

INFOCUS



Caren Harp, Administrator

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Youth Gangs

Gangs have an adverse impact on youth and communities across America. Over the years, youth gangs have become increasingly complex, lethal, and resistant to control. Sustainable solutions must involve comprehensive approaches that contain the spread of gang activity, protect youth who are most susceptible, and hold those engaged in gang violence appropriately accountable.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) anti-gang initiatives help communities implement comprehensive, data-informed strategies to combat youth gangs.

Programs

OJJDP's anti-gang portfolio combines prevention, intervention, and suppression programs to help identify and address the root causes of youth gang activity within affected communities. These programs are based on the core components of the **OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model**.

Grantees work to change community members' attitudes regarding violence, provide youth with alternatives to gang membership, and educate them about the risks of gang involvement. OJJDP also funds services—including mentoring, life skills training, and substance abuse counseling—for gang members who want to desist from gang activity.

OJJDP funding helps communities gather and share data about their gang problem so they can develop effective strategies to suppress youth gangs and sustain reductions in youth violence.

The Office also funds programs to support youth victims of gang violence. Youth who experience violence are susceptible to behavioral and mental health challenges, including perpetrating violence in the future, substance use, depression, academic difficulties, and suicide.¹ OJJDP funding helps service providers identify, treat, and seek justice for victims.

Training and Technical Assistance

The **National Gang Center** provides information, training, and customized technical assistance to help communities address their unique gang problems. The center offers an array of resources, including the **Strategic Planning Tool** and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model—a proven framework for coordinated action that helps communities prevent youth from joining gangs and reduce street gang violence and crime.

For More Information

Access more information about OJJDP's youth gang prevention programs at <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/gang-violence-prevention>.

¹ David-Ferdon, C., Vivolo-Kantor, A.M., Dahlberg, L.L., Marshall, K.J., Rainford, N., and Hall, J.E. 2016. *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Funding

Between fiscal years 2017 and 2019, OJJDP awarded \$16.5 million to strengthen anti-gang initiatives nationwide.

- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2019—\$7.4 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2018—\$5.6 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2017—\$3.5 million**

From the Field

The South Houston Victims of Gang Violence Support Project is an OJJDP-funded, community-based gang prevention and intervention program.

In addition to providing services to victims of gang violence, the program coordinates multidisciplinary teams to track gang activity, fosters agency collaboration, develops policy, and conducts community outreach and education to address gang activity and victimization in Houston, TX.

"There are many victims [of youth gangs]—those who suffer from the actions of the gang, but also those youth who are lured into [gangs] only to be taken advantage of," says Patricia Harrington, division manager, city of Houston's Department of Neighborhoods. "Understanding their victimization is key to successfully helping them leave that life behind."



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Delinquency Prevention**
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