA DYS conducts regular treatment groups grounded in a trauma-informed care approach, the agency understands that much of the treatment occurs outside of the group setting. MA DYS trains direct care staff on healthy relationships; administering positive reinforcement; role modeling skills; as well as on several treatment curricula used in its facilities (i.e., Aggression Replacement Training [ART], Dialectical Behavior Therapy [DBT], and Cognitive Behavior Treatment [CBT]).

California Alameda County Probation Department uses cognitive behavioral treatment (CBT) interventions to address risk/need factors associated with gang-affiliation. All staff are formally trained on the Carey Guide curriculum and related CBT tools. These CBT tools are used in the treatment group setting and more importantly, in the milieu to help youth process their faulty thinking following an incident. Select staff are also trained in Aggression Replacement Training (ART) – a curriculum that focuses on skills training and emotional regulation. Alameda County staff also use a formal conflict mediation process to address issues between youth, including opposing gang members, when needed.

## Role of Race

What role does race play in gang involvement? How does race influence the efficacy of treatment interventions? The collective body of “... research examining risk factors for gang membership among middle-school-aged youth has found that the effects of risk factors in the individual (for example, lack of self-control, low levels of guilt for negative behavior), family (such as poor parental monitoring), school (such as perceived vulnerability to violence), and peer (for example, commitment to delinquent peers, unstructured time spent where adults were not present, and time spent where drugs or alcohol are available) domains operate similarly for youth of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.”<sup>16</sup> Researchers found that regardless of

racial/ethnic background, youth who had multiple risk factors across several domains were more likely than other youth to report being gang members.<sup>16</sup> In other words, research shows that *“...race is not a risk factor for joining a gang. Instead, recruitment into a gang is influenced by compounding factors such as where youth live, family issues, under-resourced school systems, a youth’s mind-set, and other individual characteristics, especially peers with whom a youth associates.”*<sup>15</sup>

Research has repeatedly shown that poverty and other known risk factors have a stronger influence on whether youth become gang-involved, than that of race. Authors Freng and Taylor (2014) clearly explain this phenomenon:

*“...living in a deteriorating community without jobs and quality schools and with high crime rates represent risk factors for gang membership — and youth from any racial/ethnic group exposed to this type of environment would be more likely to join a gang. The difference is that minority youth are more likely than whites to grow up in communities with these characteristics, thus increasing their chances of gang involvement. So, the risk factors are not necessarily different for minority individuals, but the rate at which they are exposed to risk factors does differ.”*<sup>16</sup>

*“Gang membership is often portrayed, especially by the media, as a minority issue affecting the barrios and inner cities of the United States. Although a disproportionate share of gang members are in fact minority youth, this image ignores the significant number of white (non-Hispanic Caucasian) individuals involved in gangs, and creates inaccurate representations of the large number of minority youth who do not join gangs.”*<sup>16</sup>

*“The roles of race and ethnicity in gang membership are becoming increasingly complicated, and it is important to understand that the term gang membership is not “code” for race or ethnicity; the truth is that more and more gangs include white gang members and are becoming multiracial.”*<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, increased gang membership may not be *“...because the risk and protective factors are different but, rather, because they are exposed to greater risk levels based on the communities in which they typically live.”*<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that some studies have found that there are differences across race/ethnicity regarding the reasons why youth join gangs (i.e., push/pull factors). In addition, some studies have shown that some risk factors have a greater influence on certain groups. For example:

*“...when compared with Hispanics, more African-American gang members are influenced by social variables such as having family members in a gang, gang members in their classes, and friends who use drugs. On the other hand, risk factors for Hispanic gang members tend to be more related to educational frustration and lower school self-*

*esteem. For white gang members, risk factors included having parents with lower educational levels and increased levels of social isolation. African-Americans and Hispanics, on the other hand, were more likely to join gangs when they were less committed to school, had poor opinions of or interactions with the police, and were socialized on the street.”<sup>16</sup>*

Prevention research supports that general prevention strategies and programs are effective for most individuals regardless of ethnicity and race. A review of numerous programs allowed researchers to determine that “...mainstream delinquency-prevention programs do, in fact, work equally well for minority and white youth. These findings mirror those found in evaluations of other culturally specific juvenile justice programs. Similarly, the Community Guide review of universal, school-based violence-prevention programs found significant preventive effects on violent behavior, regardless of the predominant race/ethnicity of students.”<sup>16</sup> These findings do not suggest that professionals ignore common factors influencing gang-joining. In fact, researchers explain the importance of delivering treatment in the context of the culture. Researchers uphold that “...elements of successful evidence-based programs should be administered to diverse groups, but it may be necessary to modify programs so they are relevant to the specific experiences of clients being served. For example, in many minority communities, gang participation may indicate the need for protection and may not necessarily be a consequence of community values that support violence. Understanding these differences is important in terms of programmatic focus.”<sup>16</sup> As such, practitioners and researchers must consider whether it is more advantageous to make existing evidence-based programs racially and ethnically sensitive rather than developing new racially and ethnic-specific treatment curriculum and programs.<sup>16</sup>

When using a general prevention curriculum, it is important for curriculum developers and juvenile justice practitioners to incorporate specific racial/ethnic examples to which participants can relate. Culturally relevant treatment programming may also involve practitioners embracing a deep understanding of the increased impact that youth of color experience as a result of poverty and social isolation.<sup>16</sup> Culturally informed programming may

---

***“Research has shown that race is not a risk factor for joining a gang. Instead, recruitment into a gang is influenced by compounding factors such as where youth live, family issues, under-resourced school systems, a youth’s mind-set, and other individual characteristics, especially peers with whom a youth associates.”<sup>15</sup>***

---

also include assessing the desired level of family involvement in the process, which may be influenced by race/ethnicity. For example, “...there is evidence that — particularly for African-Americans — there is a desire to have the entire family unit involved in programs aimed at preventing youth problem behaviors. For these reasons, programs that focus on entire family units may be particularly important in reducing youth gang involvement.”<sup>16</sup>

Some research has shown that gangs are becoming more racially or ethnically mixed and have resulted in conflicts within racial/ethnic groups (intra) rather than inter-racial conflict. For example, *“...instead of conflict between African-Americans and whites...we are seeing more and more conflict between opposing Hispanic groups such as MS-13 and 18th Street. Thus, race/ethnicity may not be the chief reason for gang conflict.”*<sup>16</sup>

In sum, professionals must understand and appreciate the racial makeup of program participants; place greater emphasis on those factors shown to have the greatest influence on gang-joining for specific groups of individuals; and deliver known interventions with culturally relevant adjustments to have the desired impact on gang-involved youth.

#### **Modifying Programs to Be Racially Sensitive and Culturally Appropriate<sup>16</sup>**

The Strengthening Families Program 10-14 (SFP 10-14) has recently been classified as a “promising program” according to the University of Colorado’s Center for the Study of Violence Prevention Blueprints series. SFP 10-14 targets the age group at which most youth join a gang and *“...focuses on seven key resiliency factors — optimism, empathy, insight, intellectual competence, self-esteem, direction or purpose in life, and determinism/perseverance — that are associated with seven main coping or life skills — emotional management skills, interpersonal social skills, reflective skills, academic and job skills, the ability to restore self-esteem, planning skills, life skills, and problem-solving ability.”* Studies indicate that SFP 10-14 has demonstrated a positive impact on various outcomes *“...including preventing drug use, aggression, and several mediating (risk and protective) factors related to problem behavior.”*

The Strengthening Families Program 10-14 provides several versions of the curriculum to better meet the cultural needs of individuals. For example, the SFP for African-Americans includes culturally relevant pictures and wording and include additional information about African-American families and communities. Similarly, *“...the SFP for Hispanic families includes a Spanish-language version and additional content on respecting family traditions. The SFP for Hawaiian families received the most revisions; an additional 10 sessions were added on respect for family values.”* It is important for researchers and practitioners to continue to explore the ways in which curricula can be modified to better meet the needs of individual participants.

*“Community and environmental factors play a critical role in the creation of youth gangs. In current American society, members of racial/ ethnic minority groups are much more likely than whites to live in disadvantaged communities with characteristics that exacerbate risk for gang joining, including the following: Concentrated poverty; social and geographic isolation; resource-deprived social institutions, such as schools and hospitals; fewer meaningful employment opportunities because of industrial and manufacturing jobs moving out of the cities during the 1970s and 1980s, coupled with a deteriorating public education system that struggles to prepare students for new high-technology jobs; rundown and decaying housing; relatively high rates of crime and violence; and a criminal justice system that removes a disproportionate share of residents — particularly young men — from the area.”<sup>16</sup>*

### Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations:

- To have the greatest impact, facility staff must understand the population being served and be willing to modify the prevention and/or treatment curriculum to reflect the backgrounds of program participants. This can be done by infusing culturally relevant examples and emphasizing specific risk factors that may have a stronger pull on youth in terms of their decision to join a gang.
- The juvenile justice field must continue to dedicate resources to evaluating gang prevention and intervention programs. More specifically, questions to answer may include: *“Do we need more targeted programs that focus on specific factors for different racial and ethnic groups? Or is general gang-membership prevention programming — which includes some racially and ethnically sensitive elements — sufficient?”<sup>16</sup>* Answering these questions through formal evaluation studies will increase desired outcomes. Agency and facility leaders are encouraged to connect with local colleges and universities to tap into existing resources (i.e., graduate school students) to assist with evaluation efforts.
- Juvenile justice professionals must continue to develop programs that focus on tackling the root causes of gang membership (i.e., targeting known risk factors and increasing prosocial opportunities). For example, policymakers should *“...make a concerted effort to address factors such as the concentrations of high unemployment, the increase in households where the father is absent, the disruption these areas experience as a result of higher levels of mental and physical illness and other disabling conditions, and the overburdened health care system and community services.”<sup>16</sup>*

## Girls in Gangs

Research shows there are differences in male and females regarding gangs. Some of these differences include<sup>8</sup>:

- Males join gangs at a higher rate than females.
- Males stay in the gangs longer than females. *“The findings of one study [indicated] that males continue to join gangs throughout adolescence, while onset peaks in the early teens for females.”*<sup>8</sup>
- Female gang members commit fewer violent crimes than males.
- Property crimes, status offenses, and drug-related crimes are among the most common offenses for females.<sup>46</sup>

Research also suggests differences in the reasons girls and boys join gangs. Some studies have shown the most common reasons females join gangs are *“friendship, solidarity, self-affirmation, and a sense of new possibilities.”*<sup>46</sup> Several other studies have found that female gangs may be a safe-haven for young girls – an escape from physical and sexual abuse in the home.<sup>46</sup> Research supports *“a history of sexual and physical abuse in the home is a gender-specific risk factor that leads girls to join a gang. Often, girls look toward gangs for a “safe place.” Girls often express that gang membership provides them with friendship, care, love, and a way out from problems at home”.*<sup>47</sup> Meda Chesney-Lind (2014) further explains:

*“Gangs can offer both boys and girls a sense of belonging and a perceived sense of fun, excitement and protection. There are some gender differences, however. For boys, more than for girls, a gang may be seen as a place to make money. Girls, by contrast, are more likely to join a gang because of a perceived sense of safety and security that they cannot find at home. Although a gang may provide girls — particularly those from abusive or troubled families — with a sense of a surrogate family, girls in gangs actually face a greater risk of serious delinquency than their nongang counterparts, including gang-fighting, drug use and sales, and weapon-carrying. Gangs also expose girls to greater risk of sexual victimization and violence from other gang members in their own or other rival gangs.”*<sup>48</sup>

It is important that practitioners understand that *“...compared with their non-gang-joining peers, girls who join gangs are more likely to: Have a history of sexual abuse and trauma. Live in a destructive or distraught family. Have problematic peer relationships. Abuse drugs. Live in dangerous neighborhoods and attend unsafe schools”.*<sup>48</sup> If prevention and intervention programs are going to be successful, it is critical to understand the primary reasons why girls are joining gangs, so that the root causes can be addressed.

Unfortunately, gangs do not offer safety from sexual and/or physical harm. Studies have verified that *“...girls are sometimes ‘sexed in,’ or forced to have sex with male gang members, in order to be accepted by the gang.”*<sup>47</sup> In addition, it is common for gang members *“...to sexually exploit girls once they are accepted into the gang. The gang, when recruiting new male*

members, may present sexual access to girl gang members as one of the benefits of gang membership”.<sup>47</sup> Some studies verified that “...girls who are unable to age out of the gang or leave it because of pregnancy face brutal consequences: rape, beatings, and death.”<sup>47</sup> With this knowledge, it is incumbent on professionals to garner their efforts to prevent gang involvement and/or decrease the level of “embeddedness” in the gang lifestyle. Specifically, “...strategies and programs aimed at preventing youth from gang-joining must address issues that are unique to girls and the contexts that can lead them to join a gang; such strategies and programs include the need to prevent sexual abuse, strengthen family relationships, provide them with safety in their neighborhoods, help them avoid substance abuse and abusive boyfriends, and improve their skills to delay early sexual activity and parenthood”.<sup>48</sup>

Field researchers have emphasized the importance of tackling the issue of gang-involved girls and preventing the intergenerational consequences arising from female gang membership. Gang-involved youth (male and female) are at risk for “intergenerational poverty, dropping out of school, drug dependence, cognitive impairment, injury, and disability or death.”<sup>47</sup> Research shows that gang-involved girls are “particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of domestic violence, bearing and caring for children at a young age, and marrying a gang-affiliated partner”.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, as girls enter adulthood they are “...at a higher risk of becoming incarcerated and reoffending than non-gang-involved women.”<sup>47</sup> Juvenile justice professionals must develop and implement services and resources that address “....gender-specific risk factors and experiences, including histories of sexual abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, and difficulty safely leaving a gang.”<sup>47</sup>

In 2016, researchers from the National Council of Crime and Delinquency conducted a study to more closely examine reasons why girls join gangs; their roles in the gang; and their strategies for disengaging from the gang. Study participants were between the ages of 14 to 25 years and included a wide range of culturally diverse individuals. Of the youth who participated in the

*“Cultural context is an important factor in understanding why some girls join a gang. For example, Latina and Hispanic girls must negotiate the traditional gender-role ideologies of machismo and marianismo. Machismo dictates that Latino boys and men should be tough, sexually assertive, and dominating; marianismo stresses that girls and women should be submissive and passive in their relationships with boys and men.”<sup>48</sup>*

*“Female African-American gang members differ from Latina and Hispanic gang members in one very interesting way: how they feel about their futures, especially heterosexual marriage. Seventy-five percent of African-American girls — and only 43 percent of the Latinas — agreed with the statement, ‘The way men are today, I’d rather raise my kids myself.’ Similarly, when asked about the statement, ‘All a woman needs to straighten out her life is to find a good man,’ 29 percent of Latinas — and none of the African-American girls — agreed. Prevention efforts must be shaped by the cultures in which they operate; they must be cognizant of the dynamics between girls and their mothers, in particular, because research shows that, although these relationships are important, they are likely to be strained with respect to girls who are at the greatest risk.”<sup>48</sup>*

study, “96% of participants reported that they had at least one family member who had been arrested...[and] 86% participants reported that they had at least one gang-involved family member, which may include extended family or close friends.”<sup>17</sup> The study found that family involvement was one of the most common reasons girls joined a gang and often these young women didn’t feel they had a choice (i.e., because the gang was already an extension of their existing family). Some of the girls reported, “their involvement was driven by a desire for belonging and acceptance.”<sup>17</sup> Roles within the gang varied and ranged from “being loyal” and “do[ing] what you’re told” [to]...“being a fighter” which included disciplining other girls in the gang or confronting girls from rival gangs.”<sup>17</sup> Other youth reported adopting the role of a leader who was “in charge of other girls.”<sup>17</sup>

At the time of the study, 80% of the girls interviewed reported not being active in the gang. Girls reported their exiting the gang did not require “formal steps such as being ‘jumped out’ or ‘put off’ of the gangs” but rather was a “gradual process of continuously rejecting gang activity.”<sup>17</sup> The most common reason for leaving the gang lifestyle as cited by participants was wanting a better life, which researchers coined as “maturing out.” This “better life” as described by study participants involved “a desire to raise their children in a healthy environment.”<sup>17</sup> Others reported growing weary of what gang activity entailed, including constant vigilance, worrying their family members, and losing loved ones to gang violence. Some stated that as they matured, they wanted to follow different life avenues, such as pursuing education, finding legitimate employment, and living a drug-free life.”<sup>17</sup> Some girls cited the fear of incarceration as a factor including not being able to see their families if they were incarcerated.<sup>17</sup>

Research supports using gender-informed approaches and strategies when working with gang involved females have the greatest impact on outcomes. More specifically, gender-specific prevention efforts should focus on: “Preventing sexual abuse; improving family and peer relationships; helping girls avoid substance abuse and abusive boyfriends; and improving skills to delay early sexual activity and parenthood.”<sup>48</sup>

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) emphasizes that gang-related services for females should include: “...life skill classes, mentorship, and peer support” services that address the histories of sexual abuse to support girls in moving towards leaving the gang lifestyle.<sup>47</sup> Authors also encourage professionals to help gang-involved youth understand the legal system and to provide “...creative therapeutic services that allow them to process their emotions.”<sup>47</sup> Juvenile justice professionals should consider the following when serving gang-involved girls:

### **Life Skill Classes, Mentorship, and Peer Support**

Best practices in the field consistently show the positive impacts of skill development and mentoring programs for both male and female gang members. Providing opportunities for gang-involved girls to develop “...life skills that help girls make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management

*abilities can help promote girls' health and safety.*"<sup>47</sup> In addition, fostering healthy relationships in the form of support and mentors provides the needed guidance to help girls use new skills, change old patterns of behavior, and navigate and maintain their healthy lifestyle. Programs have shown that "credible messengers" – individuals who have lived the same experience such as other woman who were previously in a gang – serve as effective mentors.<sup>47</sup> More information on mentoring and credible messenger programs are provided in subsequent sections of this toolkit.

Research also supports the positive impact of peer mentorship programs when working with girls in or at risk for joining gangs. Studies show that *"...structured or informal peer support, unlike staff mentorship, allows girls to learn from their peers' guidance and experiences. More importantly, peer support allows girls to develop their own leadership and mentorship skills when providing their own knowledge and advice. Peer counseling programs, overseen by program staff, both support and empower participants, giving them a sense of control over their own lives."*<sup>47</sup>

### **Sexual Abuse and Gang Desistance**

As described in earlier sections of this toolkit, many gang members have extensive histories of trauma. For girls in gangs, this trauma often includes sexual abuse history – either independent of the gang lifestyle or as part of female gang initiation. These traumas must be addressed as part of the overall approach to decreasing the strength of gang affiliation. It is also vital to target gender-specific needs such as pregnancy and motherhood, as *"...pregnancy is a commonly cited reason for girls to reduce and eventually end their official gang involvement."*<sup>47</sup> Programs and agencies must consider these complex factors (*i.e.*, *"pregnancy as a gang exit strategy and the ongoing trauma of sexual abuse"*)<sup>47</sup> in their efforts to support girls in desisting from gangs.

### **The Service Needs of Girls in Juvenile Halls: Legal Education Services, Recidivism Prevention, and Creative Therapeutic Services**

Girls and boys who are in custody would benefit from increased knowledge about the juvenile justice system; their legal rights; and advocacy resources.<sup>47</sup> Authors Brown and Castillo-Morrison (2012) maintain that girls could benefit from intense "pre-release" case management as part of the effort to decrease the likelihood of reoffending.<sup>47</sup> Intensive case management sets forth clear goals and allows for service coordination and provision. This approach also affords girls the opportunity to participate directly in the planning and decisions related to their future.

As part of solving this complex issue, the body of literature supports the positive impact of providing avenues for healthy self-expression for girls who reside in custodial settings. *"Creative therapeutic services like poetry, song, yoga, and dance serve as emotional outlets for girls. Such programming provides girls with a sense of freedom, pro-social outlets for expression, and a validating context to process physical and*

*emotional trauma.*<sup>47</sup> Facilities are encouraged to expand creative programming to address these needs.

### Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

Agencies and facilities are encouraged to consider the following elements when working with gang-involved girls<sup>17</sup>:

- Agencies and facilities must understand girls' entrenched relationship with gangs resulting from family members, friends, and loved ones belonging to a gang. Researchers have emphasized the importance of providing girls support to address the *"...complex relationships with their gang-involved family members, friends, and neighborhoods"*<sup>17</sup> when helping girls move away from gang membership.
- Practitioners must understand the gender-specific needs of gang-involved girls and tailor services to address these individual needs. For example, researchers found that many study participants *"...decided to exit their gangs because they were pregnant or parenting, which indicates the need for specific services. In addition, as girls transition from gangs, they continue to experience high levels of trauma, need to locate sustainable employment and reliable housing, and may struggle with addiction issues."*<sup>17</sup> Juvenile justice professionals must be aware of all youth needs (including past traumas) and provide treatment and services based on individual needs.
- Agencies and facilities should provide multiple avenues for girls in custody to express themselves creatively. Additionally, it is important to select service providers who use a strength-based approach when working with gang-involved girls. This may include implementing *"...positive youth development—to recognize and build on girls' strengths, such as those endorsed by study participants: resiliency, interpersonal skills, intelligence, and independence."*<sup>17</sup>
- Agencies and facilities should memorialize gender-specific approaches and considerations in formal policy and procedures to set clear expectations for staff.

## OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model

The most comprehensive gang reduction model, the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model (CGM), was developed for preventing and intervening with gangs in the community. Although, this toolkit focuses on gang-involved youth in custodial settings, much of the CGM framework can be applied to working with youth in secure settings. The tenets of the model are discussed below.

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model uses a multidisciplinary approach to address gang issues and has been shown to reduce gang-related crimes in community settings.<sup>4</sup> The OJJDP model was developed for *"communities with a serious, violent, and entrenched gang problem"* and aims to target *"...gang-involved youth or youth who exhibit multiple risk factors for gang involvement and their families, not all the youth in the target area or community."*<sup>4</sup> Researchers conducting an evaluation of the OJJDP model explain the assumptions that support the model's

components. Specifically, the model *“...is based on theory, research, and practice which proposes that the gang problem is systemic, and a response to rapid social change, lack of social-development opportunities, poverty, institutional racism, existing criminal organizations and opportunities, and also to the fragmentation and inadequacy of approaches to the problem across multiple organizations.”*<sup>5</sup>

The Comprehensive Gang Model has been implemented in numerous communities throughout the country. Studies have consistently reported the positive impacts the model has had on reducing youth gang membership and activities. This toolkit utilizes the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model to organize information based on the three model components - Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression – and applies these to secure juvenile justice settings. To maintain scope and given the age of youth and young adults in secure juvenile justice facilities, this toolkit focuses much of its discussion on the intervention and suppression elements of the model. Professionals working in a community setting are strongly encouraged to consult the OJJDP website for additional resources regarding community efforts to address gang issues. To guide users and community leaders, OJJDP has also created a comprehensive implementation manual ([implementation-manual.pdf \[ojp.gov\]](#)) which provides a step-by-step roadmap for reducing gang activities in the community. The manual *“...is based on the best practices of almost 20 years of implementation experience with the Model in communities large and small.”*<sup>4</sup>

Before more closely examining the components of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, it is important to understand the basic hierarchy of strategies used to address gang issues. The basic components are: 1) Prevention (broken down into Primary and Secondary Prevention strategies); 2) Intervention; and 3) Suppression.<sup>4</sup> Each of these components is geared towards a specific population of youth based on the degree of involvement in gang activities. This concept of appropriate dosage and level of service-delivery (based on a youth’s level of risk and need) is universally supported throughout the body of juvenile justice research. The diagram below provides a pictorial representation of the intervention hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> When reviewing the diagram, it is important that readers understand that services provided at the base of the pyramid are less intense than those at the top of the triangle. That is to say that services provided in Group 2 are more intensive than those provided to Groups 3 or 4. A brief description of each strategy is offered below.

Author James C. Howell (2010) puts forth a basic explanation of each of the four components of this continuum of care: Primary Prevention, Secondary Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression.<sup>9</sup> The author explains:

- Prevention** programs (shown as Groups 3 and 4 in the diagram below) target youth who are “...at risk of gang involvement and help reduce the number of youth who join gangs.” Authors explain that individuals falling into Group 3 “Secondary Prevention” are typically “high-risk youth – 7 to 14-year-olds who have already displayed early signs of delinquency and an elevated risk for gang membership but are not yet gang involved. Most of these youth will not join gangs, but they represent a pool of candidates for future gang membership”.<sup>9</sup> Group 4 Prevention strategies target all youth who live in communities impacted by gangs. From a juvenile probation and school perspective, implementing effective prevention strategies may serve to divert some youth who might otherwise become gang involved in their early teenage years.

Figure 2. Gang Prevention and Intervention Strategies



Source: Wyrick, 2006.

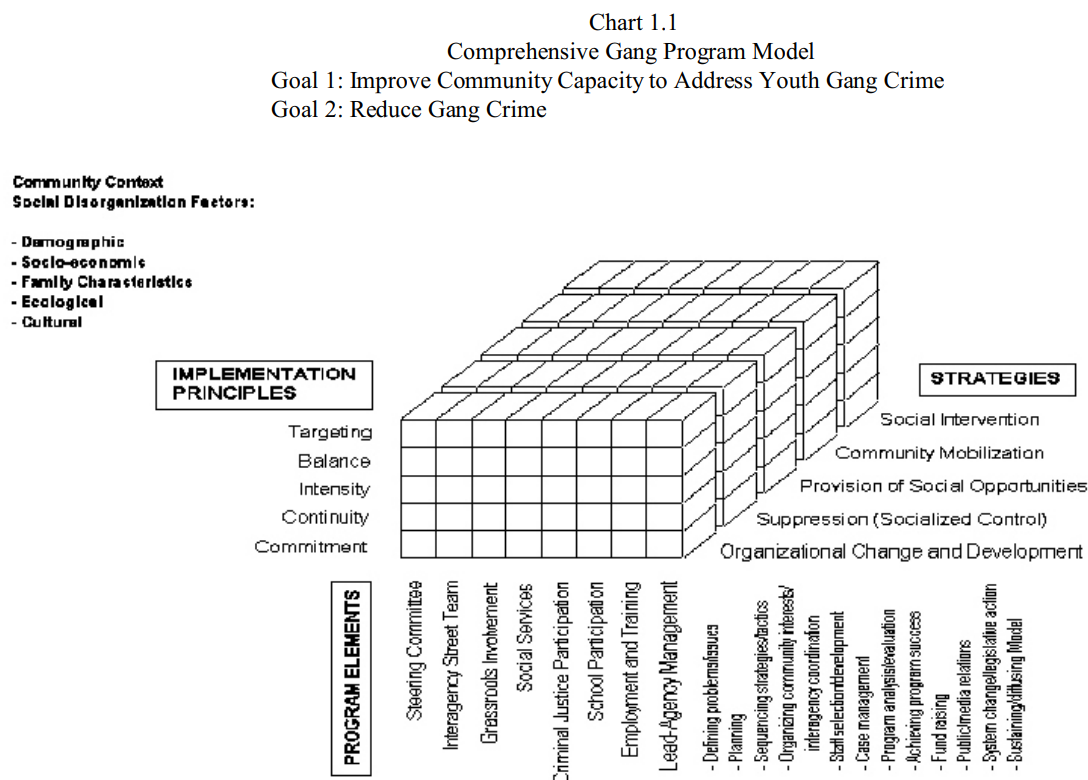
Cited in Howell, J. (December 2010). Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*<sup>9</sup>

- Intervention** programs (shown as Group 2 in the figure above) “...provide sanctions and services for younger youth who are actively involved in gangs to push them away from gangs.”<sup>9</sup> While these youth make up a large part of the total youth who are gang-involved, they do not represent the highest offending category. These individuals “...typically range in age from 12 to 24 years old” and are “...candidates for intensive treatment services and supervision.” Authors explain that these intensive services should “...include group therapy, family therapy, mentoring, and cognitive-behavioral therapy—consisting of as much as 40 hours of direct contact over a 130-day period.”<sup>9</sup>
- Suppression** strategies are the most intensive services and aim to “...rehabilitate the most violent gangs and older, criminally active gang members.”<sup>9</sup> The target population for suppression strategies are the most serious and chronic gang-involved youth, representing “...as few as 4 to 8 percent of offenders...” but perhaps “...may account for the majority of all adolescent crimes in some communities.”<sup>9</sup>

### OJJDP Gang Model Components

The OJJDP Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program Model “...consists of three sets of interrelated components: key program elements, strategies, and implementation principles, all directed to the nature and scope of the gang problem and related demographic, socio-economic, organizational and other local community factors.”<sup>5</sup> Since the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model framework is most relevant to working with gangs in the community, some of the pieces of the model may not directly impact custodial settings. However, youth treatment should be viewed as a continuum of care – transitioning from probation to a secure facility and eventually, transitioning back to the

community. As such, it is necessary to expose readers to the OJJDP framework in its entirety. The three interrelated components previously mentioned, as well as specific strategies, are discussed below.



Spergel, I.A., Wa, K.M., Sosa, R.V. (May 2005). *Evaluation of the Riverside Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression*. [Evaluation of grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention].<sup>5</sup>

## 1) Program Elements

The community-based OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model<sup>49</sup> includes key program elements such as: A Steering Committee; a lead agency; employment and training opportunities; grassroots involvement (i.e., local community organizations, political associations, churches, etc.); participation from social services, criminal justice, and school partners; and “community support, trust, and voice.”<sup>50</sup> Readers are encouraged to more deeply explore model components by consulting the [OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: A Guide to Assessing Your Community’s Youth Gang Problem](#). According to the referenced manual, some of the critical elements of the Comprehensive Gang Model include<sup>49</sup>:

- A qualitative and quantitative assessment of the gang problem.
- A detailed implementation plan describing the goals and objectives for each core strategy and including sustainability activities (i.e., securing support from community businesses and state and federal anti-gang prevention and intervention funds).
- An intervention team comprised of “....police, juvenile and adult probation, street outreach staff, school personnel, social service agency staff, job/employment

*development representatives, and others who may provide intervention services to youth.*”<sup>49</sup>

- Ongoing data collection and analyses to evaluate the impact of the implementation plan activities and to inform decisions.

### **Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations**

Agencies and juvenile justice facilities may consider the following when developing their comprehensive gang reduction strategy:

- Jurisdictions who have significant gang issues should consider creating a steering committee to develop and monitor an agency-wide plan for gang reduction. Once this overarching plan is created, each facility can then create their action plan based on the goals outlined in the statewide plan. A formal steering committee who meets regularly and reviews data will better ensure implementation goals are met.
- Establish formal process and outcome measures to track gang activities and to provide information regarding program effectiveness.
- Juvenile justice facilities should use a multi-disciplinary approach that includes representatives from an array of service areas. Facilities should also work closely with service providers in the community and law enforcement to help support youth before, during, and throughout their transition back into their home communities. Parole officers, mentors, and pro-social engagements play a crucial role in youth maintaining a healthy lifestyle. These cross-disciplinary connections and services should be in place well in advance of the youth’s transition.

## **2) Core Strategies**

As previously mentioned, the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model is comprised of a “...set of five core strategies—community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, suppression, and organizational change and development—that offer a comprehensive, collaborative approach designed to prevent and reduce gang violence.”<sup>51</sup> Each of the five core strategies are described briefly below in the context of the community-based model.

Considerations for juvenile justice agencies and facilities can be found in the Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations section to follow. More detailed information on the OJJDP model can be found at <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/comprehensive-gang-model/implementation-manual>



OJJDP Overview of Core Strategies.<sup>49</sup>

<https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh331/files/media/document/CoreStrategies.pdf>

- a) **Community Mobilization:** The Community Mobilization component is described as the *“Involvement of local citizens, including former gang members and community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.”*<sup>4</sup> Within the OJJDP framework, an agency or organization is assigned to serve as the lead on gang reduction efforts and a Steering Committee meets regularly to oversee implementation activities. *“The lead agency along with the Steering Committee initiates, develops, and maintains interagency communication and relationships across agencies and community groups.”*<sup>5</sup> The Steering Committee also works *“....with residents in the target area and community leaders to elicit their ideas and afford them a voice in identifying services and activities in the community. The committee helps facilitate the development of community groups (e.g., block watches, neighbors/mothers against gangs, or other community alliances and coalitions).”*<sup>4</sup> It is critical that Steering Committee members represent a diverse group of stakeholders such as law enforcement, school administrators, community-based advocates, policy makers/agency heads, and community members, to name a few.
- b) **Opportunities Provision:** Opportunities Provision involves *“...the development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeted at gang-involved youth”*.<sup>4</sup> This component includes providing gang youth and those at risk of

gang involvement access to education, vocational certification training, and jobs. These opportunities are also provided as part of reentry planning for individuals who may have been confined for a period of time. *“Grassroots, faith-based, and community youth agencies are involved by sponsoring training, tutoring, remedial education, vocational, and job development/placement programs for gang youth.”*<sup>4</sup>

- c) **Social Intervention:** The Social Intervention component involves *“...youth-serving agencies, schools, street outreach workers, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, law enforcement agencies, and other criminal justice organizations reaching out and acting as links between gang-involved youth and their families, the conventional world, and needed services.”*<sup>4</sup> This core strategy includes providing community-based outreach and services to address the social (mental health counseling, substance use, etc.), educational, vocational, health, housing, and income needs of gang-involved youth. These services are also provided to family members and *“...to associates of the targeted gang members because these peers may contribute to...a youth’s gang involvement.”*<sup>4</sup>

---

*“A variety of social-service programs should be provided to gang-involved program youth and their families, including younger siblings who may be at risk of gang membership and delinquent behavior. Targeted program youth often require crisis intervention and referral, and/or direct help with school, employment, and drug-use problems, as well as with gang-related controls and personal-development issues. Social services should also be provided to families of targeted youth who may need assistance with housing, public aid, health care, family dysfunction and conflict-resolution, employment, immigration, racism, and other problems which directly affect gang youth, or may be conducive to their gang behavior.”*<sup>5</sup>

---

- d) **Suppression:** The strategy of Suppression involves implementing *“...formal and informal social controls procedures and accountability measures, including law enforcement and close supervision or monitoring of gang-involved youth, by criminal justice agencies working in collaboration with community-based service providers, schools, and grassroots groups.”*<sup>51</sup> Social controls may *“...range from arrest and warnings to behavior modeling, advice, counseling, crisis-intervention and positive attention paid to youth interests and needs by members of the street team.”*<sup>5</sup> Suppression strategies also involve *“...the street team organizing neighbors to patrol neighborhoods, encouraging them to report criminal acts to the police, making sure that gang youth show up for probation or parole interviews and court appearances, as well as getting gang youth not to hang on street corners, not to incur neighborhood disapproval, and to help clean up litter and remove graffiti.”*<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the OJJDP Model includes an expanded role for police officers who, in addition to leading suppression activities, also participate *“...in [the] development of intervention*

*plans, positive social contacts with target gang members, community mobilization efforts, and gang prevention activities focused on the target area.”<sup>4</sup>*

Suppression involves a balance between formal and informal social controls. Examples of formal social controls include: Special legislation; specialized law enforcement gang units; correctional policies; and school policies and procedures. Informal social controls are “...activities that communicate the norms and values of the community regarding expectations of individual or group behavior, etc.”<sup>3</sup> Examples of informal social controls are: 1) business owners and other community members reinforcing the expectations by asking youth what they are doing hanging around in the area and 2) faith-based leaders declaring that they will support the youth in making positive changes but will not tolerate violence in the community.

- e) **Organizational Change and Development:** This component focuses on the development and implementation of policies and procedures to effectively address gang problems. More specifically, this component involves assessing the agency’s capacity to change; the level of commitment to the cause; the ability for cross-collaboration and communication; and flexibility to adjust as information changes.<sup>50</sup> Effecting change and sustaining these changes long-term involves other key elements such as clear policies and practices that consider cultural backgrounds of communities and youth; specialized training for outreach workers, juvenile justice staff, and other team members; and data and case management systems to track youth contacts, services, and treatment progress (these data can later be used to evaluate individual and program outcomes). More detailed information can be found at <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/comprehensive-gang-model/implementation-manual>.

### Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

- **“Community Mobilization”** - In the context of juvenile justice agencies and facilities, leaders should consider participating in broader local and statewide efforts to engage community partners in gang suppression efforts. For example, agency/facility leaders and/or probation/parole officers may choose to be involved in the community gang suppression steering committee. Collaborating with community partners not only increases the community’s understanding of the juvenile justice system but may also increase opportunities for paid work for youth in the community (i.e., via business owners who serve on the committee).
- **“Opportunities Provision”**– In addition to providing structured interventions while in a secure facility setting, it is critical that juvenile justice practitioners ensure case plans include details about needed services, prosocial activities, and solid supports that will assist youth in avoiding future gang involvement. Former gang involved youth must have a clear transition plan that includes prosocial activities and locations that serve as safe harbors for youth. These “safe havens” may include

afterschool programs; sports leagues; structured time with non-gang involved family members; volunteering; vocational programming; and basic living skills (i.e., job searching, how to complete job applications, how to apply for a driver's license, etc.). Gathering specific information (i.e., days/times these programs operate) and assisting youth in signing up for community activities prior to release will further aid youth in adopting a gang-free lifestyle.

Agencies must plan for a youth's transition back into the community on the day a youth arrives to the juvenile justice facility. Reentry planning must be part of a larger treatment plan and should include teaching youth how to access resources and navigate activities of basic living (i.e., education, securing employment, obtaining a driver's license, securing stable housing, paying rent, etc.). Custodial staff should establish relationships with community providers well in advance of a youth's transition (i.e., suggested a minimum of 90 days prior to release). Additionally, providing gang-involved youth access to education, vocational certification training, and jobs while in custody is a critical factor in gang reduction efforts.

- *“Social Intervention”* – The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model emphasizes the importance of connecting youth to services; maintaining contact with youth; understanding with whom the youth has contact in their neighborhood; and knowing where youth are likely to socialize at various times (i.e., evenings, weekends, and in times of crisis).<sup>5</sup> From a juvenile justice probation/parole perspective, it is essential that probation/parole officers have a clear understanding of youth behaviors, habits, peer groups, etc. Arriving at a deeper understanding of individual youth can be achieved through regular engagements with youth and through conversations with community partners such as law enforcement and community business owners. Juvenile probation/parole officers and close custody staff should ensure youth have at least three professional contacts whom they can call when they are struggling. These supportive individuals may include probation/parole officers; identified mentors; teachers; religious leaders; and counselors. It may also be helpful for the facility to make a small contact information card that can fit in a youth's wallet to make this information readily accessible should a youth need support in a crisis or pre-crisis situation. It is important to remember that while in custody youth should be offered an array of services including conflict resolution; drug/alcohol programming; group counseling; access to mentors; and referrals for services (i.e., psychological, medical, dental, etc.).<sup>4</sup>
- *“Suppression”* – While suppression plays a large role in reducing gang activities in the community, the concept of suppression can be easily applied to work with gang-involved youth who reside in custodial settings. It is critical that agencies and facilities have formal policies and procedures to hold youth accountable and support youth in staying on a positive life trajectory. Formal structures, including those for gathering information on gang involvement and activities, will assist the facility in

preventing gang related events and allow staff to better prepare for gang-related incidents that are expected to occur. It is also important that agencies emphasize the value of staff role modeling and building rapport with youth, as relationships can positively influence youth decisions. Agencies may consider providing specialized training for all staff regarding what to look for related to gang activities; understanding gang-related data; and appropriate responses to gang behaviors, etc. Additional information about data and intelligence as well as the power of human relationships are discussed in other sections of this toolkit.

- *“Organizational Change and Development”* – agencies should develop a comprehensive gang reduction strategy that includes communication activities; specialized training; policy and protocol development; and inter-division collaboration; to name a few. Organizational change and development may also include specialized staffing; developing information systems to track gang members and incidents; and using a standardized risk/needs assessment. Cross-discipline collaboration is essential to effectively tackle the issue of gangs both within a facility setting and in the community. The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model highlights short and long-term goals of a team approach to gang reduction.<sup>4</sup> Agencies and facilities should consult these goals when developing a comprehensive gang reduction strategy.

### 3) Implementation Principles

The final piece of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model are the implementation principles that serve as the foundation for gang reduction work. These principles are a) Targeting; b) Balance; c) Intensity; d) Continuity; and e) Commitment. While these pieces are most relevant to gang reduction work in a community setting, many of these can also be applied to custodial settings. A brief description of each of these is provided below.

- Targeting** – The Target Principle emphasizes the importance of using assessment data to identify the *“right neighborhoods, gangs and youth in the community who account for the gang problem”* (i.e., which gang members are most involved in serious crimes and where gang-related crimes are occurring) as well as identifying the right organizations to help address the problem.<sup>5</sup> *“It is important not only to regard the gang problem as systemic, but to focus on the most serious aspects of the problem.”*<sup>5</sup> In a facility setting, this would involve using data to assess risk factors associated with gang involvement and the degree of gang involvement (“embeddedness”). Using this information, facilities can develop specific interventions based on youth risk and needs.
- Balance of Strategies** – The Balance of Strategies Principle encourages agencies to use a variety of strategies and programs to address gang issues and changing needs overtime. *“A differential mix and dosage of multiple strategies is required for different circumstances and specific categories of program youth at different times.”*<sup>5</sup>

- c) **Intensity** – The Intensity Principle requires professionals to adjust the dosage of services and interventions based on individual risk and needs. This may involve decreasing the frequency of contacts once the youth has worked their way out the gang. *“Dosage refers to the duration, frequency and continuity of particular worker contacts, services and strategies carried out for different categories of youth. An optimum dosage may be necessary for a positive outcome. However, a balance of strategies, types of workers, coordination of worker contacts, and the nature of specific services and controls may be more important than the amount or intensity of services or contacts provided. Coordination among team workers in relation to particular types of youth may be more important than the specific range or intensity of services or strategies provided by each of them.”*<sup>5</sup>

Research shows the importance of matching the level of services (i.e., intensity) based on youth’s risk level. Seigle et al (2014) emphasized the importance of dosage stating: *“Juvenile justice systems should support the effective implementation of system interventions by monitoring whether youth receive the intended frequency and intensity (i.e., “dosage”) of services needed to realize the full benefits. The failure to provide a youth with an appropriate service dosage will result in a less than optimal outcome.”*<sup>52</sup> Therefore, agencies must have clear protocols for service delivery that reflect the intensity of services based on results from a standardized and validated risk needs assessment.

- d) **Continuity of Services/Contacts** – The Continuity of Services/Contacts Principle upholds: *“Continuity of personalized, positive contact is important, particularly for gang or delinquent youth who have special needs for social support and control, and for building trusting relationships with adults.”*<sup>5</sup> Agencies must set clear expectations for juvenile probation/parole officers regarding the frequency of contacts with youth and should provide clear guidance on what should take place during these regular contacts. From a facility perspective, it is important that staff do not underestimate the power of establishing positive healthy relationships with youth. As previously mentioned, transition planning should include linking youth to resources prior to exiting the facility (i.e., school enrollment; securing a job; mental health and medical appointments scheduled prior to release; etc.). In addition, it is suggested facilities provide youth with at least three contacts whom they can call upon for guidance and support while in the community.
- e) **Commitment** – The Commitment Principle emphasizes the value of having dedicated staff and Steering Committee members who are committed to gang-reduction efforts.<sup>5</sup> Researchers evaluating the Riverside Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression program suggest that Steering Committee members and agency/program administrators *“periodically renew their commitment to the Comprehensive Gang Program approach.”*<sup>5</sup> The concept of “commitment” can be broadened to include putting supports in place for staff so that

they remain committed to the agency mission, the youth they serve, and to the gang reduction plan. For more information related to agency and facility culture as it relates to staff retention, readers can consult the CJJA Toolkit: Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Qualified Staff (2019; [CJJA-Staff-Retention-Toolkit.pdf](#).)

## Treatment Interventions: Effective Strategies and Promising Practices

Over the past few decades, prevention programs and intervention curricula have been developed to address gang issues in the community and in custodial settings. Although this is true, there are few programs that have achieved the status of “promising practice.” The limited number of research-proven gang curricula is in part due to the lack of rigorous evaluations of these programs. However, there are numerous “promising practices” that appear to have some positive outcomes regarding gang-involved youth. Agencies are encouraged to consult the websites below for an up-to-date view of prevention and intervention models used when working with juvenile justice youth.

- The National Gang Center – the Program Matrix and the OJJDP Strategic Planning Tool can be found at [Programs by Age Range | National Gang Center \(ojp.gov\)](#)
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Model Programs Guide – [Model Programs Guide | Home | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(ojp.gov\)](#)
- Blueprints for Violence Prevention – <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/187079.pdf>
- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp>

### Prevention

Although the focus of this toolkit is on custodial settings, there is value in briefly highlighting some key pieces for schools and agencies to consider. One of the goals of prevention programs is to reduce the attraction to the gang lifestyle. Authors Taylor and Smith (2014) uphold that to do this “...we must increase the attractiveness of other organizations. Our goal should be to offer youth access to organizations with a solid image and a strong brand or identity that matches or counters the popularity of the neighborhood gangs”.<sup>53</sup> In other words, we need to develop strategies to entice youth to partake in meaningful pro-social activities. “Youth, including those at risk for gang-joining, possess developmental assets that can be strengthened when aligned with positive community resources to help prevent gang-joining.”<sup>53</sup>

As previously described, prevention strategies can be broken down into two pieces: primary prevention and secondary prevention. The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model describes primary prevention strategies as focusing “...on the entire population of high-crime, high risk communities. Programs that effectively reduce community risk factors or provide protective factors for community members are considered primary prevention”.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, secondary prevention strategies are: “....activities and services targeting young people,

*primarily between the ages of 7–14, who are at high risk of joining gangs.”<sup>4</sup> Secondary prevention services often include activities for families and siblings in addition to the identified youth. Examples of secondary prevention activities include: tutoring; mentoring; after-school programming; and recreational activities that incorporate service provision.<sup>4</sup>*

Examples of prevention activities implemented in Richmond, VA include: *“‘Class Action’ summer camp, sports and life-skills activities and training, a theater group that showcases issues faced by gang-involved youth, and after-school programs for elementary and middle-school youth....[These activities] have the potential to connect youth with prosocial friends and enhance their sense of belonging while providing safe places to have fun and learn.”<sup>53</sup>* Other examples of prevention strategies/programs include teaching English as a second language to Hispanic residents; providing mentoring; and engaging youth in school athletics.<sup>53</sup> Social service professionals should also consider: *“...conducting workshops and trainings to increase community awareness about gangs; working to change conditions contributing to gang involvement within the targeted community; creating a one-stop center that facilitates effective distribution of health and support service; creating procedures for community members to report crimes.”<sup>4</sup>*

With all types of programs, it is critical to understand the target population. Prevention strategies can be implemented using two main approaches: *“... ‘universal,’ which means that the strategy is directed toward a population regardless of risk (this could be an entire school, neighborhood or community, for example), and ‘selected,’ which means that the strategy is directed toward a specific risk group.”<sup>36</sup>* This is important to note since some prevention programs and interventions are most effective with specified populations. For example, evaluation data for school-based prevention programs show *“...that youths at the greatest risk of gang participation are not reached by traditional, school-based prevention programs; youths who have left school require alternative learning environments to engage them in learning and prevention programs.”<sup>54</sup>* That said, because of the lack of formal evaluations, it is difficult to confidently determine whether a “universal” or “targeted” approach would reap more benefits. Scott Decker (2014) explains, *“...although targeting youth who are at the highest risk for joining a gang seems, on its face, to be a wise approach, we have little empirical evidence of the success of targeted (as opposed to general youth population) programs and strategies specifically for preventing gang-joining.”<sup>12</sup>* However, the author does suggest that when community prevention programs require increased involvement and resources from law enforcement, efforts should focus on those youth at greatest risk for gang involvement.

All prevention programs should have clear eligibility criteria and an assessment tool to assess whether youth qualify for a particular program. This eligibility criteria should also include “exclusionary criteria” – a list of behaviors, clinical diagnoses, safety situations, etc. which would preclude a youth from participating in the program.

Juvenile justice agency and facility staff should consider the following information when developing, adopting, and/or implementing a comprehensive prevention strategy for gang-involved youth in the community and/or in a secure facility.

#### **Prevention (Ages 12-17)<sup>55</sup>**

- *Provide family-strengthening/effectiveness training to improve parenting skills, build life skills in youth, and strengthen family bonds.*
- *Promote emotional and social competencies in elementary school-age children, while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom.*
- *Increase prosocial peer bonds and strengthen students' attachment and commitment to schools.*
- *Increase teachers' classroom management, interactive teaching, and cooperative learning skills.*
- *Develop gender-specific programs.*
- *Improve parents' involvement in and support for their children's academic progress.*
- *Steer at-risk youth from delinquent peers to prosocial groups and provide positive peer modeling.*
- *Engage community groups, individuals, and institutions to respond to the multiple needs of youth and their families through case management for the highest-risk youth and their families; provide an array of services, after-school activities, and community activities to strengthen families.*
- *Mobilize community leaders and Boys & Girls Club staff to recruit at-risk and gang-involved youth into club programs in a non-stigmatizing way through direct outreach efforts to discuss local gang issues and design a strategy to offer youth alternatives to the gang lifestyle.*
- *Educate youth to modify their perception that gang membership is beneficial.*
- *Involve grassroots organizations in the creation of violence-free zones.*
- *Provide social support for disadvantaged and at-risk youth from helping teachers, responsible adults, parents, and peers.*
- *Provide after-school programs*

One treatment model that has been widely implemented and used as both a prevention and intervention strategy in multiple settings (i.e., community and custodial settings) is Multisystemic Therapy (MST). The model has been deemed a "Model Plus Blueprints" program<sup>56</sup> ([Blueprints Programs – Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#)) and "Effective" by OJJDP<sup>57</sup> ([Model Programs Guide | All MPG Programs | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(ojp.gov\)](#)). The model uses family interventions to work with adolescents at high risk for or engaged in anti-social behaviors and/or substance abuse.<sup>36</sup> Authors Gorman-Smith, Kampfner and Bromann (2014) explain that MST can be used as a gang-prevention strategy in three ways<sup>36</sup>:

- 1) Judges and probation officers can use MST as an alternative to incarceration, thereby reducing the likelihood of gang affiliation. Authors uphold "*Incarceration causes gang activity to proliferate. In Texas, for example, 40 percent of incoming juvenile offenders*

*claim gang affiliation; however, the estimated rate of gang affiliation at the time of release is 70 to 80 percent of the population.”<sup>36</sup> Keeping youth out of detention or other secure juvenile justice settings will help stop the proliferation of gang involvement.*

- 2) *“MST diverts youth who are not yet involved in a gang (or perhaps minimally involved) into prosocial activities while making parents more aware of the risks for gang involvement and providing the tools to prevent their child from becoming affiliated.”<sup>36</sup>*
- 3) *MST can decrease the risky behaviors of actively involved gang members.”<sup>36</sup>*

A secondary prevention program Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) is one example of a “Promising” program for a community setting (National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions<sup>58</sup>; [Program Profile: Safe and Successful Youth Initiative \(SSYI\) \(Massachusetts\) | CrimeSolutions, National Institute of Justice \(ojp.gov\)](#)). The SSYI violence prevention program targets young men ages 14 to 24 who are *“...most likely to commit or be victim of gang or gun crime...to reduce their incarceration and victimization from violent crime.”<sup>59</sup> Studies have shown SSYI youth were statistically “...less likely to be incarcerated compared with comparison group youths [and]...SSYI-funded cities had statistically significant reductions in all measured city-level crime victimization rates, compared with comparison cities.”<sup>59</sup> Another study showed that *“Between 2012 and 2017, cities with SSYI funding saw annual violent offenses decrease by as many as 2.2 offenses per 1,000 population and annual violent crime victimizations decrease by almost 3.2 victimizations per 1,000 population for ages 14 to 24. While multiple efforts exist in cities to reduce violent crime, SSYI had a statistically significant impact on reducing annual violent offenses and victimization.”<sup>25</sup>**

It is important to understand that program fidelity has a strong influence on program outcomes. Research has repeatedly shown that when staff do not adhere to the curriculum as designed, there is a negative impact on outcomes (i.e., increase in delinquent behaviors; increased recidivism; etc.). Maintaining fidelity involves formally training staff on the curriculum; closely following the structured facilitator’s manual; and training supervisors to conduct regular fidelity checks. Readers are encouraged to consult with the curriculum authors to ensure a program-specific fidelity process and tool is in place prior to full-scale implementation.

*“Adolescents have to go through a passage into adulthood and they have to declare their independence, and they have to find power and validation in their independence. We can either find a positive way to affirm their independence and their passage from adolescence into adulthood or they will create one for themselves. And they have created it — in gangs. When we don’t give them a positive way to become young adults, they find their power — their own way — that validates the reality they face. We have to make a more attractive alternative available and without directly attacking the gang, which may reinforce the power of the gang. So gang-membership prevention is changing the way youth think of themselves, how they imagine their passage into adulthood, and how they get power.”<sup>2</sup>*

For additional information regarding best practices in gang prevention in the community readers may consult the following websites:

- The NGC Strategic Planning Tool (see <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/spt>) reviews a range of anti-gang programs and offers a protocol to guide community assessment.<sup>60</sup>
- Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development (see <http://www.blueprintsprograms.com>) at the University of Colorado’s Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence provides information on promising programs that have been rigorously evaluated and shown to have an impact on youth violence and/or risk factors for violence.<sup>56</sup>
- CrimeSolutions.gov (see <http://www.crimesolutions.gov>) is sponsored by the Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs (DOJ OJP) and provides ratings for criminal justice strategies, including those focused on gang-membership prevention and intervention.<sup>58</sup>
- Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE) (see <http://www.SafeYouth.gov>) is an initiative sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that provides the latest information, interactive training videos, and customized online workspaces to help communities plan, implement and evaluate an approach to youth-violence prevention.<sup>2</sup>
- The Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY) (see <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/unity>) is funded by the CDC as part of the STRYVE initiative to help large urban centers organize their planning and increase their capacity to address youth violence. The UNITY Roadmap uses nine elements, including political support, policies and plans, organizational structure, resources evaluation, community engagement, communication, prevention programming and capacity-building skills.<sup>61</sup>

*“Given the complexity of the factors that contribute to gang-joining, it is important for groups focused on prevention to take advantage of principles from criminology, sociology, psychology and public health. Institutions within the community must collaborate to ensure that programs address youth’s needs both in school and in the community and — this is important — that the connection between them is seamless...Continuous services are critical to successful prevention: What begins in the classroom should be reinforced in the community and even in juvenile justice institutions. Prevention efforts cannot end with the ringing of the school bell. Strategies aimed at keeping kids out of gangs must be provided seamlessly across the community and even in institutional settings.”<sup>61</sup>*

### Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

- Practitioners and policymakers should ensure prevention programs include promoting positive opportunities for youth through vocational training, education, and assisting youth in obtaining meaningful employment.<sup>53</sup> Authors Taylor and Smith (2014) suggest

five principles to consider when creating a gang prevention program in the community: *“1. Integrate public health and criminal justice approaches. 2. Promote a long-term, comprehensive — rather than “single-solution” — approach. 3. Reinforce prosocial youth-development programs and community strengths. 4. Motivate social involvement....[and] 5. Promote and fund evaluation.”*<sup>53</sup> It is also important that probation/ parole officers regularly communicate with community partners such as School Resource Officers and law enforcement officials.

- When selecting a gang prevention curriculum, it is important to identify the intended population as research shows some programs are more effective with a targeted approach rather than a “universal” approach (e.g., providing the program to all youth). In addition, agencies should adapt the program and/or curriculum to the targeted population by infusing culturally appropriate and relevant examples. To achieve the desired outcomes, it is also critical that agencies have a clear process for ensuring fidelity to the treatment model and curriculum.
- Any program or treatment model is only as good as the individuals providing the services. Consistent with the OJJDP implementation component of “Commitment,” it is important that agencies and facilities hire staff who are dedicated, empathetic, and use a strength-based approach when working with youth. Research shows that staff who are committed to the agency’s mission and to the youth they serve can be powerful forces in helping youth resist and/or desist from the gang lifestyle. Agencies must also train staff on how to develop meaningful and supportive relationships with youth and how to properly administer positive reinforcements and consequences (i.e., fair, consistent, etc.).
- Agencies should consider adopting formal mentoring programs as part of its comprehensive gang prevention strategy. Research has shown the impact of using positive role models to influence and support youth in making healthy life choices. Mentoring programs can provide stable support once a youth returns home. More information about mentoring and “credible messenger” programs is provided in other areas of this toolkit.

## Intervention

Whether working to reduce gang involvement in the community or in a secure facility setting, OJJDP offers the following principles to serve as the foundation for gang reduction efforts and treatment strategies. These tenets include<sup>4</sup>:

- *“Each gang member is a unique individual who joined the gang for unique reasons and who needs an individualized response.*
- *Each gang member affects (and is affected by) multiple domains such as family, neighborhood, school, and peers.*

- *Gang members often experience uncoordinated multiple-agency involvement and are high-end service users.*
- *Gang members frequently encounter barriers to needed services.”<sup>4</sup>*

The OJJDP Implementation Manual provides short and long-term goals that can guide practitioners in developing individual treatment plans and strategies. Some of these include<sup>4</sup>:

| Short-term goals   | Long-term goals   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Creating individualized case management plans for gang members participating in the project.</i></li> <li>• <i>Engaging gang members in direct services to address their specific needs.</i></li> <li>• <i>Working together to dismantle or surmount barriers to accessing services.</i></li> <li>• <i>Holding gang members accountable for negative behaviors.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Assisting gang members in transitioning out of the gang lifestyle.</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving the effectiveness of agencies serving gang-involved clients.</i></li> <li>• <i>Reducing overall gang-related crime in the community (or likelihood youth will commit future crimes when released from the secure setting)</i></li> </ul> |

It is recommended that juvenile justice practitioners use a comprehensive approach when providing intervention services. Intervention strategies should be closely linked to those risk and need factors identified by a standardized risk/needs assessment. Examples of services facilities may use to address root causes of gang involvement include: *“Drug and alcohol treatment; mental health and anger-management counseling; job training and placement; transportation assistance; tattoo removal; legal assistance; transitional/reentry services; and mentoring.”<sup>4</sup>*

Research specific to managing gangs in juvenile justice facilities is limited at best. However, a framework for managing gangs in schools may be adapted and applied to other structured settings such as a juvenile justice facility. In the following section, readers can replace “school” with “juvenile justice facility” and “students” with “juvenile justice youth” to better understand the application of these concepts. One school-based gang prevention and intervention model includes three key components: 1) mitigate risks that foster gang activity; 2) protect those who are most susceptible; and 3) contain the spread of gang activity.<sup>15</sup> The authors explain, *“...the best way to identify, document, and respond to gangs within the school environment is to create a process that<sup>15</sup>:*

- ✓ *Begins with awareness, understanding, and documentation of the gang issue.*

- ✓ *Develops active collaborations among agencies and organizations that can reduce gang activity within the school environment.*
- ✓ *Identifies students involved in or susceptible to gang activity.*
- ✓ *Provides a range of prevention measures.*
- ✓ *Addresses specific gang behaviors with consistent consequences and offers youth avenues to reduce or disengage from gang involvement.*
- ✓ *Establishes school safety and crisis planning.*
- ✓ *Includes ongoing staff training”*

Agencies and facilities should also consider the following when developing a comprehensive intervention strategy when working with gang-involved youth.

#### **Intervention**<sup>53</sup>

- *Build a comprehensive framework for the integration of child and adolescent services programming that links the juvenile justice system with human service and other related agencies, including schools, child welfare services, mental health agencies, and social services.*
- *Create an infrastructure consisting of client information exchange, cross-agency client referrals, a networking protocol, interagency councils, and service integration.*
- *Target potential and current serious, violent, chronic gang-involved juvenile offenders for resource priority.*
- *Provide case management by a particular agency for case conferencing and to coordinate services to offenders and the families of gang youth.*
- *Provide mentoring of at-risk and gang youths, counseling, referral services, gang conflict mediation, and anti-gang programs at schools in the community.*
- *Provide close supervision and monitoring of gang-involved youth by agencies of the juvenile/criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.*
- *Provide intensive probation supervision linked with more structured behavioral and/or skill-building and multimodal interventions.*
- *Provide direct placement and referral of youth for employment, training, education, and supervision.*
- *Provide alternatives to gang involvement, including remedial and enriched educational programs for gang youths with academic problems and vocational and apprentice training.*
- *Intervene with victims in the community or in hospital emergency rooms to break the cycle of violence.*
- *Provide rehabilitation services in prisons and in youthful offender facilities.*
- *Provide stepped-down control and support services for reentry of confined offenders by linking them with court-based services.*

Studies have shown the benefits of coordinating with law enforcement to implement a gang prevention, intervention, or suppression program in a community, school, and/or institutional settings. Ways in which law enforcement can proactively contribute to gang reduction strategies include: Providing training to juvenile justice staff members; regularly sharing gang-

related youth information with facility leaders and probation/parole officers; establishing positive relationships with youth; and assisting in the development of facility and individual safety plans; to name a few.<sup>4</sup> Safety plans should include all potential risks/hazards and have a specific section addressing gang-related hazards.

One piece of effectively managing gangs in custodial settings involves facility administrators understanding how big the issue of gangs is in their facilities. Questions to ask may include<sup>15</sup>: Which youth are involved in serious incidents? Are the incidents in question actually gang-related? What is the level of these youth's gang associations? Are there rival gangs in the facility fighting among themselves? Are there outside influences or circumstances driving the gang activity? In addition, it is important that administrators regularly review gang-related data to identify trends (i.e., incident types; time of day; involved youth; etc.). Facility administrators must be thoroughly aware of the gang alliances and rivals within the facility. It is also important that facility staff stay current on information about gangs in the community since it is common for community gang members to display loyalty to fellow gang members once they enter a juvenile justice facility.<sup>15</sup>

*"Staff in programs with a correctional approach are 13 times more likely and youth are 4 ½ times more likely to be assaulted with injury than those utilizing a therapeutic approach. When one broadens the lens to include sexual victimization, the rates grow exponentially as the size of the facility grows, ranging from 1.3% for facilities with 1–9 youth to 10.2% for facilities with more than 100 youth."*<sup>32</sup>

### **a) Evidence-Based Practices**

Currently, the [National Institute of Justice's CrimeSolutions](#) has a few community gang reduction programs deemed as "effective" for ages 11-17. These include "Ceasefire" (Oakland, CA) and "Group Violence Reduction Strategy" (New Orleans, LA). Each of the programs successfully reduced the total number of gang-involved shootings and suspected gang-involved shootings in the community.<sup>58</sup> With regard to facilities, there are currently no treatment curricula targeting gang-involved youth in secure settings that meet the OJJDP threshold of "effective."<sup>57</sup> Research suggests that perhaps basic therapeutic interventions addressing antisocial thinking and behaviors may have the greatest impact on reducing gang involvement (not a curriculum specifically targeting gang membership). In general, the research literature suggests:

*"...that the two primary categories of evidence-based practices that positively impact gang-involved and violent youth in the juvenile justice system are cognitive behavioral treatment programs (including, but not limited to, Aggression Replacement Training, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Moral Reconation Therapy) and family-focused treatment programs (including, but not limited to, Family Integrated Transitions, Functional Family Therapy, and Multisystemic Therapy). Research has also established the value of certain other programs and practices for serious juvenile offenders, including substance abuse treatment programs, mental health treatment programs, and mentoring*

*programs. Sometimes these programs or practices stand alone; in other cases, they are integrated as a component of either a cognitive behavioral treatment program or a family-focused program.”<sup>6</sup>*

#### **Multisystemic Therapy (MST)**

b)

*“The primary goal of the intervention is to prevent rearrest and incarceration. At the state level, MST is a cost-effective alternative to mass incarceration of delinquent youth. Incarcerating a youth for one year can cost a state \$40,000 to \$80,000, not including the sizable legal costs. MST treatment costs approximately \$20,000 per child. Although the savings are immediately recouped, the most important saving is the accumulated justice costs over the lifetime of the child. Once a youth has been incarcerated, the likelihood of subsequent and more serious offenses increases. Preventing the child from becoming more deeply entrenched in criminal behavior will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in the long term.”<sup>12</sup>*

#### **Promising Practices**

Currently, there are a few promising practices related to gang violence, although many of these programs are geared towards gangs in the community. It is important to understand that promising practices are “...not considered evidence-based practices for juvenile offenders either because they have not been rigorously evaluated, or because they have been rigorously evaluated and designated as evidence-based practices for populations other than juvenile offenders. Promising practices include, but are not limited to, multiple service programs, substance abuse treatment programs, mentoring programs, academic and employment programs, and staff training programs.”<sup>62</sup> Structured mentoring programs such as using “credible messengers” (previously gang-involved individuals) are among the handful of “promising” practices that facility administrators may choose to implement. Readers are encouraged to consult the resources provided to find a program that would best fit the target population and desired outcomes. Additional information regarding mentoring and credible messenger programs are provided in other sections of this toolkit.

**Gang Intervention Strategies: Lessons Learned from Schools<sup>15</sup>**

- Convene a team of school administrators, teachers, school-based counselors, mental health specialists, school resource officers, outside law enforcement, vetted gang intervention specialists, and representatives from agencies that have responsibilities for gang-involved youth (e.g., probation and parole). Everyone has a different perspective and can contribute his or her own professional expertise. The team can focus on the most difficult gang-involved students by collectively monitoring their behaviors and by providing case management, referral to services in and out of the school environment, and constant follow-up.
- Have a plan for confronting/addressing students involved in gang-related activities. Always consider the safety of students and staff in developing this plan.
- Get to know those students who are suspected of gang involvement. Determine each student's level of involvement and commitment as a member or associate. (Is the student deep in the gang, or does the student have a loose affiliation with gang members?) This will assist in determining the best individual approach to use.
- Establish a rapport with these students; sometimes this is as simple as providing intervention techniques such as mentoring, academic support, and a system of wraparound support services to help students disengage from gang involvement. At other times, it may require justice system intervention."
- For those students suspected of gang affiliation or association, track and document behaviors and progress in school (e.g., regularly monitor attendance and grades). Address concerns of behavior, grades, and attendance. Utilize existing school supports for academic and behavioral issues.
- Be consistent with discipline; hold youth accountable for infractions. Balance consistent discipline and accountability with positive support.
- Use graduated sanctions based on school discipline policies.
- Use conflict-resolution strategies and other restorative justice practices demonstrated to be effective with gang-involved youth.
- Involve these students' parents/guardians early and consistently. Be proactive with parents and allow them to be a part of the solution instead of the problem. Notify a parent of possible gang identifiers that the school is noticing with his or her child. Parents appreciate your attempts to inform and help them instead of contacting them when their children are already in trouble. A parent who feels that you are being proactive, rather than simply labeling or picking on his or her child, is more apt to help instead of becoming combative."

## Mentoring Programs and Credible Messengers

The Credible Messenger Justice Center (<https://cmicenter.org/approach/>) provides a brief but thorough explanation of "credible messengers" and the impact they can have:

*"Credible Messengers are mentors who have passed through the justice system and sustainably transformed their lives. Often Returned Citizens (previously incarcerated) and others with similarly relevant experiences, want to give back to help others. Their*

*life experience provides them with a special ability to connect with younger, justice-involved people.*

*From the same background and speaking the same language, Credible Messengers are able to break through to these individuals and form powerful, transformative, personal relationships. With the development of trust over time, they provide these young people a living example of hope and opportunity and are able to equip them with new tools to manage their emotions and behavior and thus change their lives.”<sup>63</sup>*

Recent research suggests that formal mentoring programs using “credible messengers” show promising results with gang-involved youth. At the time of this publication, OJJDP and other governing bodies had not rated any of these programs as “effective” or “promising.” Although, this is mainly due to the lack of formal outcome studies. Despite this, given our understanding of how influential role models and peers can be on adolescent thinking and behaviors, three credible messenger programs are described below.

*Breaking intergenerational cycles of committing offenses, poverty, violence, and trauma requires simultaneously supporting progress in various domains of wellbeing—at the individual, family, and community levels focused on building social connections, safety, stability, mastery, and access to relevant resources.<sup>32</sup>*

Readers are encouraged to consult the Credible Messenger Center <https://cmjcenter.org/approach/> or other resources previously provided, to gather more information on this topic. A related topic, “the role of relationships” is discussed in greater detail in other sections of this toolkit.

### **Credible Messenger Initiative** (Washington, D.C. - Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services [DYRS])<sup>32</sup>

The Credible Messenger Initiative in Washington D.C. aims to strengthen “...community relationships between youth in care and custody of DYRS and skilled mentors.”<sup>32</sup> Credible messengers are members of the community who were previously involved in the juvenile justice system and who provide ongoing support to youth. Credible messengers receive formal training on the service model and expectations. These skills coupled with their integrity and commitment, assist youth in transforming their attitudes and behaviors regarding gang-involvement and violence.<sup>32</sup>

Family and community engagement are significant components of the program. Parent peer coaches work with families to help them understand and navigate the justice system based on their own involvement and family experiences. Ultimately, the “...Credible Messenger Initiative expands DYRS’ role in city-wide violence prevention efforts, improves services to youth in the community, connects youth to resources and relationships to support their success, builds on the strengths of natural community leaders, and creates employment opportunities for DC residents.”<sup>32</sup>

**Inside Circle** (*Juvenile Justice Commission [JJC], New Jersey*)<sup>64</sup>

*“The Inside Circle support model began in 1996, after a series of violent riots at Folsom State Prison, a maximum-security prison in California. Inmates sought to create a space where they might be able to engage each other peacefully and work through their own issues. The efforts within the California system were documented on the critically acclaimed documentary entitled “The Work” (2017). Since its inception, the model has been cultivated and implemented in an array of settings (in recent years with adolescents and young adults).”*<sup>65</sup>

In May of 2019, the [Inside Circle](#) through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, began engaging a small number of youth in custody at the Juvenile Medium Security Facility (JMSF) in New Jersey. JMSF houses the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission’s (JJC) most challenging young men.<sup>64</sup>

Throughout the program, interactions assist the participants in addressing past traumas; overcoming trust issues; and ultimately, healing wounds from the past. The program involves youth discussing their feelings and emotions in a safe environment (called a “healing circle”) while residing in a juvenile justice facility. Groups are guided by Inside Circle facilitators and supported by JJC staff and trained community members, many with lived experiences (“credible messengers”). Officers from the agency’s Gang Management Unit and other facility staff (i.e., Superintendents, Youth Workers, and Supervisors) are actively involved in youth and family outreach as well as engagement throughout the program. Once youth are released from the facility, youth have the option of continuing their involvement in the healing process by participating in the Young Adult Empowerment program which provides continuity once youth return to their community. In addition, NJ JCC assigns specific parole officers to Inside Circle participants to foster the staff mentoring relationship and to provide consistent support (i.e., frequent communication with families and ongoing problem solving with youth and families when issues arise).

**Arches Transformative Mentoring Program** (*New York City; Community-Based*)<sup>66</sup>

The Arches Transformative Mentoring program (Arches) is a New York City-based group mentoring intervention that serves young people ages 16 to 24 who are on probation. The program is managed by the NYC Department of Probation (DOP) and currently operates 13 sites across the five boroughs.<sup>66</sup>

The Arches program structure includes intensive group mentoring sessions using an Interactive Journaling (IJ) curriculum based on cognitive behavioral therapy principles; group mentoring sessions; and individual sessions with mentors. The program lasts between 6 and 12 months and includes 48 group sessions. The mentors responsible for facilitating group sessions are “credible messengers” who are formally trained on group facilitation; motivational interviewing; and the tenets of the Arches program.

Results from a formal evaluation study revealed the Arches program “...reduces one-year felony reconviction by over two thirds and reduces two-year felony reconviction by over half. [In addition,]...pre- and post-assessment show gains in key attitudinal and behavioral indicators, including emotion regulation and future orientation. Qualitative findings show that participants report very close and supportive relationships with mentors, attributed to mentors’ status as credible messengers, their 24/7 availability for one-on-one mentoring, and a “family atmosphere” within the program.”<sup>66</sup> In addition, the evaluation showed significant results in program participants who were ages 17 and younger. These findings support the “... promise of combining an evidence-based curriculum and credible messenger mentoring to achieve recidivism reduction.”<sup>66</sup>

### **From the Field: Credible Messengers**

In 2018, the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (NJ JJC) adopted and implemented a credible messenger program, “Inside Circle,” in two of its secure juvenile justice facilities (one highly secure facility and one medium-level security facility). Many of the youth who participate in these groups are gang members or have gang affiliations. Inside Circle groups are held on a weekly basis and are led by a trained facilitator, the Credible Messenger. Referrals to the Inside Circle can be made by staff, youth, or family members. At the time of this publication, NJ JJC had 24 youth participating in the credible messenger program. The facilities were using a hybrid model to accommodate additional members – e.g., 16 youth attend in person and eight (8) youth participate remotely. In these groups youth are provided an opportunity to acknowledge and process their traumas and receive support from group members.

As an extension of the Inside Circle program, NJ JJC has also created the Young Adult Empowerment (YAE) program to assist youth in transitioning back to their communities. The ultimate goal of the Young Adult Empowerment program is to support youth in their commitment to lead a crime-free lifestyle. Inside Circle youth, as well as other youth, are provided an opportunity to continue the healing processes after release through support from credible messengers and designated parole officers. Youth are provided a stipend for participation in the YAE. An interview with agency leaders revealed anecdotally, that youth who participate in Inside Circle are better prepared for transitioning back into the community than those youth who choose not to participate in the program.

The Alameda County Probation Department (California) has also implemented a credible messenger program in its juvenile justice facilities. The initial program grew organically and at present, the county is looking to adopt a certified credible messenger program to work with all youth (not just those who are gang-involved). An interview with agency leaders highlighted some challenges with background checks and screening credible messengers. Agency leaders from NJ JJC and CA Alameda County Probation Department provided three pieces of wisdom for facilities considering adopting a credible messenger program:

- 1) It is important to have a robust screening process to vet credible messengers. Because credible messengers serve as role models and mentors while youth are in the facility as well as post-release, credible messengers must be screened to ensure they are positive role models.
- 2) Set clear expectations that staff members will be part of the therapeutic process, including sitting in on regular group sessions. It is important that staff understand what occurs in these groups so they can provide additional support and reinforce the concepts and skills with youth in the everyday milieu.
- 3) Agencies must be flexible and be willing to revise existing policies and procedures to support the nuances of a formal credible messenger program.

### Young Adult Voice

To promote youth voice and gain insight into reasons influencing gang membership and gang desistance, the toolkit authors interviewed three previously gang-involved individuals. These interviews were conducted in March 2022. At the time of the interviews, participants were between the ages of 22 and 33 years and included two males and one female. Interviewees represented all areas of the country – west coast, the south, and the northeast. Highlights from these engagements are provided below.

- Trauma, peer influence, and family members who are gang-involved are significant factors influencing whether youth join a gang. All three young adults reported they had family members in gangs and began hanging around gang members as early as 5 or 6 years old. Participants all reported that age 11 or 12 was pivotal – the age at which they became more deeply embedded in the gang.
- All interviewees highlighted the power of credible messengers in helping them change their lives. Youth stated that having an individual who has had similar experiences and who has come through the other side (i.e., successfully leaving the gang lifestyle) was a critical factor in their success. It is encouraged that whether inside the facility or in the community, providers attempt to use credible messengers for implementing their program model. Two of the interviewees mentioned the “Inside Circle” program and one interviewee mentioned the “Home Boy Industries.” All three young adults explained the power of a credible messenger program lies in the strength of the relationship with the mentor; the fact that credible messengers have had similar life experiences; and the ongoing support from peers.
- Interviewees also reported that having a designated person to help them navigate the world post-release – i.e., assisting them in obtaining a driver’s license; helping the young person apply and interview for jobs; etc. - was an important factor in their success. One young adult emphasized the importance of having a place to go or someone to contact when they were struggling in the community. Examples provided were a substance use support group; a mental health therapist; or the assigned mentor.
- The young adults interviewed mentioned that their connection to their faith and/or finding a religious path gave them the strength to make positive changes in their lives (i.e., to eventually leave the gang lifestyle). All youth also reported that some of these positive decisions were not a result of one significant life event but a process that evolved slowly over time. Young adults explained that with time, they were able to see things more clearly. The interviewees attributed this clarity to the process of maturing emotionally (in their late teens or early twenties). Young adults also stated that having the encouragement and support from credible messengers and positive adult role models was a key factor in their decision to leave the gang lifestyle.

All three young adults reported experiences that closely aligned with the existing body of gang research. Participants clearly stated that the most powerful factors that influenced them in adopting a gang-free lifestyle were: Programs that include a combination of credible messengers and an emphasis on positive relationships; individual spiritual exploration; and long-term mentors who provide ongoing support and foster new skill development.

## Transition Planning and Reentry

In 2018, the federal government enacted the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-391). *“The Second Chance Act aims to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety by increasing reentry programming and improving outcomes for individuals returning to their families and communities.”*<sup>21</sup> The act allows federal grant monies allocated to government agencies and not-for-profit organizations to be used for service provision to individuals returning to the community from prison or jail. Examples of qualifying services are employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, and victim support, to name a few.

### National Institute of Justice - An Overview of Offender Reentry<sup>67</sup>

*“The integration of reentry and employment services is a challenge. For this integration to be successful, it requires a high level of coordination and collaboration between policymakers, practitioners, and service providers.....”*

As previously mentioned, having a comprehensive case plan that includes a detailed transition plan is critical to ensuring youth success once released from a secure setting. Best practices include conducting a transition multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meeting well in advance of the youth’s release (suggested a minimum of 90 days prior to release). The MDT should include but not be limited to the youth, family, facility administrators, social services personnel, and an education/vocation representative. The main question team members must answer in as much detail as possible is what supports and services do we need to put in place for these previously gang affected youth to return to their communities and create a positive life trajectory (i.e., gang-free lifestyle)? Furthermore, transition planning should involve family engagement; securing employment and connections to academic institutions; addressing housing needs; linking youth to outreach and support organizations; conducting safety assessments with law enforcement; interfacing with social support service agencies (i.e., food stamps, medical services, mental health services, etc.); and connecting youth with pro-social activities and adult supports.

Researcher Tim Decker (2019) provides seven essential components juvenile justice professionals should consider when developing youth case plans.<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that many of these items require significant family engagement for success to be fully realized.

1. *Individualized case assessment of assets, risk, and needs of the youth and family;*
2. *Comprehensive focus on healthy youth and family development including peer-to-peer and adult-child relationships, self-awareness and insight, skill development, and behavioral change;*
3. *Integrated plan for education, employment, and services anchored in family and youth voice and choice;*
4. *Predictable daily or weekly routines providing clear goals and expectations, action plans, and support structures;*

5. *Regular engagement with family and community with opportunities to strengthen social connections, build empathy, and participate in prosocial activities;*
6. *Leadership and youth development opportunities within the program and community; and*
7. *Crisis plans and stability measures to resolve conflicts and ensure single events or crises do not lead to cascading problems.*<sup>32</sup>

*"The best reentry programs begin while a youth is still confined. Nearly 100,000 youth are released from juvenile justice institutions each year. Most are returned to families struggling with poverty in blighted neighborhoods with high crime rates, few programs, and poorly performing schools. Key to success is connecting youth to people, programs and services that reinforce their rehabilitation and help them become successful and productive adults."*<sup>68</sup>

In the context of a community setting, OJJDP explains that reentry should be part of the formal Intervention Team that works within and alongside the Gang Reduction Steering Committee. More specifically, *"...Because gang members are frequently in and out of custody for varying periods of time, the Intervention Team continues to serve these clients during their incarceration, maintaining regular contacts with the clients and then planning for their release back into the community. The Intervention Team, in conjunction with the Steering Committee, should develop a policy for serving incarcerated clients...In general, clients serving sentences of one year or less should receive at least monthly contacts from outreach workers and other agency staff. Depending on the policies of the facility where a client is incarcerated, these contacts may take place face to face, by phone, or by letter/postcard."*<sup>4</sup> This approach may provide the intensive support a youth needs to resist falling back into the gang lifestyle. OJJDP encourages community providers who operate gang reduction programs and/or serve on the community Intervention Team, *"....to establish relationship with probation/parole authorities, and also with corrections personnel, to identify gang members who are due to be released. Outreach staff can visit these inmates prior to release to help develop a supportive plan for their return to the community and to recruit them into the project."*<sup>4</sup>

Brief descriptions of four reentry programs are provided below. Juvenile justice professionals are encouraged to assess its current transition and reentry service provision and identify areas for enhancement. Jurisdictions may consider adopting one of the programs described below or may choose to develop their own transition/reentry program based on research-supported strategies that produce positive outcomes.

**The Lifeset program** (Tennessee)– The Lifeset program is one example of a Certified Blueprint "Promising" program. Lifeset is *"...a community-based program that assists young people with histories of foster care or juvenile justice involvement in making a successful transition to adulthood by providing intensive, individualized, and clinically focused case management, support, and counseling. Specific goals include improved family relationships, increased high school graduation, decreased illicit substance use, and decreased intimate partner violence"*.<sup>56</sup> The program lasts nine months and *"...involves intensive, individualized, and clinically focused case management, support,*

*and counseling.”*<sup>56</sup> Case managers typically have only eight youth at a time. Specific services include life skills training (i.e., money management; opening a bank account; securing safe and appropriate housing; educational enrollment; and job-seeking skills); behavioral treatment for alcohol and other substances; trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy; and financial support to purchase appropriate clothing for job interviews or to pay an apartment application fee.<sup>56</sup> Results of formal studies found that those participants who completed the Lifeset program showed marked increases in earnings, housing stability, economic well-being, mental health, and a reduction in partner violence when compared with the control group.<sup>56</sup>

**WE RISE Project (California - Alameda County)** – WE RISE is an “...intensive case management and life coaching support for gang-affiliated youth returning to Oakland from Juvenile Hall.”<sup>45</sup> Program services are delivered by a designated deputy probation officer (DPO) and one life coach. Caseloads are limited to a maximum of 15 youth. Together, the life coach and DPO work closely to “...help youth achieve the program goals including but not limited to: Meeting the conditions of their probation; reintegrating into school and attending school regularly; strengthen relationships with family and social groups that have a positive influence; weaken relationships with social groups that have a negative influence; and avoid violence and illegal activity.”<sup>45</sup>

Some of the duties of the DPO include developing the supervision plan; supervising youth to ensure conditions of probation are successfully met; actively engaging youth and families in prosocial activities; providing gift cards to assist youth and families (food, clothing, toiletries, etc.); conducting cognitive behavioral therapy programming; and organizing and facilitating family engagement activities to promote family bonding (e.g., game night, painting party, fishing, etc.). The Life Coach is responsible for helping youth map out their personal goals and actions steps for the next 12–18 months; supporting youth in achieving their goals; providing youth with an \$800 stipend upon completion of their life map goals; facilitating multidisciplinary team meetings to arrange community-based services and supports; operating paid work/internship programs; and administering assessments to evaluate youth needs and outcomes. Although the DPO and Life Coach have different responsibilities, they work closely together to support youth throughout the program. Specifically, joint duties include<sup>45</sup>:

- *Prerelease case planning: Before the youth is released from Juvenile Hall, DPO and life coach start making referrals to services/programs and working with the youth’s family to address pressing needs.*
- *School welcome circle: DPO and life coach convene a meeting with the youth and supportive teachers and staff to assist with a successful transition back to school.*
- *Ongoing case management: DPO and life coach meet regularly with youth and their families to support their goals and address pressing needs.*<sup>45</sup>

Alameda County tracks outcomes related to the WE RISE program. Specifically, the following data points are collected for each of the program participants: *“...Completion of probation; school attendance and performance; technical violations of probation; recidivism (conviction of a new offense); strength of relationships with family and positive groups; and strength of relationships with group or gang affiliates.”*<sup>45</sup>

**Reentry to Resilience (R2R)** (State of North Carolina Department of Public Safety [NC DPS]) – the R2R program’s primary goal is to transition youth from secure settings back into the community. Additional goals of the R2R program include: *“Successful youth reintegration into family and community systems of care; educational progress and advancement; a mastery of life skills such as critical problem-solving skills and self-control.”*<sup>45</sup> Reentry and support services focus on educational placement; *“...vocational services and job/career placement; family engagement to sustain continuum of care; community engagement to model the behavioral change, adopt ownership within the community, and give back to the community; [and] continuation of therapeutic services to ensure prosocial development.”*<sup>45</sup> The R2R program involves developing a Transition Intervention Plan (TIP) within 90 days of release and gradually intensifying transition efforts to prepare the family and youth for reentry.

*“Successful aftercare and reentry programs require coordination between multiple government agencies and nonprofit providers, not only to develop new services, but to help youth better access existing services. Upon release, teenagers must enroll immediately in school or have a job waiting. Otherwise, they are more likely to return to their old friends and delinquent behaviors. Workforce development—helping teens attain job skills and earn money—is a key motivator for adolescents increasing their commitment to and enthusiasm for learning. Youth must have quick access to mental health and substance abuse services as needed. And they must receive strong support from family and other caring adults.”*<sup>68</sup>

**Second Chance Act of 2007** – The State of Utah Department of Human Services (DHS) provides comprehensive reentry services to youth transitioning from a residential setting back into the community. These services focus on education, employment, housing, and mentoring. Utah DHS has partnerships with local colleges through which they provide a number of vocational certificate opportunities (i.e., welding, robotics, automotive, and food handler’s permit).<sup>45</sup> Staff working with youth on community transition also assist youth in securing employment through established partnerships with local and statewide businesses (i.e., Utah Workforce Development, automotive businesses; construction companies, etc.).<sup>45</sup> Additionally, DHS provides youth with financial support for housing such as deposit, rent, household supplies, and furnishings, to name a few.<sup>45</sup>

## Social Embeddedness Scales and Program Screening Tools

There are a few tools that can be used to measure the strength of relationships and degree of embeddedness in the gang lifestyle. While none of these instruments have earned an “effective” rating, some studies have shown these tools may be a useful mechanism for determining areas on which to focus in treatment and for tracking progress in the program. Brief descriptions of some of these tools are provided below.

### ***Youth Services Eligibility Tool (YSET) and the Social Embeddedness Tool (SET)***<sup>41</sup>

All prevention programs should have formal eligibility criteria to assess whether youth qualify for a particular program. This eligibility criteria should include “exclusionary criteria” – a list of behaviors, clinical diagnoses, safety situations, etc. that would disqualify youth from participating in the prevention program. An example one of the screening tools used by the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) initiative in Los Angeles, California, is the Youth Services Eligibility Tool (YSET). The tool was used with participants at intake (YSET-I) to establish program eligibility and pinpoint critical risk factors to target in treatment. Researchers also used a variation of the YSET-I called the YSET-R (YSET – Reassessment), to track progress regarding the degree of connection to gang lifestyle.

Based on the YSET another tool was created and piloted by the University of Southern California in April 2013 - the Social Embeddedness Tool Profile (SET). The SET allows staff to understand the relationship of participants to gangs and affords staff an opportunity to measure client progress in reducing gang affiliation throughout the program and upon program completion. The SET gathers information about initial attitudes and behaviors of clients via structured interviews.<sup>41</sup>

The YSET instrument assesses changes in the “...*strength of relationships between youth and their: Family; group or gang; [and] other positive group (identified by youth).*”<sup>45</sup> The SET measures “...*family, peer, and individual-level attributes including impulsivity, self-investment, and self-differentiation (i.e., independence from social influence, especially in the gang context).*”<sup>41</sup> By way of summary, the SET assesses the following constructs for each group<sup>45</sup>:

- *Identification: How strongly youth identifies with each group*
- *Time spent: How much time youth spends with each group per week*
- *Connection: How connected youth feels to each group*

The tool assesses youth’s beliefs and behaviors (in the past six months to a year) related to traumas or significant events; degree of engagement with family; risk taking tendencies; ethical/criminal thinking and behaviors (stealing, lying, carrying weapon, violence towards others, etc.); loyalty to friends; and whether friends are involved in gangs, illegal drugs, alcohol use, etc. to name a few. It is important to note that each

prevention program will have a unique assessment based on the specific goals and objectives of that particular program and the target population (although many assessments share similar items).

Preliminary research on the SET showed<sup>41</sup>:

- *“Impulsivity was associated with greater gang identity and involvement in violence, suggesting that it is a significant risk factor to recognize and address.*
- *Self-investment and self-differentiation appeared to act as protective factors. Self-investment, as defined by engagement in positive activities such as school and work, was negatively associated with gang identity and involvement in violence; in other words, greater self-investment was linked to less extensive gang identity and involvement in violence. Similarly, self-differentiation (from the gang) was also negatively associated with gang identity, though based on these initial assessments it did not appear to have a significant relationship to violence.”*
- *“....many of the clients who have strong emotional ties to their family also have strong identification with the gang, perhaps reflecting the multigenerational nature of gang involvement in Los Angeles. However, clients whose families are highly organized and close knit (some might describe these as more functional families) reported lower gang involvement and less involvement in violence.”<sup>41</sup>*

### ***Gang Risk of Entry Factors (GREF)<sup>14</sup>***

The GREF tool was designed to help identify those youth most likely to join a gang in their community. This information can be used to target intensive secondary prevention services to those youth at greatest risk for gang involvement. The GREF includes a self-report delinquency scale that matches youth to risk profiles. These profiles were developed based on multiple longitudinal studies. The GREF scales include: impulsive risk taking; guilt neutralization; antisocial tendencies; negative peer influences; peer delinquency; parental monitoring; family gang influence; critical life events; early involvement in delinquent activities; and substance use. The GREF allows providers to limit the number of youth served in prevention programs by providing services to higher risk youth (research shows low risk offenders often need minimal interventions). The tool’s validity was tested over a 12-to-18-month period in a high-risk sample of 11- to 16-year-old youth in Los Angeles County. Results show the GREF assessment can be used to predict gang involvement.<sup>14</sup>

## Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

- Case plans, particularly for gang-involved youth, should include enrolling in school; securing employment; assisting in securing stable housing; and connection to needed services such mental health counseling. Readers are encouraged to consult the seven key elements of youth case plans previously described in this section.
- Agencies should begin transition planning the day a youth arrives to the facility and intensify its efforts at least three months prior to the youth's release. At a minimum, formal transition planning should include the youth, family members, and a diverse body of professionals.
- Facilities should consider connecting youth with positive mentors and supports in the community. These mentors may be business owners, teachers, community advocates, credible messengers, etc. These individuals can serve as positive role models who may support the youth in making good life decisions while in a secure facility and later, in the community. Parole officers, mentors, and pro-social engagements will play a crucial role in helping youth maintain a healthy lifestyle once back in their community. These cross-disciplinary connections and services should be in place well in advance of the youth's transition.
- Agencies and facilities should consider adopting a standardized risk/needs assessment tool to assess risk and protective factors associated with propensity for delinquent behavior and gang joining. Information obtained from the assessment tools should serve as the basis for a youth's individual treatment plan. It is important that agencies/facilities consider creating policies and procedures to support the new assessment practices, to include requiring formal training (initial training and ongoing refreshers) of staff members responsible for completing these assessments. Policies should also address how select information from these assessments will be communicated to appropriate staff and how sensitive information will be protected.
- Establish a good classification system to consistently and accurately identify Security Threat Groups (STGs). The classification system should include an assessment of the degree of embeddedness in the gang lifestyle. This will allow facility staff to place youth safely throughout the facility as well as develop an effective treatment plan while in custody.

**From the Field: Transition**

Research shows the importance of transition in helping youth maintain a crime-free lifestyle. The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (MA DYS) allows youth to begin transitioning back into the community within 90 days of release. During this time, youth visit family members and other positive role models to help foster relationships and build a solid support network. During the 90-day pre-release window, MA DYS staff assist youth in applying for jobs; preparing for job interviews; and visiting colleges. Staff also help youth secure stable housing within Massachusetts, which may involve relocating youth to a different part of the state to further support youth in dis-associating with negative peer influences.

Similarly, Alameda County Probation Department (California) has established a formal process for planning youth transitions. Alameda County engages probation/parole officers (PPOs) when youth first arrive to a juvenile justice facility to begin establishing a relationship with each youth. PPOs are the primary point of contact for planning for and assisting youth in successfully transitioning back to the community. Parole/probation officers work closely with facility staff and community members to secure educational services, mental health services, and other key services related to youth success. Transition goals are discussed during weekly multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings throughout the youth's stay.

New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (NJ JCC) has a formal gang unit that employs five correctional gang management officers stationed throughout four of its secure juvenile justice facilities. Prior to leaving one of the secure facilities, gang management officers work with youth to create a robust transition plan. In addition, NJ JCC employs youth workers called Community Program Specialists (CPS), who help link youth to services once in the community. These Community Program Specialists focus on securing connections to education, employment, transportation, treatment, and housing, as needed. CPS staff are intended to supplement services provided by traditional parole officers who are also assigned to youth. An interview with NJ JCC leaders (conducted in March 2022) revealed that intensive transition work begins within 30 days of release. This process includes transporting youth to "One Stops" which are agencies that help individuals secure employment by providing support – i.e., assisting youth in completing job applications and navigating the interview process.

Recognizing the importance of transition in a youth's success, NJ JCC has created a new unit called Specialized Youth Support Services (SYSS) that will launch in the coming months. The SYSS will employ three staff members whose focus is to work with youth and the assigned juvenile parole officer to ensure a successful transition. A formal transition plan will be developed within 180 days of the youth's release from the juvenile justice facility. All youth (not only gang-affiliated youth) will be afforded this opportunity for comprehensive transition planning. To formalize and standardize the transition process, NJ JCC has developed a transition template to ensure all key components are effectively addressed in the transition planning process.

## The Role of Relationships

Basic studies in social psychology support the influential power of human relationships. Facility administrators and staff must fully understand the impact of staff-to-youth relationships, particularly for those youth who have experienced past traumas and familial instability. As such, juvenile justice agencies should provide formal training on building rapport; healthy boundaries; motivating youth in treatment; and approaches that relay trust, respect, empathy, and support.

Although the impact of positive relations is far reaching, there is an art to growing any relationship- i.e., family, professional, or personal. Because adolescents are in the developmental stage of establishing their own identity, research suggests that staff focus on the development of personal skills and self-differentiation.<sup>41</sup> These individual-level factors can affect gang identity and impact involvement in violence. Cahill et al. (2015) explains: *“....maintaining simultaneous close identification with groups that hold directly conflicting values and norms is difficult, but also that confronting gang social identity directly is likely to backfire. Therefore, nurturing alternative group identities and promoting personal (individual-level) relationships that “compete” with gang identification is an important part of indirectly challenging gang social identity.”*<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it is suggested that programs *“....seek to reduce gang identity by strengthening identification and cohesion with family [and]....by strengthening identification with one or more conventional groups such as a fire crew, sports team, or other group with prosocial goals such as a conventional career objective”*.<sup>41</sup> In a secure facility setting, creating prosocial networks and supports may involve connecting youth to

*“In addition to the need for autonomy, adolescents are at a stage of development when they are hypersensitive and oriented toward relationships and belonging and will often be influenced profoundly by their peers. Developmentally appropriate programs and serves are often most effective if they incorporate a group approach (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, & Carver, 2010) and are positioned close to home so that family and community relationships can be maintained and strengthened.”*<sup>32</sup>

*“The scientific literature shows that several conditions are critically important to healthy psychological development in adolescence (Steinberg, Chung, & Little, 2004). These include the presence of a parent or parent figure who is involved with the adolescent and concerned about his or her successful development, inclusion in a peer group that values and models prosocial behavior and academic success (Brown, Bakken, Ameringer, & Mahon, 2008), and activities that contribute to autonomous decision making and critical thinking.”*<sup>32</sup>

*“A more ambitious task is to offer corrections programs and activities that will replace gang activity. Through programs and activities, individual gang members learn to think as individuals, feel less of a need for the “group,” and channel any residual group propensities toward legitimate social activities and goals.”*<sup>69</sup>

positive peer influences within the facility; fostering a relationship with a staff mentor or credible messenger through regular interactions; linking youth to volunteers; and engaging youth in prosocial activities and hobbies (i.e., painting, music, etc.). Research suggests that engaging youth in prosocial activities/groups will have a greater positive impact than trying to push youth away from the gang lifestyle.

It is critical that staff build trust with youth and create a safe space for honesty, emotional expression, and feedback not only in a treatment group setting but through daily interactions. This can be achieved in part by having a robust behavioral management system that provides clear expectations, rewards, and consequences for youth behaviors. It is vital that staff receive formal training on the behavioral management system and how to deliver rewards and consequences fairly and consistently. This includes how to provide youth feedback on their behaviors in a way that maintains trust and allows youth to take full responsibility for their choices. Researcher and author Tim Decker (2019) explains, *“Day-in and day-out “24/7” interventions are necessary to provide intensive social learning experiences that reinforce and lead to the sustained use of these skills taught in classes and therapeutic interventions.”*<sup>32</sup>

*Adolescents are developmentally driven in part by a desire for autonomy. This includes heightened longing for fairness, to be heard, and to be included in decisions about one’s life. Indeed, procedural justice theory and developmental research indicates that when adolescents feel that the system has treated them fairly, they are more likely to accept responsibility for their actions and embrace prosocial activities (National Research Council, 2013). In the context of juvenile justice practice, this means that the imposition of sanctions or the movement of a youth from home to a more restrictive setting should only be considered after a diligent, inclusive, and thorough decision-making process, balanced by objective risk assessment, procedural fairness, and administrative checks and balances.*<sup>32</sup>

It is important that juvenile justice staff make a consistent and concerted effort to establish rapport with the youth’s family members and/or legal guardians. For many youth, parental figures can have a tremendous influence on their decisions. And yet, creating a healthy working relationship with parents can be challenging. Author Tim Decker (2019) explains that *“Juvenile justice systems are attempting to overcome long histories of fear, mistrust, discouragement, and racial disparity which compromise productive working relationships and opportunities for healing. Juvenile justice systems must address negative assumptions and experiences of youth and families, and develop robust structures and training to enhance youth and family engagement and empowerment, including:*

- *Understanding the importance of power differentials and ways in which youth and families, historically, have been diminished in voice and choice and are often recipients of coercive treatment.*

- *Creating operational structures, programs, and services that value and build upon strengths, cultivate and support self-advocacy skills, and emphasize empowerment of youth and families.*<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, agencies and facilities are encouraged to develop a list of specific strategies for increasing family engagement and identify avenues for building rapport with families. Providing staff additional information and training in this area will likely improve outcomes. Researcher Tim Decker (2019) also emphasizes the importance of providing formal training to staff on working with families and how to effectively to communicate with family members.<sup>32</sup>

Best practices also include engaging youth and families in a shared decision-making process. Giving youth and families a “voice” is empowering and allows families and youth to take responsibility for creating their future. Providing opportunities for families to discuss potential choices and to participate in goal development is a critical piece to the path to success. It is strongly suggested that facilities actively seek input from youth and family members. In fact, facility staff should adopt the understanding that the families are the “experts.” This *“...approach acknowledges that professionals do not know or have the same long-standing commitment to a young person as a caring and supportive family member.”*<sup>32</sup>

Author Tim Decker (2019) provides the following suggestions when developing strategies when working with youth and families.

- Create opportunities for staff to serve as facilitators in the rehabilitative process.
- Aim for *“...continuity in the staff working with families and prioritizing contact with families at a time and place that is comfortable for the family.”*<sup>32</sup>
- Establish trust and partnerships in which youth and families feel seen and heard. It is also important that everyone believes and is anchored in the common goals identified.
- Implement *“...policies and practices to encourage regular and meaningful youth family connections at all stages of involvement with the juvenile justice system.”*<sup>32</sup>

Working closely with the families while youth is in a secure facility provides a foundation that will serve to support the youth in their journey back into the community. It is important that families be provided opportunities to develop the skills needed to successfully support their child on their journey. As such, families should be offered strength-based family counseling and access to wraparound services that stabilize the family situation. Author Tim Decker also suggests that family members be *“...invited to serve on local advisory boards and participate as partners in the system improvement process.”*<sup>32</sup>

## Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

- It is critical that agencies and facilities recognize the profound impact the staff-to-youth relationship has on overall safety and youth progress in treatment. This requires setting clear expectations and providing formal training to staff on developing trust; healthy boundaries; delivering rewards and consequences fairly and consistently; motivational interviewing; and family engagement strategies; to name a few.
- Agencies should seek out opportunities to increase family engagement; promote the youth and family “voice;” and provide youth and families with leadership opportunities. In addition to being part of the case planning team (i.e., MDTs), families should be invited to participate on advisory boards.

*“Even a quality service provider and strong case plan will ultimately leave youth unprepared to navigate the transition to adulthood, especially if the plan relies too heavily on formal services and relationships with system professionals. Relationships matter and are a primary change agent. The effectiveness of programs is directly impacted by the quality of relationships and the extent to which they support young people in establishing healthy and productive relationships. A well-known quote from Bill Milliken, Founder of the national Communities in Schools initiative, reminds us that ‘It’s relationships, not programs, that change people.’ The ideal juvenile justice system, therefore, must include ambitious transition frameworks that are grounded in proven risk reduction strategies, child and family wellbeing, and positive youth development.”<sup>32</sup>*

## Suppression

To understand how to suppress gang activity within a secure juvenile justice setting, it is important to first understand some basic signs that may be indicative of gang involvement. Because research literature is limited in this area, we once again turn to articles on gang-involved youth in the school setting. Juvenile justice professionals should consider the information below and also ask themselves, “what other signs are indicative of gang-affiliation based on local gangs in our immediate community?” It is important to remember that gang identifiers among young people can shift over time.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, administrators and staff must stay abreast of the most recent information and regularly assess signs and adapt to changing trends. Some of the most common gang identifiers may include<sup>15</sup>:

- Cliques of [youth] wearing the same colors in clothes, bandanas, specific types of belts/buckles, jewelry, charms, or team sports clothing.
- Tattoos; graffiti; and drawings/sketches on folders, notebooks, or school assignments (including area codes and geographical locations represented numerically).
- Hand signs, handshakes, and other expressions of gang association or affiliation.

The concept of suppression includes identifying and closely supervising gang youth. In a facility setting it is recommended that gang members be dispersed throughout the institution, as this allows staff to more easily supervise fewer high-risk youth. This may also involve transferring hard-core gang members to other institutions, if appropriate. Adequate supervision may also require creating specialized teams of staff members who have received additional training on agency policies, procedures, and strategies for effectively managing gang youth.

Suppression requires agencies to develop clear policies and procedures regarding how to effectively manage gang activities including consequences for participating in gang-related events. Marchese (2009) advises facility administrators to include the following areas when developing a comprehensive gang/STG management protocol: *“Intake; Classification; Intelligence; Mitigating factors; Facility disturbances; Recruitment of gang/STG members; Legal aspects of gang management; [and] Staff training.”*<sup>70</sup> It is important that policies and protocols are well-written to allow staff to gain a clear understanding of the agency’s directives and expectations.

Research on gangs uphold the value of collaboration in addressing gang issues in facilities and in the community. Juvenile justice agencies/facilities are encouraged to collaborate with police, prosecution, and probation/parole officers to gather information about specific youth and local gang characteristics. Collaborating with other professionals can provide insight and ideas on how best to manage gang issues within the facility.<sup>4</sup> In addition, these individuals can provide recent information that may be incorporated into staff training such as new gang signs and/or methods gangs use to effect violence and lure/initiate new members. Another key piece to gang suppression centers on staff observations, data monitoring, and tracking trends (i.e., gang members, assaults, other acts of violence, etc.). More detailed information on data and intelligence is provided in other sections of this toolkit.

Readers are likely familiar with a common term infused throughout the body of gang-reduction literature: Security Threat Groups (STGs). Author Hatcher, L.D. (2006) offers one possible definition of STGs as: *“....any formal or informal, ongoing inmate/offender groups, gangs, organizations or associations comprising three or more members who have”*<sup>71</sup>:

- *A common name or common identifying signs, colors, language or symbols;*
- *Members or associates who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of gang activity or departmental rule violations; and*
- *Potential to act in concert to pose a threat or potential threat to staff, visitors, inmates, or the secure and orderly operation of a facility.”*<sup>71</sup>

Authors Toller and Tsagaris (1996) offer an alternative definition of a Security Threat Group (STG): *“...two or more inmates, acting together, who pose a threat to the security or safety of staff/inmates, and/or are disruptive to programs, and/or threaten the orderly management of the facility/system. Designation criteria for an STG include the following”*<sup>69</sup>:

- *degree of threat the group presents to the facility or system*

- *organizational structure of the group*
- *propensity for violence by the group*
- *specific acts, or intended acts, of violence that can be attributed to the group (e.g., assaults, murders, etc.)*
- *specific illegal acts, or conspiracy to commit acts (e.g. extortion, protection, racketeering, etc.)”<sup>69</sup>*

As previously mentioned, agencies should have formal policies and procedures for managing gang activities and all staff must be trained on these policies. Staff should understand and strive to develop relationships with all youth who reside in the facility/unit (i.e., key behaviors, gang affiliations, signs of regression, triggers, etc.). Agencies must determine who is considered part of a STG; how this determination is made; and what restrictions are needed to manage gang activity.<sup>69</sup> As part of the policy and practice development process, Hatcher (2006) also advises facilities to answer the following questions:

- Does the facility have a clear definition of STG?
- Has the facility established a process to identify and track the STGs within the facility and the area?
- Can the facility identify the members of the STGs currently being housed?
- If someone from the press were to call and ask what percentage of the facility's inmate population belong to STGs or profess to be affiliated with such a group, could an answer be provided? <sup>71</sup>

Toller and Tsagaris (1996) also suggest facilities designate an individual as part of an STG if they have two or more of the following<sup>69</sup>:

- Self-admission by the individual
- Identifiable STG tattoo
- Possession of STG paraphernalia
- Information from law enforcement staff
- Information from an internal investigation
- Information from a confidential informant
- Mail or outside contacts
- An individual or group STG picture

*“...there have been a growing number of STGs that evolved into gangs.....consider that the STG could be in the infantile stage when correctional staff first come across it, and if a facility does not recognize the inception, it could progress rapidly within the institution and into the community.”<sup>71</sup>*

Juvenile justice agencies with moderate or serious gang issues, may find it useful to organize a Security Intelligence Group (SIG). A SIG can be defined as *“...any staff member who has the duty and responsibility to collect, analyze, evaluate, collate and disseminate intelligence related to STGs and their members or suspected members and affiliates.”<sup>71</sup>* Hatcher (2006) reminds practitioners that the *“...SIG looks at general threat groups and does not target or become narrowed in its focus to a specific gang.”<sup>71</sup>* He also suggests staffing the SIG with a minimum of three positions: Coordinator; STG Intelligence Officer; and Classification Officer.<sup>71</sup> The following

chart provides additional details related to the roles and responsibilities of these identified parties.

| Example of Roles and Responsibilities of the Security Information Group (SIG) <sup>71</sup> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Coordinator</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervises the overall operations of the SIG</li> <li>• Oversees the collection and monitoring of STG data intelligence from existing departmental documents (e.g., initial charges and facility infractions), law enforcement agencies, and other correctional agencies.</li> <li>• Facilitates the creation of a database capable of creating lists/reports by inmate name, facility, identification number, nickname/moniker, tattoos, scars, and group alliance.</li> <li>• Supervises the development and distribution of STG intelligence to correctional managers, criminal justice agencies, community groups or other affected agencies or groups by preparing reports, security alerts, intelligence briefs and general advisories.</li> </ul> <p><u>NOTE:</u> The author states, <i>“It is critical for the success of the SIG that the coordinator ensures intelligence-sharing among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Obtaining funding for new positions is preferred, but the same information can be gained through reassignment of resources.”</i></p> |
| <b>STG Intelligence Officer</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for compiling intelligence data related to STGs from departmental documents, databases, law enforcement, and correctional agencies. The STG Intelligence Officer is also responsible for responding to inquiries about STGs. This may involve interviewing STG leaders, members and affiliates, and monitoring the phone and possibly the mail, if appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><u>NOTE:</u> It is important to understand that information requests can come from a variety of sources (i.e., individual staff and/or local, state and federal law enforcement agencies who are authorized to receive this highly sensitive information).</p>  |
| <b>Classification Officer</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A specialized role who acts as the primary liaison between the SIG Unit and the classification staff.</li> <li>• Consistently documents in the facility’s database when an individual is a member of, or affiliated with an STG (resulting from observations, interviews, and/or formal assessments).</li> </ul> <p><u>NOTE:</u> The author emphasizes that <i>“It is critical to the success of the SIG that prior information and records be reviewed and updated as needed.”</i></p>   |

Juvenile justice professionals may consider the following activities when developing a comprehensive gang reduction plan that includes suppression. Because much of the research literature addresses gangs in the community, professionals are encouraged to adopt those strategies that may apply to a facility setting and adapt others based on the youth population and unique program goals.

#### **Suppression<sup>55</sup>**

- *Form or modify existing gang units that perform four primary functions: intelligence, enforcement/suppression, investigations, and prevention activities; ensure that these functions are integrated with core policing units.*
- *Sponsor Police Athletic Leagues that provide recreation and mentoring.*
- *Serve as teachers in school-based educational programs, such as Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.), that, among other things, educate youth on the consequences of gang involvement.*
- *Provide mentoring, grief counseling, referral for social services, gang conflict mediation, and case conferencing on individual youths for at-risk and gang-involved youths.*
- *Conduct anti-gang programs in the community.*
- *Provide community policing that enlists community support, shifts police focus from individual gangs and crimes to the neighborhoods, and recognizes the importance of strategies and tactics other than what the police can provide.*
- *Simultaneously enforce curfew and truancy laws and regulations.*
- *Develop a Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Strategy.*
  - *Acknowledge the gang problem.*
  - *Form an agreement among stakeholders to work together in addressing the gang problem.*
  - *Set goals and objectives.*
  - *Develop and integrate relevant services, strategies, and graduated sanctions.*
  - *Form an Interagency Intervention Team that targets gang members for interagency services and sanctions and provides case management.*
  - *Create a one-stop center that addresses gang involvement and general delinquency involvement with individual problem assessment, services, service referral, and recreational activities.*

#### **Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations**

- Since gang allegiances and gang statuses change frequently, authors Toller and Tsagaris (1996) remind administrators to regularly review classification reports (i.e., weekly) and update as needed. In addition, the facility should make housing changes based on safety risks.<sup>69</sup>
- Establish a system to regularly monitor potential gang activities by monitoring telephone calls and mail when warranted. This should also include consistently tracking

gang activities and studying trends for the purpose of predicting and preventing future gang-related incidents.

- Provide specialized training to all staff on gang signs and behaviors as well as how to properly document and respond to these events.
- Gather gang intelligence data and communicate this information to designated individuals. Agencies must have a clear communication pathway outlined in their policies on how sensitive information will be disseminated and which individuals are authorized to receive this information.
- Additional policy considerations are discussed below. As previously mentioned, author Marchese (2009) suggests that policies at a minimum address: *“Intake; classification; intelligence; mitigating factors; facility disturbances; recruitment of gang/STG members; legal aspects of gang management; [and] staff training.”*<sup>70</sup> Each of these is expounded upon briefly to provide readers with a clearer picture of how to operationalize these components.<sup>70</sup>

**Intake:** Intake officers should be trained to flag suspected gang members and designate them for interviews with a facility gang intelligence officer. Intake officers should not be responsible for conducting investigations but rather for adhering to protocols that ensure the safety of the facility and are aimed at mitigating any safety threats. A comprehensive protocol may address transporting youth; holding areas; intake searches; interpreters; gang identification training; initial classification; and communicating gang-sensitive information and security risks.

**Classification:** When developing or revising a classification policy, it is important to address the following: *“Gang identification/affiliation intelligence; prior incarceration records; dangerous associations; co-defendants; requests for special housing, programs and/or job assignments; offender programming needs; language barriers; and location in the facility (escape or facility assault risks).”*<sup>70</sup>

**Intelligence:** When gathering information about gang members and level of embeddedness, it is important that facilities consult a variety of sources. Some sources to consider include: identification and interpretation of gang symbols; interviews with gang members; information from law enforcement; media coverage; monitoring associations and visitors; reviewing criminal records and co-defendants; surveillance (internal and external); and through confidential informants (i.e., snitches);<sup>70</sup> to name a few.

Social media outlets are an incredibly rich repository of information that can be gleaned for gang intelligence data. It is not uncommon for gang-involved youth to highlight their activities via social media outlets. *“In addition, social media is beneficial for anonymous reporting of gang involvement and/or activity by concerned parents, students, and*

staff.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, agencies and facilities must designate individuals to periodically monitor social media sites and have an established process for relaying this information to designated parties.

Agencies and facilities are also encouraged to use electronic platforms to store gang-related data. Author Marchese (2009) explains, *“Since many gang members are transient, administrators also must be aware of national or regional gang databases that assist agencies in collecting and disseminating gang intelligence. Two of the most frequently used databases are the Regional Information Sharing System Network and GangNet. These are the two intelligence systems most often used by law enforcement agencies nationwide.”*<sup>70</sup> By way of reminder, agencies are encouraged to have clear policies regarding communicating and protecting sensitive information, which may involve limiting database access to select authorized users.

**Mitigating Factors:** Additional factors agencies and facilities may consider include<sup>70</sup>:

- *Outside influences.* The degree to which a gang is supported in the community can lead to outside assistance for incarcerated gang members (i.e., contraband smuggling, staff corruption, etc.). It is critical that facility administrators consider outside influences when screening applicants for staff positions and critical assignments such as credible messengers and investigators.
- *Media coverage.* It is important to understand that media coverage can lead to additional criminal activities and the need for enhanced operational security.
- *Degree of violence.* The degree of violence varies from gang to gang. *“If a gang is willing to threaten staff and their families, administrators must put a threat assessment protocol in place to protect staff. Such protocols should include collaboration with other law enforcement agencies; procedures for protecting the staff member and his or her family (target hardening); and specialized training for gang intelligence officers in threat assessment procedures.”*<sup>70</sup>
- *Transportation issues.* It is critical to have security protocols for safely transporting at-risk gang members to avoid attacks from rival gang members.

**Staff Training:** Policies should include initial and ongoing training for all staff as well as specialized training for managers and staff in specialized roles. Marchese (2009) offers four training protocols that should be considered when training staff in various roles.<sup>70</sup>

**Direct care staff** (in contact with youth) should be trained on, at a minimum:

- *“Common threads - Overview of how gangs operate;*
- *Criminal enterprise - Types of criminal activities they engage in;*
- *Dangers to staff and facility - How gang behavior endangers the facility, what to look for and how to report it;*
- *Types of Gangs - Types of gangs in the locality and their general characteristics;*  
*and*

- *Agency gang management protocol.*<sup>70</sup>

Intake and classification staff training should include:

- Information about gangs currently operating in the facility, within the criminal justice system, and in the local community;
- *“Specific behaviors, tattoos, hand signs, graffiti and clothing; and*
- *Specific related dangers such as gang conflicts.*”<sup>70</sup>

Gang intelligence officers must be trained on and knowledgeable of:

- *“Investigative processes;*
  - *Sources of information and networking;*
  - *Crime scene preservation and evidence;*
  - *Interview and interrogation;*
  - *Photography;*
  - *Surveillance;*
  - *Intelligence systems and networks;*
  - *Gang familiarization and identification;*
  - *Visual and verbal indications of gang behaviors and activities;*
  - *Threat assessment/management;*
  - *Use of confidential informants;*
  - *Legal issues; and*
  - *Management and classification issues.*”<sup>70</sup>
- It is not uncommon for youth who have no gang affiliation when entering a secure facility to seek protection inside the facility by joining a gang. Therefore, it is important for administrators to clearly delineate how recruitment of new members will be addressed and establish mechanisms to discourage recruitment and quickly respond to any emerging safety concerns (i.e., unit changes, programming, etc.).<sup>70</sup> Facilities must also be careful of false accusations made by rival gang members - claiming that a person or group is gang associated. Other youth may also brag that they are gang members when they are not or claim to be higher in the gang hierarchy than they really are.<sup>69</sup> Facilities must adopt processes for corroborating statements using accurate data and observations.
  - It is important that agencies make sure that they are not violating constitutional rights as part of their gang management strategy. Marchese (2009) advises that *“When restricting the rights of gang members (or any other inmate) is necessary, staff members must articulate how the exercise of such rights endangers care, custody and control or creates an excessive hardship for the facility.*”<sup>70</sup> Administrators should be familiar with existing *“...criminal/penal codes so that when gang members violate such codes they are charged with a crime.*”<sup>70</sup>

## Exiting Gangs

To affect change and assist youth in eventually leaving the gang, it is essential that juvenile justice facility staff have a deep understanding of the concept of embeddedness. Staff must embrace the understanding that the goal of working with gang-involved youth is not to convince them to leave the gang but rather, the goal of treatment and daily interactions is to help youth lessen their ties with the gang. This is done by building rapport and engaging youth in prosocial activities. When youth experience positive emotional states and social reinforcement they will be likely to repeat these positive experiences. It is important for staff to remember that “...*exiting a gang is not an event, it is a process.*”<sup>1</sup> With this understanding, there are main two factors that juvenile justice practitioners must target when helping youth to slowly disengage from the gang lifestyle: 1) length of membership and 2) embeddedness.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pyrooz explains the target of interventions should be to reduce the degree of identification and affiliation with the gang and to ultimately, reduce the length of time in the gang.<sup>1</sup>

Research shows that gang involvement is often fleeting and that many youth only claim gang affiliation for a single year. As Dr. Pyrooz explains, “*Gang membership is not a lifelong commitment. Nearly every youth who joins a gang also leaves one.*”<sup>1</sup> Research also shows that youth typically join in the younger years between the ages of 13 and 15 and leave in the late teen years. In fact, approximately 70% of gang-involved youth join in their adolescent years and exit gangs as they emerge into young adulthood.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that because no two people are alike, there is naturally variability in gang members.

Broadly speaking, juvenile justice practitioners should consider interventions with gang-involved youth from two perspectives. If a youth is already affiliated with a gang in the community, the facility should employ appropriate interventions to target risk and need factors identified in a standardized risk/needs assessment. They will also need to employ safety measures such as structured conflict mediation to help prevent gang-related incidents within the facility.<sup>1</sup> If a youth is considering joining a gang or joins a gang while in a juvenile justice facility, staff members should consider intervention strategies that will prevent youth from becoming fully embedded in the gang lifestyle and/or help youth become less tied to the gang while in custody.<sup>1</sup>

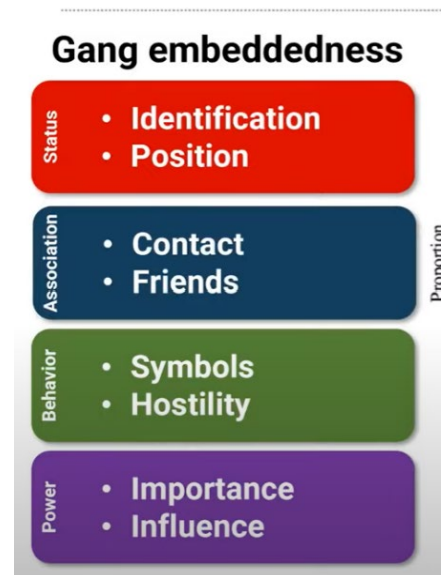
There are four main categories that comprise the concept of embeddedness or the degree of affiliation with the gang. These are: 1) Status (i.e., identification with and position in the gang); 2) Behavior (i.e., amount of contact with the gang and friends); 3) Association (i.e., displaying gang symbols and acts of hostility in the name of the gang); and 4) Power (i.e., how much influence the gang has over youth and how much importance youth place on gang membership).<sup>1</sup> It is important that staff understand these pieces to be able to gauge the degree of a youth’s involvement in the gang. A graphical representation is provided below.

In the absence of a standardized tool to measure gang embeddedness for youth in custodial settings, facility administrators can assess several of these components using self-reports of

gang-identification (Status); tracking observations of youth peer group/friends (Association); and reviewing incident reports of gang-violence and tagging/graffiti (Behavior). Staff should be trained to make these observations on a regular basis to informally assess the level of embeddedness throughout a youth’s stay in custody.

Push and pull factors can be applied to reasons why youth exit gangs. Research by Dr. Pyrooz explains the most common “push” reason for youth leaving the gang:

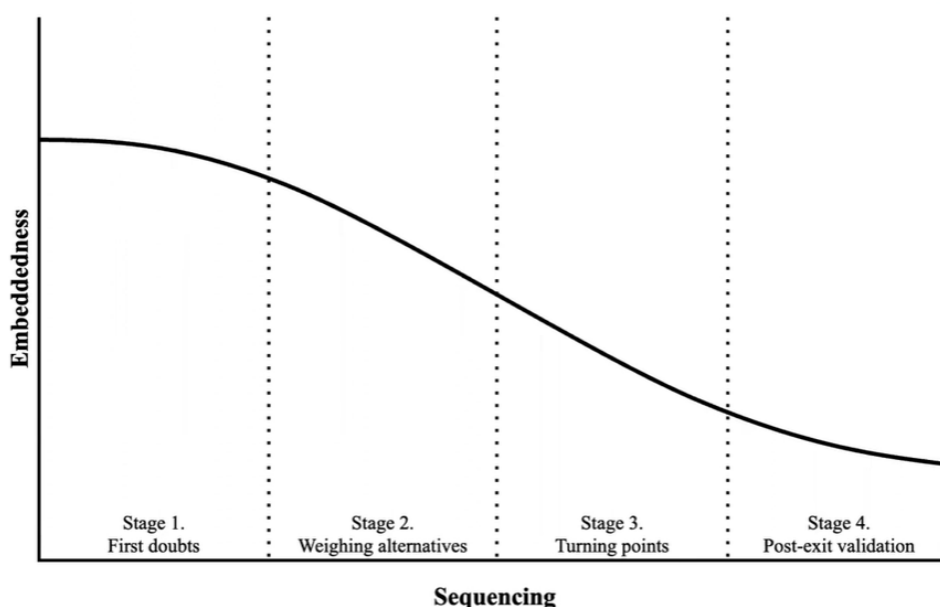
*“The number one reason people leave gangs is disillusionment. They get tired of the violence. They get tired of the criminal justice system involvement. They get tired of people who are snitching on them. They feel they have been sold a bill of goods. You have been promised protection, but you wind up with victimization. You have been promised companionship, but you don’t have people putting money on your books or people visiting you while you’re incarcerated. You get promised economic benefits, but in reality you’re making less than minimum wage...disillusionment has to do with realizing you’ve been sold a bill of goods.”<sup>1</sup>*



On the other hand, “pull” factors as it relates to desistance, are things that help pull a youth away from the gang lifestyle. Examples of pull factors include having children, securing employment, and connecting with mentors. Research shows “push” factors have greater influence than “pull” factors on exiting the gang.<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember that gang involvement is a complex issue that is further impacted by how old a person is; the status in the gang; if family members are gang members; and if the person is incarcerated<sup>1</sup>, to name a few. Juvenile justice professionals must consider all factors when determining the appropriate interventions to use when working with these youth.

Best practices upholds that the “dosage” (frequency and intensity) of treatment should match the level of criminogenic risk. In other words, offenders who register moderate or high-risk based on a standardized risk/needs assessment should be provided more intensive treatment than youth who are low risk. Juvenile justice research has shown that providing intensive services to low-risk youth can actually increase their likelihood to reoffend.<sup>72</sup> As discussed in other areas of this toolkit, youth gang membership is fleeting and most youth leave the gang before their early twenties.<sup>3</sup> Most youth gang members will not need intense interventions. Therefore, it is important that facility staff determine the degree of embeddedness so the appropriate level of intervention may be applied. Using the four embeddedness components, staff members can informally gauge youth treatment needs and progress regarding moving away from the gang lifestyle (i.e., - decreasing embeddedness).

The decision to leave a gang can be thought of as a process comprised of four main phases: Stage 1 – First doubts; Stage 2 – Weighing alternatives; Stage 3 – Turning points; and Stage 4 – Post-exit validation.<sup>3</sup> The process begins with doubting the gang lifestyle and moves into examining possible alternatives to gang membership. Once youth consider the alternatives, the youth eventually determines that the cost of gang membership outweighs the benefits and soon after, leaves the gang. The final stage occurs once the youth has exited the gang. In each of these stages, it is important that juvenile justice professionals support the youth where they are in the process. In other words, if a youth is in Stage 2 “weighing alternatives” staff should assist youth in exploring the pros and cons of gang membership.



Pyrooz, D. (2021, July 29). *Community Violence Intervention – Addressing Gangs: Understanding Youth Gang Involvement* [PowerPoint Slide].<sup>3</sup>

Few rigorous evaluation studies have been conducted on gang intervention programs and therefore, there are currently no “effective” rated treatment programs specifically designed for gang members. However, research shows that using evidence-based curricula that target criminogenic risk and need factors (such as Functional Family Therapy or Multi-Systemic Therapy) can address many of the root causes of gang-involvement. Recent research has found programs that demonstrate promising results for gang-involved youth in the community include Jobs Corps and Cure Violence. Links to programs are included in [Additional Resources](#).

*“Research suggests that a focus on the development of personal skills and self-differentiation can reduce gang influence. These individual-level factors affect gang identity and involvement in violence.... At the group level...services seek to reduce gang identity by strengthening identification and cohesion with family, given a positive valence of family norms....as well as by strengthening identification with one or more conventional groups such as a fire crew, sports team, or other group with prosocial goals such as a conventional career objective.”<sup>41</sup>*

**Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations:**

- There are currently no “effective” rated programs for working with gang-involved youth in juvenile justice facilities. In addition, no standardized tool assessing gang embeddedness exists for youth residing in custodial settings. As such, juvenile justice practitioners are encouraged to train staff to deepen their understanding of gangs including push/pull factors; embeddedness; effective approaches to support youth in each of the four stages of exiting a gang; relationship building; etc.
- Exiting from a gang is a process not an event. It is critical that staff understand the goal of interventions and that daily interactions should aim to decrease the strength of attachment with the gang, not to convince youth to leave the gang lifestyle.
- In the absence of a standardized tool to measure embeddedness, facility administrators can assess several embeddedness components using self- reports of gang-identification (Status); review of incident reports of gang-violence and tagging/graffiti (Behavior); and observations of a youth’s peer group/friends (Association). Staff should be trained to make these observations on a regular basis to informally assess the level of embeddedness throughout a youth’s stay in custody. This information can be used to identify the degree of gang affiliation throughout a youth’s stay and to determine the intensity of treatment needed.
- Most youth will exit the gangs on their own, without intervention. Therefore, staff should focus on those youth who express interest in leaving the gang but who cannot see a clear pathway through to the other side. Providing treatment to youth who have a low level of embeddedness may inadvertently strengthen the bonds with gang members. It is critical that juvenile justice staff be formally trained on specific strategies to support youth through each of the four stages in the gang exiting process.

**Gang Intelligence: Using Data**

As previously mentioned, data intelligence information is a critical piece to addressing gang issues in a secure facility setting. If used properly, accurate data can help facilities: 1) mitigate risks that foster gang activity; 2) protect those who are most susceptible; and 3) contain the spread of gang activity.<sup>15</sup> Regular data review of meaningful measures can better ensure youth and staff safety and can drive program improvements. It is critical that agencies and facilities choose the correct measures that will assist them in identifying areas of deficiency; pinpoint root causes of an issue; and allow to tell their success stories (i.e., positive outcomes).

Potential sources of data agencies may consider collecting include, but are not limited to:

- 1) **Gang intelligence data.** As previously mentioned, juvenile justice facility administrators should have a strong working relationship with local law enforcement and other criminal justice entities. Through regular conversations and routine data collection, facilities can be alerted to potential gang violence that may be in the planning stages. Examples of

criminal/gang databases used in the field to share information with law enforcement are *RISSIntel™* or *RISSGang™*. Agencies and facilities are also encouraged to develop and foster relationships “...with other state, county, local, and private (nonprofit) agencies/organizations that may be able to aid in gang prevention, intervention, and mitigation strategies.”<sup>15</sup>

It is important that facility leaders and staff understand the balance of sharing and protecting sensitive gang-related information. “Not all types of data about youth gang-member activities have to be shared, nor all types of team-member activity planned together”.<sup>5</sup> Facilities are encouraged to share enough information to keep facility youth and staff safe while taking care to not interfere in formal investigations. Developing clear policies and procedures on how to manage gang-intelligence information is critical (i.e., what information will be collected and shared; at what point in the process; to whom information will be shared; how information will be collected and by whom; where information will be securely stored, etc.).

It is important that administrators consult and become familiar with federal guidelines on managing sensitive information. The federal “Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies” ([28 CFR Part 23 \(ojp.gov\)](#)) provides directives on how to control and protect data; auditing requirements; how to validate gang affiliations; and other information related to gang intelligence data.

*“Gang intelligence, like all other types of intelligence information, changes frequently for this reason, agencies need to develop secure intelligence protocols and databases that compile current, useful and practical information that is relevant to the gang population in each facility. Such information must be routinely updated, analyzed and interpreted to assist facility gang intelligence officers in identifying potential problems.”<sup>70</sup>*

- 2) **Individual assessment data from a risk/needs assessment instrument, social embeddedness scale, and/or a classification tool.** These data provide important information about gang membership, history of youth gang involvement, and degree of gang embeddedness. Using these data, administrators and staff can better understand youth’s needs; use this information to ensure staff and youth safety while in the facility; and determine treatment interventions and case plan goals. Facilities may also choose to use standardized instruments to periodically assess youth throughout the youth’s stay. This will provide insight into youth progress in treatment and overall program effectiveness.
- 3) **Incident data – individual and facility levels.** Regular review of incident data allows facility administrators to identify trends. Data trends may involve determining repeat offenders in gang-related incidents; the most common day and times of the week that incidents occur; events leading up to incidents; and staff involved in responding to incidents, to name a few. Agencies should consider tracking all incidents of graffiti, assaults, facility disturbances, bullying, weapons, non-compliance, and other events that may (or may not) be a result of gang affiliation. Studying trends and understanding the

root causes of incidents will help staff prevent future incidents. As part of the analyses, it is critical that investigations uncover *why* the gang-related incidents are occurring – Are gang members acting on their own? Are two gangs feuding?<sup>9</sup> This will allow for accurate interpretation of the information, thereby shaping appropriate responses from facility staff.

- 4) **Outcome data.** Agencies are encouraged to develop outcome measures to determine program effectiveness. Whenever possible, formal program evaluation studies should be conducted. Agencies can partner with local colleges or universities to conduct formal program evaluation studies. Examples of outcome data measures include: Change in protective factors, needs, and/or in gang embeddedness using standardized pre/post instruments; change in negative behaviors and/or increase in prosocial behaviors (based on a well-designed and structured behavior management system); to name a few.
- 5) **Other data measures.** Examples of additional measures agencies may choose to track include the number of gang-involved youth actively participating in designated treatment groups; number of youth earning vocational certifications; number of partnerships and programs with agencies that assist with employment; and number of youth released into the community with a job secured; etc.

OJJDP recommends at a minimum, agencies gather the following data elements<sup>4</sup>:

- Individual characteristics (race, age, gender, level of gang affiliation, and other factors such as family structure, etc.).
- School attendance/activity level, pre- and post-involvement in the program.
- Criminal history and/or activity subsequent to being involved in the program.
- Employment history, pre- and post-involvement in the program.
- Probation referrals and/or violations, pre- and post-involvement in the program.
- Substance use levels, pre- and post-involvement in the program.

### Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice Considerations

- From a higher-level perspective, it is important that agencies establish process and outcome measures that closely align with their gang reduction strategies. This may include incident data; treatment completion; change in protective factors over time; level of embeddedness; formal evaluations of gang interventions; etc. Data should be regularly reviewed and analyzed to determine trends. This will assist facility staff in preventing gang-related violence by interrupting events before they occur.
- Agencies must have formal policy/procedures on what gang-related information will be collected; who will have access to this information; and how sensitive information will be communicated to designated individuals to ensure the safety of all staff and youth.

- Agencies should consider partnering with local colleges and universities to conduct formal evaluations of its programs and services.

#### **From the Field: Data**

The MA Department of Youth Services (MA DYS) has a formal Apprehension Unit that employs 10 Apprehension Officers. These officers are masters-level specialized state police officers who have successfully completed a rigorous 16-week training. Two apprehension officers are assigned to each of the five regions throughout Massachusetts. These individuals are responsible for verifying gang membership; bringing youth back into custody when necessary; data/intel collection; discussing youth in weekly meetings (to which law enforcement often attend); and leading monthly trainings on gang-related issues.

Routine data collection and regular data reviews assist agencies in identifying root causes; course correct when business processes are not functioning optimally; and help inform individualized youth treatment plans. The MA DYS has a well-established system for collecting data related to gang-involved youth. Recently, the agency created data fields to support tracking gang-related information in the agency's information system (Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System - "JJEMS"). Apprehension Officers collaborate with local law enforcement to gather and corroborate data entered into the JJEMS. During an interview with agency leaders and Apprehension Unit staff members conducted in July 2022, participants emphasized the importance of regular communication with: Local and state gang unit staff; local law enforcement; and families to build relationships and problem solve issues as they arise. MA DYS has a standardized workflow detailing how to verify gang-membership information. It is important to note that gang information is only accessible to Apprehension Unit staff who have been formally trained on how to protect sensitive information (and the limits to sharing this information).

## **Future Considerations**

It is important that juvenile justice agencies have a comprehensive plan for reducing gang involvement and related incidents of violence in their facilities. Author Tim Decker (2019) on behalf of the Juvenile Justice Leadership Network (JJLN), suggests that when systems or facilities make significant system or practice changes that these changes be rooted in eight specific principles: *"(1) developmentally appropriate, (2) research-based, data-driven, and outcome-focused, (3) fair and equitable, (4) strengths-based, (5) trauma-informed and responsive, (6) supportive of positive relationships and stability, (7) youth- and family-centered, and (8) well-coordinated across systems of care."*<sup>32</sup>

Juvenile justice practitioners are also encouraged to adopt *"...restorative approaches that reimagine and reshape youth, family, and community perceptions of each other, and build effective working relationships, commitment, and shared responsibility. Decision-making and*

*case planning frameworks prioritize involvement of family and community and utilize these opportunities to build and strengthen the social fabric surrounding each youth. The ideal system consciously engages non-agency partners, strengthens connections with parents and extended family, and seeks to strengthen and build meaningful supports within communities.”<sup>32</sup>*

Here are a few first steps for juvenile justice agencies to consider on their journey to managing gangs in their facilities.

- Review existing policies and protocols to ensure clear directives and guidance on how to manage gang-related incidents; how to respond to gang-related events; how to communicate sensitive information and to whom information will be shared; etc. Policies should also include consequences for gang involvement and youth should be informed of these consequences at intake.
- Expand partnerships with law enforcement, criminal justice partners, community business owners, and volunteers. These connections can provide hidden opportunities for intelligence sharing; insight into effective strategies for managing gangs in secure settings; and employment and/or training for youth while in the facility and/or upon release.
- Consider developing an entity responsible for managing gang activities in the facility and at the state level. A steering committee or gang task force can assist in developing a comprehensive strategy to include all critical components as outlined by the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.
- Develop formal measures to inform decisions. Measures may include those used to monitor gang-involvement; assess safety risks; track progress in treatment; determine level of gang-embeddedness; and outcome measures to determine level of program success. This may involve agencies investing in technology to better track gang-related information and/or engaging local colleges and universities to conduct formal program evaluation studies.
- Invest in formal training of staff on managing and interacting with gang members – i.e., what to look for; how to respond to incidents; relationship building with youth as a prevention mechanism; components of embeddedness; approaches to support youth in the process of exiting gangs (across the four stages); etc.
- Adopt evidence-based treatment models that address the core reasons why youth join gangs (i.e., risk and need factors). Curricula should be adjusted to ensure culturally appropriate language, examples, pictures, scenarios, etc. are infused throughout the curricula.
- Ensure staff are formally trained on the facility’s treatment model and approaches – i.e., trauma-informed, cognitive behavioral methods, de-escalation techniques, etc. Formal training and ongoing feedback from supervisors will better ensure staff are reinforcing skills with youth in the everyday milieu.
- Establish a formal process for measuring fidelity and providing constructive feedback to group facilitators on a routine basis.
- Implement a robust screening/selection process for staff employed in gang units and in credible messenger programs.

- Maintain regular communication and discuss gang-involved youth with local law enforcement and specialized staff through regular meetings that include representatives from various disciplines.
- Make efforts to relocate gang-affiliated youth to alternate geographical areas throughout the state when released. This is one factor that may help youth resist falling back into the gang-lifestyle.
- Consider housing youth from opposing gangs on the same unit. This experience can be a powerful learning experience for youth regarding relationships and helping youth develop the skills to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Agency leaders and facility administrators are encouraged to consult the various resources provided throughout this toolkit for additional information and guidance on those topics that are most relevant to their facilities.

#### **The Importance of Collaboration**

*“Multi-system collaboration is essential to the ideal juvenile justice system. At a minimum, it must include coordinated case assignment, joint assessment processes, and case planning and supervision. This level of multisystem effort is absolutely necessary for juvenile justice systems and communities to improve outcomes for youth (Siegel & Lord, 2004; Halemba & Lord, 2005; American Bar Association, 2008; Herz & Ryan, 2008; Nash & Bilchik, 2009; Stewart, Lutz, & Herz, 2010). Juvenile justice agencies must work with stakeholders to integrate best practices and evidence-based programs related to child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, substance abuse and education. Without integrated and comprehensive efforts, multisystem youth are less likely to receive the appropriate services and placements they need (Widom & Maxfield, 2001; Cusick, George, & Bell, 2009). Additionally, opportunities exist for juvenile justice agencies to partner “upstream” with these stakeholders as well as with law enforcement and community-based organizations on efforts designed to prevent system involvement in the first place.”<sup>32</sup>*

## Additional Resources

- Blueprints for Violence Prevention – <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/204274.pdf>
- CJJA Toolkit: Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Qualified Staff. [CJJA-Staff-Retention-Toolkit.pdf](#)
- Cure Violence – <https://cvg.org/>
- JobCorps – <https://www.jobcorps.gov/>
- Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act (2002)  
<https://ojdp.ojp.gov/library/publications/juvenile-justice-and-delinquency-prevention-act-reauthorization-2018>
- National Gang Center – the Program Matrix and the OJJDP Strategic Planning Tool can be found at [Programs by Age Range | National Gang Center \(ojp.gov\)](#)
- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp>
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Model Programs Guide – [Model Programs Guide | Home | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(ojp.gov\)](#)
  - Focused Deterrence Strategies
  - Gang Membership Preventions Programs
  - Phoenix Curriculum: A core evidence-based gang prevention program, designed for elementary school, middle school, high school, and alternative school students. It *inoculates students against* the highest risk factors for gang involvement. It also links students to the most available protective factors and assets.
- Youth Services Eligibility Interview  
<https://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/gangs-test-05202009.pdf>

## Appendices

### Alameda County (CA) Probation Department

- Appendix A: Alameda County (CA) Probation Department Classification System policy
- Appendix B: Alameda County (CA) Juvenile Hall Classification form

### Massachusetts DYS

- Appendix C: Massachusetts DYS Advisory on Protecting Sensitive Gang-Related Information policy
- Appendix D: Massachusetts DYS Screenshots of gang database/data collection instrument

### Ohio DYS

- Appendix E: Ohio DYS Transitional Reentry Planning policy
- Appendix F: Ohio DYS Reentry Checklist

**Appendix A: Alameda County (CA) Probation Department Classification System policy**



## Chapter: Classification and Separation

### Section: Classification System

#### I. Principle

The Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD) considers the safety and security of all persons located within the Juvenile Facilities (Juvenile Hall and Camp Wilmont Sweeney (CWS)) as one of the most important and critical responsibilities of ACPD. The proper assessment and classification of youth housed at the Juvenile Hall assists ACPD in delivering upon its responsibility to promote a safe, secure, and responsive environment for youth and staff. In support of this philosophy and in adherence with state law, ACPD will maintain policy and procedures regarding the facilitation of a classification system that designates an appropriate level of security for each youth in the least restrictive environment.

#### II. Policy

Each youth admitted to Juvenile Hall must be classified according to the criteria within this policy and in such a manner as to provide for the safety of the youth, other youth, the public and staff. All criteria must be considered to determine the least restrictive housing unit and most appropriate program setting for the youth. All youth must be assigned to individual rooms until all rooms are filled. The assigned Unit Institutional Supervisor (IS) I or their designee will review classifications on a regular basis and confer with the Duty IS II for unit reclassification if necessary.

Sworn staff must not use lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or intersex identification or status for classification purposes or as an indicator of likelihood of being sexually abusive. Juvenile Institution Officers (JIOs) and IS I/II's must not assign youth to a single occupancy room based solely on the youth's actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, origin, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.

#### III. Procedures

##### Classification

Upon admission to Juvenile Hall, the JIO assigned to Intake will make an initial classification recommendation for the admitted youth based on the following criteria:

- Risk (actuarial probability to reoffend)
- Age
- Gender/gender identity

- Maturity
- Criminal sophistication
- Emotional stability
- Program needs
- Legal status (nature of charges)
- Public safety considerations
- Physical disabilities
- Medical/mental health concerns

The JIO assigned to Intake must complete a *Juvenile Hall Classification Form* (ACPD Form 168) for each youth admitted, which will be maintained in the youth's intake folder. Youth returning to Juvenile Hall after being released must be reassessed and a new *Classification Form* (ACPD Form 168) completed. All classification assessments and forms must be reviewed and approved by the Duty IS II or their designee.

If the youth is classified for a given unit where bed space is not available, the JIO assigned to Intake must contact the Duty IS II or their designee to determine an alternate placement until bed space is available in the appropriate unit. The youth will maintain their classification while housed in the next most appropriate unit. The Duty IS II or any Unit Supervisor may initiate transfers to make sure youth are housed in the proper living units based on their classification or re-classification.

Youth with disabilities will be housed in the most appropriate setting that meets the needs of the youth. Youth with disabilities will not be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities provided by Juvenile Facilities in accordance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA).

### Progress Folder Entry

JIOs must document the youth's classification on the progress folder face sheet and place a copy of the completed risk assessment in the progress folder.

### Overrides

In exigent circumstances, a youth may be housed in a unit contrary to their classification with the approval of the Duty IS II and proper documentation on the *Classification Form* (ACPD Form 168) in the youth's progress folder. Potential exigent circumstances include, but are not limited to, co-defendants, gang conflicts, recent conflicts between youth, etc.

When the exigent circumstances are resolved, the youth may be transferred back to the appropriate unit.

### Classification Review

The assigned Unit IS I or their designee will review classifications at minimum, weekly, and confer with the Duty Institutional Supervisor II (IS II) for unit reclassification if necessary. Reviews will take into consideration the youth's level of supervision, behavior while in custody, and initial *classification criteria* listed above.

#### **Appendix B: Alameda County (CA) Juvenile Hall Classification form**



## ALAMEDA COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT JUVENILE HALL CLASSIFICATION FORM



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Classification Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

New Charges: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe New Charges: \_\_\_\_\_

Sustained Charges: \_\_\_\_\_

### Classification Criteria

- **Age:** 14 and younger ☐ 15 ☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 and over ☐ HT: \_\_\_\_\_ WT: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Gender/identity:** Male ☐ Female ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Program Needs**  
Interpreter, IEP (SP)
- **ADA/medical/mental health concerns**  
Medical History, Current Medical Observations (MC, MH, S3)
- **Public safety considerations:** Escape risk, violence against person, etc.  
Relevant JJC Incidents (SM, S2, S5)
- **Maturity:** Age appropriate behavior/ability to respond to the situation appropriately  
Age appro./Near age app./Not age appropriate
- **Criminal History:** Sophistication  
# of referrals, Prior offense history (S5)
- **Legal status:** Nature of charges  
300, 601, 602, 707b offender GPS, HS
- **Risk:** Actuarial probability to re-offend  
YLS Score
- **Emotional stability:** Lack of stability or balance or tendency towards unpredictable or erratic behavior  
Personal Observation, Mental Health History (MH, S3)

Reason for Reclassification (Unit \_\_\_\_): \_\_\_\_\_

### Males or youth who identify as male:

Unit 1: Limited criminal history/sophistication, low to moderate risk.

Unit 2: Adult transfer, high criminal sophistication, WIC 707(b) offenses, gang affiliation, DJJ parolees, age 16 and up.

Unit 4: High criminal sophistication, WIC 707(b) offenses, gang affiliation, age 16 or under.

Unit 5: Enhanced support unit for youth needing intensive clinical support, low maturity, low functioning.

**Females or youth who identify as female:**

Unit 6: Female unit.

ISI Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ ISII Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Codes**

**MC**: Permanent Medical Condition   **MH**: Mental Health   **SP**: Spanish Speaking   **SM**: Sexual Misconduct   **S2**: Escape Risk   **S3**: Suicidal Ideation   **S5**: Aggressive Behavior

## Appendix C. Massachusetts DYS Advisory on Protecting Sensitive Gang-Related Information policy



|  |
|--|
| <i>Commonwealth of Massachusetts</i>                             |
| <b>Executive Office of Health and Human Services</b>             |
| <b>Department of Youth Services</b>                              |
| <i>Advisory on Protecting Sensitive Gang Related Information</i> |

This Advisory is effective immediately and applies to all state and provider staff working with DYS involved youth regarding the collection, use and sharing of gang related information in the Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (“JJEMS”).

Safety of youth and staff is a top priority for the Department of Youth Services. Accurate and comprehensive information about a youth in DYS care or custody, including gang affiliation, is foundational to providing services, treatment and interventions tailored to each youth’s needs and for establishing effective safety and security strategies and protocols. The Department recognizes that there are youth in DYS care or custody who are gang affiliated and that this affiliation can present a safety and security threat as they move within and along the DYS service continuum.

### **PURPOSE**

The primary purpose for collecting gang affiliation information is to protect the safety of DYS involved youth and staff in residential programs and the community. Only information that is relevant and necessary to accomplish this purpose is collected.

### **GUIDELINES RELATING TO THE USE OF THE JJEMS GANG AFFILIATION INFORMATION**

Entry of gang affiliation information into JJEMS is not proof of criminal behavior. Every staff person with access to gang related information is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of this sensitive information and the privacy of the youth.

The section with gang affiliation status information in JJEMS can only be accessed by limited authorized staff. Only DYS Apprehension officers who have access to the most current and reliable information from sources that include law enforcement, local probation departments, executive branch agencies and community partnerships, may enter identified gang affiliation status into JJEMS. Caseworkers, clinical directors, program directors, district managers, and designated staff, are limited to “read only” access.

Any gang affiliation information about a youth in JJEMS will be reviewed and updated at each initial intake into a program, excluding Overnight Arrest intakes. Gang affiliation

information about a detained youth will be permanently removed from JJEMS within 90 days from the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Gang affiliation information about a committed youth will be permanently removed from JJEMS within 90 days from the youth's 21st birthday.

The misuse of the JJEMS gang affiliation information will subject individuals to administrative, civil, and potentially criminal penalties, in addition to any discipline up to and including termination related to DYS policy violations.

The Department of Youth Services reserves the right to revoke or modify this Advisory at any time if it determines that the safety and/or well-being of youth or staff are at risk, or to comply with state and federal policies and regulations.

## Appendix D: Massachusetts DYS Screenshots of gang database/data collection instrument

### Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (JJEMS)


### Job Aid: Entering Gang Affiliation



The Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (JJEMS) is the DYS automated system for tracking youths, their activities and programs. This guide contains instruction on how to record Gang Affiliation.

#### Search for Youth

To conduct a youth search, follow the steps below:

1. **Click** the Search Folder Icon 
2. **Select Type** as Client
3. **Type** any search criteria fields you would like to include.  
**Tip:** While entering search criteria fields, be cautious of spelling, as JJEMS will search for the EXACT word you type. You can substitute asterisk (\*) sign for a letter within a word while performing the search.  
**Tip:** Set Folder Type as "Master" for cleaner and better search results.
4. **Click** Search button.
5. **Double click** the youth's folder that you need to work on.

#### How to Create the Initial Gang Affiliation Questionnaire Folder

1. In the Master Folder, **click** the [Create new Gang Affiliation Questionnaire](#) hyperlink
2. **Click** "OK" on the pop-up window that appears

**NOTE:** This is a one-time task. Once the folder is created, the hyperlink is no longer available to create another new folder. The folder will now appear in the folder list on the left side of the screen

#### Entering data into the Gang Affiliation Questionnaire E-File

1. **Open** Gang Affiliation Questionnaire E-File
2. **Click** "Add New" if this is a subsequent entry
3. **Enter** Date of Interview in MM/DD/YYYY format

**NOTE:** Youth's Home Region will appear below Date of Interview and is grayed out

**NOTE:** The name of the staff entering Gang Affiliation Questionnaire will auto populate

4. **Enter** details in the "\*\* List Any Street or Tag Name(s):" text box
5. **Enter** details in the "\*\* List Any Social Media Name(s):" text box

### Section 1: To Be Completed at Initial Intake or Relevant Event

**NOTE:** Section 1 can be completed by any JJEMS user

1. **Select** Yes or No to "\*\*Young Person at Time of Interview Has Tattoos/Marks/Brands/Scars?"
  - a. If Yes is selected, the identifying body parts will appear

#### Section 1: To Be Completed at Intake or Relevant Event

|   |                                      |                          |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| * Young Person at Time of Interview Has Tattoos/Marks/Brands/Scars? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Head?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Neck?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Face?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Torso?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Back?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Left Arm?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Right Arm?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Left Hand?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Right Hand?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Left Leg?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Right Leg?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Left Foot?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Right Foot?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes            | <input type="radio"/> No |

- b. For each body part answered Yes, **enter** details in the "Describe Tattoos/Marks/Brands/Scars on [Body Part Selected]" textbox

## Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (JJEMS)

## Job Aid: Entering Gang Affiliation

- c. For each body part answered Yes, **select** Yes, No or N/A for “\*Young Person Verified He/She Obtained New Tattoos/Marks/Brands on [Body Part Selected]?”

| Section 1: To Be Completed at Intake or Relevant Event                         |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| * Young Person at Time of Interview Has Tattoos/Marks/Brands/Scars?            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes      | <input type="radio"/> No                                      |
| * Head?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Neck?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes      | <input type="radio"/> No                                      |
| * Describe Tattoos/Marks/Brands/Scars on Neck:                                 | 3" horizontal green arrow on left side    |   |
| * Young Person Verified He/She Obtained New Tattoos/Marks/Brands on Neck?      | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes      | <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> N/A            |
| * Face?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Torso?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Back?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Left Arm?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Right Arm?   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes      | <input type="radio"/> No                                      |
| * Describe Tattoos/Marks/Brands/Scars on Right Arm:                            | 5" black and red pitchfork on inner bicep |   |
| * Young Person Verified He/She Obtained New Tattoos/Marks/Brands on Right Arm? | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| * Left Hand?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Right Hand?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Left Leg?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Right Leg?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Left Foot?   | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |
| * Right Foot?  | <input type="radio"/> Yes                 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No                           |

2. **Select** Yes or No to “\*Young Person Self-Proclaims Affiliation with a Gang?”

- a. If Yes, **select** “\*Which Gang?”, “\*Set or Clique?” and “\*Area” from dropdown menus for each question, if applicable

|  |   |
|--|---|
| * Young Person Self-Proclaims Affiliation with a Gang? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Which Gang?  | Blood   |
| * Set or Clique?                                       | GBV   |
| * Area?  | East Side   |

**NOTE:** If Gang, Set or Clique is not listed, please contact your JJEMS Regional Administrator to have it added.

3. **Select** Yes or No to “\* Have Pictures of Face and Identifying Marks Been Uploaded to JJEMS?”

- a. If No, **enter** details in “\*Why?” text box

## Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (JJEMS)

## Job Aid: Entering Gang Affiliation

\* Have Pictures of Face and Identifying Marks Been Uploaded to JJEMS?

☐ Yes ☒ No

\* Why?

tattoo located on  
private body part

4. **Select** Yes to "Is Section 1 Complete?"
5. **Click** Save

**NOTE:** After Section 1 is marked "Complete," a workflow will be sent to the Apprehension Officers.

## Section 2: Identified Gang Affiliation Status

**NOTE:** Section 2 can ONLY be completed by Apprehension Officers and will be available as "read-only" to Caseworkers, Clinical Directors, District Managers, and Program/Assistant Program Managers and certain designated staff

1. **Select** Yes or No for "\*\*Information Regarding Significant Gang Activity Has Been Shared with DYS?"
  - a. If Yes for "\*\*Other?", **enter** information in textbox

## Section 2: Identified Gang Affiliation Status

|   |   |
|---|---|
| * Information Regarding Significant Gang Activity Has Been Shared with DYS? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Adult Corrections?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Community Partner?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Court?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Family?   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Guardian including DCF?   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Law Enforcement?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Probation?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * School?   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Social Media?   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Other?  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * If Other, Please Specify:   | Mr. Floss   |

2. **Select** Yes or No to "\*\*Information Received From Law Enforcement Agencies that Substantiates Gang Affiliation?"
3. **Select** Yes or No to "\*\*This Young Person Has an Active Gang Affiliation?"

## Juvenile Justice Enterprise Management System (JJEMS)

## Job Aid: Entering Gang Affiliation

- a. If Yes, **select** “\*Active Gang Affiliation?”, “\*Active Set or Clique?”, and “\*Active Area?” from dropdown menus for each question, if applicable
- b. **Enter** comments, if applicable

|   |   |
|---|---|
| * Information Received From Law Enforcement Agencies that Substantiates Gang Affiliation? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * This Young Person Has an Active Gang Affiliation?                                       | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| * Active Gang Affiliation?  | Blood   |
| * Active Set or Clique?   | Asian Boyz  |
| * Active Area?  | South End   |
| Comments:   | Gang gang   |

4. **Select** Yes to “\*Is This Form Complete?”
5. **Click** Save


**NOTE:** User’s name will auto populate in the “Reviewed By:” field

**NOTE:** “Date and Time Reviewed” will auto populate

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| * Is This Form Complete? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| Reviewed By:             | Apprehension Officer 1  |
| Date and Time Reviewed:  | 01/16/2020 03:47 PM   |

**NOTE:** Gang Affiliation Folders for Committed youth will be deleted by a JJEMS Regional Administrator within 90 days of the youth’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Gang Affiliation Folders for Detained youth will be deleted by a JJEMS Regional Administrator within 90 days of the youth’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Appendix E: Ohio DYS Transitional Reentry policy**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| TITLE:<br>Transitional Reentry Planning | PAGE 1 OF 14  |
|   | NUMBER:<br>102-REN-04   |
| RELATED RULE/CODE:                      | SUPERSEDES:<br>102-REN-04 dated 05/08/2020  |
| RELATED ACA STANDARDS:                  | EFFECTIVE DATE:<br>May 13, 2021   |
| RELATED PREA STANDARDS:                 | APPROVED:<br><br>Ryan Gies, Director |

**I. AUTHORITY**

This policy is issued in compliance with Ohio Revised Code 5139.01, which delegates to the Director of the Department of Youth Services the authority to adopt rules for the governance of the department, the conduct of its officers and employees, the performance of its business, and the custody, use, and preservation of the department's records, papers, books, documents, and property.

**II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth expectations for transitional reentry planning for a youth's successful release into the community.

**III. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to persons employed by the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS), independent contractors providing a service to DHS, volunteers, and youth.

**IV. DEFINITIONS**

**Community Engagement Liaison (CEL)** - Staff member designated by the director/designee to serve as the agency contact person responsible for overseeing and coordinating community service projects and activities department wide.

**Early Release** – A release from the facility by an order of the court prior to the parole eligibility date or parole on or after date.

**My Important Documents Portfolio** - A secure binder in which a youth and staff store the youth's important documents. The portfolio may include certificates of program completion, cover letter, resume, list of references, letter(s) of reference, educational documents, work evaluations, work samples, community service documents, and other documents that that prove age, identity, eligibility to work in the United States, as well as job qualifications, skills, and abilities.

**O.N.E.-Stop (Offender Network for Employment to Stop Recidivism)** - A secure, facility-specific version of Ohio Means Jobs ([www.OhioMeansJobs.com](http://www.OhioMeansJobs.com)), which provides online career planning, skill building, in-demand job information, and job search/application functions.

**Recidivism** - The tendency of an adjudicated youth to reoffend.

**Reentry** - The process of preparing and planning for youth who have spent time in a DYS facility to transition back to his/her home community. DYS's philosophy for reentry is the comprehensive, individualized actions steps, beginning at the time a youth enters a facility and continuing through the youth's discharge from parole, designed to help a youth achieve a successful, crime-free life.

**Reentry Administrator** – A member of the Office of Community Engagement and Reentry responsible for leading agency-driven reentry initiatives and assigned to assist facilities with implementation.

**Reentry/Job Fair** – An informational forum where youth can meet and speak directly with employers and/or representatives from workplace development and reentry initiatives that assist returning youth.

**School Fair** - An informational forum where youth can meet and speak directly with representatives from school systems, high school equivalence programs, colleges and universities, industry credential programs and other educational support agencies or organizations.

## **V. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Ohio Department of Youth Services to provide every youth with reentry planning and services prior to release from a facility. Essential habilitation services shall be provided at each facility for all youth prior to release. These services are designed to facilitate a youth's successful reentry into the community.

## **VI. PROCEDURE**

### **A. General**

Reentry planning shall begin at the youth's admission to DYS and shall continue through parole discharge. All designated planning activities and/or information in this policy shall be documented by the assigned case manager (CM) and/or unit manager (UM) in the Juvenile Justice Case Management System (JJCMS) case notes and marked accordingly on the Reentry Checklist, a JJCMS widget.

1. The reentry administrator shall research, develop, and implement strategies and networking practices in cooperation with employers and other community partners to build and maintain a pipeline of youth resources.
2. The reentry administrator shall keep abreast of in-demand job opportunities and collateral consequences that could impact youth and ensure that appropriate training is provided to facility and parole staff.
3. The reentry administrator shall maintain reentry resources on the DYS website and portal.

4. The reentry administrator shall serve as a resource to youth and staff for troubleshooting reentry needs on an individual basis.
5. The facility program administrator shall serve as the facility reentry coordinator.
6. The Reentry Checklist widget in JJCMS shall be designed for the completion of reentry activities at various intervals of youth's commitment. The due date for each item shall be calculated from the youth's admission date (the intake/orientation section) or parole eligibility date (PED) (all other sections of the checklist).
7. The CM and/or UM shall complete items prior to their due date. In the event an item is not completed at the time, the item shall be recorded as in progress with completion to follow as soon as possible.
8. Prior to any moves between housing units, between facilities, or between a facility and an alternative placement, the CM or UM shall check the Reentry Checklist to ensure it is up-to-date.

**B. Intake/Orientation**

1. During intake, the CM or UM shall educate the youth on the My Important Documents portfolio, in accordance with DYS Policy 102-REN-03, Reentry Documents, and ensure that the youth has a portfolio established. The CM or UM shall instruct the youth on the importance of saving important documents, including certificates, work evaluations, and community service hours, in the My Important Documents portfolio. The CM or UM shall document this in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
2. The CM or UM or other trained staff shall escort youth age 16 and older to the O.N.E.-Stop (Offender Network to Stop Recidivism) room or living unit workstations to access devices with the Student Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI). The staff shall assist the youth in establishing a username and password for OhioMeansJobs which shall be maintained in the youth's My Important Documents Portfolio. This shall occur prior to the youth transferring off the Orientation Unit. The CM or UM shall document this in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
3. The Behavioral Health Services (BHS) staff person shall conduct and review the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS), in accordance with DYS Policy 153-CLS-05, Ohio Youth Assessment System, with the youth and explain how it shall be used to create treatment goals throughout their stay. The CM or UM shall ensure BHS has completed the initial OYAS; and thereafter, the CM or UM shall complete the ongoing Reentry OYAS assessment. The CM or UM shall mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
4. The CM or UM shall conduct a review of the youth's main file and/or OnBase to determine if a copy of the youth's birth certificate is on file with DYS. If not, the CM or UM shall inquire if the parent/legal guardian has possession of the youth's birth certificate. The CM or UM shall mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
5. The Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry shall review the youth's credit history with the three (3) nationwide credit reporting companies within thirty (30) days of the youth's arrival.

- a. The Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry shall keep the youth's CM or UM and JPO informed of the credit review by documentation in JJCMS case notes. The Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry shall maintain a spreadsheet of all credit reviews.
  - b. For those youth with suspicious transactions or accounts listed, the Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry shall work with the youth and CM or UM to complete identify theft notification paperwork, collect required documentation, and submit to the designated staff in the Division of Legal Services for submission to the Ohio Attorney General's Office. The CM or UM shall respond to the community engagement liaison within fourteen (14) days of assistance being requested.
  - c. The CM or UM shall mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
6. The CM or UM shall ensure a visitation packet is mailed to the youth's approved family members. The CM or UM shall mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist (for youth admitted on/after the checklist revision on November 18, 2020).

#### **C. Youth Reentry Services**

1. Each facility shall conduct, at minimum, two (2) Reentry/Job Fairs and one (1) School Fair per year, in accordance with DYS Policy 150-FAM-04, Structured Facility Schedules.
  - a. The facility program administrator shall include Education staff and the assigned reentry administrator in planning the Reentry/Job Fairs.
  - b. The Education staff shall include the facility program administrator and the assigned reentry administrator in planning the School Fair.
2. The facility program administrator shall collaborate with the unit management administrator to ensure that O.N.E.-Stop is included in the unit program schedule. The facility program administrator shall maintain a sign-in sheet to track youth participation in the O.N.E.-Stop. The CM or UM shall ensure youth age 16 and above have at least monthly access to the O.N.E.-Stop, to provide youth with career planning, skill building, in-demand job information, and job search/application functions. The CM or UM shall document the youth's participation in the O.N.E.-Stop in JJCMS case notes. The facility program administrator shall monitor the sign-in sheet monthly and provide feedback to the unit management administrator regarding usage.

#### **D. Nine (9) To Twelve (12) Months Prior To Release**

1. The IDT, to include the youth's CM or UM and JPO, shall consider youth for the step-down option to one of the Community Corrections Facilities (CCFs) throughout the state. This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  - a. For those youth who are potentially appropriate for this option, as determined by the IDT, the CM or UM shall refer by email to the superintendent for approval.
  - b. If deemed appropriate for consideration, the superintendent shall email the bureau chief of Community Facilities and CM or UM. The CM or UM shall document the superintendent's decision in JJCMS case notes and mark the Reentry Checklist accordingly.

- c. The bureau chief of Community Facilities shall process the referral to the community corrections facilities for review and consideration. For any CCF interested in serving the youth, the bureau chief of Community Facilities shall contact the juvenile court for consideration. Once the court has decided, the bureau chief of Community Facilities shall inform the CM or UM and juvenile parole officer of the determination. The CM or UM shall inform the youth of the decision and document in JJCMS case notes.
2. The CM or UM shall conduct a review of the youth's JJCMS case notes, Reentry Checklist, and My Important Documents portfolio to ensure the youth's reentry needs are being met, including but not limited to:
  - a. Original birth certificate is stored in a dedicated envelope in the youth's main file or family has confirmed they have the youth's original birth certificate. If not, the CM or UM shall notify the Bureau of Records and Sentence Computation and request that a birth certificate be ordered.
  - b. The youth's credit history has been reviewed, and if applicable, identity theft notification has been made and a response has been received;
  - c. The OYAS is being used to guide treatment goals;
  - d. For youth age 16 and older, a O.N.E.-Stop account has been established and youth participates at least monthly in the O.N.E.-Stop;
  - e. If youth is a parent, youth is receiving parenthood services and that the Contact Relationships widget in JJCMS is updated with the child and the mother of child (or guardian of child);
  - f. Certificates of program completion, documentation of any services provided, employment records, items from the O.N.E.-Stop (e.g. username and password, youth's resume), and appropriate copies of educational records are stored in the youth's My Important Documents portfolio;
  - g. The CM or UM shall be follow-up on incomplete items as well as documenting in JJCMS case notes and marking the Reentry Checklist accordingly.

**E. One Hundred Twenty (120) To One Hundred Eighty (180) Days Prior To Release**

1. The facility program administrator shall ensure that the IDT schedule is noted "reentry" (prior to the distribution of the IDT schedule) for youth who will be released in 180 days or less. For those youth, the IDT shall begin focusing their discussion on reentry preparation, including, but not limited to, community placement plans, employment opportunities and/or educational opportunities. The first reentry-focused IDT shall be documented on the Reentry Checklist.
2. The IDT shall discuss placement plans with the youth (e.g. options that are safe, stable, supportive, and affordable). This shall be documented on the Integrated Treatment Plan (ITP) tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
3. The CM or UM shall approach the JPO for assistance with placement, if needed. Parole staff shall assist youth in need of placement in accordance with DYS Policy 400-PAR-01, Parole Supervision and Case Management. This shall be documented on the Integrated Treatment plan (ITP) tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.

4. The IDT shall discuss employment opportunities with the youth, with regard for the youth's career assessment/Student Success Plan (e.g. full-time vs. part-time, transportation to and from work, prospects youth has found through O.N.E.-Stop). This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
5. The IDT shall discuss educational opportunities with the youth. (E.g. educational goals, appropriate placement to support the student's needs, assistance needed for school success, enrollment/reenrollment process). This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
  - a. Once a post-release educational placement is determined, the school counselor shall contact the receiving school to determine enrollment requirements and provide any necessary pre-enrollment information regarding the youth.
  - b. For those youth interested in higher education through a career school (e.g. technical, vocational or trade) or college, the education specialist shall assist the youth in completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The education specialist shall inform the JPO and CM of completion and submission. The CM or UM shall document being notified in JJCMS case notes.
6. The IDT shall refer any youth with significant reentry needs (i.e. youth likely to lack a strong support system, experience housing or employment challenges, or have difficulty coping with everyday life), to the assigned reentry administrator who shall assist with problem-solving. This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly on the Reentry Checklist. The reentry administrator shall document follow-up in JJCMS case notes and ensure that the CM and/or UM and JPO are kept up to date.
7. For those youth meeting the requirements set forth in DYS Policy 173-PRG-03, Virtual Driving Simulator Program, shall be provided the opportunity to participate in the virtual driving simulator program, available at each facility. The CM or UM shall ensure the youth is referred to the appropriate staff person, noting the youth's expected date of release from the facility. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.

#### **F. Ninety (90) To One-Hundred Twenty (120) Days Prior To Release**

1. The CM or UM shall conduct a review of the youth's JJCMS case notes, OnBase, and the youth's main file to determine if the youth needs an original Social Security card. This review shall be documented on the Reentry Checklist and updated, as necessary.
2. In accordance with DYS Policy 102-REN-03 Reentry Documents, the CM or UM and facility program administrator shall assist those youth in need of an original Social Security card.
3. When a youth's Social Security card is received by the facility, it shall be immediately scanned into OnBase. Original documents shall be stored in a dedicated envelope in the youth's main file in records until the time of the youth's release when original documents shall be pulled from the main file and added to the My Important Documents Portfolio, in accordance with DYS Policy 102- REN-03, Reentry Documents.

#### **G. Thirty (30) To Ninety (90) Days Prior To Release**

1. Reentry-focused IDTs shall continue. This shall be documented on the Reentry Checklist (for youth admitted before the checklist revision on November 18, 2020).
2. The Release Authority shall conduct Release Reviews in accordance with DYS Policy 300-REA-04, Release Reviews. Once available, the IDT shall review the Release Authority expectations provided to the youth during the review panel. The youth's progress in meeting the Release Authority's expectations shall continue to be discussed at every succeeding IDT prior to the youth's release. This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
3. The CM or UM shall ensure the results of the OYAS Reentry Tool Assessment are used to identify the domains of risk for ITP case planning in accordance with DYS Policy 153-CLS-05, Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS). This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
4. The IDT, to include the youth, parent/legal guardian, JPO, CM and/or UM, and reentry administrator, if available, shall continue to explore placement possibilities and plan for living arrangement details (e.g., expectations regarding rent, household chores, household rules, and length of stay). This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
5. The Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry shall again review the youth's credit history with the three (3) nationwide credit reporting companies.
  - a. The Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry shall keep the youth's CM or UM and JPO informed, by email, of the credit review and document in JJCMS case notes. The bureau staff shall maintain a spreadsheet of all credit reviews.
  - b. For those youth with suspicious transactions or accounts listed, the Bureau of Community Engagement and Reentry staff shall work with the youth and the CM or UM to complete identify theft notification paperwork, collect required documentation, and submit to the designated staff in the Division of Legal Services for submission to the Ohio Attorney General's Office. The CM or UM shall respond to the community engagement liaison within fourteen (14) days of assistance being requested.
  - c. The CM or UM shall mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
6. The CM or UM shall ensure that youth on the mental health caseload who are referred for Community Linkage shall be scheduled through the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to ensure continuity of care pursuant to DYS Policies 102-REN-05, Community Linkage, and 167-BHS-05, Behavioral Health Services Discharge Planning. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
7. For youth with chronic medical conditions, as set forth in DYS Policy 168-MED-23, Health Care Treatment Plans for Youth with Special Health Needs: Chronic Care, the health services administrator (HSA) shall support continuity of care through coordination of follow-up medical treatment in the community. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.

8. If applicable, the CM or UM shall remind youth of his/her sex offender registration status, to include parole implications. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
9. Pursuant to DYS Policy 400-PAR-01, Parole Supervision and Case Management, within sixty (60) days prior to the youth's release, the JPO shall submit the Release ITP to the juvenile parole services supervisor (JPSS) for approval along with the General Rules of Parole or Rules of Parole - Juvenile Sex Offender (refer to JJCMS Reports), including the youth's parole placement. Once approved by the JPSS, the documents shall be retained in the electronic file. The CM or UM shall review the Release ITP and Rules of Parole and document the review on the Reentry Checklist.
10. For those youth transitioning back to an educational setting (e.g. middle or high school, career center, dropout recovery school, community college), the IDT shall consider youth for an off-grounds visit to the post-release educational placement. This consideration shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist. The recommendation for an off-grounds visit to a post-release educational placement shall be included in the worksheet completed by the IDT for a release review by the Release Authority.
  - a. If approved for release by the Release Authority, the reentry administrator or other representative of the Office of Community Engagement and Reentry shall initiate any recommended off-grounds visit by contacting the facility program administrator or designee. The request shall be made in accordance with the process for Planned Off-Grounds Activities Only Requiring Superintendent Approval contained in DYS Policy 185-RPS-11, Off-Grounds Activities.
  - b. Youth who make off-grounds visits to post-release educational placements shall wear clothing that is appropriate for visits (e.g. khaki pants and a collared shirt, not facility clothing).
  - c. Off-grounds visits shall be documented in JJCMS case notes and updated accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
11. Whenever possible, the CM or UM shall discuss with the JPO any connections to community providers that should be made prior to release (e.g. mental health/substance abuse provider, school representative, vocational support worker, placement provider, healthcare provider). The JPO shall inform the provider of interdisciplinary team meetings (IDT) as well as the availability of teleconference, webcam, and videoconference options. This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist. Follow-up shall be discussed at the following IDT.
12. The IDT shall plan for completion of any outstanding items, as documented on the Reentry Checklist, by making assignments, as necessary. This shall be documented in the minutes of the IDT in the ITP tab of JJCMS and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist. Follow-up shall be discussed at the following IDT.

#### **H. Between Thirty (30) Days Prior To Release and the PED/POA date**

1. The CM or UM shall assist the youth in reviewing the My Important Documents portfolio and adding any documents that may be missing, including facility work evaluations, community service documentation, and O.N.E.-Stop items (username and password), resume and cover letter).

The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.

2. The CM or UM shall introduce the youth to a local guide to reentry resources. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
3. The CM or UM shall assist the facility program administrator with acquiring the information necessary to produce a Youthful Offender Release Identification Card (YO-RIC). In the event the CM or UM cannot obtain verification of the youth's date of birth and/or Social Security number for the YO-RIC, the facility program administrator shall contact a reentry administrator for assistance. The CM or UM shall mark the Reentry Checklist accordingly when the YO-RIC is produced.
4. The CM or UM shall educate the youth on the Parole Aftercare Hotline. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
5. The CM or UM shall coordinate transportation to placement with the JPO, if needed. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
6. The CM or UM and JPO shall discuss with the youth assistance with employment, if needed. They may utilize the DYS Reentry Directory posted on the DYS portal. This shall be documented in JJCMS case notes and marked accordingly by the CM or UM on the Reentry Checklist.
7. In accordance with DYS Policy 178-REL-02, Youth Facility Release, the CM or UM shall meet with the youth and obtain a decision from the youth on his choice of the following options for release clothing:
  - a. Youth's parent/legal guardian may provide the clothing the day of release. If this is the choice, the CM or UM shall talk with the parent/legal guardian to confirm the decision.
  - b. If the youth has off-grounds privileges and personal funds, he may be taken to a nearby department store (if staffing allows) to purchase clothing.
  - c. If a youth is returning to the community and the family is indigent, the facility shall coordinate an effort with parole staff to ensure the youth has appropriate clothing (i.e. clean, presentable shoes, clothing for a job interview, seasonal appropriate clothing). Refer also to DYS Policy 161-PRP-01, Youth State and Personal Property.
  - d. Additionally, at release, the youth may take all personal clothing and any other clothing or footwear that will not be reissued by the facility.
  - e. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
8. If applicable, the CM or UM shall remind youth of his/her SYO status, to include parole implications. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
9. In accordance with DYS Policy 102-REN-01, Medicaid Coverage, one week prior to release, the agency coordinator shall enter the youth's information into the Ohio Department of Medicaid Presumptive Eligibility (PE) Portal.

- a. If a youth is approved for PE, the agency coordinator shall print the PE letter, sign, date, and forward copies to the youth's assigned CM, JPO, juvenile parole services supervisor, and the senior juvenile parole officer. The CM or UM shall document approval in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
- b. If the youth is denied for PE and the youth/family needs coverage, the CM or UM shall work with the JPO who assists with full application. The CM or UM shall document denial in JJCMS case notes, and the CM or UM shall mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.

#### **I. Post-Release**

1. The JPO shall also assist the youth in attending appointments scheduled with behavioral health providers prior to the youth's release in accordance with DYS policy 102-REN-05 Community Linkage. The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  2. The JPO shall assist the youth in scheduling and/or attending appointments with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) if eligibility was determined prior to the youth's release. The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  3. If an Ohio state identification card was not obtained prior to the youth's release, the JPO shall assist the youth with obtaining a State ID prior to the expiration date on the Youthful Offender Release Identification Card (YO-RIC). If a YO-RIC was not issued due to lack of verification of date of birth and/or Social Security number, the JPO shall assist the youth in obtaining the birth certificate and Social Security card first then the State ID. The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  4. The JPO shall assist the youth in scheduling and/or attending appointments with parenthood service providers if the youth is a parent. The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  5. If the youth was released with Presumptive Eligibility for Medicaid, the JPO shall assist the youth in applying for Medicaid or other coverage prior to the expiration of Presumptive Eligibility. The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  6. For those youth transitioning back to an educational setting (e.g. middle or high school, career center, dropout recovery school, community college), the JPO shall assist with the youth's physical enrollment into the school, as outlined in DYS Policy 400-PAR-01, Parole Supervision and Case Management. The JPO shall document this in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  7. The JPO shall use the OYAS Reentry Tool Assessment for ongoing case planning, determining the appropriate supervision level, and targeting criminogenic risks/needs in accordance with DYS Policies 400-PAR-01, Parole Supervision and Case Management and 153-CLS-05, Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS). The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
  8. The JPO shall assist interested and eligible youth in completing Ohio Voter Registration, which can be found by clicking [here](#). The JPO shall document in JJCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
-

9. If not already completed (i.e. while at the BMV getting a State Identification Card), the JPO shall assist male youth age 18 and over in completing the Selective Service form (using the youth's approved placement address), which can be found by clicking [here](#). The JPO shall document in JCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.

#### **J. Prior to Discharge**

1. At the time of discharge, the JPO shall reinforce awareness and provide a copy of the Parole Aftercare Hotline Flyer (DYS3061). This flyer shall also be made available on the DYS portal by logging into MyOhio. The JPO shall document in JCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.
2. At the time of discharge, the JPO shall ensure the youth receives the Office of the Ohio Public Defender (OPD) Sealing and Expunging Juvenile Records Flyer (DYS3062). This flyer shall also be made available on the DYS portal, by logging onto MyOhio. The JPO shall document in JCMS case notes and mark accordingly on the Reentry Checklist.

#### **K. Early Releases**

1. Upon notice that a youth has been granted an early release by the court and before the youth is released, the CM or UM shall promptly complete the following items on the Reentry Checklist:
  - a. The CM or UM shall ensure that youth on the mental health caseload who are referred for Community Linkage are scheduled (located in the 30–90-day section of the checklist). If the youth was already referred for Community Linkage following a Release Authority approval, the CM or UM shall contact the community engagement liaison to advise of the early release date. If the youth was not already approved for release by the Release Authority, this item should be marked N/A.
  - b. If chronic care, HA shall coordinate follow-up treatment (located in the 30–90-day section of the checklist). The CM or UM shall contact the HSA to advise of the early release date in order to secure follow-up care in the community.
  - c. Release credit check completed (located in the 30–90-day section of the checklist). The CM or UM shall contact the community engagement liaison for a credit check.
  - d. The CM & youth review My Important Documents (located in the 30 days prior to release section of the checklist). The CM or UM shall review the contents of the My Important Documents portfolio to ensure it is updated. When the portfolio is complete, the CM or UM shall obtain any identification documents (birth certificate, Social Security card, and/or YO-RIC) stored in the youth's main file and add them to the portfolio. The CM or UM shall then deliver the portfolio to the superintendent's administrative professional for the facility release process.
  - e. CM introduces youth to local guide for reentry resources (located in the 30 days prior to release section of the checklist). The CM or UM shall provide youth with information about 2-1-1, [relink.org](#), and/or a local resource guide for the county to which they are being released.

- f. YO-RIC/Ohio Identification Card (located in the 30 days prior to release section of the checklist). The CM or UM shall notify the facility reentry coordinator of the youth's early release order in order to produce a YO-RIC if eligible under DYS Policy 178-REL-01, Youthful Offender Release Identification Card.
- g. Medicaid – Presumptive Eligibility (located in PED/POA section of the checklist). The CM, UM or JPO shall notify the agency Medicaid coordinator of the youth's early release order in order to apply for Medicaid under DYS Policy 102-REN-01, Medicaid Coverage.

#### **L. Age 21 Releases**

For those youth released from the facility at age 21, the reentry administrator shall make arrangements with the CM or UM to include the following documents in the youth's My Important Documents portfolio prior to release. The CM or UM shall document in JJCMS case notes:

- 1. Parole Aftercare Hotline flyer.
- 2. A copy of a local guide to reentry resources.
- 3. The Sealing and Expungement flyer and the Ohio Collateral Consequences Guide (if available) from the Office of the Ohio Public Defender.

#### **M. Process For Release**

DYS has an established, standardized process for release of youth upon the conclusion of incarceration. All youth shall be processed according to the provision set forth in DYS Policy 178-REL-02, Youth Facility Release. This includes providing the My Important Documents portfolio to the youth.

#### **N. Enhancement**

The deputy director of Community Engagement and Reentry shall facilitate biannual meetings to include the assistant director; superintendents; deputy director of Facility Support; deputy director of Parole, Courts and Community; regional administrators, and Release Authority chairperson to identify and enhance processes and procedures that can be modified to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

## Appendix F: Ohio DYS Reentry Checklist

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | Intake/Orientation <span>Due: 2/12/2023</span>    | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|---|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM & youth establish My Important Documents |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM & youth establish One-Stop account (16+) |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Initial credit check completed                    |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | 12-9 Months Prior to Release <span>Due: 4/1/2023</span>                               | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|---|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT considers CCF step-down option  |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Original Birth Certificate is stored in a dedicated envelope in the youth's main file |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | O.N.E.-Stop set up & monthly access (16+)   |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | If parent, parenthood services initiated and contact relationships updated            |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Items being added to My Important Documents   |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | 180-120 Days Prior to Release <span>Due: 8/29/2023</span>                                | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|--|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Reentry-focused IDTs begin   |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT discusses placement plans (safe, stable, supportive, affordable)                     |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT discusses job plans (Student Success Plan, FT/PT, transportation, O.N.E.-Stop leads) |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT discusses educational opportunities  |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT refers significant needs to reentry administrator                                    |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | If 15 1/2 or older, Virtual Driving Simulator Program                                    |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | 120-90 Days Prior to Release <span>Due: 9/28/2023</span>  | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|---|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Determine if parent/guardian has youth's original Social Security card. If not, refer to Facility Reentry Coordinator to assist with obtaining a replacement card |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | 90-30 Days Prior to Release <span>Due: 11/27/2023</span>   | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|--|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT discusses living arrangement details   |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT reviews Release Authority expectations   |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | <b>Release credit check completed</b>  |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | <b>If chronic care, HSA coordinates follow-up treatment</b>  |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | IDT considers off-grounds visit for youth transitioning to school setting                                  |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM discusses with JPO any connections to community providers prior to release                        |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Ensure youth logs into their One-Stop account to opt-in, if desired, to the Secure Resume Database Program |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | POA   | Due: 12/27/2023 | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|---|-----------------|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM & youth review My Important Documents  |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM introduces youth to guide for reentry resources  |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | YO-RIC/Ohio Identification Card   |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM educates on parole aftercare hotline   |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | If mental health caseload, CM or UM shall ensure that youth are scheduled (if referred) for the Community Linkage Program |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | CM or UM and JPO discuss assistance with employment, if needed  |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Going home clothes  |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | Medicaid Presumptive Eligibility  |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | If denied and youth/family are in need of coverage, CM or UM works with JPO who assist with full application              |                 |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | Post Release   | Due: 1/26/2024 | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|--|----------------|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO follows up with community linkage appointments       |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO follows up with QOD appointments                     |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO assists with obtaining State ID                      |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO follows up with parenthood appointments              |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO assists with applying for Medicaid or other coverage |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO assists with school enrollment                       |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO: OYAS in case planning                               |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO: if desired, voter registration                      |                |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO: if needed, Selective Service                        |                |       |

|                      | Status | Date | Staff | Prior to Discharge                              | Due: 12/27/2023 | Notes |
|----------------------|--------|------|-------|---|-----------------|-------|
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO: Final reminder on parole aftercare hotline |                 |       |
| <a href="#">Edit</a> |        |      |       | JPO: Sealing & expungement flyer                |                 |       |

## References

1. Pyrooz, D. (2022). *Five Facts About Gangs Everyone in Juvenile Corrections Should Know*. [Webinar]. Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators. <https://youtu.be/VyFQVyK5jPs>
2. Haegerich, T.M., Mercy, J. & Weiss, B. (2014). What Is the Role of Public Health in Gang-Membership Prevention? In Simon, T. R., Ritter, N.M. & Mahendra, R.R. (Eds.) *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (pp. 31-51). <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/239234.pdf>
3. Pyrooz, D. (2021, July 29). *Community Violence Intervention – Addressing Gangs: Understanding Youth Gang Involvement* [PowerPoint Slide]. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM\\_DKiZhXeE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM_DKiZhXeE)
4. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (May 2009). *OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: Planning for Implementation*. <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh331/files/media/document/implementation-manual.pdf>
5. Spergel, I.A., Wa, K.M., Sosa, R.V. (May 2005). *Evaluation of the Riverside Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression*. [Evaluation of grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention]. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/library/publications/evaluation-riverside-comprehensive-community-wide-approach-gang-prevention>
6. Ehrmann, S., Hyland, N., & Puzzanchera, C. (April 2019). Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. [Juvenile Justice Statistics National Report Series Bulletin](https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/239234.pdf). Page 4. Retrieved from <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/pubs/251486.pdf>
7. Decker, S.H., Pyrooz, D.C. & Densley, J.A. (2022) *On Gangs*. Temple University Press.
8. *Frequently Asked Questions About Gangs*. (n.d.). Retrieved on <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/about/faq#faq-1-what-is-a-gang>
9. Howell, J. (December 2010). Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/gang-prevention-overview-research-and-programs>
10. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2009). *Trauma in the Lives of Gang-Involved Youth: Tips for Volunteers and Community Organizations*, page 3. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/trauma-lives-gang-involved-youth-tips-volunteers-and-community-organizations>
11. Guerra, N.G., Dierkhising, C.B. & Payne, P.R. (2014). How Should We Identify and Intervene with Youth at Risk of Joining Gangs? A Developmental Approach to Children Ages 0-12. In Simon, T. R., Ritter, N.M. & Mahendra, R.R. (Eds.) *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (pp. 63-74). <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/239234.pdf>
12. Decker, S. (2014). What is the Role of Police in Preventing Gang Membership. In Simon, T., Ritter, S., & Mahendra, R. (Eds). *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (Pages 51-62).
13. Sweeten, G., Pyrooz, D.C. & Piquero, A.R. (2013). Disengaging from Gangs and Desistance from Crime. *Justice Quarterly*, 30:3, 469-500. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2012.723033>
14. Hennigan, K.M.; Kolnick, K.A., Vindel, F., and Maxson, C.L. (2015). Targeting youth at risk for gang involvement: Validation of a gang risk assessment to support individualized secondary prevention. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 56, 86-96.
15. *Responding to Gangs in the Schools: A Collaborative Approach to School Safety*. (January 2020). National Gang Center. Version 1. <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/newsletter>

16. Freng, A. & Taylor, T.J. (2014). Race and Ethnicity: What Are Their Roles in Gang Membership? In Simon, T. R., Ritter, N.M. & Mahendra, R.R. (Eds.) *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (pp. 135-150).
17. Wolf, A.M., Castro, E., & Glesmann, C. (Fall 2016). *Improving Understanding of and Responsiveness to Gang-Involved Girls*. National Gang Center Newsletter. National Council on Crime & Delinquency.
18. Ryan, L. (September 2022). *Youth Gangs*. In Focus <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/publications/in-focus-youth-gangs.pdf>
19. *OJJDP Fiscal Year 2020 Awards at a Glance*. (2020). Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/publications/fy-2020-awards.pdf>
20. *Redline Version: Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act as Amended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018*. (n.d.) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/about/legislation>
21. *NIJ Evaluations of the Second Chance Act*. (2022, April 26). National Institute of Justice (NIJ). <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/nij-evaluations-second-chance-act#:~:text=The%20Second%20Chance%20Reauthorization%20Act,other%20services%20to%20individuals%20returning>
22. *Highlights of Gang-Related Legislation*. (n.d.) National Gang Center (NGC). <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/legislation/highlights>
23. Georgia House Bill 250 Legislative Gang Prevention and Intervention Commission (2021, April 21). Retrieved from [https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:GA2021000H750&ciq=asteigenjj&client\\_md=2cef6c7f8880a9922332faf7ac810039&mode=current\\_text](https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:GA2021000H750&ciq=asteigenjj&client_md=2cef6c7f8880a9922332faf7ac810039&mode=current_text)
24. Virginia House Bill 422 Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Grant Fund and Program (2020, March 23). Retrieved from [https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:VA2020000H422&ciq=ncsl53&client\\_md=959805b0284b600aa02811994879741a&mode=current\\_text](https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:VA2020000H422&ciq=ncsl53&client_md=959805b0284b600aa02811994879741a&mode=current_text)
25. Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) Legislative Report. (February 2021). Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/SD2517.pdf>
26. California Act 1603 (2019, October 11). 2019 CA A 1603. California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program. Retrieved from [https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:CA2019000A1603&ciq=ncsl53&client\\_md=9367e6ae33607fc15c3f3e5f383eaa97&mode=current\\_text](https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:CA2019000A1603&ciq=ncsl53&client_md=9367e6ae33607fc15c3f3e5f383eaa97&mode=current_text)
27. National institute of Justice. (2011, October 27). *What Is a Gang? Definitions*. <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/what-gang-definitions#:~:text=Defining%20%22youth%20gangs%22&text=The%20group%20has%20three%20or,and%20a%20degree%20of%20organization>
28. Ortiz, J.M. (June 2018). Gangs and environment: A comparative analysis of prison and street gangs. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, Vol.2 No. 1, pp. 97-117 <http://www.ajqr.org/>
29. Howell, J.C. and Egley, A. Jr. (2005). Moving Risk Factors into Developmental Theories of Gang Membership. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 3: 334-354.

30. Makuch, G. (2021, June 13). *Addiction and Psychosocial Development in Early Childhood*. The Clearing. <https://www.theclearingnw.com/blog/psychosocial-development-early-childhood-sets-stage-addiction>
31. Taylor, S.S. (December 2013). Why American boys join street gangs. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 5(8), pp. 229-249. <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSA>
32. Decker, T. (July 2019). A Roadmap to the Ideal Juvenile Justice System. *Juvenile Justice Leadership Network*. <https://cjjr.georgetown.edu/resources/publications/>
33. National Gang Center. (2020, December 16). Review of Risk and Protective Factors for Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Gang Involvement. Retrieved from <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/spt/Risk-Factors>
34. Esbensen, F.A., Peterson, D., Taylor, T.I., & Freng, A. (2009). Similarities and differences in risk factors for violent offending and gang membership. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 42(3), 310-335.
35. National Gang Center. (2021, April 7). Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model. Retrieved from <https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/spt/Programs/53#individual>
36. Gorman-Smith, D., Kampfner, A., & Bromann, K. (2014). What Should Be Done in the Family to Prevent Gang Membership? In Simon, T., Ritter, S., & Mahendra, R. (Eds). *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (Page 75-88).
37. Pyrooz, D.C. and Sweeten, G. (2015). Gang Membership Between Ages 5 and 17 Years in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*; XXX: 1-6.
38. Morris, R.E., Harrison, E.A., Tromanhauser, E., Marquis, D.K., & Watts, C.C. (1994) Health Risk Behavioral Survey from 39 Juvenile Correctional Facilities in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*; 17:334-344
39. Pyrooz, D.C., Gartner, N. & Smith, M. (2017) Consequences of Incarceration for Gang Membership: A Longitudinal Study of Serious Offenders in Philadelphia and Phoenix. *Criminology*; 55(2): 273-306
40. Pyrooz, D.C., Sweeten, G., and Piquero A.R. (May 2013). Continuity and Change in Gang Membership and Gang Embeddedness. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 50: 239-271. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Pyrooz/publication/258155773\\_Continuity\\_and\\_Change\\_in\\_Gang\\_Membership\\_and\\_Gang\\_Embeddedness/links/5bcf6d8c299bf1a43d9b3925/Continuity-and-Change-in-Gang-Membership-and-Gang-Embeddedness.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Pyrooz/publication/258155773_Continuity_and_Change_in_Gang_Membership_and_Gang_Embeddedness/links/5bcf6d8c299bf1a43d9b3925/Continuity-and-Change-in-Gang-Membership-and-Gang-Embeddedness.pdf)
41. Cahill, M., Jannetta, J., Tiry, E., Lowry, S., Becker-Cohen, M., Paddock, E., Serakos, M. with Park, L. & Hennigan, K. (September 2015). *Evaluation of the Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program. Year 4 Evaluation Report*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/77956/2000622-Evaluation-of-the-Los-Angeles-Gang-Reduction-and-Youth-Development-Program-Year-4-Evaluation-Report.pdf>
42. Pyrooz, D. (2021, July 29). *Addressing Gangs: Understanding Youth Gang Involvement*. [PowerPoint slides]. National Gang Center Community Violence Intervention [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM\\_DKiZhXeE&list=PLso7oIWOUIVPxwnLFnYUa\\_SMwY6RRNMRT&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM_DKiZhXeE&list=PLso7oIWOUIVPxwnLFnYUa_SMwY6RRNMRT&index=3)
43. Pyrooz, D.C. (2014). "From your first cigarette to your last dyin' day: The patterning of gang membership in the life course. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 30(2): 349-372.

44. Development Services Group, Inc. (2015). Risk and Needs Assessment for Youths. Literature review. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.  
<https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/RiskandNeeds.pdf>
45. National Reentry Resource Center (2022, April 25). *Exploring Efforts to Provide Coordinated Reentry Services to Youth* [PowerPoint slides]. [Home | National Reentry Resource Center](#)
46. Moore, J. and Hagedorn, J. (March 2001). Female Gangs: A Focus on Research. *OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/186159.pdf>
47. Wolf, A. and Gutierrez, L. (March 12). It's About Time: Prevention and Intervention Services for Gang-Affiliated Girls. *Focus From the National Council on Crime and Delinquency*. National Council on Crime and Delinquency.  
[https://www.evidentchange.org/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdf/focus-its-about-time.pdf](https://www.evidentchange.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/focus-its-about-time.pdf)
48. Chesney-Lind, M. (2014). How Can We Prevent Girls From Joining Gangs? In Simon, T., Ritter, S., & Mahendra, R. (Eds). *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (Pages 121-134).
49. National Gang Center. (May 2009). OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem. Retrieved from  
<https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/publications/4>
50. National Gang Center (2021, April 15). *Addressing Gangs: Introduction to the Comprehensive Gang Model*. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/media/video/23086>
51. National Gang Center. (n.d.) *Comprehensive Gang Model: Core Strategies*.  
<https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh331/files/media/document/CoreStrategies.pdf>
52. Seigle, E., Walsh, N., & Weber, J. (2014). Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Other Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System. *Council of State Governments Justice Center*. <https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/juvenile-justice-white-paper/>
53. Taylor, C.S. & Smith, P.R. (2014). The Attraction of Gangs: How Can We Reduce It? In Simon, T., Ritter, S., & Mahendra, R. (Eds). *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (Pages 19-30).
54. Gottfredson, G.D. (2013) What Can Schools Do to Help Prevent Gang-Joining? In Simon, T., Ritter, S., & Mahendra, R. (Eds). *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (Pages 89-104).
55. National Gang Center. (2020, December 16). Best Practices Ages 12-17. Retrieved from  
<https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/spt/Planning-Implementation/Best-Practices/12-17>
56. Blueprints (n.d.). Program Search. <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/program-search/?localPageSize=5000&keywords=mst>
57. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (n.d.). Model Programs Guide.  
<https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/all-mpg-programs>
58. National Institute of Justice CrimeSolutions. (2020, July 29). Rated Programs.  
<https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/rated-programs>
59. National Institute of Justice CrimeSolutions. (2021, April 9). Program Profile: Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) (Massachusetts). Retrieved from  
<https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/717>
60. National Gang Center. (2020, November 30). Strategic Planning Tool. Retrieved from  
<https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/spt>
61. Leap, J. (2014). What Should Be Done in the Community to Prevent Gang-Joining? In Simon, T., Ritter, S., & Mahendra, R. (Eds). *Changing Course Preventing Gang Membership*. (Pages 105-120).

62. Whitbeck, B. (October 2010). *Gang and Youth Violence Interventions: A Review of Research and Literature Addressing Evidence-Based and Promising Practices for Gang-Affiliated and Violent Youth in Juvenile Institutions and Detention Centers*. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Report 2.23  
<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-2-23.pdf>
63. Credible Messenger Justice Center (n.d.). The Role of Credible Messengers.  
<https://cmjcenter.org/approach/>
64. Inside Circle. (n.d.) Our History. Retrieved from <https://insidecircle.org/our-history/>
65. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (December 14, 2021). Healing Circles Help New Jersey Youth in Custody. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/blog/healing-circles-help-new-jersey-youth-in-custody>
66. Lynch, M., Astone, N.M., Collazos, J., Lipman, M., & Esthappan, S. (February 2018). Arches Transformative Mentoring Program: An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City” *Urban Institute*. Page VI-VII
67. National Institute of Justice. (n.d.) An Overview of Offender Reentry. *U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs*. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/251554.pdf>
68. National Juvenile Justice Network. (n.d.). *Improve Aftercare and Reentry*. Retrieved from <https://www.njjn.org/improve-aftercare-and-reentry>
69. Toller, W. and Tsagaris, B. (October 1996). Managing institutional gangs: a practical approach combining security and human services. *Corrections Today*, vol. 58, no. 6, pp. 110 [Managing institutional gangs: a practical approach combining security and human services. - Free Online Library \(thefreelibrary.com\)](https://www.thefreelibrary.com/managing-institutional-gangs-a-practical-approach-combining-security-and-human-services-a-free-online-library)
70. Marchese, J. J. (February 2009). Managing gangs in a correctional facility: what wardens and superintendents need to know. *Corrections Today*, vol. 71, no. 1, Feb. 2009, pp. 44+. Retrieved on January 31, 2022 from [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A196927756/ITOF?u=nysl\\_me\\_gbplib&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=3cf72f01](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A196927756/ITOF?u=nysl_me_gbplib&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=3cf72f01).
71. Hatcher, L.D. (April 2006). Security threat groups: it is more than managing gangs in a local facility. *Corrections Today*, vol. 68, no. 2, Apr. 2006, pp. 54+. Retrieved on January 31, 2022 from [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A146425286/ITOF?u=nysl\\_me\\_gbplib&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=8ec072fa](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A146425286/ITOF?u=nysl_me_gbplib&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=8ec072fa).
72. Lipsey, M.W., Howell, J.C., Kelly, M.R., Chapman, G., & Carver, D. (2010). Improving Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidenced Based Practice. *Center for Juvenile Justice Reform*. [https://njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/CJJR\\_Lipsey\\_Improving-Effectiveness-of-Juvenile-Justice\\_2010.pdf](https://njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/CJJR_Lipsey_Improving-Effectiveness-of-Juvenile-Justice_2010.pdf)