

Utah Gang Task Force Summary of Activities and Reports

Mission Statement:

The Utah Gang Task Force will partner with local communities to support and establish a comprehensive, sustainable approach to prevent and reduce gang violence and gang related crime.

In order to accomplish this, the Task Force will:

- 1. Assess the gang problem in Utah and the resources available to address it.**
- 2. Compile and disseminate updated information.**
- 3. Identify best practices for state and local responses to gang issues.**
- 4. Identify funding and other resources available to state and local governments.**
- 5. Recommend statewide policies and legislative changes.**

The Utah Gang Task Force was established in December of 2008 by Governor John M. Hunstman, and was made up of officials and representatives from various state, county, and local governments and organizations. The group was organized to discuss the state's gang problem and make recommendations regarding the best ways to address those problems, including recommendations on current and future policy and legislation.

As a focus of its efforts, the Task Force conducted extensive research on gang issues and problems in Utah and existing gang intervention and prevention programs throughout the country. As a result of this research, the Task Force produced three separate products in the attempt to meet the goals of its mission statement:

1. A report summarizing past research on gangs and reviewing best practices for addressing gang issues (including prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry, as well as comprehensive multi-faceted programs).
2. A report assessing the current state of the gang problem in Utah.
3. A website to serve as a central location for information about gangs in Utah.

This information is intended to help local communities organize and address the issues they are facing.

On the following pages are brief summaries of the two reports produced by the Task Force. The full versions of each report can be found on the website www.gangfree.utah.gov, along with information for parents and youth regarding gang prevention and intervention, information regarding laws and policies in Utah, graffiti removal, and other resources.

Gang Research & Best Practices Report Summary

Moisés Próspero, Ph.D.

IE Consulting

OVERVIEW

This report reviews the gang literature in search of best practices to confront gang membership and crime. The review includes prevalence of gangs, gang crime, its consequences, characteristics of gangs, and gang control efforts. Based on the most recent gang literature, 11 recommendations are proposed for prevention, intervention, suppression, and re-entry services at individual, group and community levels. This overview will reference the larger report in brackets for more detailed information.

Although global documentation of gangs is scattered, gangs are found to be prevalent around the world. This research also reveals that the gang itself increases a member's likelihood of being involved in violence and other criminal behavior. Youth who are in gangs have a significantly higher homicide rate than non-gang delinquents. Therefore, gang control efforts need to address the uniqueness of gangs if we are to significantly reduce the consequences of gang crime, which include death, psychological trauma, neighborhood fear and significant economic costs to the community. [p. 1]

A serious concern is the alliance between Mexico's drug trafficking organizations (DTO: e.g., Los Zetas Cartel, La Familia Michoacana) with US gangs (e.g., Banditos Motorcycle Gang, MS-13). DTOs use motorcycle and street gangs as soldiers, for drug delivery into the US, and for smuggling guns into Mexico from the US. DTOs have been reported in every large city in the US, including Utah (Ogden and Salt Lake City). Although confronting Mexican DTOs is needed, addressing the large consumption of illegal drugs by the US and the sale of US military weapons to Mexican DTOs should also be prioritized. [p. 3]

The main risk factors for gang membership are impulsivity, negative life events, lack of sense of belonging, antisocial attitudes, delinquent peers, and lack of parental supervision. The risk factors for gang formation are communities that lack appropriate jobs, lack prosocial alternate activities to gang members, lack informal and formal controls but have minority youth segregation and an out-migration of the middle class. The factors related to gang violence are the presence of firearms, ethnic tensions, and the social norm of using guns during conflict. [p. 7]

Research has revealed that much of what the public knows about gangs are myths. For example, gangs are generally poorly organized and have unstable leadership. Gangs are ethnically diverse (25% White, 31% Black, 25% Latino) with a large percentage of females (25-33%) who are core and fringe members. Surprisingly, many members leave the gang within a year, usually by maturing out, not by death as shown my media. There are at least two types of gang members identified: core and fringe. Core gang members are more likely to strongly identify with the gang, be more cohesive with their clique, stay longer in the gang, be more resistant to gang control efforts, and be more violent. At the group level, the cohesiveness of cliques within a gang is related to gang violence as these smaller tight groups of gang members are more likely to follow the "code of the streets" and violently retaliate when these codes are broken. [p. 9]

Through an extensive validation process that included data across the US collected through gang experts (law enforcement, gang workers, and researchers), a gang typology was created that included five types: traditional, neotraditional, compressed, collective, and specialty gangs. Traditional gangs are large (over 100 members), enduring, and territorial with a wide age range and several internal cliques. Neotraditional gangs are newer territorial gangs that appear to be evolving into larger traditional type of gangs. Compressed gangs make up the largest percentage of gangs (39%) and are smaller groups that have a relatively short history. Collective gangs are medium sized groups of adolescents and young adults that have not developed into a form that has any of the characteristics from other gangs. Specialty gangs are smaller groups that are involved in the following types of crimes: drugs, assault, burglary, theft, and robbery. Understanding the type of gang to be targeted should determine the gang control effort to be used. [p. 17].

The review revealed that gang control efforts have not been effective at addressing the issues of gang proliferation and gang crime. There are a few gang control efforts (OJJDP GRP and Chicago’s Ceasefire Program) that have attempted to be multi-level (individual, group, community) and comprehensive (prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry) and hold some promise for future success. Unfortunately, these approaches largely ignore the prevention and reentry levels in favor of intervention and suppression efforts. A few comprehensive models that may fill the prevention gap are Kids First and Megacommunities models. Effective reentry programs, unfortunately, are practically non-existent, which is extremely concerning as offenders who have been incarcerated for long periods of time are at greatest risk (several criminogenic needs) to re-victimize the community. Another area that has largely been ignored by gang control efforts but unique to gangs and related to increased gang violence is the cohesiveness of cliques within the larger gang. [pp. 21, 31]

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement multi-level comprehensive gang control efforts with goals & strategies [pp. 31, 38]

Trisector coalitions (government, non-profit and business sectors) should be brought together to implement multi-level, comprehensive gang control approaches and address mutually agreed overarching goals. Goals should include at least in two levels (individual, group, community) and more than one strategy (prevention, intervention, suppression, reentry). Municipalities and communities should consider implementing OJJDP’s Gang Reduction Program or Chicago’s Ceasefire as intervention and suppression strategies and the Kids First model as a prevention strategy. The Megacommunity model should be used to ensure that community level factors of gang formation (e.g., unemployment, ethnic tensions) are also addressed, in addition to individual gang membership (e.g., lack of belonging, antisocial attitudes).

2. Use data-driven assessment to identify target population (gangs, crime, & resources) [p. 41]

A community-wide assessment should be conducted to identify the prevalence, or risk of gang membership, crime and the resources available to address gang issues. A statewide database would facilitate the achievement of this task. The structural gang typology should be used to identify gang type in the targeted community.

3. Use programs found to be effective with non-gang members (Blueprint) [p. 23, 26, 40]

Since effective programs specifically aimed at gang membership and crime do not exist, it is recommended to use effective non-gang specific programs with gang members. The model programs identified by the Center for the Study & Prevention of Violence are: Midwestern Prevention Project; Big Brothers Big Sisters of America; Functional Family Therapy; Life Skills Training; Multisystemic Therapy; Nurse-Family Partnerships; Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care; Olweus Bullying Prevention Program; Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies; The Incredible Years.

The Incredible Years curriculum that focuses on Training for Parents should be considered as a primary prevention effort, as research has not only found it to improve parenting skills at home and improve academics, but has also found it to improve the relationship between parents.

If the G.R.E.A.T. program is to be implemented, it should be the most updated version with the gang-specific content and format changes and it should be rigorously evaluated to test effectiveness.

4. Use “hot spot” POP in collaboration with community organizations [p. 29, 41]

“Hot spots” policing has been found to be effective at decreasing criminal behavior in targeted areas, with minimal displacement of crime and some diffusion of benefits into adjacent areas. The use of problem-orientated policing (POP), such as the Houston Targeted Beat POP and the Jersey City POP, and proper assignment of cases to officers is believed to increase the likelihood of successful “hot spot” policing. However, community interventions should be included in these operations in order to address any dismantling of community cohesion as a result of suppression efforts.

5. Use improved street lighting with active close circuit TV [p. 24, 41]

Improved street lighting is an effective and fairly inexpensive method to reduce crime, including during the daylight hours. Improved street lighting may be seen as an investment by the community and therefore increase informal social controls in the neighborhood. In targeted areas where crime is prevalent, active close circuit TV should be used with improved street lighting.

6. Use long-term incarceration for extremely high risk violent offenders [p. 41]

Incarceration can provide a sense of safety and can actually be cost-beneficial (\$2.80:1 return on investment), but only with extremely high risk offenders (i.e., those who offend 12 times a year or identified by assessment like LSI-R). However, this policy should be narrowed to focus on those who are extremely high risk of causing harm to the community, as incarceration of lower risk offenders may actually increase re-victimization of our neighbors and property.

7. Evaluate all gang control efforts (process & outcome) [p. 21, 42]

Programs should follow the principles of effective intervention, as outcomes are dependent on how well the program follows these principles. Therefore, the fidelity of programs needs to be assessed via process evaluations. Process and outcome evaluations should be part of every gang-control effort to ensure that the program is being properly implemented, staff are properly trained, that funds are used efficiently, and that offenders are actually improving and not “getting worse.”

8. *Be proactive with media to raise awareness & educate public regarding gang issues [p. 42]*

Be proactive with media to help increase awareness of gang issues, to educate community members on preventative methods to reduce gang membership, etc. Increase awareness and education on gangs includes knowledge of risk and protective factors related to gang membership, formation, and crime.

9. *Develop gang-specific screening and assessments [p. 42]*

Gang members are not just higher level delinquent offenders and not all gang members are alike. However, gang-specific screening and assessment tools do not presently exist that specifically identify the risk of gang membership/crime or discriminate core from fringe gang members. Core gang members should not be mixed with fringe gang members (or at-risk youth). It is recommended that a gang-specific screening and assessment be identified or developed in order to match the appropriate intervention to the needs of the gang offender. Presently, two screening/assessment tools (GST: Dixon & Próspero, 2011; GREF: Sloane, 2011) are being tested and validated. Community-level assessments should also be developed to identify a community's level of risk for gang formation. This would guide the implementation of gang control efforts in neighborhoods.

10. *Develop gang-specific programs (e.g., reduce clique cohesion, reentry services) [p. 43]*

It is recommended that program workers, law enforcement officers, researchers, etc. should work collaboratively to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention aimed at reducing gang cohesion. Long-term, intensive group programming or suppression efforts are likely to increase the gang's and gang member's oppositional culture to authority, gang identification, and gang cohesion, and thereby make it much more difficult to reduce gang membership and gang crime (this may actually increase membership and crime). Therefore, programs should work individually with core gang members, rather than in groups, to reduce clique cohesion within the gang and focus on criminogenic needs without the interference of group dynamics. Similarly, law enforcement officers should interact individually with core gang members to avoid increasing gang cohesion.

11. *Develop a systems-level process & outcome evaluation tool (e.g., test fidelity of collaborative efforts, measure community impact) [p. 44]*

A systems-level process evaluation should be identified or developed that will assess the best practices associated to all parties involved in the system (e.g., providers, courts, probation, law enforcement, schools, etc.). Additionally, the process evaluation should assess the collaborative process (e.g., communication, shared data/resources, time, etc.). Although this is quite an endeavor, it is vital that we understand how the system influences individual behavior (prosocial and antisocial) and its community impact.



Gang Assessment Report Summary Ben Peterson, Ph.D. Utah Commission on Criminal & Juvenile Justice

An assessment plan was carried out that addressed limitations in any one source of gang data by looking at the gang issue from three different perspectives:

1. Objective data sources that collect individual offender behavioral data and/or system case processing data (**see section starting on p.5 of the full report**). This includes large tracking databases and data repositories operated by corrections, the courts, law enforcement, prosecutors, and schools. Problems with each source were discussed.
2. Youth self-reports of gang affiliation from statewide surveys of students in middle schools and high schools (**see section starting on p.17**). This also allowed comparison of gang membership to other types of antisocial activities and background risk/protective factors that are assessed in the Student Health and Risk Prevention (SHARP) survey.
3. Surveys of professionals working in schools, community supervision, correctional facilities, law enforcement, courts, and community organizations, as well as the general public, about their perceptions of gangs in their areas and communities, and the problems they may be causing (**see section starting on p.29**). This includes two new surveys that were conducted, one on the above-mentioned professionals and one on a statewide representative sample of Utah residents.

It is important to note that, while each perspective has its flaws, looking at the problem from multiple perspectives allows us to find areas of agreement that strengthen our confidence in that information beyond what we would have if it came from only one source or perspective. Consistent with this focus on areas of potential agreement, we decided early on in the process that it would be beneficial to narrow the focus to several specific questions:

1. What areas of the state (i.e., counties, districts, regions) are experiencing the most serious problems with gangs and gang crime, and what other areas might have emerging gang issues that need to be addressed?
2. What types of crime and other activities are gang members generally committing in the state, and what impact do gangs have on communities?

The other major theme that emerged from our analysis revolved around problems of data quality in many of the large agency databases with information related to gangs, including definitional issues and consistency in the process of data entry. Apart from these common questions and themes throughout the report, there were also other important findings that emerged from several of the data sources.

What areas of the state should we be most concerned about?

An important point to take away from the regional analyses of gangs and gang problems provided in the assessment report is that most sources point to a gang presence in many parts of the state, though obviously in varying degrees from one county or metropolitan area to the next. While it is hard to rely on any one source of information to determine which places in the state to be most concerned about, the report made an attempt to combine the regional data from all of the sources examined to get a better idea of which places appear to have the most

Utah Gang Best Practices & Assessment Reports – Combined Summary

established gang problems and which places may have a less recognized but growing gang presence (**please refer to Table 12 on p.49**).

This combined regional analysis provided a fairly clear grouping of counties based on their overall presence and/or problem with gangs at this time. The highest category (Weber, Salt Lake, and Tooele), with an average score greater than 3 (with 4 being the highest rating), appears to have pretty strong evidence of a current gang problem that is relatively high compared to other regions of the state. The clearly elevated nature of the problem in these three counties may justify increased support in the form of prevention, intervention, and suppression. The next category could be seen as either places with established lower-level gang problems (Utah, Davis) or places outside the Wasatch Front where gang problems are emerging and/or growing (Washington, Cache, Uintah, and Box Elder). The counties in this category should also be prime targets of prevention and intervention in particular, as well as suppression in some of those with larger populations (Utah, Davis, Washington), to prevent further growth of the problem. The next category below this one (Grand, Juab, Iron, Wasatch, Carbon, and Sanpete) contains mostly smaller counties that showed evidence of issues beyond a mere presence (i.e., a rating over 2 in at least one category). These counties may be ones to keep an eye on in the coming years, as well as being the focus of some prevention and intervention efforts. The fourth and largest category contains counties that did not show consistent evidence beyond the fact that there is likely some gang presence within their borders (albeit minimal at this point in time). While these counties do not show clear presence of a problem, some areas may still be in need of targeted prevention and intervention efforts to ensure that more youth do not join gangs and/or form new gangs. The final category contains four small counties (Wayne, Piute, Daggett, and Rich) that did not show any consistent evidence of a gang presence. In fact, the only affirmative ratings for any of the counties in this category came from their grouping within larger regions or task forces in two of the data sources (as well as one gang inmate from Wayne County).

It is important to note that this analysis is to be used as a general guideline to direct important efforts at prevention, intervention, and suppression. Grouping by county is the most useful way to present this information, though there is obviously recognition of the fact that the same situation will not necessarily be found in all parts of a given county. A county that falls on the higher end of the ratings may have areas completely free of gang problems, while a county that falls in the yellow or green categories may have an area experiencing more problems than the rest of the county. Either way, an important goal of this report was to identify areas with current and emerging gang problems, and we feel that this analysis is an important first step. We also need to rely on feedback from individuals within a given county to identify more targeted areas for various types of funding.

What types of criminal activities are gang members generally engaged in (and to what effect)?

Another goal of this assessment which the available data afforded was to get a better idea of what types of activities (criminal and otherwise) that gang members are engaging in that might be causing varying degrees of problems in our communities. The evidence is fairly clear from multiple sources that gangs and gang-affiliated individuals in Utah are engaging a significant amount of violent and disruptive activities in our neighborhoods, schools, and prisons, as well as drug-related offenses and property crimes. The most common activities cited include assaults, threats and intimidation (and bullying in schools), disorderly conduct of varying degrees, graffiti and vandalism, burglaries, and drug possession and distribution.

Utah Gang Best Practices & Assessment Reports – Combined Summary

Apart from the particular activities that gangs are engaging in, it is clear from the surveys of professional and public perceptions that gangs are having a negative impact on communities where they are present, including in contexts such as schools and correctional facilities. Concerns about gang presence were also related to concerns about violent crime, drug crime, graffiti, and sexual violence in the community (**see Table 12 on p.31 and second paragraph on p.44**). Also, individuals who were victims of crime in the previous year were significantly more likely to report a gang presence in their community (61.1% vs. 42.1%), and this was especially true for person crime victims (70.1%).

Summary of data limitations

A main theme of this report, especially in relation to the first section discussing objective data sources from criminal justice agencies in the state, may be that much of the current data available on gangs and gang-related crime in Utah is very limited at this time. The main issues that we find tend to be definitional and process-oriented. First, we lack a common definition of important terms relevant to gangs (gang, gang member, gang-related crime) even within a given area of the criminal justice system across the state. This also feeds into the other issue, as an established common definition of gang terms would allow more consistent data entry across different areas of the state within and between different parts of the criminal justice system. Consistency in the process of recording data is very important to our ability to trust the data and rely on it to draw important policy conclusions. At this time, there are several databases that have fields for entry of gang-related information that are not consistently used due to a lack of emphasis, training, and/or relevant definitions.

Based on the data and feedback that was received for this report, the O-Track database within the Department of Corrections is clearly the most reliable at this time in the information it provides about gang members in its system (**see pp.5-9**). They have a process in place where gang investigators screen information that is entered relevant to gang affiliation based on definitions used within this agency. The prison data are considered to be especially accurate, while the community (AP&P) data should be expected to improve in the coming years as the new process extends to this larger pool of offenders and investigators continue to screen and update the information on these offenders.

The law enforcement community in Utah is also working on forming a statewide gang intelligence database, the plans for which involve common definitions and an entry and screening process similar to that established by Corrections with O-Track (**see p.16**). The PIMS database operated by the Utah Prosecution Council has also recently undergone an update that should improve the scope and quality of the data available from prosecutors related to gang cases (**see pp.12-13**). These new initiatives and updated processes should be monitored to see the extent to which more accurate information improves the work of those individuals who use these databases the most, as well as facilitates the ability to track gang trends in these areas over time.

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), which oversees the CORIS database for district and justice courts and the CARE database for juvenile courts, seems to be the agency that would most benefit from common definitions and an improvement in training and other aspects of the process of data entry relevant to gang offenders and gang-related crimes (**see pp.9-11**). At this time, each database has a field or fields that would provide gang-relevant information, though neither provides data that is reliable due to their spotty and inconsistent use. It is not evident that there is a plan to institute any changes at this time, as there appears to be with the other agencies discussed above. The Juvenile Court and its CARE database have some unique problems to confront due to the population

Utah Gang Best Practices & Assessment Reports – Combined Summary

they serve, and may need to develop their own definitions and process. Finally, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) has recently taken over more control of the process of how incidents within the schools are reported to and by the districts (**see p.14**). Once again, school officials lack a definition for what makes an incident gang-related, and there is not much consistency across schools and districts in how the gang flag in their database is employed (if at all) as a result. USOE officials hope that this process will improve as more consistent standards are provided to the schools.

The bottom line in the issues and limitations with the data discussed above is that they decrease our confidence in the data available, and in our ability to conceptualize the problem and draw important policy conclusions. Without the inclusion of other survey-based data that was gathered for this report, it would have been very difficult to complete a worthwhile assessment of the gang problem in Utah.

Other important findings

Findings from Objective Data Sources

- In two separate data pulls from O-Track (Department of Corrections), 17.1% and 18.7% of prisoners were identified as being affiliated with an organized gang (**see pp.5-6**). Roughly three times as many male prisoners than female prisoners are documented gang members, and documented gang members tend to be disproportionately Hispanic (i.e., much higher percentage of gang population than prison population as a whole). A high and disproportionate number of gang inmates come from Salt Lake and Weber counties (based on court of conviction – **see Table 2 on p.7**).
- Almost one-quarter (22.2%) of documented incidents in the prison are gang-related, with the most common being related to assaults/threats (27.7%) and drug/alcohol/contraband (25.8%). For further information, **see Table 3 on p.8**.
- While gang-relevant data from CORIS (district and justice courts) was generally of poor quality (**see pp.9-11**), 24.1% of charges flagged as gang-related were assaults, followed by thefts (15.0%), burglaries (12.8%), and robberies (9.5%). Gang data in CARE (juvenile courts) was not considered reliable.
- Law enforcement officials across the state are currently pursuing a new statewide gang intelligence database that should improve the quality of and access to gang-related data. In the meantime, data were examined from several interagency task forces (Salt Lake Area Gang Project, Ogden/Weber Gang Task Force, and Washington County Task Force – **see pp. 13-14**). In all cases, documented gang members tended to be disproportionately Hispanic. A high percentage of gang-related crimes recorded by law enforcement were assaults (23.7% simple and aggravated in Salt Lake, 19.6% aggravated in Ogden/Weber).
- Gang-related incidents in schools are being recorded (though not in a systematic manner) in districts throughout the state, based on data compiled by the State Office of Education. The most common incident types involved disorderly conduct, simple assault/battery, and threats/intimidation, while incidents involving drugs were rarely marked as gang-related (**see Figure 2 on p.15**).
- Other databases that provided limited or no reliable information relevant to gang issues were PIMS (Utah Prosecution Council), criminal history (UCCH) and incident-based reporting (NIBRS) databases run through the Department of Public Safety, and O-Track data for community supervision (Adult Probation & Parole).

Findings from Youth Self-Reports (Statewide SHARP Surveys)

- 4-5% of youth in middle and high schools across the state (grades 6-12) report having some current or prior involvement in a gang over the five biennial survey assessments. Self-reported involvement appears to peak in the 8th grade (**see p.17**).
- Gang involvement percentages were at their lowest overall in the most recent 2011 assessment, including all grade levels with the exception of 12th grade (**see Figure 3 on p.18**).
- Youth in most parts of the state report some level of gang involvement on these surveys, including more rural areas outside of the Wasatch Front (**see Table 5 on p.19**).
- Social-Behavioral (i.e., early initiation of antisocial behavior and/or drug use, hanging out with antisocial peers) and Cognitive-Attitudinal (i.e., low self-esteem/depression, favorable attitudes toward antisocial behavior) factors tended to be most predictive of gang involvement and interest in joining a gang. Males and minority youth were also more likely to be gang-involved. For further information, **see Tables 6, 7, and 8 on pp.22-24**.
- Gang involved youth (and those interested in joining a gang to a lesser extent) had significantly higher antisocial outcome scores than youth not involved or not interested (**see Figure 4 on p.25**).
- Youth may join gangs for various psychosocial (i.e., status, belonging, security) and tangible (i.e., money/stuff) reasons, and this may be helpful to prevention and intervention efforts. Youth interested in joining a gang rated all reasons assessed higher than other youth (including those with gang involvement), especially concerns such as status, security, and excitement (**see Table 9 on p.26 and Figures 5 and 6 on p.27**). Gang-involved youth who rated status and money/stuff concerns high engaged in a higher level of antisocial behavior, while those who rated belonging and security concerns high had somewhat lower levels of antisocial outcomes.

Findings from Surveys Assessing Perceptions of Professionals and the General Public

- The Utah Gang Task Force developed a survey to target professionals who work with youth and adults who may be involved in gangs in several different categories of professions in 2009 (**see p. 29**).
- Not surprisingly, the vast majority (81.8%) of these professionals reported that they know of, or believe there is, a gang presence in their community. Respondents acknowledging a gang presence rated the overall impact of gangs on crime and other problems in their area at a moderate level (5.5 on a scale of 0-10).
- Ratings of gang presence and impact were significantly related to concerns about violent crime, drug crime, graffiti, and sexual violence in the community, and a large percentage of those reporting a gang presence across professional areas believed that gangs were at least partially responsible for property offenses (especially graffiti, vandalism, and burglary), violent offenses (especially assaults and threats/intimidation), and drug possession and distribution.
- Professional respondents from locations all over the state reported a gang presence and/or problems in the communities where they work (**see Table 10 on p.30**).
- Survey data also answered some important questions within each specific professional context targeted: schools (**see pp.31-34**), community supervision (probation, parole, case management, etc. – **see pp.34-36**), correctional facilities (**see pp.36-37**), law enforcement (**see pp.37-39**), courts (judges, prosecutors – **see pp.39-41**), and community organizations (**see pp.42-43**).
- CCJJ also included several similar questions regarding gang perceptions on their 2010 Utah Crime Survey, administered to a statewide representative sample of Utah residents (**see p.43**).

Utah Gang Best Practices & Assessment Reports – Combined Summary

- Overall, 49.5% of public respondents indicated that they know of, or believe there is, a gang presence in their community. Those acknowledging a gang presence rated the overall impact of gangs on crime and other problems in their area at a moderate level (5.8 on a scale of 0-10).
- Respondents from Weber and Salt Lake counties, along with urban/metro areas in general, tended to rate the impact of gangs on their communities the highest (**see Table 13 on p.44**). Washington and Cache counties were also relatively high in terms of perceived gang presence.
- Drug possession (96.8%) and drug sales (96.6%) were the most cited activities that respondents believed gangs are at least partially responsible for in their community, followed closely by vandalism (95.3%), graffiti (94.5%), and assaults (89.0%). All of the assessed criminal activities were cited by at least two-thirds of respondents who indicated a gang presence (**see Figure 17 on p.45**).
- 13.2% of property crime victims and 11.0% of person crime victims perceived at least one of their victimizations in the previous year to be at the hands of a gang member (**see Table 14 on p.46**).

Conclusions

First, the data from this report has helped to paint a better picture of the gang problem across the state and identify certain areas that may be in need of further assistance to not only fight current gang-related issues, but also to prevent youth and others from joining gangs. This assessment provides a quantitative evaluation of the gang problem by region of the state to identify areas with serious gang problems and others with emerging problems that may be “under the radar” in comparison to high population areas along the Wasatch Front. It also provides an account of the disruptive activities that gangs are most often engaging in, and how such activities are impacting our communities across the state. Finally, it provides demographic and background factors that might put individuals (especially youth) at risk for gang involvement, while also outlining potential reasons why people might join gangs. In doing this, it also provides perspectives from various groups and individuals involved with the problems in a variety of contexts, from self-reports by youth at varying levels of involvement in gangs to professionals working with youth and adults involved in gangs to the general public’s perceptions of their communities, and finally to criminal justice processing data coming out of our courts, prisons, law enforcement agencies, etc. This is all potentially actionable information that can be used by agency decision makers and other policy makers in terms of **where** and **who** to direct resources at, including prevention, intervention, and suppression. The companion report on best practices can help to determine **how** to direct those resources (i.e., what types of programs).

Second, some of these substantive conclusions must obviously be qualified by important conclusions regarding problems and limitations in the quality of data available, especially from many of the objective data sources discussed in the first section of the report. It is vitally important to our ability to track the gang problem over time and across locations that criminal justice officials and policy makers in the state develop and follow a single definition of “gang”, “gang member”, and “gang crime” that can be used in conjunction with improvements in our data recording processes and inputting. This will be a rather difficult undertaking, and some groups have already attempted it with varying results. It may be that individual agencies (most notably the Juvenile Court and their CARE database) end up deciding upon definitions that work for their own use. This has already begun in the Department of Corrections with their O-Track database and trained gang investigators performing screening of data, and with discussions by law enforcement of a statewide gang intelligence database, though it is

important that agencies coordinate their efforts to some extent. Either way, we have to ensure that the information that is being collected can be tied to something tangible that makes sense across agencies and across areas within a given agency. This will also involve a great deal of training for those responsible for handling (i.e., producing, entering, screening) this data once definitions are established.

Next Steps

We encourage agency decision makers and other policy makers to follow through with actionable information from this report, both in terms of its substantive conclusions (i.e., areas where gang problems are greatest and emerging, types of disruptive activities that gangs are engaging in, risk factors and reasons for gang involvement) and its conclusions about current data limitations (i.e., developing and implementing definitions of gang terms and improving the process of data recording and verification to increase reliability and confidence in the data). The information in this report should be used alongside that provided in the companion report on gang research and best practices to target areas and individuals most at-risk and in need with resources and programs that have been proven to work in reducing gang membership and related crime and community disruption. These efforts should include perspectives and input from not only law enforcement and other traditional criminal justice agencies, but also schools and the greater community.

While there is valuable information in this assessment, it is important to monitor improvements in the data sources that track gang-relevant information and, as confidence in this data increases and more quality data become available, conduct a follow-up assessment within five years. To be maximally useful, these assessments should be an ongoing process, along with evaluating any programs or initiatives that have been funded based on the recommendations of this report and its companion.