REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

REPORT ON SURVEY OF YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY IN VIRGINIA

TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 36

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2000

Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)

Survey of Youth Gang Activity in Virginia

Project Staff

DCJS Criminal Justice Research Center

Sherri Johnson
Evaluation Specialist

Trina Bogle Willard
Manager, Evaluation Section

Sandra Wright, Ph.D.
Evaluation Specialist

Alison Houston
Research Specialist

Department of Criminal Justice Services
Joseph Benedetti, Director

To request additional copies of this report, please contact:
Criminal Justice Research Center, Department of Criminal Justice Services
805 E. Broad St., 10th floor, Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 371 - 0530

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I. AUTHORITY FOR STUDY

House Joint Resolution (HJR) 539, passed by the 1999 session of the General Assembly, directed the Department of Criminal Justice Services to "conduct a survey of youth gang activity in the Commonwealth." This report is submitted to the General Assembly in fulfillment of that directive. (A complete copy of the resolution is shown in Appendix A.)

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legislative interest in gangs and gang behavior in Virginia has increased in recent years. In 1992, the Virginia State Police conducted surveys of law enforcement personnel that attended two street gangs seminars. These surveys were followed with a telephone survey in 1994. As a result of concern that youth gangs were on the increase, the 1996 General Assembly directed the Virginia Commission on Youth (COY) to conduct a study on youth gangs in Virginia. Each of these efforts was designed to assess the prevalence of youth gangs in Virginia.

During the 1999 session, the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution (HJR) 539 to update these earlier findings. This resolution directed the Department of Criminal Justice Services to investigate youth gang activity in Virginia. To fulfill this mandate, surveys were sent to seven groups, each having a different role in its interactions with youth. The seven groups were: Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs, Educators, Court Service Unit Directors, Probation Supervisors, Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judges, and Commonwealth's Attorneys.

Youth Gang Prevalence

Of the 1313 surveys distributed, 844 were returned, producing an overall response rate of 64%. All of Virginia's localities were represented by at least one agency's returned survey. A total of 63 localities out of 135 (40 counties and 23 cities) reported gang activity, representing 47% of Virginia's localities. There was not necessarily agreement, however, among various agencies in the same locality. In fact, only six localities that reported gang activity had agreement across all responding agencies. Further, in 41% of the 63 localities reporting youth gangs, only one respondent group reported the existence of gangs. These differing opinions across agencies in the same locality may illustrate the difficulties inherent in defining gang activity. Although estimating the number of unique gangs is difficult due to variations in gang names and spelling, the findings suggested that approximately 321 gangs currently exist in Virginia. This study also asked respondents to estimate the change in the number of gangs and gang membership in the three years since the COY effort. Most respondents indicated that the number of gangs and gang members in their locality had increased or stayed the same.

Youth Gang Characteristics

The gang characteristics reported from these localities stated that about two-thirds of reported youth gangs engage in some violent crime. Gang violence is reported to be most often directed at other gang members. The most common offenses reported across all respondents were assault, vandalism / destruction, and intimidation. Less than half of reported gangs were described as engaging in drug distribution. Of gangs that sell drugs, marijuana is the most frequently reported

drug being sold or distributed by gang members, with cocaine / crack a close second. Although few gang-related offenses were reported to involve weapons, over half of respondents who reported weapons use cited hands / feet / fists as the most common weapons used. Firearms and knives / cutting instruments were reported about half as often.

Use of Virginia's Youth Gang File

Finally, gang characteristics that were reported by localities were compared to those that comprise the definition of youth gang in the Code of Virginia §16.1 - 299.2. This comparison revealed that only 13% of the reported gangs fit the description of a youth gang as outlined in the Code. Because this definition is used as the requisite for reporting to Virginia's Youth Gang File, this finding suggests that most of Virginia's gang members would not fit the profile necessary to be reported to the Youth Gang File. Conclusions from this study found that the definition problem is one reason that law enforcement agencies cited for not reporting to the Youth Gang File. Others stated they were unaware of the reporting requirement. Results of the survey indicate that few police departments and sheriff's offices are currently using this reporting system.

Given these findings, the project team developed recommendations to inform future legislative action and research.

Recommendation 1

The General Assembly should consider reviewing the current statutory definition of a "youth gang" in Virginia Code §16.1 - 299.2.

Most localities indicated that, in practice, they use definitions of youth gangs and youth gang members that are incompatible with the definition in the Code of Virginia. The Code definition seems to be incongruous with community perceptions of gangs and gang activities. While this conclusion does not imply that the definition is erroneous, our findings suggest that the General Assembly may want to consider modifying the current Code definition.

Recommendation 2

Implementation of the Virginia Youth Gang File should be improved.

Local Law Enforcement indicated that they do not routinely report youth gang members to the Virginia Youth Gang File. While some law enforcement representatives suggest that this difficulty is due to the Code definition of "youth gang", others claimed a lack of knowledge about the reporting system and procedures. The Virginia State Police should consider methods to improve awareness of the Virginia Youth Gang File and its associated reporting procedures among local law enforcement agencies.

Recommendation 3

Virginia should implement an appropriate gang prevalence monitoring program if it intends to track the scope and nature of youth gangs in Virginia.

If Virginia intends to monitor the prevalence and nature of youth gangs over time, it should develop a monitoring program that will provide consistent reporting. Previous gang surveys

have used a variety of definitions and methods, making it impossible to reliably compare results from the different surveys. Development of such a monitoring program should be guided by experts in youth gangs, and may include the use of the Youth Gang File along with supplemental research activities.

III. INTRODUCTION

Overview of National Youth Gang Research

Research on gang prevalence has proliferated in recent years, particularly at the national level. The National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) attempted to assess the incidence of youth gangs nationwide by conducting the Youth Gang Survey in 1995 and 1996. A representative sample of Police Departments and Sheriff's Offices was surveyed and asked to describe the gangs in their area, including the characteristics and activities of these gangs.

In 1996, the national survey found that approximately three-quarters of localities with populations over 25,000 reported gangs in their communities. In addition, less than half of the communities with populations under 25,000 reported gangs. The NYGC study also examined the average number of gangs reported for localities with populations of various sizes (National Youth Gang Center, 1999). Table 1 illustrates these findings.

Table 1
National Youth Gang Survey
Average Number of Gangs per Jurisdiction by Population Size

Size of Locality	Average Number of Gangs
250,000 +	80
100,000 - 249,999	32
50,000 - 99,999	10
25,000 - 49,999	6
10,000 - 24,999	4
1 - 9,999	3
Overall Average	**15**

Source: OJJDP, 1996 National Gang Survey Summary (1999)

Several other studies conducted in various regions of the country have attempted to characterize gangs and gang behaviors. A summary of notable findings is provided below.

- An OJJDP-funded study in Seattle examined the effect of gang membership on youth offending. A sample of students was measured on prior delinquency and classified into three categories. Gang-involved youth were compared with non-gang youth with delinquent friends and non-gang youth with no delinquent friends. The study found that gang-involved

youth (15% of the sample) self-reported committing 58% of the general delinquent acts in the entire sample, including a majority of minor assaults (51%), felony thefts (54%), minor thefts (53%), drug trafficking offenses (62%), and property offenses (59%). The Seattle study demonstrated that a large proportion of Seattle's juvenile crime is committed specifically by youth gang members (Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano, and Hawkins, 1998).

- A 1996 study in Chicago indicated that most gang violence is directed at other gangs. "Of nearly 1,000 gang-related homicides in Chicago from 1987 - 1994, 75% were intergang (gang members killing other gangs' members), 11% were intragang (gang members killing members of their own gang), and 14% involved non-gang victims murdered by gang members," (Block, Christakos, Jacob, and Przybylski, 1996, as cited in Howell, 1998).
- "Although youth gangs appear to be increasing their involvement in drug trafficking, empirical research has not documented extensive networks or drug trafficking as an organized activity managed by youth gangs. The consensus among the most experienced gang researchers is that the organizational structure of the typical gang is not particularly suited to the drug-trafficking business," (Klein, 1995; Moore, 1990; Spergel, 1995; Waldorf, 1993, as cited in Howell, 1998).
- Research by Block and others concluded that "Youth gang homicides result more from intergang conflict than from the drug trade," (Block, et.al., 1996; Block and Block, 1993, as cited in Howell, 1998).

Although much has been learned from the efforts of gang researchers, assessing the extent of the youth gang problem remains difficult. One of the largest obstacles lies in determining precisely how to define a "youth gang." The National Youth Gang Survey used a "self-definition" process, allowing the respondents to define the groups they perceive as gangs. Respondents were provided with this general guideline: a youth gang is defined as "a group of youths or young adults in (the respondent's) jurisdiction that (the respondent) or other responsible persons in (the respondent's) agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a 'gang'." Respondents were asked to exclude groups such as motorcycle gangs, hate / ideology groups, prison gangs and adult gangs (National Youth Gang Center, 1999).

However, no consensus exists on how to define a gang or a youth gang. Even within the same city or town, numerous agencies may have different formal definitions of a "youth gang." For instance, some agencies may regard only highly organized, law-violating groups who wear colors or other symbols as gangs. Others might label a loose-knit group of young "troublemakers" as a gang. There also may be various reasons and motivations for why a locality or agency might exaggerate or deny the existence of gangs in its community (Spergel, 1995). These factors complicate the process of studying youth gangs. Consequently, obtaining an accurate picture of the youth gang problem is a difficult task.

Overview of Previous Research on Youth Gangs in Virginia

During the past decade, concerns about gangs and gang activities emerged in Virginia as well. This section reviews prior studies of youth gangs in Virginia.

Virginia State Police Gang Surveys

In January 1992, the Virginia State Police (VSP), with the assistance of the Norfolk Police Department, held a Virginia Street Gang seminar. Surveys were given to seminar attendees in an effort to estimate gang prevalence in the Commonwealth. Of the 74 surveys administered, 44 surveys representing 25 localities were returned. Of those who responded, 36% (9 localities) reported gangs in their jurisdictions. Within these 9 jurisdictions, a total of 100 gangs with approximately 1350 gang members was reported. The highest concentration of gang activity reported was in the Tidewater area, with three-quarters of the gangs in Norfolk and Virginia Beach (Virginia Commission on Youth [COY], 1997). These results, however, only reflected the 25 localities that were surveyed at the seminar, and may not have represented the true gang situation in Virginia at that time.

In September 1992, a second Virginia Street Gang seminar was held. Surveys were mailed to attendees prior to the seminar. This group included some local representatives that attended the first seminar in January. The surveys asked respondents for information about "recognized" gangs in their jurisdictions. Fewer surveys were returned (23) in this second survey, providing information for 20 localities. In general, the results of this survey revealed no major changes in gang activity since the January survey (Brooks, 1994).

The Virginia State Police conducted a follow-up to the 1992 surveys in August 1994. Several agencies that attended either or both of the previous Virginia Street Gang seminars were contacted by telephone and asked about their gang problem. As summarized by the Virginia Commission on Youth (1997), the 1994 survey results were similar to those from the 1992 surveys. Only one exception was reported. Prince William County, which disclosed no youth gangs in 1992, reported 15 gangs in 1994. Thus, by 1994, the VSP had determined that gangs were present in at least ten Virginia localities.

Virginia Commission on Youth Gang Survey

During the 1996 legislative session, the Virginia Commission on Youth (COY) was directed by HJR 92 to conduct a study which included a prevalence survey on youth gangs in Virginia. The report was delivered to the 1997 General Assembly as House Document No. 30.

The COY study was conducted jointly with the Virginia State Crime Commission. Their approach included workgroups and public hearings to provide input and information to guide the study and its recommendations. Methodology consisted of (1) a statewide survey of Virginia's local law enforcement agencies and juvenile Court Service Unit (CSU) Directors that requested information about youth gangs in their districts and jurisdictions, and (2) interviews with youth about their gang involvement. The interviewed youth included all juveniles committed to a juvenile correctional center during a two-month period and over 800 juveniles in secure detention.

The law enforcement and CSU surveys had an individual response rate of 64%. Of 133 localities represented by the survey responses, 32 localities reported gang activity. These 32 localities reported a total of 260 youth gangs. The COY survey asked respondents to categorize their gangs as "street", "ethnic", "hate", "motorcycle", "prison", or "other." Of the 260 gangs

reported, 57% were classified as "street gangs", 40% were classified as "ethnic gangs", and 3% were classified as "hate gangs."

The COY report also compared its findings to those from the earlier Virginia State Police surveys to assess changes in Virginia's gang problem. The COY study reported a 220% increase in the number of localities reporting youth gangs and a 160% increase in the number of youth gangs since the 1994 VSP survey (COY, 1997). However, the COY survey included responses from 133 localities, whereas the 1994 VSP survey included responses from only 29 localities. Therefore, the increase in the number of localities reporting gangs and the number of gangs is most probably due to the larger number of localities surveyed, and not to an actual increase in gang prevalence.

As a result of recommendations made in the COY report, several gang-related policies were implemented in Virginia. First, the General Assembly developed a definition for a youth gang that was adopted into the Virginia State Code under § 16.1 - 299.2:

For purposes of this section "youth gang" means an ongoing organization, association, or group (i) having common characteristics, including but not limited to initiation practices, hand signals, structured style of dress, specific geographic territorial claim or identifiable leadership and (ii) consisting of three or more individuals, at least one of whom is a juvenile, who identify themselves as a group by a name or symbol and are involved in a pattern of recurrent felonious criminal conduct.

Also as recommended in the COY report, the Virginia State Police created a statewide databank to store the names of juveniles who are arrested and identified as a member of a youth gang, as well as other appropriate gang-related information. This databank, called the Youth Gang File, was also included in the Virginia Code under §16.1 - 299.2. This statute mandates the submission of youth gang information to the state Youth Gang File under these conditions:

When it is determined, either by admission or investigation, by a state or local law enforcement agency or a regional multi-jurisdictional law enforcement task force, that a juvenile who has been arrested is a member of a youth gang, the arresting officer shall enter the juvenile's name and other appropriate gang-related information required by the Department of State Police into the Youth Gang File of the Virginia Crime Information Network. The entry shall be made as soon as practicable after the determination is made.

Another COY suggestion that resulted in Code changes was the recommendation that an assessment of gang affiliation be included in a youth's social history report prepared by the local CSUs. As stated in §16.1 - 273:

When a juvenile and domestic relations district court or circuit court has adjudicated any case involving a child subject to the jurisdiction of the court hereunder, ... the court before final disposition thereof may require an investigation, which... (ii) may include the physical, mental, and social conditions, including an assessment of any affiliation with a youth gang as defined in § 16.1 - 299.2,...

This provision is currently being implemented by local Court Service Unit staff.

Attorney General's Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence

Subsequent to the findings of the Commission on Youth, the Attorney General formed a Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence as an effort to address the problem of gangs in Virginia. The task force made specific recommendations for reducing youth and gang violence to the following groups: faith communities and families, local school divisions, colleges and universities, local businesses, local law enforcement, the General Assembly, and localities and communities. Recommendations for the prevention of youth and gang violence emphasized mentoring, prevention programs / policies, and increased opportunities for youth.

Defining the Concept of "Youth Gang"

One of the most difficult and controversial issues that DCJS encountered in conducting this research was attempting to define a "youth gang." This problem is frequently cited in the national research literature on gangs. Groups that may be viewed as a gang by some are not necessarily seen as a gang by others. The problem is that researchers and practitioners have not reached a consensus on the attributes and actions that typically characterize a gang.

Model Gang Definitions

There are a few model definitions of gangs. The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association (NAGIA) is a national group of law enforcement professionals which supports the efforts of federal, state, and local anti-gang associations and programs. In an effort to advance toward a standard definition for the term "gang", NAGIA developed the following definition (Virginia Gang Investigators Association [VGIA], 1999):

"Gang - A group or association of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol or name and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile acts that if committed by an adult would be a crime."

The Virginia Gang Investigators Association (VGIA) likewise uses this definition. This organization of law enforcement and criminal justice professionals advances coordination among gang investigators in Virginia and is a member of NAGIA.

The Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) also offers a model definition for use by their members. The VSBA defines a gang as:

"any group of two or more whose purpose includes

- *commission of illegal acts*
- *participation in activities that threaten the safety of persons or property*
- *disruption of the school activities*
- *creation of an atmosphere of fear and intimidation."*

These models provide guidelines for agencies and support the need for a standard in defining the gang concept. In addition, other definitions have been constructed for various research efforts to assess gang prevalence as noted in the descriptions of national and Virginia-based gang surveys.

Review of Existing Gang Definitions

Although no wide-ranging consensus exists, certain characteristics or elements are commonly used in describing or defining a gang. These characteristics can be found repeatedly both in the literature on gangs and in the code and statute definitions from states which have codified a "gang" or "youth gang" definition. This section reviews relevant definitions that were discovered in both sources.

For this review, 35 states[1] were identified as having a formal definition for "gang", "gang member" or "youth gang" in their codes or statues. Some definitions were developed to outline enhanced penalties for gang members, while others are used to define a gang for reporting purposes. During the review of state codes and statutes, definitional elements were identified and condensed into 15 gang characteristics. Gang definitions from each state were then examined, and each element was tallied to determine the frequencies across the 35 states' codes and statutes.

Definitions for "gang" were also found in 20 recent or pioneering reports, journal articles, and books about gangs, gang members, and youth gangs[2]. Researchers and agencies typically formed these definitions for use in surveys or other research. Using a process similar to that noted in the codes / statutes section, gang characteristics were identified. Each definitional element was tallied to assess its frequency in the literature.

A content analysis was conducted for both the 35 state code and statute definitions and for the definitions taken from the literature. For the most part, the gang characteristics found in the review of state codes / statutes mirrored the definitional elements identified in the literature review. Table 2 illustrates the frequency of definitional elements from both sources.

[1] States which have their codes / statutes available on-line and which include a formal definition of "gang," "gang member," or "youth gang" in their state code / statutes are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

[2] BJA Monograph, 1997; Block and Block, 1993; Bryan Police Department, 1999; Chicago Crime Commission, 1995; Curry, Ball, and Fox, 1994; Howell, 1994; Howell, 1998; Huff, 1990 as cited in Le and Jenkins; Huff, 1998; Jackson, 1999; Klein, 1971 as cited in Le and Jenkins; Maxson, 1988; Miller, 1982, Revised 1992; National Youth Gang Center, 1999; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995; Sachs, 1999; Spergel, 1995; Taylor, 1989 as cited in Le and Jenkins; Thrasher, 1927 as cited in Le and Jenkins; Walker, 1999.

Table 2
Frequency of Gang Definition Elements in State Codes / Statutes and Literature Review

	State Code / Statutes N = 35	Literature N=20	Combined Total N = 55
Group is on-going	9	0	9
Group size of 3 or more	27	1	28
Group exhibits organizational features	5	9	14
Has recurrent pattern of meetings / criminal activity	27	9	36
Group identifies itself as a gang	4	8	12
Has group solidarity	1	3	4
Others identify group as a gang	0	5	5
Members share mutual interests	2	1	3
Group acts individually (Codes / statutes only) or collectively to achieve specific purposes – usually criminal	22	3	25
Conducts illegal / criminal activity	35	15	50
Group claims turf / territory	2	12	14
Group has identifiable leadership	5	8	13
Group has a gang name	23	7	30
Group uses symbols for identification purposes (i.e. dress, colors, graffiti, hand signs)	25	7	32
Group has initiation practices	5	0	5
Group has collective goals	4	0	4

As the table shows, the most frequently cited definitional elements in both the state codes / statutes and the literature review sources were:

- Conducts illegal / criminal activity,
- Has recurrent pattern of meetings / criminal activity,
- Group uses symbols for identification purposes (i.e. - dress, colors, graffiti, hand signs),
- Group has a gang name, and
- Group size of 3 or more.

Illegal activity was defined more specifically by some states' codes / statutes. Eleven states required illegal / criminal activities to be "one of the group's primary activities" and three states further required the illegal activity to be a felony. In examining only the literature review

sources, two more elements are found to be cited quite often: Group claims turf / territory and Group exhibits organizational features.

Overall, the examination of state codes / statutes and the relevant literature revealed that, although officials may lack a consensus in how to define a gang, there are some qualities and characteristics that are commonly used to describe and define the concept of "gang." These characteristics will be examined more closely when we describe the results of this Virginia Youth Gang Survey.

To supplement a careful review of existing "gang" and "youth gang" definitions, staff met with a lead researcher who worked on the COY's 1997 Youth Gang Study. The development process of the definition used in the COY study was discussed in depth to consider the pros and cons of that strategy. The COY study's definitions for "Gang Members" and "Gang Characteristics" were as follows:

"Gang[3] - youth who identify themselves as a group by a name or a symbol and engage in recurrent criminal activity. Gang characteristics may include one or more of the following:

- structured style of dress;
- hand signals;
- claim a geographic territory or turf;
- identifiable leadership;
- regular or continuous association, and
- initiation practices."

An alternative definition strategy was used by the Virginia State Police in earlier research. In their survey, respondents were given guidelines which aided them in identifying gangs in their localities. Respondents were then asked to describe any "recognized" gangs in their area.

In 1997, the state adopted the youth gang definition referred to earlier in the Code of Virginia §16.1 - 299.2. The code currently defines a gang as "an ongoing organization, association, or group (i) having common characteristics, including but not limited to initiation practices, hand signals, structured style of dress, specific geographic territorial claim or identifiable leadership and (ii) consisting of three or more individuals, at least one of whom is a juvenile, who identify themselves as a group by a name or symbol and are involved in a pattern of recurrent felonious criminal conduct."

It appears that to date, the effort to develop a statewide definition for use in reporting and measuring gang activity has not been entirely successful. While making initial inquiries about existing gang definitions and past gang research, it was found that some agencies, particularly law enforcement agencies, find the current state code definition too narrow. Of particular difficulty is the element of "recurrent felonious criminal conduct." In designing the survey for the present study, every effort was made to accommodate various perceptions of gangs and existing gang definitions in order to obtain a comprehensive view of youth gangs in Virginia.

[3] "Gang" was further broken down in the 1997 COY study in regard to gang type, such as "street," "ethnic," etc.

IV. VIRGINIA YOUTH GANG SURVEY METHODOLOGY

During the 1999 legislative session, the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution (HJR) 539 which mandated the Department of Criminal Justice Services to conduct a survey regarding youth gang activity. Because this research was primarily intended to be a prevalence study, the definition of "youth gang" adopted was critical. As an initial step, the research team considered the merits and limitations of definitions used in previous Virginia and national studies. As noted earlier, staff also met with the COY to discuss its experiences and recommendations on measuring gang prevalence in Virginia. After reviewing the issues that emerged, a "one size fits all" definition was deemed inappropriate for our purposes. First, our review of previous national and Virginia studies clearly indicated that no standard definition of "youth gang" existed. Second, previous surveys which imposed a definition for research purposes could not be compared due to this problem.

Therefore, this survey was constructed somewhat differently than many previous gang prevalence surveys. It was decided to have the survey respondents report about groups that they defined as youth gangs, incorporating a similar approach to that used in the National Gang Study, but then additionally report the attributes of those groups. Thus, instead of providing a definition for "youth gang" and asking localities if they have youth groups that fit the given definition, respondents were asked to identify groups that they or their community perceived as youth gangs. Then respondents were asked to choose from a list of 21 commonly cited gang characteristics in order to describe each of their youth gangs (see Appendices B through E for the survey instruments).

It was expected that this survey strategy would provide information not only regarding the prevalence of youth gangs in the Commonwealth, but also about the characteristics most commonly found among Virginia's youth gangs. The list of gang characteristics was primarily derived from the state code / statute and literature reviews previously described on page 9. Additional characteristics were added to include elements from the gang definition found in §16.1 - 299.2 of the Code of Virginia. Inclusion of these definitional elements allowed comparisons between local youth gang definitions and the Code of Virginia definition.

In addition to the gang prevalence and definitional questions, survey items were developed to collect more detailed information from each respondent group. These questions generally addressed specific activities and impacts of gangs in communities, addressing issues such as weapons use, common offenses, violence, and drug sales. To supplement these general questions that were asked of all respondents, a few additional questions were tailored for each respondent group to examine their sources of gang information (see survey descriptions below for more details).

The study implemented a written survey of seven groups who may regularly come in contact with youth who are gang-involved. Each group surveyed has a different role in its interactions with juvenile offenders. Consequently, four different survey forms were developed to recognize these variations. Survey forms on youth gang prevalence and characteristics were developed for each of the following:

Law Enforcement. Law Enforcement surveys were mailed to Chiefs of all local Police Departments, except for those covering resorts, transportation stations, colleges, and universities. All Sheriff's Offices were also surveyed using this form. The Law Enforcement Surveys specifically requested information about how youth gang members are identified, and about local law enforcement knowledge of and experience with the Youth Gang File reporting system.

Juvenile Probation. Directors of each Virginia CSU and their Probation / Parole Supervisors were sent Juvenile Probation surveys. These probation staff were asked to estimate the percentage of their caseload who are gang members, and to provide information on how gang affiliation is determined and reported.

Court. All Judges in each Juvenile & Domestic Relations (J&DR) Court were sent Juvenile Court surveys. All Commonwealth's Attorneys in independent Virginia localities were also surveyed using this form. These respondents were asked to characterize the availability of gang affiliation information in the court process.

Education. Education surveys were distributed to Principals of all public High Schools, Middle Schools, Combined Schools and Alternative Schools. These respondents were also asked to describe the availability of information on gang-related incidents in schools. In addition, Principals were asked to indicate if School Resource Officers (SROs) staff their facilities.

Survey forms allowed respondents to specify up to five gangs in their localities. Respondents were also asked to indicate if their locality had more than five groups that they would classify as gangs. Localities which indicated the presence of more than five gangs were contacted by phone to collect information on additional gangs. All survey recipients who had not responded to the original mailing were sent a follow-up postcard to encourage participation. The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice assisted the effort by encouraging participation and coordinating the survey distribution for CSU staff. The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police also assisted by sending participation reminders to Chiefs and Sheriffs across the state.

V. RESULTS OF THE VIRGINIA YOUTH GANG SURVEY

Of the 1313 surveys distributed to the sample, 844 surveys were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 64%. An examination of the response rates by respondent type (see Table 3) revealed that Court Service Units and Law Enforcement agencies (i.e., Police Departments and Sheriff's Offices) provided representation for essentially all localities across the state. Responses from other groups provided relatively less coverage of the state as a whole. Responses from School Principals represented more than 80% of Virginia cities and counties, while responses from Judges and Commonwealth's Attorneys represented less than two-thirds of Virginia localities.

Not all surveys were filled out by the person to whom it was sent. Many recipients delegated the survey to the person in their agency most qualified to answer questions regarding youth gangs in

their locality. This occurred most frequently with Law Enforcement surveys and occasionally with Education surveys.

Table 3
Response Rates by Respondent Type

Respondent Type	Percentage of:		
	Surveyed Individuals Represented	Virginia Counties Represented	Virginia Cities Represented
Law Enforcement Agencies	75%	98%	98%
Court Service Units	94%	100%	100%
J&DR Court Judges	52%	64%	55%
Commonwealth's Attorneys	47%	44%	43%
School Principals	56%	88%	83%

Note: Thirty-five surveys were received that did not identify the specific responding agency. Consequently, these surveys were not included in this analysis.

Gang Prevalence in Virginia Localities

Tables 4 and 5 present lists of Virginia counties and cities which reported gangs on the survey. A locality is documented as reporting a gang if any one or more of the responding groups listed above reported a gang in the locality. In addition, an agency is documented as reporting gang activity if at least one respondent from that agency reported gang activity. For example, one locality may have three judges who represent a specific jurisdiction. If only one judge cited the existence of gangs, this locality is classified as reporting gang activity.

A total of 63 localities (40 counties and 23 cities) reported gangs. These localities comprise 47% of Virginia's 135 localities. As might be expected, different respondents had different impressions of gang activity in each locality; therefore, these findings do not demonstrate consensus across the locality. Only six localities that reported gang activity had agreement on the presence of gangs across responding agencies: Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Falls Church, Newport News, and Waynesboro. Seven additional localities (King George County, Prince William County, Alexandria, City of Fairfax, Norfolk, Richmond, and Virginia Beach) had only one dissenting respondent group. However, many of the localities listed show reports of gangs from only one reporting agency. These localities include 18 counties and 8 cities, and comprise 41% of localities which reported gangs.

These findings may be interpreted in several ways. First, differing opinions across groups in the same locality may illustrate the difficulties inherent in defining gang activity at this time. This conclusion is addressed further in the sections which outline reported gang characteristics (see pages 20 - 23). An alternative explanation might be that certain agencies have greater contact with gang-involved youth, and are better positioned to assess the presence or absence of gang activity.

Finally, national research (Spergel, 1995) has noted that officials in some localities may be motivated to under- or over-report the presence of gangs for various reasons. For example, some localities may wish to downplay the existence of gangs to avoid damaging the reputation of the locality. Given recent national events and concerns about school safety, a locality may be hesitant to recognize the presence of gangs in schools due to fear of a backlash from parents. On the other hand, officials that have devoted resources to establish gang units in law enforcement or other agencies may be more likely to cite a gang problem, in part, to justify continued resources for these units.

The map on page 18 graphically illustrates Virginia localities which reported youth gangs. The map also indicates the estimated number of gangs reported by each locality. The figures for the number of gangs in localities are estimates because a single gang may be known by different names within and across localities. Therefore, it could not always be determined whether different groups were identifying the same, similar, or different gangs. Using these estimates, it appears that there are approximately 321 unique youth gangs across the state.

Table 4
Virginia Counties Reporting Gangs by Type of Respondent

	Police Department	Sheriff's Office	Court Service Unit	J&DR Judges	Commonwealth's Attorneys	School Principals
Amherst	Y	N	N			N
Arlington	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
Bedford		N	N	N	Y	N
Brunswick	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Buchanan	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Chesterfield	Y		N	N	Y	Y
Culpeper	Y	N	N		N	N
Dickenson	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Essex	N	Y	N			
Fairfax	Y		Y			Y
Fauquier	N	Y	N	N		Y
Fluvanna		Y	N			N
Frederick	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Gloucester			N		Y	N
Halifax	Y	N	N	N		Y
Hanover	Y	N	Y	N		N
Henrico	Y		Y	N		N
Isle of Wight	Y	N	Y		N	N
King George		Y	N			Y
King William	N	Y	N			N
Lancaster	N	N	N		Y	N
Loudoun	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Y (Yes) responses are recorded for each local office from which *at least one respondent* reported the presence of gangs in the locality. N (No) responses are recorded for each local office from which *all respondents* reported no gangs in the locality. Shaded cells in the Police Department column indicate that no department exists in the locality. Shaded cells in the Sheriff's Office column indicate that the office does not function in a traditional law enforcement capacity or the absence of an office in the locality. Unmarked cells indicate that no response was received from this local agency.

Table 4 Virginia Counties Reporting Gangs by Type of Respondent (continued)						
	Police Department	**Sheriff's Office**	**Court Service Unit**	**J&DR Judges**	**Commonwealth's Attorneys**	**School Principals**
Louisa	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Lunenburg	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Mecklenburg	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Montgomery	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
New Kent		Y	N	N		N
Northampton	Y	N	N	N		
Page	Y	N	N	N		N
Powhatan		Y	N	N	N	N
Prince William	Y		Y	N		Y
Pulaski	N	N	N	N		Y
Rappahannock		Y	N	N		
Roanoke	Y		N		N	N
Rockingham	N	Y	N	N		N
Spotsylvania		Y	Y	N	N	N
Sussex	N	Y	Y	N		N
Warren		Y	N	Y		N
Washington	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
Westmoreland		N	N		Y	Y

Y (Yes) responses are recorded for each local office from which *at least one respondent* reported the presence of gangs in the locality. N (No) responses are recorded for each local office from which *all respondents* reported no gangs in the locality. Shaded cells in the Police Department column indicate that no department exists in the locality. Shaded cells in the Sheriff's Office column indicate that the office does not function in a traditional law enforcement capacity or the absence of an office in the locality. Unmarked cells indicate that no response was received from this local agency.

Table 5
Virginia Cities Reporting Gangs by Type of Respondent

	Police Department	Sheriff's Office	Court Service Unit	J&DR Judges	Commonwealth's Attorneys	School Principals
Alexandria	Y		Y	N		Y
Bristol	Y		N	N		Y
Charlottesville	N		N	Y		N
Chesapeake	Y		Y	N	N	Y
Danville	Y		N	N		N
Emporia	N		Y	N		
Fairfax	Y		Y	N		
Falls Church	Y		Y			Y
Fredericksburg	Y		N	N	N	N
Harrisonburg	Y		N	N		Y
Hopewell	N		N		N	Y
Lynchburg	N		Y	N		N
Manassas	Y		Y	N		N
Newport News	Y		Y	Y		Y
Norfolk	Y		Y	N		Y
Petersburg	Y		N		N	
Portsmouth	N		N	N	Y	Y
Richmond	N		Y	Y		Y
Roanoke	Y		Y	N	N	N
Suffolk	N		N		N	Y
Virginia Beach	Y		Y	N	Y	Y
Waynesboro	Y		Y			
Winchester	Y		N	N	Y	

Y (Yes) responses are recorded for each local office from which *at least one respondent* reported the presence of gangs in the locality. N (No) responses are recorded for each local office from which *all respondents* reported no gangs in the locality. Shaded cells in the Police Department column indicate that no department exists in the locality. Shaded cells in the Sheriff's Office column indicate that the office does not function in a traditional law enforcement capacity or the absence of an office in the locality. Unmarked cells indicate that no response was received from this local agency.

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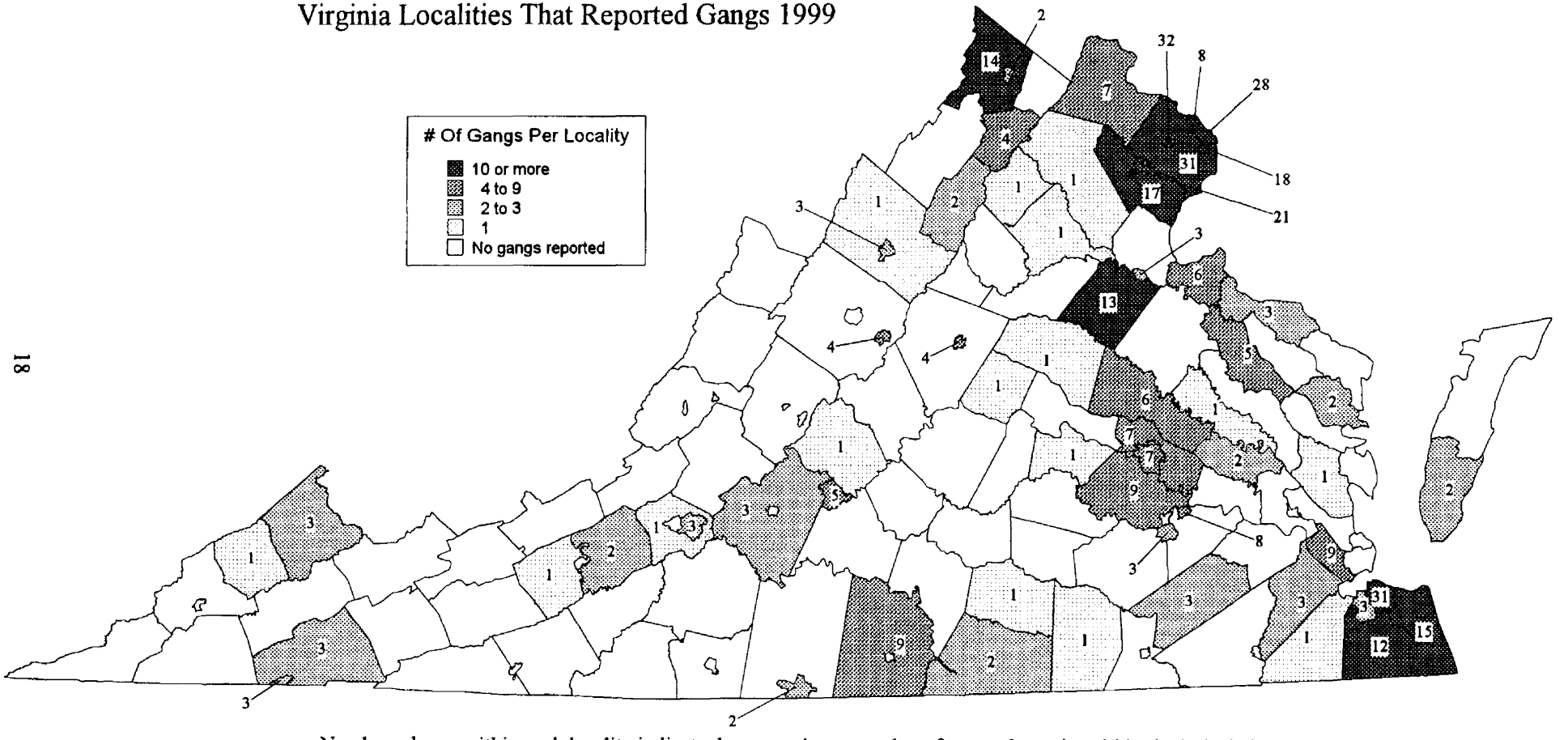

Numbers shown within each locality indicate the approximate number of gangs that exist within the jurisdiction. Because the same gang sometimes exists in multiple jurisdictions the sum of these figures does not equal the estimated number of gangs statewide.

Table 6 lists the Virginia counties and cities which reported no gangs on the survey. A total of 72 localities (55 counties and 17 cities) reported no gang activity. This constitutes 53% of Virginia localities. A locality is documented as reporting no gang activity if none of the agencies surveyed in the locality reported a gang.

Table 6
Localities Reporting No Gang Activity

COUNTIES		CITIES
Accomack	James City	Bedford
Albemarle	King and Queen	Buena Vista
Alleghany	Lee	Clifton Forge
Amelia	Madison	Colonial Heights
Appomattox	Mathews	Covington
Augusta	Middlesex	Franklin
Bath	Nelson	Galax
Bland	Northumberland	Hampton
Botetourt	Nottoway	Lexington
Buckingham	Orange	Manassas Park
Campbell	Patrick	Martinsville
Caroline	Pittsylvania	Norton
Carroll	Prince Edward	Poquoson
Charles City	Prince George	Radford
Charlotte	Richmond	Salem
Clarke	Rockbridge	Staunton
Craig	Russell	Williamsburg
Cumberland	Scott	
Dinwiddie	Shenandoah	
Floyd	Smyth	
Franklin	Southampton	
Giles	Stafford	
Goochland	Surry	
Grayson	Tazewell	
Greene	Wise	
Greensville	Wythe	
Henry	York	
Highland		

Characteristics of Reported Gangs in Virginia

Each respondent who reported gang activity was asked to document the characteristics of each gang in the locality. Table 7 presents the total percentage of reported gangs with each characteristic across all Virginia localities. This table also provides the percentage of reported gangs with each characteristic for localities with populations of 25,000 or less, and for localities with populations over 25,000. The characteristics that are components of the gang definition provided in the Code of Virginia are indicated with an asterisk on pages 20, 21, and 22.

Table 7
Percentage of Reported Gangs with Selected Gang Characteristics

Characteristic	Total	Low Population (25,000 or less)	High Population (over 25,000)
Group has 3 or more members*	97%	98%	97%
At least one member is under age 18*	91%	97%	90%
Group identifies itself as a gang or group*	85%	93%	84%
Members regularly associate as a group*	84%	91%	83%
Group engages in occasional illegal activities	84%	92%	82%
Gang attracts negative attention from the community	78%	85%	76%
Group engages in property crime	72%	76%	72%
Group sustains itself over time*	70%	74%	69%
Members of group have similar goals, beliefs, or values	70%	81%	67%
Group causes fear or intimidation in the community	67%	68%	67%
Group engages in violent crime against persons	67%	76%	65%
Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress*	60%	65%	59%
Majority of membership under age 18	58%	74%	54%
Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory*	54%	55%	54%
Members use hand signals*	51%	50%	52%
Group engages in recurrent felonious activity*	48%	58%	45%
Group uses initiation practices*	47%	48%	47%
Group engages in selling or distributing drugs	46%	52%	45%
Group has female members	43%	45%	42%
Group has identifiable leadership*	42%	62%	37%
Group has organizational structure	41%	51%	39%

As Table 7 shows, only six of the 21 gang characteristics were used in more than 75% of the gang descriptions. Specifically, the most common characteristics used to describe local gangs were:

- Group has 3 or more members*,
- Members regularly associate as a group*,
- At least one member is under age 18*,
- Group attracts negative attention from the community,
- Group identifies itself as a gang or a group*, and
- Group engages in occasional illegal activity.

An examination of the characteristics above reveals that the most common descriptors are rather broad, and focus primarily on very basic tenets of group membership – age, number of members, proximity, and identification. Only two of these characteristics actually identify problem behaviors, and these items are relatively vague regarding the type of behavior.

A second group of nine characteristics was noted somewhat less frequently, appearing in 50 - 74% of the reported gang descriptions. These characteristics include:

- Group sustains itself over time*,
- Majority of membership is under age 18,
- Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress*,
- Members use hand signals*,
- Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory*,
- Members have similar goals, beliefs, and values,
- Group causes fear or intimidation in the community,
- Group engages in property crime, and
- Group engages in violent crime against persons.

The characteristics above seem to focus on the stereotypical identifiers of gang members – dress, colors, hand signals, and claiming territory. Other characteristics in this group identify the problem behaviors of gangs (e.g., violent crime) with increased specificity.

Finally, a third group of characteristics was noted in less than half of the reported gang descriptions. These characteristics are:

- Group has organizational structure,
- Group has identifiable leadership*,
- Group has female members,
- Group uses initiation practices*,
- Group engages in selling or distributing drugs, and
- Group engages in recurrent felonious activity*.

Several of the above characteristics speak more strongly to the strength of the group's formality or organization. In addition, these characteristics include stronger statements of more organized or severe criminal activity.

In summary, it appears that the most commonly noted characteristics of Virginia's gangs focus primarily on group membership rather than specific group behaviors. This analysis indicates that the problems which are generally attributed to gangs by the media, for example, drug sales, violent crime, and felonious activities (Spergel, 1995), are not frequently used to describe Virginia's gangs. Participation in violent crime is indicated for about two-thirds of reported gangs, while drug sales and recurrent felonious criminal behaviors are reported for less than half of reported gangs.

An additional analysis was conducted to compare the types of gang characteristics reported by localities with large and small populations. Small localities were defined as those localities with populations of 25,000 or fewer total residents. The small population category consisted primarily of rural counties and small cities. Localities with populations over 25,000 were categorized as large localities; this group was generally comprised of suburban counties and large cities.

Overall, localities with small populations that reported gangs reported nearly all gang characteristics more frequently than localities with large populations. To assess the strength of these differences, Chi-square tests were conducted to statistically compare the frequency of reported gang characteristics between small and large localities. Of the 21 characteristics tested, 11 showed statistically significant differences between the two groups ($p < 0.05$). The 11 characteristics listed below were reported significantly more often by small population localities:

- Group has organizational structure,
- Group has identifiable leadership*,
- Members regularly associate as a group*,
- At least one member is under age 18*,
- Majority of membership under age 18,
- Gang attracts negative attention from the community,
- Group identifies itself as a gang or group*,
- Members of group have similar goals, beliefs, or values,
- Group engages in occasional illegal activities,
- Group engages in violent crime against persons, and
- Group engages in recurrent felonious activity*.

The finding of differences between gang characteristics in small and large localities may be interpreted in several ways. One explanation may be that gangs in small localities and gangs in large localities actually exhibit different characteristics. Most notable of the characteristics listed above are those which indicate violent and recurrent felonious criminal activity, suggesting that gangs in small localities engage in more serious criminal behaviors than gangs in large localities. Other characteristics focus on the formality of the group's structure, implying that gangs which are identified in smaller population localities may be more organized.

Alternatively, officials in smaller localities may be defining gangs more specifically than officials in larger localities. The standard of what constitutes a gang in smaller localities may be more rigorous than in larger localities when reporting the prevalence of gang activity. A third possible explanation may be that, generally, smaller localities have fewer gangs to monitor and

therefore may be more aware of these gangs' characteristics in detail. However, this suggestion is debatable because large localities generally have more resources to detect and investigate gang behavior, and have even developed specific gang units within local police departments in some instances.

Reported gangs characteristics also were compared to the current Virginia Code definition of a youth gang. As noted in Table 7, eleven characteristics from the survey were analogous to the components of the Virginia Code definition. At least seven of these characteristics were used less than 75% of the time to describe Virginia gangs. Of these, four characteristics were used to describe approximately 50% to 70% of the reported gangs: Group sustains itself over time; Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress; Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory; and Members use hand signals. Three additional characteristics were used to describe less than half of reported gangs: Group engages in recurrent felonious activity; Group uses initiation practices; and Group has identifiable leadership. This shows that most groups which are perceived to be gangs by local officials would not be classified as a gang by the Code of Virginia definition. Only 13% of the gangs reported in this survey had all of the characteristics required by the Code of Virginia definition. Consequently, the incompatibility between local and state definitions will undoubtedly result in problems when implementing reporting systems that are designed to collect gang prevalence information.

Gang Behaviors and Sources of Gang Information

This portion of the report describes additional survey results from the Law Enforcement, Juvenile Probation, Court, and Education respondents who reported gangs in their localities. Many of the survey questions were consistent across respondent groups; however, some questions were specific to the respective roles of each group. Therefore, responses for each respondent group are reviewed separately, followed by a summary of relevant findings across groups.

Law Enforcement Survey Results for Respondents Who Reported Gangs

This section describes responses provided by law enforcement respondents who reported gang activity in their localities. Overall, 54 (28%) respondents from law enforcement agencies indicated there were gangs in their localities. Of those 54 respondents, 37 (69%) were from Police Departments and 17 (31%) were from Sheriffs' Offices.

Gang Member Identification

Table 8 shows responses to questions about how law enforcement agencies identify youth gang members. The most common sources of information used by law enforcement to identify youth gang members included either someone informing law enforcement that a youth is a gang member (87%) or a youth's admission to being a gang member (85%). About one-third of respondents reported the use of "other existing records", such as local, regional, and national databases; field intelligence forms; photos; tattoos; dress; graffiti; and police contacts and informants. Only 18% of the respondents reported having a specialized gang unit housed in their agency.

Table 8
Gang Member Identification:
Law Enforcement Respondents

What sources of information do you use to identify youths as gang members?* **(A total of 54 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Law Enforcement Respondents**
Admission by Youth	85%
Revealed by Others	87%
Other Existing Records	33%
State Rap Sheet	13%
Social History from CSU	4%
Does your department / office have a specialized gang unit? **(A total of 49 (91%) respondents answered this question)**	
No	82%
Yes	18%

*Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Use of Virginia State Police's Youth Gang File

Law enforcement respondents were asked how familiar they were with the Virginia State Police (VSP) Youth Gang File (YGF), how often they reported information to the YGF, and reasons for not reporting information to the YGF. As shown in Table 9, 59% of the respondents were not very familiar with the file, and 9% were unaware of the Virginia State Police's Youth Gang File and associated reporting procedures.

Most respondents reported that they rarely (14%) or never (68%) reported gang information to the Youth Gang File. When asked to report reasons for not reporting information to the Youth Gang File, the most frequent response was that the respondent had no knowledge of the requirement to report youth gang members and information to the YGF. The second most common response was that the gangs in their locality did not qualify as a "youth gang" under the definition in the Virginia Code. The element of "recurrent felonious criminal conduct" was specifically cited as difficult to qualify by three of the respondents.

Table 9
Familiarity With and Reporting to the Youth Gang File:
Law Enforcement Respondents

How familiar are you with the Virginia State Police (VSP) Youth Gang File and its associated reporting procedures? **(A total of 53 (98%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Law Enforcement Respondents***
Very Familiar	13%
Somewhat Familiar	19%
Not Very Familiar	59%
Unaware	9%
When you identify a youth gang member, how often do you report the information to the VSP Youth Gang File? **(A total of 52 (96%) respondents answered this question)**	
Always	12%
Frequently	0%
Sometimes	8%
Rarely	14%
Never	68%
Please explain the circumstances under which you do not report gang members to the Youth Gang File. **(A total of 33 (61%) respondents answered this question)**	
No Knowledge of Youth Gang File	39%
Gangs Don't Meet Code Definition Required for Reporting	30%
Gang New to Area	21%
Reported Locally or Regionally	9%

*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Offenses Committed By Gangs

Law enforcement respondents were asked to choose the offenses most frequently committed by gang members in their communities from a list of 20 offenses. Table 10 shows that the three offenses most frequently cited were Vandalism / Destruction, Assault, and Drug Sales / Distribution. None of the respondents cited Sex Offenses - Forcible, Arson, Counterfeiting / Forgery, Fraud, Gambling, Prostitution, or Handling Stolen Property.

Table 10
Offenses Committed by Gangs:
Law Enforcement Respondents

What offenses are most frequently committed by these groups?* **(A total of 53 (98%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Law Enforcement Respondents**
Vandalism / Destruction	66%
Assault	53%
Drug Sales / Distribution	36%
Disorderly Conduct	32%
Drug Possession	30%
Intimidation	28%
Larceny / Theft	26%
Curfew / Loitering	23%
Weapons Law Violations	11%
Homicide	6%
Robbery	6%
Burglary/Breaking and Entering	6%
Motor Vehicle Theft	4%
Sex Offenses - Forcible	0%
Arson	0%
Counterfeiting / Forgery	0%
Fraud	0%
Gambling	0%
Prostitution	0%
Handling Stolen Property	0%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs

Law enforcement respondents were also asked to estimate the percentage of offenses committed by gangs that involve weapons, which type of weapons are used most frequently, who violent gang crimes are directed toward, whether gangs distribute drugs, and the types of drugs that gangs distribute. Respondents reported that an average of 17% of all offenses committed by gang members involved the use of a weapon. As shown in Table 11, the most frequently used weapons were hands / feet / fist (40%), followed closely by firearms (36%). Law enforcement respondents reported that youth gang violence was most often directed toward other gangs. The next most frequent recipient of youth gang violence was the community in general.

Sixty-seven percent of the law enforcement respondents reported that at least one youth gang distributes drugs in their locality. For those gangs who are reported to sell or distribute drugs, the most frequently sold drug was marijuana (83%) followed very closely by cocaine / crack (78%).

Table 11
Weapons Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs:
Law Enforcement Respondents

If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently?* **(A total of 42 (78%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Law Enforcement Respondents**
Hands / Feet / Fist	40%
Firearm	36%
Blunt Instrument	24%
Knife / Cutting Instrument	19%
Other	2%
If youth gangs in your area commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward?* **(A total of 38 (70%) respondents answered this question)**	
Other Gangs	45%
Community in General	31%
Other (e.g., individuals who do not pay for drugs, other youth)	21%
Area Businesses	5%
Ethnic Groups	3%
If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs in your locality, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed.* **(A total of 36 (67%) respondents answered this question)**	
Marijuana	83%
Cocaine / Crack	78%
Hallucinogens	11%
Heroin	11%
Methamphetamine	8%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members

Finally, law enforcement respondents were asked whether the number of gangs and gang members in their localities had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past 3 years. As shown in Table 12, most law enforcement agencies reported that the number of youth gangs and gang members had either stayed the same or increased slightly during this time period.

Table 12
Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members: Law Enforcement Respondents

In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your locality has:	**% of Law Enforcement Respondents***
(A total of 50 (93%) respondents answered this question)	
Increased Significantly	12%
Increased Slightly	34%
Stayed the Same	35%
Decreased Slightly	6%
Decreased Significantly	12%
In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your locality has:	
(A total of 50 (93%) respondents answered this question)	
Increased Significantly	16%
Increased Slightly	35%
Stayed the Same	26%
Decreased Slightly	6%
Decreased Significantly	16%

*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Juvenile Probation Survey Results for Respondents Who Reported Gangs

This section describes responses provided only by Juvenile Probation respondents who reported gang activity in their localities. Overall, 42 (35%) respondents from 18 (51%) CSUs reported gangs in their localities. Of those 42 respondents, 7 were directors (17%) and 35 (83%) were probation supervisors.

Gang Membership Identification and Documentation

Juvenile Probation respondents were asked questions about how many youth on probation / parole are gang members, how often gang membership is documented in social histories, and the information used to make a determination about gang membership. Respondents indicated that an average of 10% of their caseload are youth gang members. As shown in Table 13, all respondents (100%) indicated that they include gang membership / affiliation in social histories. The most common sources of information used to determine gang membership include admission by youth (100%), information from someone other than the youth (83%), and social histories (64%).

Table 13
Gang Membership Identification and Documentation:
Juvenile Probation Respondents

Does your staff typically include gang membership / affiliation in social histories? **(A total of 42 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Juvenile Probation Respondents**
Yes	100%
What sort of information do you use to make a determination of gang membership?* **(A total of 42 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	
Admission by Youth	100%
Revealed by Others	83%
Social History from CSU	64%
Other Existing Records	36%
State Rap Sheet	7%

*Percentages may exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Offenses Committed by Gangs

Respondents were asked to choose the offenses most frequently committed by gang members from a list of 20 offenses. As shown in Table 14, the three offenses most frequently cited were Assault, Vandalism / Destruction, and Larceny / Theft. None of the respondents cited Homicide, Arson, Counterfeiting / Forgery, Fraud, Gambling, and Prostitution.

Table 14
Offenses Committed by Gangs:
Juvenile Probation Respondents

What offenses are most frequently committed by these groups?* (A total of 42 (100%) respondents answered this question)	% of Juvenile Probation Respondents
Assault Offenses	67%
Vandalism / Destruction	55%
Larceny / Theft	52%
Intimidation	36%
Drug Possession	33%
Motor Vehicle Theft	29%
Drug Sales / Distribution	29%
Burglary / Breaking and Entering	24%
Curfew / Loitering	21%
Disorderly Conduct	14%
Robbery	10%
Weapons Law Violations	10%
Sex Offenses - Forcible	2%
Handling Stolen Property	2%
Homicide	0%
Arson	0%
Counterfeiting / Forgery	0%
Fraud	0%
Gambling	0%
Prostitution	0%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response.

Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs

Responses to questions about the types of weapons used most frequently by gangs, who violent crimes are directed toward, and the types of drugs distributed by gangs are shown in Table 15. Respondents indicated that weapons are used in about 19% of the offenses committed by gangs. In instances where weapons were used, the most commonly used weapons were hands / feet / fists (49%), followed by knife / cutting instruments (23%) and firearms (21%). Further, respondents indicated that violent crimes by gangs were most often directed toward other gangs (55%).

Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated that at least one gang distributed drugs in their locality. Of those who reported drug distribution by gangs, respondents indicated that the most common drugs being sold were marijuana (78%) and cocaine / crack (67%).

Table 15
Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs: Juvenile Probation Respondents

If weapons are used, which type is used <u>most frequently</u>?* **(A total of 35 (83%) respondents answered this question)**	**<u>% of Juvenile Probation Respondents</u>**
Hands / Feet / Fist	49%
Knife / Cutting Instrument	23%
Firearm	21%
Blunt Instrument	17%
If youth gangs in your area commit violent crimes, who is the violence <u>most frequently</u> directed toward?* **(A total of 38 (90%) respondents answered this question)**	
Other Gangs	55%
Community in General	37%
Other (e.g., peers, family members, etc.)	16%
Ethnic Groups	0%
Area Businesses	0%
If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs in your locality, please indicate the types of drugs <u>most commonly</u> sold / distributed.* **(A total of 36 (86%) respondents answered this question)**	
Marijuana	78%
Cocaine / Crack	67%
Methamphetamine	14%
Hallucinogens	8%
Heroin	6%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

<u>Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members</u>

Respondents were also asked whether the number of gangs and gang members in their localities had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past 3 years. As shown in Table 16, most respondents indicated that the number of gangs and gang members had increased slightly or stayed the same. Only about a quarter of the respondents reported a decrease in gangs and gang members.

Table 16
Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members:
Juvenile Probation Respondents

In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your locality has: **(A total of 40 (95%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Juvenile Probation Respondents***
Increased Significantly	18%
Increased Slightly	28%
Stayed the Same	33%
Decreased Slightly	8%
Decreased Significantly	15%
In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your locality has: **(A total of 38 (90%) respondents answered this question)**	
Increased Significantly	16%
Increased Slightly	42%
Stayed the Same	18%
Decreased Slightly	5%
Decreased Significantly	18%

*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Court Survey Results for Respondents Who Reported Gangs

This section describes those responses given by Court respondents who reported gang activity in their localities. Overall, 17 (15%) respondents indicated there were gangs in their localities. Of those 17 respondents, 5 (29%) were Judges and 12 (71%) were Commonwealth's Attorneys. Both groups were surveyed using the same survey instrument, which focused attention on gang information in the court process.

Availability of Gang-Related Information

Court Respondents were asked to indicate whether they ordinarily request information about a youth's involvement in gangs in the course of their work, how they obtain information about gang involvement, and how often social histories include gang involvement information. As shown in Table 17, a majority (59%) of respondents indicated that they often requested gang-related information on court-involved youths. Most of the time, this information was revealed by someone other than the youth, such as CSU staff, law enforcement officers, schools, parents, and peers. Only about one-third of the respondents indicated that gang information was always or frequently included in social histories.

Table 17
Availability of Gang-Related Information:
Court Respondents

In the course of your work, do you ordinarily request information about a youth's possible involvement in gangs? **(A total of 17 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Court Respondents**
Yes	59%
No	41%
If yes, how is this information usually received?* **(A total of 10 (59%) respondents answered this question)**	
Revealed by others (e.g., CSU staff, Law Enforcement, etc.)	80%
Social History from CSU	40%
Admission by youth	10%
State rap sheet	0%
When you receive a youth's social history, how often does it include information telling you whether or not the youth is involved in a gang? **(A total of 17 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	
Always	6%
Frequently	29%
Sometimes	18%
Rarely	41%
Never	6%

* Percentages may exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Offenses Committed by Gangs

Respondents were also asked to indicate the offenses most frequently committed by gangs from a list of 20 offenses. Table 18 shows the types of offenses listed and the percentage of respondents who chose each offense type. The most commonly cited offenses were Assault (59%), Vandalism / Destruction (53%), and Larceny / Theft (41%). No respondents chose Arson, Counterfeiting / Forgery, Fraud, Sex Offenses - Forcible, Gambling, Prostitution, or Homicide.

Table 18
Offenses Committed by Gangs:
Court Respondents

In your opinion, what are the offense types most frequently committed by these groups?* **(A total of 17 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Court Respondents**
Assault Offenses	59%
Vandalism / Destruction	53%
Larceny / Theft	41%
Drug Sales / Distribution	29%
Drug Possession	24%
Disorderly Conduct	24%
Intimidation	18%
Weapon Law Violations	18%
Curfew / Loitering	18%
Motor Vehicle Theft	18%
Robbery	12%
Burglary / Breaking and Entering	12%
Handling Stolen Property	6%
Arson	0%
Counterfeiting / Forgery	0%
Fraud Offenses	0%
Sex Offenses - Forcible	0%
Gambling Offenses	0%
Prostitution	0%
Homicide Offenses	0%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs

Table 19 shows responses to questions about the types of weapons used by gangs, who gang violence is directed toward, and the types of drugs distributed by gangs. Respondents indicated that weapons were used in about 34% of the offenses committed by gangs in their community. Of those offenses in which weapons were used, the most commonly reported types of weapons were firearms (60%) and knives / cutting instruments (33%). Respondents also indicated that gang violence was usually directed toward other gangs (50%) or the community in general (36%).

Roughly two-thirds of the respondents indicated that at least one gang in their community was involved in distributing drugs. Of those that were involved in drug distribution, the most commonly reported types of drugs sold were cocaine / crack (91%) and marijuana (73%).

Table 19
Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs: Court Respondents

If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently?* **(A total of 15 (88%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Court Respondents**
Firearm	60%
Knife / Cutting Instrument	33%
Hands / Feet / Fist	20%
If youth gangs in your area commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward?* **(A total of 14 (82%) respondents answered this question)**	
Other Gangs	50%
Community in General	36%
Other (e.g., youths not in gangs, persons targeted for revenge)	21%
If you have gangs that sell/distribute drugs in your locality, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed.* **(A total of 11 (65%) respondents answered this question)**	
Cocaine / Crack	91%
Marijuana	73%
Heroin	9%
Methamphetamine	9%
Hallucinogens	0%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members

As shown in Table 20, most respondents indicated that the number of gangs and gang members had stayed the same or increased slightly over the past three years. However, about one-quarter of respondents reported a decrease in gangs and gang members.

Table 20
Changes in Number of Gangs and Gang Members: Court Respondents

In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your locality has: **(A total of 16 (94%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Court Respondents***
Increased Significantly	13%
Increased Slightly	25%
Stayed the Same	38%
Decreased Slightly	25%
Decreased Significantly	0%
In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your locality has: **(A total of 16 (94%) respondents answered this question)**	
Increased Significantly	13%
Increased Slightly	38%
Stayed the Same	25%
Decreased Slightly	25%
Decreased Significantly	0%

*Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Education Survey Results for Respondents Who Reported Gangs

This section describes responses given by educators who reported gang activity in their schools. Overall, 65 (18%) respondents reported gang activity in their schools. Of those 65 respondents, 38 (58%) were from High Schools, 17 (26%) were from Middle Schools, 7 (11%) were from Alternative Schools, 2 (3%) were from Combined Schools, and 1 (2%) was unknown.

Gang-Related Documentation and Prevalence of School Resource Officers in Schools

Responses to questions about gang activity documentation in schools and whether schools have School Resource Officers (SROs) are shown in Table 21. Eighty-two percent of the educators indicated that their school maintained information about gang-related incidents when or should they occur. Of those schools that documented gang-related incidents, respondents reported an average of 2.5 gang-related incidents during the 1998-1999 school year. Ninety-one percent of responding schools reported that they had an SRO or other staff member who performs a similar function, with 85% of those SROs staffing the school on a full-time basis.

Table 21
Gang-Related Documentation and Prevalence of School Resource Officers: Education Respondents

	% of Education Respondents
Does your school maintain information about gang-related incidents that occur on school property? **(A total of 62 (95%) respondents answered this question)**	
Yes	82%
No	18%
Does your school have a School Resource Officer (SRO) or someone who serves a similar function? **(A total of 65 (100%) respondents answered this question)**	
Yes	91%
No	9%
If yes, does at least one of these persons staff your school on a full-time basis? **(A total of 59 (91%) respondents answered this question)**	
Yes	85%
No	15%

Offenses Committed by Gangs

The Education Survey also asked respondents to report the offenses most frequently committed by gang members. The list of offenses was modified for the Education respondents to reflect offenses that are applicable to schools. As shown in Table 22, the three offenses most frequently cited were Intimidation, Assault, and Destruction / Vandalism. Conversely, the three offenses that were cited the least were Weapons Violations, Arson, and Sex Offenses - Forcible.

Table 22
Offenses Committed by Gangs:
Education Respondents

What kinds of offenses are most frequently committed by gangs? (A total of 65 (100%) respondents answered this question)	% of Education Respondents*
Intimidation	71%
Assault	57%
Destruction / Vandalism	43%
Truancy	34%
Drug Sales / Distribution	29%
Larceny / Theft	25%
Tobacco Violations	22%
Drug Possession	15%
Alcohol Violations	12%
Weapons Violations	8%
Arson	3%
Sex Offenses - Forcible	2%

* Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs

Table 23 presents responses to questions about how often youth gangs use weapons on school grounds, the types of weapons used on school grounds, who gang violence is directed toward at school, and types of drugs distributed by gangs at school.

Schools reported that, when gang-related offenses occurred on school grounds, 89% rarely or never involved the use of weapons. In instances where weapons were used, the most commonly used weapons were hands / feet / fists. No respondents reported that firearms were the most common weapons. Of those schools that reported gang-related violent crime occurring on school grounds, most respondents reported that the violence was directed at other gangs or gang members (60%) or other students (31%).

About one-third of the respondents indicated that at least one gang distributed drugs on school property. Of those schools that reported drug distribution by gangs, most reported that the drug being sold was marijuana (96%).

Table 23 Weapon Use, Violence, and Drug Distribution by Gangs: Education Respondents	
How often do youth gangs use weapons when committing offenses on school grounds? **(A total of 62 (95%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Education Respondents**
Always	0%
Frequently	0%
Sometimes	11%
Rarely	44%
Never	45%
If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently?* **(A total of 39 (60%) respondents answered this question)**	
Hands / Feet / Fist	79%
Knife / Cutting Instrument	18%
Blunt Instrument	3%
Firearm	0%
If youth gangs in your school commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward?* **(A total of 35 (54%) respondents answered this question)**	
Other Gangs	60%
Students	31%
Community in General	6%
Ethnic Groups	3%
If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs on school property, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed?* **(A total of 24 (37%) of respondents answered this question)**	
Marijuana	96%
Cocaine / Crack	17%
Heroin	8%
Methamphetamine	8%
Hallucinogens	4%

* Percentages may exceed 100% because respondents could have checked more than one response for this question.

Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members

Schools were asked whether the number of gangs and gang members in their schools had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past 3 years. As shown in Table 24, most respondents indicated that gangs and gang members are maintaining current levels or are decreasing in the schools.

Table 24
Changes in the Number of Gangs and Gang Members:
Education Respondents

In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your school has: **(A total of 61 (94%) respondents answered this question)**	**% of Education Respondents**
Increased Significantly	2%
Increased Slightly	13%
Stayed the Same	41%
Decreased Slightly	23%
Decreased Significantly	21%
In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your school has: **(A total of 61 (94%) respondents answered this question)**	
Increased Significantly	3%
Increased Slightly	18%
Stayed the Same	33%
Decreased Slightly	20%
Decreased Significantly	26%

Summary of Gang Behavior and Information Findings

The following section summarizes survey findings across all Law Enforcement, Juvenile Probation, Court, and Education respondents who reported gang activity in their localities.

Gang Member Identification and Documentation

Respondents from Juvenile Probation, Law Enforcement, and the Court each reported that the most common sources of information for identifying youth gang members included either a youth's admission to being a gang member or someone else informing them that a youth was a gang member. Very few respondents reported using state rap sheets or other existing records.

Documentation of Gang Membership in Social Histories

All Juvenile Probation respondents reported that staff typically include gang membership / affiliation in social history reports, indicating 100% compliance with §16.1 - 273 of the Code of Virginia, which suggests such documentation be included in social histories. However, 47% of the Court respondents reported that gang membership is rarely or never included in those reports. This discrepancy may be explained by the procedures used to document gang membership. Juvenile Probation staff may not explicitly state gang membership information when youths are not thought to be involved. Other explanations may be that staff are not routinely including this information, as contended, or that judges are unaware of the location of this information within the social history reports.

Documentation of Gang Membership in the Virginia State Police Youth Gang File

As noted earlier, all Law Enforcement agencies are required to report to the Youth Gang File at the Virginia State Police, pursuant to §16.1 - 299.2 of the Virginia Code. Despite this Code requirement, 82% of the Law Enforcement respondents reported that they rarely or never submit gang information to the Youth Gang File. Nearly 70% of the Law Enforcement respondents reported that they were not very familiar with or unaware of this reporting requirement.

Offenses Committed by Gangs

Assault (58%), Vandalism / Destruction (54%), and Intimidation (45%) were reported as the most common offenses committed by gang members across all respondent types. These were followed by Larceny / Theft (33%), Drug Distribution (31%), and Drug Possession (25%). The seriousness of these offenses is somewhat difficult to interpret because many of them can be misdemeanors or felonies. Very few respondents reported that gangs commit violent offenses, such as Homicide (3%), Robbery (8%) and Weapons Offenses (10%).

Weapons, Violence, and Drugs

Most Educators reported that weapons were rarely or never used by gangs on school grounds. However, Court, Juvenile Probation, and Law Enforcement respondents reported that an average of 20% of the offenses committed by gangs involved the use of a weapon. The discrepancy between the Education respondents and all other respondents is probably a result of how the

question was framed. Education respondents were asked to report on the use of weapons on school property, whereas the other respondents were asked to report on weapon use more generally. Weapons offenses are also more likely to come to the attention of the Law Enforcement, Juvenile Probation, and Court Respondents. Across all respondents, the most commonly reported weapon used by gangs was hands / feet / fist (52%), followed by firearms (25%), knife / cutting instruments (21%), and blunt instruments (13%).

Although other gangs were reported to be the most common victims of gang violence across all respondent types, non-gang members were also noted to be victims of gang violence by a significant number of respondents. About one-third of the Court, Juvenile Probation, and Law Enforcement respondents reported that citizens in the community were victims of gang violence, and about one-third of Educators reported that other students were victims of gang violence.

More than two-thirds of Juvenile Probation, Law Enforcement, and Court respondents reported drug distribution involvement for at least one of the gangs in their localities. But only about one-third of the Educators reported drug sales on school grounds. All respondent groups agreed that marijuana and cocaine / crack were the most common types of drugs sold by gangs.

Changes in the Number of Gangs and the Number of Gang Members

All respondent groups, except for the Educators, agreed that the number of gangs and gang members was the same or had increased slightly over the past 3 years. Most of the Education respondents reported that the number of gangs and gang members was the same or had decreased over the past 3 years. Educators may have been more likely to report a decrease in gangs due to the more stringent behavior codes adopted recently by schools, such as the Virginia School Board Association's gang policy. Because of such policies, gang members may have been eliminated from the school system either through expulsion or by dropping out on their own. As a result, actual gang activity may be lower in the schools. In addition, students who do attend school may be more careful to conceal gang affiliation, making current levels of gang activity seem lower than they really are in the school setting.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interest in gangs and gang behavior has increased dramatically in Virginia in recent years, as evidenced by its presence in proposed General Assembly legislation, the development of the Virginia Gang Investigators Association, and the formation of the Attorney General's Task Force on Gangs and Youth Violence. Over the past seven years, several studies have attempted to measure the prevalence of youth gangs in Virginia. This research has paralleled similar efforts at the national level. While each Virginia study has contributed to the available information on youth gangs and youth gang activity, an overriding difficulty remains unresolved at both the national and state level. Specifically, no consensus currently exists on how to define a youth gang.

Previous studies have provided a definition of a youth gang and asked respondents to identify groups that fit this description. These studies typically used different definitions which limited

the ability to compare prevalence rates over time. In recognizing the scope of the definitional problem, this study approached gang prevalence using a different strategy. This survey requested assessments of gang activity from professionals in four settings: Law Enforcement, Juvenile Probation, Courts, and Education. Respondents were asked to identify groups that they or their community perceived as youth gangs, then were additionally asked to report the characteristics of these groups.

Using this method, 63 of 135 localities in Virginia reported the presence of groups that they classify as "youth gangs." These localities include 40 counties and 23 cities, and encompass small and large cities, as well as rural and suburban counties. The number of gangs in Virginia was estimated from the data provided by the localities. Although this estimation was made difficult due to variations in gang names and spelling, the findings suggested that approximately 321 gangs currently exist in Virginia. The meaning of the term "youth gang" was determined by the respondents. Localities were classified as having gangs when at least one respondent reported gangs. Notably, in 40% of the 63 localities classified with gangs, only one respondent among the four groups reported gangs.

While our prevalence findings are somewhat different than those reported by the Virginia Commission on Youth in 1997, these variations should be interpreted with caution. First, the methodologies of the two studies were very different. The COY used a specific definition for "youth gang", while we allowed respondents to interpret this term. Second, the DCJS study expanded the respondent pool significantly. The COY study surveyed CSU Directors and Law Enforcement personnel; DCJS surveyed those groups and also included CSU Probation Supervisors, Judges, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and School Principals. For these reasons, comparisons between the prevalence rates for these two studies is not appropriate. However, DCJS' study did include questions to estimate the change in gangs and gang membership since the COY effort. Most respondents indicated that the number of gangs and gang members in their locality had increased or stayed the same.

Additionally, this study asked respondents to report the characteristics of their reported gangs. Descriptions of gangs varied widely. Only a few characteristics were used routinely to characterize gangs. The following characteristics were indicated in more that 75% of the descriptions:

- Group has 3 or more members,
- Members regularly associate as a group,
- At least one member is under age 18,
- Group attracts negative attention from the community,
- Group identifies itself as a gang or group, and
- Group engages in occasional illegal activity.

The most commonly cited youth gang characteristics described the nature of the group rather than the activities of the group. About two-thirds of reported gangs were described as engaging in violent crime. Other characteristics that tend to be stereotypically attributed to gangs, such as engaging in drug sales and felonious crime, were used to describe less than half of the reported gangs in our study. In addition, significant differences were found between gang characteristics

reported by localities with small populations versus large populations. Several characteristics, including engaging in violent crime and recurrent felonious activity, were significantly more common among gang descriptions from small population localities.

Respondents who reported gangs also provided specific information about gang activities. Across all respondents, the most common crimes committed by youth gangs were assault, vandalism / destruction, and intimidation. Less common offenses included larceny / theft, drug possession, and drug distribution. When asked about the percentage of gang crimes that involve weapons, Law Enforcement, Juvenile Probation, and Court respondents revealed that 20% of offenses committed by gangs involved a weapon. In school settings, respondents reported that weapons were rarely used in gang offenses. All respondents indicated other gangs are the most common target of gang violence, however, the community and students were also noted as frequent targets.

One further series of questions was designed to follow-up on the effects of gang-related definition and reporting changes that occurred after the COY's 1997 report. The most significant development was the adoption of a youth gang definition within the Code of Virginia. A comparison was made between reported gang characteristics and the characteristics required by the Code definition. This comparison revealed that only 13% of the reported gangs fit the description of youth gang as outlined in the Code. Clearly, local opinion about the characteristics that constitute youth gang membership and the state definition of youth gangs are currently not compatible.

This finding has implications for the other significant development that was authorized in the same Code section, that is, the development of the Virginia Youth Gang File. This reporting system was implemented in 1997 to improve measures of gang activity in Virginia. Findings from this study indicate that few Police Departments and Sheriff's Offices are using this reporting system as intended. Some respondents specifically stated that they do not report to the system because their gang members are not reportable under the current Code definition. However, almost 70% of respondents indicated that they are not very familiar with the Youth Gang File or are unaware that it exists.

Finally, Code of Virginia §16.1 - 273 authorized the inclusion of gang affiliation information in social histories submitted to the J&DR courts. While all Probation respondents indicated that this information is typically included in social histories, almost 50% of Judges and Commonwealth's Attorney's reported that this information is rarely or never included in these reports.

Given these findings, the project team developed recommendations to inform future legislative action and research on the measurement of gang activity in Virginia.

Recommendation 1

The General Assembly should consider reviewing the current statutory definition of a "youth gang" in Virginia Code §16.1 - 299.2.

Most localities indicated that, in practice, they use definitions of youth gangs and youth gang members that are incompatible with the definition in the Code of Virginia. The Code definition seems to be incongruous with community perceptions of gangs and gang activities. While this conclusion does not imply that the definition is erroneous, our findings suggest that theGeneral Assembly may want to consider modifying the current Code definition.

Recommendation 2

Implementation of the Virginia Youth Gang File should be improved.

Local Law Enforcement indicated that they do not routinely report youth gang members to the Virginia Youth Gang File. While some law enforcement representatives suggest that this difficulty is due to the Code definition of "youth gang", others claimed a lack of knowledge about the reporting system and procedures. The Virginia State Police should consider methods to improve awareness of the Virginia Youth Gang File and its associated reporting procedures among local law enforcement agencies.

Recommendation 3

Virginia should implement an appropriate gang prevalence monitoring program if it intends to track the scope and nature of youth gangs in Virginia.

If Virginia intends to monitor the prevalence and nature of youth gangs over time, it should develop a monitoring program that will provide consistent reporting. Previous gang surveys have used a variety of definitions and methods, making it impossible to reliably compare results from the different surveys. Development of such a monitoring program should be guided by experts in youth gangs, and may include the use of the Youth Gang File along with supplemental research activities.

VII. SUMMARY

DCJS was directed to conduct a survey of youth gang activity in Virginia. The survey was distributed to 1313 representatives from Law Enforcement, Juvenile Probation, Court, and Education throughout the Commonwealth. This survey identified approximately 321 different gangs. At least one gang was reported from 47% of the cities and counties in Virginia. Only 13% of the gangs reported met the criteria of a "gang", as defined by the Code of Virginia. The number of gangs revealed by this study could not be compared to estimates from previous studies in Virginia due to differences in the methodologies, but most respondents indicated that the number of gangs was the same or had increased slightly over the past 3 years. Although a system for documenting youth gang activity has been established by the Virginia State Police, many law enforcement respondents reported that they were not using this system. Study recommendations include reviewing the current statutory definition of youth gangs and improving current methods of documenting and monitoring gangs.

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IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thaddeus F. Aubry, Jr., Regional Administrator
Department of Juvenile Justice

Rebecca S. Camache, Regional Administrator
Department of Juvenile Justice

Jim Chin, Deputy Administrator
Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council

Randy Crank, Investigator
Norfolk Police Department and VGIA President

Nina Cron, Evaluation Specialist
Department of Criminal Justice Services

Kim Echelberger, Legislative Policy Analyst
Virginia Commission on Youth

Kate Ehlenberger, Director of Legal, Legislative and Policy Services
Virginia School Board Association

Diane Eddleton, Program Support Technician
Department of Education

John Gephardt, Lieutenant
Virginia State Police

Tom Gooding, Acting Regional Administrator
Department of Juvenile Justice

Tim Howard, Deputy Director for Community Programs
Department of Juvenile Justice

John W. Jones, Executive Director
Virginia Sheriff's Association

Robert Kemmler, Lieutenant
Virginia State Police

Ken Massengil, Colonel
Virginia State Police

Jim McDonough, Ph.D., Research Center Director
Department of Criminal Justice Services

Lisa Catlett-Price, Executive Secretary
Department of Criminal Justice Services

Deborah Roberts, Research Assistant
Department of Criminal Justice Services

Dana Shrad, Executive Director
Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police

Supreme Court
Personnel Department

Donna Walko-Frankovic, Evaluation Specialist
Department of Criminal Justice Services

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APPENDIX A

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 539

Requesting the Department of Criminal Justice Services to conduct a survey of youth gang activity in the Commonwealth.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 23, 1999
Agreed to by the Senate, February 18, 1999

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Police administered the first youth gang survey to selected jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth in 1992 and again in 1994; and

WHEREAS, the survey in 1994 indicated a growth in youth gangs in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 92 (1996), the Commission on Youth, with the assistance of state and local law enforcement, administered a statewide survey on the prevalence of youth gangs in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 survey identified 260 youth gangs in 32 Virginia localities; and

WHEREAS, the majority of jurisdictions reported in the 1996 survey that the formation of gangs had occurred within the five years preceding the survey; and

WHEREAS, youth gangs result in increased violence in communities and exact a toll on the quality of life in the jurisdictions in which they flourish; and

WHEREAS, both law-enforcement interdiction and youth gang prevention programs are better able to function with current, accurate information on the prevalence of youth gang activity; and

WHEREAS, a statewide survey on the prevalence of youth gangs has not been conducted since 1996; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for up-to-date information on the youth gang presence across the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Criminal Justice Services be requested to conduct a survey of youth gang activity in the Commonwealth.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department for this survey, upon request.

The Department shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Virginia State Crime Commission and the Commission on Youth by December 1, 1999, and the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

Go to (General Assembly Home)

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Section A

APPENDIX B

Enter Gang Names Here:

Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5

In reference to the groups you listed above, place a checkmark in the boxes below to note the characteristics of each individual group.

Does this characteristic describe...	Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5
Group of 3 or more members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has organizational structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has identifiable leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members regularly associate as a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group sustains itself over time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At least one member is under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Majority of membership under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has female members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gang attracts negative attention from the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group identifies itself as a gang or group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members use hand signals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group uses initiation practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members of group have similar goals, beliefs, or values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group causes fear or intimidation in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in occasional illegal activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in property crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in violent crime against persons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in selling or distributing drugs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in recurrent felonious activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Section B

1. What source of information do you use most frequently to identify youths as gang members? **(CHECK ONE)**

   ☐ Admission by youth
   ☐ Revealed by others
   ☐ State rap sheet
   ☐ Social history from CSU
   ☐ Other existing records _____ (please specify)

2. What other sources of information, if any, do you use to identify youth gang members? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

   ☐ Admission by youth
   ☐ Revealed by others
   ☐ State rap sheet
   ☐ Social history from CSU
   ☐ Other existing records _____ (please specify)

3. How familiar are you with the Virginia State Police (VSP) Youth Gang File and its associated reporting procedures?

   ☐ Very familiar
   ☐ Somewhat familiar
   ☐ Not very familiar
   ☐ Unaware

4. When you identify a youth gang member, how often do you report the information to the VSP Youth Gang File?

   ☐ Always
   ☐ Frequently
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Rarely
   ☐ Never

   If you responded "Sometimes," "Rarely," or "Never" to question 4 above, please explain the circumstances under which you do not report gang members to the Youth Gang File.

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Does your department / office have a specialized gang unit?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

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Section C

Please consider the overall youth gang problem in your community while answering the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what are the offense types most frequently committed by these groups? **(CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)**

☐ Homicide Offenses	☐ Larceny / Theft	☐ Fraud Offenses	☐ Gambling Offenses
☐ Sex Offenses-Forcible	☐ Arson	☐ Handling Stolen Property	☐ Prostitution Offenses
☐ Robbery	☐ Burglary / B&E	☐ Vandalism / Destruction	☐ Weapon Law Violations
☐ Assault Offenses	☐ Motor Vehicle Theft	☐ Drug Possession	☐ Curfew / Loitering
☐ Intimidation	☐ Counterfeiting / Forgery	☐ Drug Sales / Distribution	☐ Disorderly Conduct

☐ Other _____ (please specify)

2. Of the offenses committed by gangs in your community, please estimate the percentage that involve the use of weapons. _____ %

If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently? **(CHECK ONE)**

☐ Firearm
☐ Knife / Cutting Instrument
☐ Blunt Instrument
☐ Hands / Feet / Fist
☐ Other _____ (please specify)

3. If youth gangs in your area commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward? **(CHECK ONE)**

☐ Gangs in this area do not commit violent crimes
☐ Area Businesses
☐ Other Gangs
☐ Ethnic Groups
☐ Religious Groups
☐ Community in General
☐ Other _____ (please specify)

4. If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs in your locality, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed. **(CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)**

☐ Gangs do not sell drugs
☐ Cocaine / Crack
☐ Hallucinogens (LSD, Mushrooms, etc.)
☐ Heroin
☐ Marijuana
☐ Methamphetamine (a.k.a. - "crank," "crystal meth")
☐ Other _____ (please specify)

8143230911

5. In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your locality has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

6. In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your locality has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

7. Does your agency or locality have a formal definition for "youth gang" or "youth gang member?" If so, please write it here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Please include any other information you would like to share about youth gangs in your locality.

_____

_____

_____

In case we have any questions or need clarification, please provide contact information:

Name _____ Locality _____

Title _____ Phone _____

Agency _____ E-Mail _____

Please return this form BY OCTOBER 6, 1999.

By Mail, send to: ***Sherri Johnson, Department of Criminal Justice Services, 805 E. Broad St., 10th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219***

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Section A

APPENDIX C

Enter Gang Names Here:

Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5

In reference to the groups you listed above, place a checkmark in the boxes below to note the characteristics of each individual group.

Does this characteristic describe...	Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5
Group of 3 or more members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has organizational structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has identifiable leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members regularly associate as a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group sustains itself over time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At least one member is under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Majority of membership under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has female members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gang attracts negative attention from the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group identifies itself as a gang or group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members use hand signals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group uses initiation practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members of group have similar goals, beliefs, or values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group causes fear or intimidation in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in occasional illegal activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in property crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in violent crime against persons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in selling or distributing drugs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in recurrent felonious activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section B

1. Please estimate the percentage of your probation / parole caseload that are youth gang members. _____ %

2. Does your staff typically include gang membership / affiliation information in social histories?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what sort of information do you use to make a determination of gang membership? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

☐ Admission by youth

☐ Revealed by others

☐ State rap sheet

☐ Social history from CSU

☐ Other existing records _____ (please specify)

Section C

Please consider the overall youth gang problem in your community while answering the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what are the offense types most frequently committed by these groups? **(CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)**

☐ Homicide Offenses	☐ Larceny / Theft	☐ Fraud Offenses	☐ Gambling Offenses
☐ Sex Offenses-Forcible	☐ Arson	☐ Handling Stolen Property	☐ Prostitution Offenses
☐ Robbery	☐ Burglary / B&E	☐ Vandalism / Destruction	☐ Weapon Law Violations
☐ Assault Offenses	☐ Motor Vehicle Theft	☐ Drug Possession	☐ Curfew / Loitering
☐ Intimidation	☐ Counterfeiting / Forgery	☐ Drug Sales / Distribution	☐ Disorderly Conduct

☐ Other _____ (please specify)

2. Of the offenses committed by gangs in your community, please estimate the percentage that involve the use of weapons. _____ %

If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently? **(CHECK ONE)**

☐ Firearm

☐ Knife / Cutting Instrument

☐ Blunt Instrument

☐ Hands / Feet / Fist

☐ Other _____ (please specify)

2390286358

3. If youth gangs in your area commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ Gangs in this area do not commit violent crimes
- ☐ Area Businesses
- ☐ Other Gangs
- ☐ Ethnic Groups
- ☐ Religious Groups
- ☐ Community in General
- ☐ Other _____ (please specify)

4. If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs in your locality, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed. (CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)

- ☐ Gangs do not sell drugs
- ☐ Cocaine / Crack
- ☐ Hallucinogens (LSD, Mushrooms, etc.)
- ☐ Heroin
- ☐ Marijuana
- ☐ Methamphetamine (a.k.a. - "crank," "crystal meth")
- ☐ Other _____ (please specify)

5. In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your locality has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

6. In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your locality has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

5947286359

7. Does your agency or locality have a formal definition for "youth gang" or "youth gang member?" If so, please write it here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Please include any other information you would like to share about youth gangs in your locality.

_____

_____

_____

In case we have any questions or need clarification, please provide contact information:

Name _____ Locality _____

Title _____ Phone _____

Agency _____ E-Mail _____

Please return this form BY OCTOBER 6, 1999.

By Mail, send to: ***Sherri Johnson, Department of Criminal Justice Services, 805 E. Broad St., 10th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219***

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Section A

APPENDIX D

Enter Gang Names Here:

Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5

In reference to the groups you listed above, place a checkmark in the boxes below to note the characteristics of each individual group.

Does this characteristic describe...	Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5
Group of 3 or more members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has organizational structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has identifiable leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members regularly associate as a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group sustains itself over time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At least one member is under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Majority of membership under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has female members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gang attracts negative attention from the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group identifies itself as a gang or group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members use hand signals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group uses initiation practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members of group have similar goals, beliefs, or values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group causes fear or intimidation in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in occasional illegal activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in property crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in violent crime against persons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in selling or distributing drugs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in recurrent felonious activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8167287043

Section B

1. In the course of your work, do you ordinarily request information about a youth's possible involvement in gangs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how is this information usually received? (CHECK ONE)

☐ Admission by youth

☐ Revealed by others _____ (please specify who)

☐ State rap sheet

☐ Social history from CSU

☐ Other existing records _____ (please specify)

2. When you receive a youth's social history, how often does it include information telling you whether or not the youth is involved in a gang?

☐ Always

☐ Frequently

☐ Sometimes

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

Section C

Please consider the overall youth gang problem in your community while answering the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what are the offense types most frequently committed by these groups? (CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)

☐ Homicide Offenses	☐ Larceny / Theft	☐ Fraud Offenses	☐ Gambling Offenses
☐ Sex Offenses-Forcible	☐ Arson	☐ Handling Stolen Property	☐ Prostitution Offenses
☐ Robbery	☐ Burglary / B&E	☐ Vandalism / Destruction	☐ Weapon Law Violations
☐ Assault Offenses	☐ Motor Vehicle Theft	☐ Drug Possession	☐ Curfew / Loitering
☐ Intimidation	☐ Counterfeiting / Forgery	☐ Drug Sales / Distribution	☐ Disorderly Conduct

☐ Other _____ (please specify)

2. Of the offenses committed by gangs in your community, please estimate the percentage that involve the use of weapons. _____ %

If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently? (CHECK ONE)

☐ Firearm

☐ Knife / Cutting Instrument

☐ Blunt Instrument

☐ Hands / Feet / Fist

☐ Other _____ (please specify)

3. If youth gangs in your area commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ Gangs in this area do not commit violent crimes
- ☐ Area Businesses
- ☐ Other Gangs
- ☐ Ethnic Groups
- ☐ Religious Groups
- ☐ Community in General
- ☐ Other _____ (please specify)

4. If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs in your locality, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed. (CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)

- ☐ Gangs do not sell drugs
- ☐ Cocaine / Crack
- ☐ Hallucinogens (LSD, Mushrooms, etc.)
- ☐ Heroin
- ☐ Marijuana
- ☐ Methamphetamine (a.k.a. - "crank," "crystal meth")
- ☐ Other _____ (please specify)

5. In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your locality has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

6. In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your locality has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

0784287040

7. Does your agency or locality have a formal definition for "youth gang" or "youth gang member?" If so, please write it here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Please include any other information you would like to share about youth gangs in your locality.

_____

_____

_____

In case we have any questions or need clarification, please provide contact information:

Name _____ Locality _____

Title _____ Phone _____

Agency _____ E-Mail _____

Please return this form BY OCTOBER 6, 1999.

By Mail, send to: ***Sherri Johnson, Department of Criminal Justice Services, 805 E. Broad St., 10th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219***

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Section A

APPENDIX E

Enter Gang Names Here:

Gang 1	Gang 2	Gang 3	Gang 4	Gang 5

In reference to the groups you listed above, place a checkmark in the boxes below to note the characteristics of each individual group.

Does this characteristic describe...	**Gang 1**	**Gang 2**	**Gang 3**	**Gang 4**	**Gang 5**
Group of 3 or more members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has organizational structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has identifiable leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members regularly associate as a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group sustains itself over time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At least one member is under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Majority of membership under age 18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group has female members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gang attracts negative attention from the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group identifies itself as a gang or group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members wear specific colors, items, or style of dress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members use hand signals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group controls or claims a specific geographic territory	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group uses initiation practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Members of group have similar goals, beliefs, or values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group causes fear or intimidation in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in occasional illegal activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in property crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in violent crime against persons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in selling or distributing drugs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group engages in recurrent felonious activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3314286816

Section B

1. Does your school maintain information about gang-related incidents that occur on school property?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many gang-related incidents occurred during the 1998 - 1999 school year? _____

2. Does your school have a School Resource Officer (SRO) or someone who serves a similar function?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, do at least one of these persons staff your school on a full time basis?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Section C

Please consider the youth gang problem in your community while answering the following questions:

1. What kinds of offenses are most frequently committed by these groups? **(CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)**

☐ Assault Offenses	☐ Arson	☐ Drug Sales / Distribution	☐ Truancy
☐ Intimidation	☐ Larceny / Theft	☐ Drug Possession	☐ Tobacco Violations
☐ Sex Offenses-Forcible	☐ Destruction / Vandalism	☐ Alcohol Violations	☐ Weapons Violations

☐ Other _____ **(please specify)**

2. How often do youth gangs use weapons when committing offenses on school grounds?

☐ Always
☐ Frequently
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

If weapons are used, which type is used most frequently? **(CHECK ONE)**

☐ Firearm
☐ Knife / Cutting Instrument
☐ Blunt Instrument
☐ Hands / Feet / Fist
☐ Other _____ **(please specify)**

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3. If youth gangs in your school commit violent crimes, who is the violence most frequently directed toward? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ Gangs in this school do not commit violent crimes
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Other Gangs
- ☐ Ethnic Groups
- ☐ Religious Groups
- ☐ Other _____ (please specify)

4. If you have gangs that sell / distribute drugs on school property, please indicate the types of drugs most commonly sold / distributed. (CHECK NO MORE THAN 3 BOXES)

- ☐ Gangs do not sell drugs
- ☐ Cocaine / Crack
- ☐ Hallucinogens (LSD, Mushrooms, etc.)
- ☐ Heroin
- ☐ Marijuana
- ☐ Methamphetamine (a.k.a. "crank," "crystal meth")
- ☐ Other _____ (please specify)

5. In the past 3 years, the number of gangs in your school has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

6. In the past 3 years, the number of gang members in your school has:

- ☐ Increased Significantly
- ☐ Increased Slightly
- ☐ Stayed the Same
- ☐ Decreased Slightly
- ☐ Decreased Significantly

7. Describe any problems, influence, or impact that youth gangs have in your school. (For example, in the classroom, on school buses, at school-sponsored events, on school grounds before or after school...)

_____

_____

_____

_____

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8. Does your school or school district have a formal definition for "youth gang" or "youth gang member?" If so, please write it here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Please include any other information you would like to share about youth gangs in your school.

_____

_____

_____

_____

In case we have any questions or need clarification, please provide contact information:

Name _____ Locality _____

Title _____ Phone _____

School _____ E-Mail _____

Please return this form BY OCTOBER 6, 1999.

By Mail, sent to: ***Sherri Johnson; Department of Criminal Justice Services, 805 E. Broad St., 10th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219***

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