





NC Department of Public Safety
GOVERNOR'S CRIME COMMISSION

Josh Stein, Governor
Jeffrey Smythe, Secretary

Sheriff Charles S. Blackwood, Chairman
Caroline Farmer, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Appropriations Committee
House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Jeffrey Smythe, Secretary 
Caroline Farmer, Executive Director 

RE: Gang Prevention Report

DATE: March 31, 2026

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143B-1730, The State Highway Patrol, in conjunction with the State Bureau of Investigation and the Governor's Crime Commission, shall develop recommendations concerning the establishment of priorities and needed improvements with respect to gang prevention and shall report those recommendations to the chairs of the House of Representatives and Senate Appropriations Committees on Justice and Public Safety and to the chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety on or before March 1 of each year.

Attached is the Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force annual report. The recommendations contained herein reflect the contributions of the Governor's Crime Commission, the State Bureau of Investigation and the State Highway Patrol, all of which actively contribute to the Task Force's work.



Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force

Annual Report

March 2026



Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force

Leslie Cooley Dismukes and Siarra Scott, Co-Chairs

March 2026

Dear Governor Stein,

We are honored to serve as co-chairs of the Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force and remain committed to advancing efforts that reduce and ultimately eliminate gang violence across North Carolina.

Our work focuses on enhancing public safety through evidence-based strategies that deter and decrease gang participation. Through targeted intervention and strengthened prevention efforts, we aim to build safer communities and improve quality of life for all North Carolinians.

Over the next year, we will build actionable recommendations for gang prevention and intervention. In alignment with Executive Order 21, these recommendations will support a comprehensive public safety and public health approach that collaborates across sectors to promote safe communities. While previous task force initiatives have laid important groundwork, this new task force will build upon those efforts with data-driven strategies, best practices, and plans for implementation.

As co-chairs, we stand ready to support the task force and provide the leadership necessary to drive meaningful, lasting change in North Carolina.

Respectfully,

Leslie Cooley Dismukes



Secretary
NC Department of Adult Correction

Siarra Scott



Director
NC Office of Violence Prevention

Introduction

Gov. Josh Stein established the Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force (“Task Force”) with the signing of Executive Order 21 on Aug. 19, 2025. Housed within the Governor’s Crime Commission, the Task Force is co-chaired by N. C. Department of Adult Correction Secretary Leslie Cooley Dismukes and Siarra Scott, director of the Department of Public Safety’s Office of Violence Prevention.

The Task Force’s mission is to make recommendations to reduce the presence and impact of gang activity in North Carolina and support the implementation of such efforts. Gov. Stein directed the Task Force to include in its recommendations these factors: education, prevention, and intervention efforts focused on youth and justice-involved individuals; support and training for law enforcement; and enhanced coordination among community, local, state and federal partners.

The full executive order can be found in Appendix A.

2025 Legislative Report

Pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 143B-1730, the State Highway Patrol, in conjunction with the State Bureau of Investigation and the Governor's Crime Commission, published a [Gang Prevention Legislative Report](#) in March 2025. This report was referenced in Executive Order 21 and recommended the creation of this Task Force focused on gang prevention in North Carolina. The Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force is continuing to explore and expand on the recommendations made in the 2025 legislative report.

The full Gang Prevention Legislative Report can be found in Appendix B.

Task Force Structure

Executive Order 21 specifies that the Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force should be comprised of no more than 20 members appointed by the executive director of the Governor’s Crime Commission and the Task Force co-chairs. Statewide representation is important given that gangs affect all 100 counties in North Carolina. To promote transparency and community engagement, the executive director and co-chairs initiated an open call for applications, and more than 100 interested people applied. In reviewing applications, staff prioritized statewide representation and included expertise from public, private and non-profit sectors and former gang-involved people themselves.

Task Force Membership

Task Force Member	Position
Leslie Cooley Dismukes	Task Force Co-Chair ; Secretary, North Carolina Department of Adult Correction
Siarra Scott	Task Force Co-Chair ; Director, North Carolina Office of Violence Prevention
Kevin Blackburn	Prevention Work Group Chair ; Director, Kids Making It
Michelle Guarino	Intervention Work Group Chair ; Gang Free NC, Director of Program Development; The NC Center for Safer Schools, Assistant Director of Behavioral Health; Professor, NCSU School of Social Work
Steven Holmes	Enforcement: Intelligence and Interagency Coordination Work Group Chair ; Assistant Director, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation
Jamie Adams	District Attorney, District Attorney's Office-District 21
Ivy Bagley, FNP and PMHNP	Owner, Blessed and Healthy Families PLLC
Scottie Chavis	Captain, North Carolina State Highway Patrol
Kendall Taylor	Co-Founder and CEO, Salute 1st Academy of Men
Sharon Frazier	Founder/Director, Youth & Family Advocate, In Deed Youth and Family Empowerment Initiative
Jessica Hargett	Probation/Parole Officer, N. C. Department of Adult Correction
Krystal Harris	Director, Durham County Community Intervention and Support Services
W. Chuck Hastings	President, North Carolina Gang Investigators Association
David Johnson	Executive Director/Founder, Changing Faces to Change Lives
Ontario Joyner	Program Manager, Office of Survivor Care
Keynon Lake	Founder/Executive Director, My Daddy Taught Me That
Ed McMahon	Sheriff, New Hanover County Sheriff's Office
Estella Patterson	Chief of Police, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department
Rebecca Palmer	Pediatric Hospitalist, Brenner Children's Hospital
Danya Perry	Director, Wake County Government

Dana Rice	Associate Professor, Public Health Leadership and Practice, and Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, UNC Chapel Hill-Gillings School of Global Public Health
Nikki Shere	Prevention Coordinator, Anuvia Prevention and Recovery Center
Jeff Jackson	Ex-Officio Member; Attorney General of North Carolina
Dev Sangvai/ Designee: Adrian Daye	Ex-Officio Member; Secretary of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
William Lassiter	Ex-Officio Member; Deputy Secretary of North Carolina Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Jeffrey Smythe	Ex-Officio Member; Secretary of North Carolina Department of Public Safety
Maurice “Mo” Green/ Designee: Pachovia Lovett	Ex-Officio Member; Superintendent of North Carolina Public Instruction
Erik Lindahl	Ex-Officio Member; Assistant US Attorney, US Attorney's Office, Western District of North Carolina

Task Force Staff

Staff member	Position
Caroline Farmer	Executive Director, Governor’s Crime Commission, Department of Public Safety
Dr. Brandy McKoy	Director of Task Force and Community Engagement, Department of Public Safety
Meghan Chua	Task Force and Policy Specialist, Department of Public Safety

Task Force Meetings

The Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force held its initial meeting on Oct. 14, 2025. During the meeting, members settled the proposed committee structure, identified focus group areas and discussed next steps for the Task Force. Gov. Josh Stein attended and delivered closing remarks.

See Appendix C for the Oct. 14 meeting agenda.

The Task Force will continue to meet bimonthly in person on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Below are the proposed meeting dates for 2026:

Jan. 27, 2026*	July 28, 2026
March 24, 2026	Sept. 1, 2026
May 26, 2026	Nov. 24, 2026

*Due to inclement weather, the Jan. 27 meeting was rescheduled to Feb. 4 but then cancelled, also due to inclement weather.

Work Groups

At the first Task Force meeting, members determined that there should be three work groups:

- 1) Prevention
- 2) Intervention
- 3) Enforcement: Intelligence and Interagency Coordination

Work groups are comprised of Task Force members and additional participants with relevant expertise and lived experience. A Task Force member serves as the chair for each work group. Task Force co-chairs selected work group members through another applicant open call based on experience and geographic location to ensure representation from a variety of sectors and areas.

Work group membership can be found in Appendix D.

Work groups began meeting in Dec. 2025 and will meet at least monthly through the end of 2026. At each work group's initial two meetings, members used a list of key questions to establish a baseline understanding of fundamental concepts and definitions related to their group's area. Work groups will use the information gathered and the shared understanding developed from discussing key questions to inform each group's recommendations to the Task Force.

Prevention

The Prevention Work Group aims to avert initial gang participation and acts of violence from occurring through an upstream approach that addresses the root causes of violence. The work group's approach to prevention focuses on the following areas:

- Social determinants of health
- Risk and protective factors
- School-based programs

- Public awareness
- Mentorship

Intervention

The Intervention Work Group aims to reduce gang participation, increase disassociation, and promote positive behavior change through approaches that reach those at highest risk of gang involvement, including people actively involved in gangs and close associates. The work group's approach to intervention focuses on the following areas:

- Early intervention
- Community-based intervention
- Diversion
- Reentry
- Supporting individuals exiting gang life

Enforcement: Intelligence and Interagency Coordination

The Enforcement: Intelligence and Interagency Coordination Work Group's priority is the exchange of information between agencies and communities to facilitate better decision-making, threat identification, and prosecution for the purpose of reducing gang presence and activity. The work group's approach to enforcement via intelligence and interagency coordination focuses on the following areas:

- Strategic enforcement
- Data collection and data sharing
- Risk assessment
- Gang validation
- Communication

Task Force Plan

The Task Force’s plan is organized into three phases, as summarized below. The time frames provided are estimates and subject to change. The Task Force will provide regular updates to these phases as the project progresses.



Phase 1: Infrastructure

Winter 2025 - Spring 2026

The Task Force and work group members prepare to begin developing recommendations by ensuring that all members have a shared baseline understanding of key concepts. Background information has been compiled to support this alignment. The process emphasizes leveraging the expertise within each group and fostering common perspectives, minimizing significant differences in interpretation or approach.

Phase 2: Recommendation Development and Prioritization

Spring - Winter 2027

The Task Force will engage in a comprehensive process to develop actionable recommendations. This will include brainstorming and prioritizing ideas, leveraging internal and external subject matter expertise, and gathering data from diverse national, state and local resources. These efforts will ensure that recommendations are informed by evidence, expert insights, and a broad understanding of community needs.

Once recommendations have been developed, the Task Force will conduct a review of recommendations submitted by the work groups and prioritize these for implementation. Prioritization will be based on multiple criteria, including feasibility, potential impact, and

alignment with strategic goals. The final recommendations should fall into three key categories: programming, policy, and partnership, ensuring a comprehensive approach to gang prevention and intervention.

Phase 3: Implementation

Winter - Summer 2027

The Task Force will develop a comprehensive implementation plan for the prioritized recommendations and begin implementation. This plan will outline key components necessary for successful execution, including clearly defined goals, actionable steps, required resources, strategic partners, and realistic timeframes. By establishing this structured approach, the Task Force ensures sustainable progress toward reducing gang involvement and enhancing public safety.

Acknowledgments

North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC) Work Group Staff Leads, Jennifer (Jenni) Holste, Torie Keeton, Venecia Outlaw, and Tracy Springer

North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) Work Group Staff Leads, Paul Callanan and Meghan Chua

Governor's Crime Commission (GCC)

North Carolina State Highway Patrol (NCSHP)

State Bureau of Investigation (SBI)

North Carolina Gang Investigators Association (NCGIA)

Appendices

Appendix A: Executive Order 21

Appendix B: 2025 Gang Prevention Legislative Report

Appendix C: Oct. 14, 2025 Task Force Meeting Agenda

Appendix D: Work Group Membership

Appendix A:
Executive Order 21



State of North Carolina

JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR

August 19, 2025

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 21

ADVANCING SAFETY IN NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH THE OFFICE OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND THE GANG PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION TASK FORCE

WHEREAS, the safety of North Carolinians must be a top priority of all leaders, including leaders in state government; and

WHEREAS, all communities in our state should be free from harm and violence; and

WHEREAS, addressing violence is a matter of public safety and public health, as safe communities increase economic opportunity and lead to healthier people; and

WHEREAS, several state agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to, the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (“DAC”), the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (“DHHS”), the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (“DPS”), the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (“SBI”), the North Carolina State Highway Patrol (“SHP”), and the Governor’s Crime Commission (“GCC”), have initiatives and programs that advance safety across the state; and

WHEREAS, in Executive Order No. 279, Governor Cooper established within the DPS the North Carolina Office of Violence Prevention (“OVP”), which works to reduce violence and its associated harms and encourage safe storage of firearms; and

WHEREAS, Governor Cooper further established the Community Violence Advisory Board (“Advisory Board”) to provide guidance to the OVP; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Executive Order No. 279, the Advisory Board expired on March 31, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Governor Stein has determined that in order to best promote public safety for all North Carolinians, the OVP and the Advisory Board should continue; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina continues to be impacted by gang activity, including the presence of approximately 4,000 validated gang members across the state and an alarming rise in youth gang activity with suspected juvenile gang crime increasing nearly 50 percent in the past five years; and

WHEREAS, the 2025 Gang Prevention Legislative Report from the GCC, the SBI, and the SHP noted that gang-involved at-risk youth have more mental health problems than other at-risk youth, are twice as likely to have negative peer relationships than other at-risk youth, and are nearly twice as likely to have family with criminal behavior history; and

WHEREAS, the 2025 Gang Prevention Legislative Report recommended the creation of a task force focused on gang prevention to effectively combat gang activity in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Governor Stein has determined that in order to best promote public safety for all North Carolinians, a concerted, statewide effort focused on both gang prevention and intervention is required; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article III of the North Carolina Constitution and N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 143A-4 and 143B-4, the Governor is the chief executive officer of the state and is responsible for formulating and administering the policies of the executive branch of state government; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-12, the Governor has the authority and the duty to supervise the official conduct of all executive and ministerial officers.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in the undersigned as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of North Carolina, **IT IS ORDERED**:

Section 1. Continuing the Work of the Office of Violence Prevention.

The DPS is hereby directed to continue operating the OVP. The mission of the OVP shall remain to reduce violence and its associated harms and encourage safe storage of firearms in North Carolina by coordinating efforts across state agencies and partnering with local communities to support and deploy evidence-based and promising programs and strategies.

The OVP shall work closely and coordinate with other state agencies, including the DHHS to ensure a whole-of-government and public health approach to reducing violence.

The OVP may engage in activities that align with its mission, such as offering training and technical assistance, issuing best practice guidance and model processes, facilitating cross-jurisdictional information sharing, conducting public awareness campaigns, sharing data and collaborating with research institutions, and identifying and applying for funding from federal and philanthropic sources.

The OVP shall implement its strategic plan and performance objectives in coordination with the DHHS and the Advisory Board reestablished herein.

The OVP shall submit a report describing its activities, establishing priorities, and making recommendations to the Office of the Governor annually in December.

Section 2. Reestablishing the Community Violence Advisory Board.

To facilitate the OVP's collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, including public health professionals, law enforcement, community-based organizations, and survivors of violence, the DPS is hereby directed to reestablish the Advisory Board. In consultation with the Office of the Governor, the OVP shall manage the Advisory Board.

The Director shall ensure that the membership of the Advisory Board consists of individuals dedicated to the mission of the OVP. The Advisory Board will provide guidance to the Director, including on the implementation of the OVP's strategic plan.

Section 3. Establishing the Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force.

The GCC is hereby directed, in collaboration with the DAC and the OVP to establish the North Carolina Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force ("Task Force"). As an advisory body to the GCC, the Task Force shall be housed within the GCC with representatives of the DAC and OVP serving as co-chairs.

The mission of the Task Force shall be to make recommendations to reduce the presence and impact of gang activity in North Carolina and to report on and support the implementation of such efforts. It shall focus on, but not be limited to, education, prevention, and intervention efforts focused on youth and justice-involved individuals; support and training for law enforcement; and enhanced coordination among community, local, state, and federal partners.

The Executive Director of the GCC, in partnership with the Task Force co-chairs, shall name no more than twenty (20) members, in addition to the co-chairs, to the Task Force. Members shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from the SBI and the SHP; representatives from the education, law enforcement, and legal communities; representatives from community-based organizations and mental health and substance use organizations; and people who successfully left gangs.

The Task Force shall submit a report describing its activities, establishing priorities, and making recommendations to the Office of the Governor annually in March.

Section 4. Effective Date.

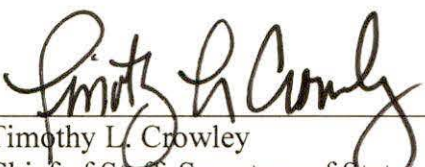
This Executive Order is effective immediately. Section 1 shall remain in effect until rescinded or superseded by another applicable Executive Order. Sections 2 and 3 shall remain in effect until August 31, 2027, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-16.2, or until rescinded.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capital in the City of Raleigh, this 19th day of August in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-five.



Josh Stein
Governor

ATTEST:



Timothy L. Crowley
Chief of Staff, Secretary of State



Appendix B:

2025 Gang Prevention Legislative Report



GANG PREVENTION LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Governor's Crime Commission
NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

March 1, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 143B-1730, the State Highway Patrol, in conjunction with the State Bureau of Investigation and the Governor's Crime Commission, is required to develop recommendations concerning the establishment of priorities and needed improvements with respect to gang prevention. These recommendations shall be made to the chairs of the House of Representatives and Senate Appropriations Committees on Justice and Public Safety and to the chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety on or before March 1 of each year.

Key Points

There are three main categories of recommendations of priorities and needed improvements with respect to gang prevention. These are Education & Training, Coordination & Communication, and Leadership. Given the increase of youth involved in gangs, many of these recommendations address youth as a critical piece in gang prevention.

First, Education and Training recommendations include expansion of existing programs such as EKG2 (Educating Kids on Guns and Gang Violence). The committee also recommends providing education on gang information and identification as well as de-escalation skills be taught to specific groups. Lastly, the committee also recommends training at-risk students life skills that lead to economic productivity and youth leadership as an alternative to gang engagement.

Second, the committee recommends increased coordination and communication especially amongst law enforcement agencies. The committee recommends that the Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) help local law enforcement build relationships with community intervention organizations. We recommend the NC Information Sharing and Analysis Center's (ISAAC) statewide Field Liaison Officer (FLO) Program to be expanded to include FLO Coordinators within the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. This will allow for a focus on gang prevention coordination and communication within each region of the state.

Interagency collaboration and sharing of information are recommended, including sharing gang data. Additional examples of interagency collaboration include the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction Special Operations and Intelligence Unit should examine the gang tracking system for solutions that facilitate the automatic sharing of relevant data for all certified user agencies. This collaboration is essential for enhancing communication and ensuring the integrity of documented information. Also, within the SBI, the Center for Safer Schools (CFSS) will need to establish coordination amongst multiple SBI sections.

Third, we recommend that state and local leaders prioritize gang prevention and intervention. State agencies are recommended to support gang prevention activities especially youth gang intervention programs. These leaders can provide support through shared expertise, collaboration and grant funding. Local government leadership is encouraged to work with the Office of Violence Prevention to address gang violence with a public health approach. This approach includes coordination with stakeholders in the community to identify and address local prevention needs. Law enforcement leadership is encouraged to receive gang training to understand how prioritizing gang documentation is beneficial and to understand how specialized units can collaborate with stakeholders and build trust in the community to reduce and prevent gang violence.

TRENDS

National

Nationally there is a lot of concern about gangs in the United States. On January 20, 2025, President Trump signed the executive order "Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists." This executive order specifically references gang concerns about the Venezuelan based Tren de Aragua and the Salvadoran based La Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang, citing their "campaigns of violence and terror in the United States and internationally" as threats to "the stability of the international order in the Western Hemisphere."

The U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP), compiles research on gangs, why youth join gangs, the risk factors and attractions that increase youth's propensity to join gangs, and how gangs form. Below are three findings relevant to prevention:

- "Youth join gangs for protection, enjoyment, respect, money, or because a friend is in a gang.
- Youth are at higher risk of joining a gang if they engage in delinquent behaviors, are aggressive or violent, experience multiple caretaker transitions, have many problems at school, associate with other gang-involved youth, or live in communities where they feel unsafe and where many youth are in trouble.

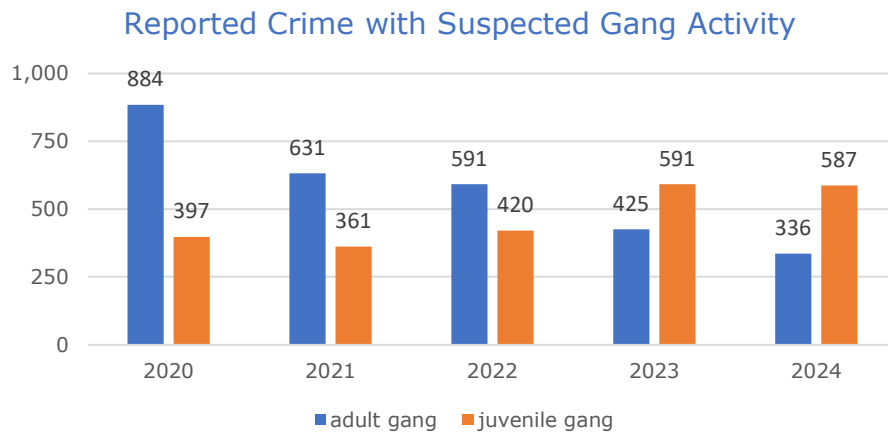
- To prevent youth from joining gangs, communities must strengthen families and schools, improve community supervision, train teachers and parents to manage disruptive youth, and teach students interpersonal skills.”¹

North Carolina

Recent law enforcement reports have paralleled national concerns about certain illegal gang activity in North Carolina. Specifically, Venezuelan Tren de Aragua (TdA) has a confirmed presence in neighboring states and at least one confirmed report of their presence in North Carolina. According to data from GangNET, there are approximately 4,000 validated gang members in North Carolina. The findings indicate that gang membership is predominantly male, with females representing only a small percentage. The majority of gang members tracked fall within the 25 to 34 age range, accounting for 50% of the total membership. Enhanced documentation by certified users regarding gang members improves information sharing among agencies, ultimately increasing officer safety and awareness.

Currently, approximately 1% of offenses reported in NC each year are related to gang activity.² In recent years, juvenile gang activity has overtaken adult gang crime activity. Data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) shows that in recent years, reported crime with suspected juvenile gang involvement has increased from 397 offenses in 2020 to 587 offenses in 2024. This is an increase of 47.9% in five years.

Suspected juvenile gang crime has increased 47.9% in 5 years



¹ Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs. NCJ Number. 231116. Author(s). James C. Howell. Date Published. December 2010.

² National Incident-Based Reporting System data, CJAC Data Warehouse, retrieved February 14, 2025.

North Carolina Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) uses a tool to assess the risk and needs of at-risk youth. According to the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI), in 2023 in North Carolina 6.7% overall youth are gang-affiliated. Of the 12,533 North Carolina juveniles administered the YASI during 2024, 86% of these at-risk youths experienced trauma. Surry, Richmond, Watauga, Alexander, Rowan, and Rockingham counties averaged the highest trauma scores for justice involved youth in the State with three or more traumatic indicators per youth. Unfortunately, this number is higher for female youth with 94% of girls residing in a youth development center diagnosed with trauma and stress related disorders. From the YASI trauma index, the top 3 traumas were parental separation/divorce, family members with criminal records and emotional neglect. Frequent trauma rankings were physical neglect, household substance abuse, emotional abuse and household mental illness.

YASI Trauma Index Item	Juveniles	Percentage
Victim of Emotional Abuse	2,186	17.44
Victim of Physical Abuse	1,072	8.55
Victim of Sexual Abuse	1,060	8.46
Victim of Emotional Neglect	2,542	20.28
Victim of Physical Neglect	2,371	18.92
Parental Separation/Divorce	8,028	64.05
Mother Treated Violently	172	1.37
Household Substance Abuse	2,348	18.73
Household Mental Illness	2,053	16.38
Family Members with Criminal Records	4,040	32.23

The YASI report which shows that gang-involved at-risk youth have more mental health problems than other at-risk youth (44% to 33%). Yet very few at-risk youth were being diagnosed, receiving medicines or receiving treatment for their mental health. This underlines the need for the public health approach for gang prevention. JJDP points out that 29% of juvenile detention stays were for youth who are identified as gang involved. Their 2024 Point in Time Survey (PITS) report identified that 98.2% of all Youth Development Centers (YDC) youth have at least one mental health diagnosis the average is 3.8 mental health diagnoses per youth. Moreover, 71.5% of YDC youth have been diagnosed with at least three mental health conditions.

44% of gang-involved youth have mental health problems.

98.2% of YCD youth have at least 1 mental health diagnosis. The average is 3.8.

Mental Health	Gang affiliated	Not affiliated	Difference
<i>Mental Health Problems</i>	44%	33%	-11%
<i>Diagnosed</i>	2%	1%	-1%
<i>Past Meds</i>	1%	1%	0%
<i>Current Meds</i>	1%	1%	0%
<i>Past Treatment</i>	1%	1%	0%
<i>Current Treatment</i>	1%	1%	0%

Of the 1,054 gang involved youth, a large number have family and friend relationships that show traumatic factors according to the YASI report. Gang affiliated at-risk youth are twice as likely to have negative peer relationships than other at-risk youth and the majority of their friendships are associated with gangs. They are almost twice as likely to have a family with criminal behavior history (40% to 22%). Gang affiliated youth are also more likely to be in a family with a history of alcohol/drugs, mental health disorders, and violence.

Family History	Gang Affiliated	Not Affiliated	Difference
<i>Alcohol/Drugs</i>	18%	10%	-8%
<i>Mental Health</i>	15%	11%	-4%
<i>Criminal</i>	40%	22%	-18%
<i>Violent</i>	11%	5%	-6%
Community & Peers			
<i>No Friends</i>	4%	14%	10%
<i>Negative Peers</i>	71%	36%	-35%
<i>Gang Associated</i>	80%	0%	-80%
<i>Family Gang Associated</i>	8%	0.30%	-8%
<i>Gang Member</i>	20%	0%	-20%

Lastly, gang affiliated at-risk youth were more justice-involved and attended school less often (78% to 88%) than other at-risk youth. Eight percent were high school dropouts. The gang affiliated youth were three times as likely to have had a previous residential placement and over four times as likely to be placed in detention or a YDC. According to JJDP gang involved youth stay longer in YDCs than non-gang involved youth (394 compared to 378 days on average). Gang affiliated youth are more than twice as likely to have had previous delinquency and four times as likely to have a previous weapon offense (36% to 9%). Thus, showing a clear connection between gang affiliation and weapons.

Legal History	Gang Affiliated	Not Affiliated	Difference
Previously Delinquent	63%	30%	-33%
Previous Weapon Offense	36%	9%	-27%
Previous Residential Placement	24%	7%	-17%
Detention	43%	9%	-34%
YDC	7%	1%	-6%
School	Gang Affiliated	Not Affiliated	Difference
<i>Enrolled Full-time(2)</i>	78%	88%	10%
<i>Dropped Out(4)</i>	8%	3%	-5%
<i>Graduated(1)</i>	2%	2%	0%
<i>Suspended(5)</i>	3%	2%	-1%

According to NIBRS data, crimes that have seen the most reported increase in juvenile gang activity between 2020 – 2024 are:

Aggravated assault: increase of 14.0% (114 to 130 offenses reported)

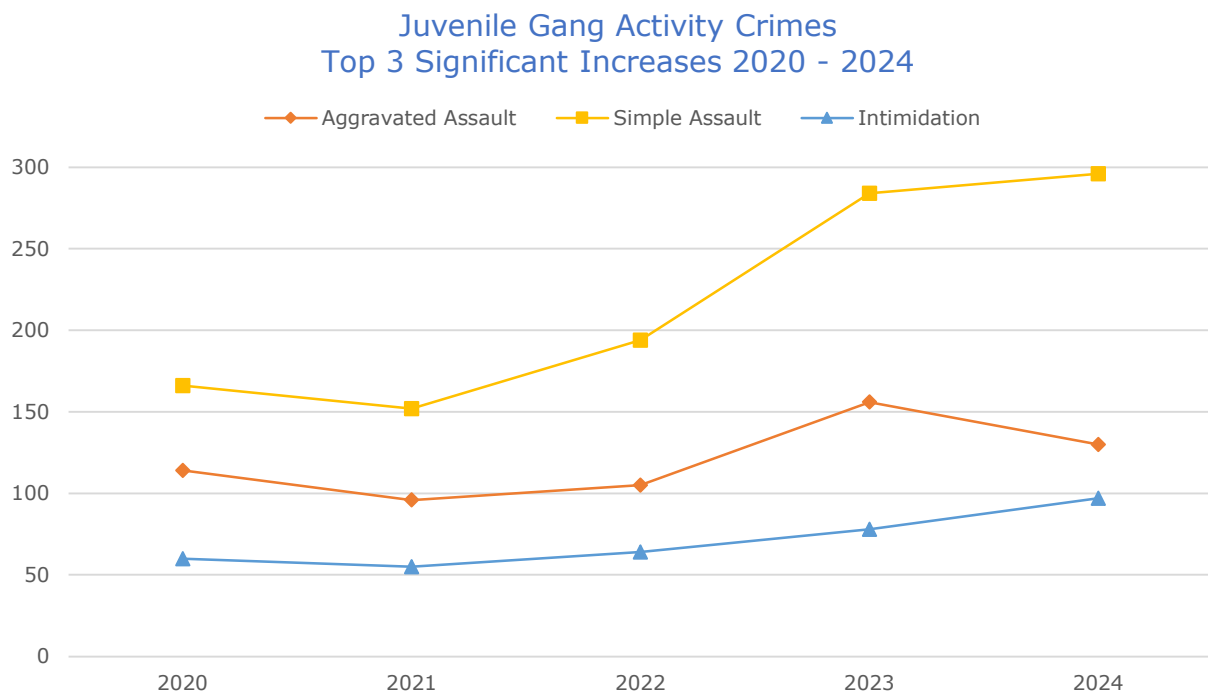
Defined as: an unlawful attack by one person upon another wherein the offender uses a weapon or displays it in a threatening manner, or the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Simple assault: increase of 78.3% (166 to 296 offenses reported)

Defined as: an unlawful physical attack by one person upon another where neither the offender displays a weapon, nor the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Intimidation: increase of 61.7% (60 to 97 offenses reported)

Defined as: to unlawfully place another person in reasonable fear of bodily harm through the use of threatening words and/or other conduct but without displaying a weapon or subjecting the victim to actual physical attack.



In 2023 of the top juvenile gang-affiliated charges possession of a handgun by a minor was third and robbery with a dangerous weapon was eighth. Three of the top 10 charges involved motor vehicles (breaking and entering, larceny and felony possession). Also resisting a public officer and simple assault were fourth and fifth. The possession of weapons, motor vehicle theft of weapons and resisting public officer data are factors that support the prevention recommendations below involving law enforcement. This trend of increased cases of gang intimidation confirms law enforcement reports of increased threat or intimidation against victims or witnesses. Feedback from law enforcement included the need for victim witness support. While not a gang prevention recommendation, it is an area of concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the North Carolina data above shows, for the last five years there are more cases of North Carolina youth involved in gang activity and ultimately violence. Although the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and GangNet gang-affiliated data is inconsistently input across the state, the JJDP gang-affiliated YASI data shows similar trends and provides insight upon underlying trauma related causes and needs. This data reiterates the Chief Justice's Task Force on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) - Informed Courts recommendations to have a trauma-informed approach. As the ACES Task Force states, "today's victim is tomorrow's defendant, and high crime areas are high victim areas." Chief Justice's report recommends proactively confronting trauma rather than waiting for the "predictable disasters waiting downstream." Based upon this data, we make the following recommendations.

Education and Training

1. Expand EKG2 (Educating Kids on Guns and Gang Violence) training curriculum for students.

EKG2 teaches students about the legal, medical, and emotional consequences of youth gun possession, substance abuse and related gun violence. Students attend a two-hour/two-day interactive classroom presentation by a uniformed law enforcement officer. There is currently a 7th grade and 9th grade curriculum. An after-school curriculum is coming soon.

2. Extend gang information and identification training beyond law enforcement.

Those in contact with youth may benefit from recognizing the ever-changing signs of gang involvement and gang activity. School teachers, assistants, bus drivers, School Resource Officers (SROs), law enforcement leadership, community healthcare workers, and community intervention and prevention programs could all benefit from understanding more about gangs. This public version of the law enforcement gang training could be a redacted version of law enforcement training that exists now.

3. Training at-risk students, the skills for productive economic pathways and leadership.

Programs that address ACEs often include community initiatives, mentoring, and family-centered approaches. However, successful gang prevention programs that address alienated and disaffected at-risk youth often need activities designed to help youth acquire skills and gain work experience. This allows youth to see a productive path exists for their lives outside of gang involvement.

4. Nonviolent communication and de-escalation skill training.

Based upon the data provided to JJDP, at-risk youth experience negative and even violence both at home and amongst peers. Training on de-escalation, violence reduction skills, mediating conflict, alternate resolution techniques should be taught to youth, SROs, school counselors, school teachers, assistants, bus drivers, law enforcement, community health workers, community intervention and prevention programs as well as to the families of youth. This recommendation addresses the impact on youth from traumatic exposure to adverse experiences and also aligns with trauma informed care training that many school districts are receiving as part of school staff annual training.

Communication and Coordination

1. Increase collaboration between local law enforcement and community organizations

The committee recommends the OVP help local law enforcement build relationships with community intervention organizations. Local law enforcement and community intervention organizations must work together to build trust and address violence prevention in their community. OVP could be a resource and provide training and examples of how this works well in certain locations. Local leadership should identify and establish a list of community stakeholders that could be community partners. These partnerships will address gang violence and should include organizations, entities, and businesses from the affected community. Community partnerships should include:

- City, county, and state government officials
- Local law enforcement
- School system representatives
- Post-secondary education representatives
- Public health community
- Churches and faith-based organizations
- Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) trusted and charged with doing this work in the community
- Community leaders and individuals from the most affected communities
- Private sector businesses and organizations
- Commerce workforce development could be a resource in certain communities
- Private donors who want to invest in the community

2. Reestablish a Gang Prevention Taskforce to address gang prevention

Gang activity landscape is changing quickly. In order to better prevent gang activity, we must have current knowledge of the trends of activity to make recommendations and plan for prevention. Thus, we recommend that a taskforce be appointed to continue to address gang prevention and also to track the implementation of the recommendations.

3. Enhance law enforcement collaboration

We recommend the NC Information Sharing and Analysis Center's (ISAAC) statewide Field Liaison Officer (FLO) Program to be expanded to include FLO Coordinators within the North Carolina State Highway Patrol in every region. This will allow for a focus on gang prevention coordination and communication with law enforcement within each region across the state. Expanding the FLO Program would include the following:

- Fuse and analyze information from multiple sources, jurisdictions, and disciplines into a regional and statewide picture.
- Support national information networks regarding gangs, cartels, and Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs).
- Build relationships amongst local, state, federal, public safety, and private sector partners.
- Assist with collaboration and communication of information amongst agencies statewide such as ALE, DPS, DAC, SBI, North Carolina Gang Investigators Association as well as local law enforcement.

Sharing information in coordination with the ISAAC's annual Statewide Threat Assessment, gang intelligence could equip prevention, preparation, response, and recovery resources with intelligence that enhances effectiveness and proactive intervention, thereby reducing public harm and minimizing impact. Examining this information and intelligence to produce strategic and tactical intelligence products could provide opportunities for enhanced threat identification and indicators, leading to early observation and proactive intervention.

4. State Agencies should systematically communicate and share gang data.

Systematic information sharing and connection amongst state and local agencies on gang-affiliated information will improve coordination, help local law enforcement and schools make more informed decisions, identify broader trends, enhance efficiency, and ultimately make the public safer by removing the silos and showing information across departments and jurisdictions. This is especially needed when addressing gangs that cross jurisdictional boundaries. We recommend automation improvements to the state's gang-tracking software, currently GangNet. An example of such an improvement would be having OPUS automatically download relevant data into GangNet rather than being manually input into the system. The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction Special Operations and Intelligence Unit should develop an efficient system that facilitates the automatic sharing of relevant data with certified user agencies. This collaboration is essential for enhancing communication and ensuring the integrity of documented information.

Moreover, the state should encourage enhanced documentation of gang member data. Understanding the identities of gang members and associates will facilitate law enforcement's collaboration with community stakeholders in developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Additional collaboration is needed. For example, the Center for Safer Schools (CFSS) was recently relocated to the NCSBI. Systematic coordination between CFSS with other SBI sections such as the Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit (BeTA) regarding at-risk youth should be implemented.

Leadership

1. Law enforcement leaders to create specialized gang units

To effectively address gang violence and prevention, leadership must prioritize the development of specialized units dedicated to gang identification, prevention, intervention and prosecution. These units should collaborate closely with other law enforcement, criminal justice professionals, and community stakeholders to enhance coordination and inform strategic interventions. Community based programs and the establishment of school behavioral threat teams are crucial for early intervention efforts.

2. Share data across law enforcement.

Additionally, leadership should encourage identification of gangs and members while promoting the sharing of data across law enforcement agencies and criminal justice professionals to improve coordination and enhance response effectiveness.

3. State leaders must support both gang prevention and intervention programs.

Encourage law enforcement leadership statewide to focus on identification of gang membership and trends. Prioritize grant funding that address factors that lead to gang membership. Highlight programs like Durham's Project BUILD throughout the state. Office of Violence Prevention can help local leaders coordinate communities to discuss and address the gang violence occurring locally. Leadership must support consistent and ongoing gang awareness training to strengthen the ability to address gang issues effectively, while empowering communities to engage in meaningful prevention efforts.

4. Expand the number of offenses for which gang activity elements are collected.

Currently, the FBI only collects reported gang activity for a limited number of offenses. These include murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, rape, sodomy, sexual assault with an object, fondling, aggravated assault, simple assault, intimidation and robbery. This means that there are many crimes for which gang activity simply is not recorded. Adding more offenses, such as drug offenses, which can be entered into the North Carolina's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) at the state level would allow for a more comprehensive view of gang activity in reported crime.

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Name	Organization
Caroline Farmer	NC Governor’s Crime Commission
Scottie Chavis	NC State Highway Patrol
Steven Holmes	NC State Bureau of Investigation
Siarra Scott	NC Office of Violence Prevention
Arthur Durham	NC Office of Violence Prevention
Keynon Lake	My Daddy Taught Me That, Youth Development Program
Michelle Beck	NC Criminal Justice Analysis Center
Chuck Hastings	NC Gang Investigators Association
Jose Hernandez	NC Gang Investigators Association
Michelle Guarino	NC Gang Investigators Association
Kevin Salguero	Durham County Sheriff’s Office
Kevin Webster	Durham County Sheriff’s Office
Jennifer Holste	NC Department of Adult Correction, GangNet

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs by James C. Howell December 2010, USDOJ, OJP, OJJDP
2. Gang Activity at The Durham County Detention Facility by Jim Stuit December 2021
3. Former Project Build Clients and Adult Convictions by Jim Stuit February 2023

Appendix C:

Oct 14, 2025 Task Force Meeting Agenda

Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force

Siarra Scott and Leslie Cooley Dismukes, Co-Chairs

Task Force Meeting

October 14, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Governor's Crime Commission
1201 Front Street, Raleigh NC

1:00 p.m.	Welcome Call to Order Ethics Reminder Task Force Overview	Secretary Leslie Dismukes, Co-Chair Director Siarra Scott, Co-Chair
1:10 p.m.	Legislative Report	Michelle Guarino Captain Scottie Chavis
1:40 p.m.	Introductions	Members and Task Force Staff
2:10 p.m.	Committee Structure Task Force Next Steps	Secretary Leslie Dismukes, Co-Chair Director Siarra Scott, Co-Chair
2:45 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Governor Josh Stein
3:00 p.m.	Adjourn Photograph	Secretary Leslie Dismukes, Co-Chair Director Siarra Scott, Co-Chair

2026 DATES (4th Tuesday)

January 27, 1-4 p.m.

March 24, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

May 26, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (Tuesday after Memorial Day)

July 28, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

September 22, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

November 24, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (Tuesday before Thanksgiving)



Appendix D:
Work Group Membership

**Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force
Work Group Membership**

Prevention Workgroup	Intervention Workgroup	Enforcement: Intelligence and Interagency Coordination Workgroup
Kevin Blackburn, Chair Ivy Bagley Sharon Frazier Danya Perry Becca Palmer Pachovia Lovett ¹ Adrian Daye ² Cecelia Ware Karen Fairley Allison Streeter Shannon Keyes William Van Tright Alyssa Tatum Tamara Veit Donyell Jones Steven Matthews Nicole Elliott Amanda VanKuren Sarah Maness William Breasure Melissa Elliot	Michelle Guarino, Chair Ed McMahon Nikki Shere Jessica Hargett W. Chuck Hastings David Johnson Jamie Adams Dr. Dana Rice Ontario Joyner Dr. Kendall Taylor Antonio Chalmers Shawn Smalls Tashia Cannon Tim Curington Kathleen Lockwood Justin Walker Gerald Givens Jr. Dr. Kebbler Williams Joseph Styles Jason Bensavage David Hess	Steven Holmes, Chair Scottie Chavis Krystal Harris Keynon Lake Erik Lindahl Estella Patterson Nathan Snyder Jack Monell Boz Zellinger Dr. Pam Peoples-Joyner Jared Robinson Linwood Whitehurst James Stuit Dr. Lisa Long Alexis Powell Keith Gordon Wendy Sullivan Kayla Redfoot Todd Cooke ³ Jason Baker Christopher Kluttz

¹ Designee for Superintendent Mo Green

² Designee for Secretary Dev Sangvai

³ Designee for Sheriff Danny Rogers