



# **COORDINATING COUNCIL ON GANG REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

## **Report of Progress: Florida Gang Reduction Strategy 2007-2009**

*February 2010*

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## COORDINATING COUNCIL ON GANG REDUCTION STRATEGIES

### Council Members (2009)

Florida Attorney General  
Hon. Bill McCollum  
Chair

Florida Department of Law  
Enforcement  
Gerald Bailey, Commissioner  
Vice-Chair

Florida Department of Children &  
Family Services  
George Sheldon, Secretary

Florida Department of Corrections  
Walter McNeil, Secretary

Florida Department of Education  
Eric Smith, Commissioner

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice  
Frank Peterman, Secretary

Office of Drug Control  
Bruce D. Grant, Director

Division of the Florida Highway Patrol  
Colonel John Czernis, Director

Florida Police Chiefs Association  
Chief Dorene Thomas, President

Florida Sheriffs Association  
Sheriff William Farmer, President

Florida Prosecuting Attorneys  
Association  
Hon. William P. Cervone, President

### Major Responsibilities

1. Gather, compile, assimilate, and facilitate the distribution to government agencies and community organizations information on criminal gangs and at-risk youth prevention and intervention programs in this state
2. Develop a statewide strategy to stop the growth of, reduce the number of, and render ineffectual criminal gangs in this state
3. Coordinate and give guidance and support to efforts by federal, state, and local government agencies; federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies; at-risk youth prevention and intervention organizations; elected officials and community leaders to combat criminal gangs and reduce criminal gang-related crime and violence in this state.

Section 34, Chapter 2008-238, Laws of Florida.



## STATE OF FLORIDA

**BILL McCOLLUM**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Dear Fellow Citizens:

Over the past three years, the Attorney General's Office has worked to develop and implement a Statewide Gang Reduction Strategy in order to combat one of the most serious threats to the safety and well being of our families and communities.

In October, 2007, I announced a collaborative effort initiated by our agency to develop the Statewide Gang Reduction Strategy. In conjunction with that initiative I brought together an Executive Group comprised of community leaders from around our state. In December, 2007, our office hosted a two-day Gang Reduction Strategy Summit here at the Capitol in Tallahassee. In June, 2008, we presented the strategy and began to develop the seven regional gang reduction task forces around the state to implement the strategy.

Today, I am pleased to present our first report of progress for the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy.

Through our combined efforts, we have seen great success in meeting our goal of suppressing and deterring gang activity around the state, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. I look forward to continuing our work to protect our state from the threat of gangs and gang violence.

Thank you for your continued support of our ongoing efforts to make Florida a safer place for our families and visitors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill McCollum".

Bill McCollum  
Attorney General

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007, Attorney General Bill McCollum initiated a collaborative effort to develop a Statewide Gang Reduction Strategy. In 2008, a statewide gang reduction strategy was developed through the collaborative work of a wide variety of state and community representatives from all over Florida. The Florida Gang Reduction Strategy is a statewide plan to reduce and deter gang-related crime and violence throughout the state of Florida. It coordinates community-based prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, and reentry programs, practices, and other measures that are closely aligned with state and local law enforcement efforts.

The strategy focuses on at-risk youth, and communities and schools where gangs are present through prevention and intervention measures. It targets criminal gangs, and gang members and associates involved in criminal activities through suppression and enforcement measures. And, it helps incarcerated gang members and former gang members through rehabilitation and reentry measures. The uniqueness of this initiative is its aim to overcome the individual anti-gang efforts implemented around the state.

### ***Prevalence of Gangs in Florida***

In 2009 the Florida Office of the Attorney General coordinated a statewide gang assessment through the law enforcement component of the Coordinating Council and the seven Florida Gang Reduction Task Forces. Based on information from the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice and 75% of Florida's local law enforcement agencies within 60 counties:

- Approximately 1,100 Criminal Gangs were identified;
- Approximately 48,812 Gang-Involved Persons were identified between the two categories:
  - o 40,071 Gang Members and Associates (certified per s. 874.03 (3)(a-k) F.S.)
  - o 8,741 Other Persons with Suspected Criminal Gang Affiliations

### ***Summary of Accomplishments***

The Coordinating Council on Gang Reduction Strategies, although formalized in law in 2008, does not receive Legislative appropriations. The seven Regional Gang Reduction Task Forces are not statutory or official bodies of the state. Participation is completely voluntary. There has been no funding or material support from the state available to the Task Forces since the inception of this Strategy. Despite this lack of specifically directed funding, the Council and Task Forces have made major progress as demonstrated by the following accomplishments:

- Enhancements to Chapter 874, Criminal Gang and Prevention Act
- Implementation of a gang prosecution strategy utilizing the Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization Act (RICO)
- Dedication of staff and community volunteers to coordinate data collection, training and education, community mobilization, and committee planning.

- Improvements in gang intelligence sharing among law enforcement
- Accomplishment of a statewide gang assessment
- Expanded gang training for law enforcement
- Increased community gang awareness education and prevention training
- Regularly scheduled regional Task Force meetings with demonstrated local goals and objectives, and protocols for information sharing
- Coordinated multi-county law enforcement gang sweeps (i.e., Region 4's eight county gang sweep conducted May 2009).

### ***2010 Priorities***

Among the activities the Coordinating Council on Gang Reduction Strategies will focus on in the following year:

- Collect and assess gang data annually
- Maximize gang intelligence information sharing
- Promote collaborative public-private partnerships
- Encourage state prosecutors to utilize enhanced tools under the RICO Act for major gang cases
- Support efforts to increase community programs such as graffiti abatement projects, youth development programs, early family intervention programs, prisoner re-entry programs, gang mentoring programs, and tattoo removal programs.
- Establish standardized in-service training programs for law enforcement, juvenile justice, education, and corrections staff
  - Develop community gang awareness training and technical assistance projects
  - Promote public awareness of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

This report provides a historical review of the development, implementation, and current outcomes of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy since its inception in 2007. The Florida Gang Reduction Strategy is a multi-component plan that coordinates community-based prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, and reentry programs, practices, and other measures that are closely aligned with state and local law enforcement efforts. The Strategy's concept of operation works to bring all vested parties together to identify methods which will improve gang intelligence documentation, enhance information sharing among all stakeholders, pool resources more effectively, and coordinate the multiple approaches necessary to reduce criminal and violent activities of gangs throughout the state.

This report:

- Describes the prevalence of gang activity and its implications in Florida based on available national, state, and local data.
- Outlines the mission, goals, objectives, and structure of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy.
- Provides a description of events and developments of 8 state agencies, 3 state associations, and 7 regional Gang Reduction Task Forces between 2007 and 2009.
- Lists 2010 priorities for the Coordinating Council

## PREVALENCE OF GANGS IN FLORIDA

"Criminal gang" means a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group that has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts, and that consists of three or more persons who have a common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols, including, but not limited to, terrorist organizations and hate groups. (s. 874.03 (1) F.S.)

The state of Florida is facing a mounting crisis caused by criminal gangs whose members threaten and terrorize communities and commit a multitude of crimes. Typical gang-related crimes include retail theft, criminal mischief, graffiti, burglary, drug trafficking, aggravated assault/battery, identity theft, intimidation/extortion, robbery, auto theft, weapons offenses, home invasions, and murder. Gangs have evolved into increasingly sophisticated and complex organized crime groups in their criminal tactics, schemes, and brutality. Left unchecked, the proliferation of criminal gangs and their activities both individually and collectively present a clear and present danger to the public order and safety of the State's citizens and communities.

One of the systemic challenges that has hindered Florida's efforts to reduce gangs and their criminal activities throughout the state has been the lack of clear and accurate information about gangs, their members, and the extent of their criminal activities. This has been in part due to gang migration, and the ever changing nature of gang culture; gangs are not static entities. Efforts to track gangs, their members, and the amount and nature of their criminal activities is also complicated by inconsistent data gathering and reporting procedures, as well as, the lack of standardization in exchanging information among different law enforcement agencies.

There have been a number of efforts to conduct statewide gang threat assessments. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) conducted two statewide assessments, one in 1991 and one in 2007. In 1991, approximately 159 gangs and 10,000 gang members were identified. In 2007, respondents to the FDLE survey identified approximately 1,500 gangs with over 65,000 gang members. This reflects a marked increase in gang activity regardless of any limitations in data gathering.

According to the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment released by the U.S. National Gang Intelligence Center, criminal gangs commit as much as 80 percent of the crime in many communities across the U.S. Local street gangs, or neighborhood-based gangs remain a significant threat because they still constitute the largest number of gangs and often exhibit the most violent behaviors. Increasingly, gang members are migrating from urban to suburban and rural areas. Reasons include, expanding drug distribution territories, increasing illicit revenue, recruiting new members, hiding from law enforcement, and escaping from other gangs. Law enforcement agencies are experiencing similar trends.

### **OAG Statewide Gang Assessment**

In 2009 the Florida Office of the Attorney General (OAG) coordinated a statewide gang assessment through the law enforcement component of the Coordinating Council and the seven Florida Gang Reduction Task Forces. This assessment will be conducted every year; its strict purpose will be to collect yearly baseline information on the number of gangs and gang members in Florida as one means to measure long-term progress of Florida's Gang Reduction Strategy. For this initial 2009 assessment, information was collected from the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and local law enforcement agencies across the state. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement maintains the InSite Intelligence Database which is designed for sharing gang intelligence among Florida law enforcement agencies. However, input into the system is voluntary and not all law enforcement agencies participate. Therefore, in an effort to reach all local law enforcement agencies, a short survey was developed by the OAG and distributed to all Sheriff's Offices. To avoid duplication of counts, Sheriff's Offices were requested to coordinate the compilation of information for all local law enforcement jurisdictions and county correctional departments in their respective counties.

Law enforcement agencies from 60 of Florida's 67 counties participated in this survey effort. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the 341 law enforcement agencies within those 60 counties

## Florida Gang Reduction Strategy

participated in the survey assessment. Of the approximately 356 local law enforcement agencies in the state<sup>1</sup>, 72 % contributed information to this assessment.

Findings are summarized in Table 1. Specific criminal gang names, although reported in this survey, are excluded from this report so as not to further compromise on-going criminal investigations. In Table 1, survey findings are categorized by the three major geographic regions of the state. Gang membership appears to be centered in Central and South Florida. Overall, respondents identified 1,100 active gangs in the state, 31,334 gang members and associates (certified per s. 874.03(3)(a-k), F.S.), and 6,913 other persons with suspected criminal gang affiliations. Data available from the Department of Corrections (DOC) indicates that there is at least one gang member from each of Florida's 67 counties serving in state prison. As of December 2009, the Department of Corrections reported 7,133 identified gang members in Florida's state prisons and 1,604 identified gang members released on community supervision. The Department of Juvenile Justice identified 1,828 juveniles under active supervision/placement<sup>1</sup> whose files include alerts that indicate potential gang involvement.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Findings of the 2009 OAG Gang Assessment**

Source	# of Documented Gangs	# of Documented Members & Associates F.S. 874.03	# of Other Suspected Gang Affiliates	Total Gang Persons
Gang Survey by North Region	221	2,132	699	2,831
Gang Survey by Central Region	422	12,663	3,068	15,731
Gang Survey by South Region	457	16,539	3,146	19,685
<b>Gang Survey Total</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>31,334</b>	<b>6,913</b>	<b>38,247</b>
DOC Incarcerated		7,133		7,133
DOC Probation		1,604		1,604
DJJ Youth on Active Supervision			1,828	1,828
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>40,071</b>	<b>8,741</b>	<b>48,812</b>

(N=254 local Law Enforcement Agencies Reporting from 60 Florida Counties)

The accuracy of gang intelligence assessments depends upon the precision of field officers' documentation efforts and crime analysts' reporting efforts. As gang intelligence documentation and reporting procedures are becoming more uniform around the state, data integrity is improving. It is too early to tell whether these recent findings indicate a downward



trend or a more accurate count. As statewide assessments continue to be conducted annually in September, trend patterns will emerge, providing a better sense of the extent of the gang problem in Florida.

### **Implications**

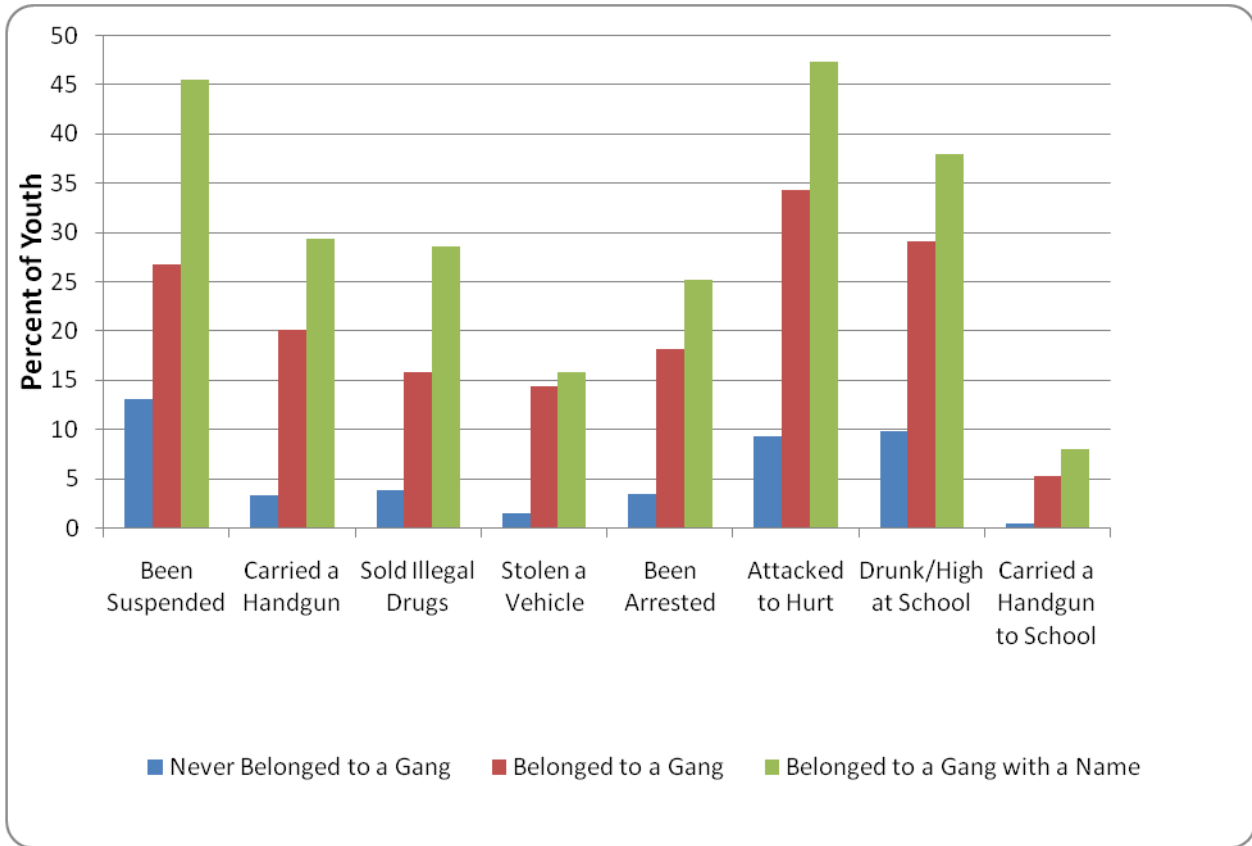
Extensive research indicates that many factors contribute to a youth's risk of criminal gang involvement.<sup>3</sup>

- Lives in neighborhood where gangs already exist, and where drugs and firearms are readily available.
- Lack of opportunities for involvement in positive activities and hobbies, or too much unsupervised leisure time.
- Problems at home; poor family management; problematic parent-child relationships; poor parental supervision.
- Associates with aggressive peers and peers who engage in delinquency.
- Prior and/or early involvement in delinquency, especially violence and alcohol or drug use
- Low attachment to school; poor educational or employment potential.
- The need for recognition and belonging which has not been met through positive avenues.

The average age of gang members ranges from 14 to 21 years of age. The early adolescent years (11–14 years of age) are a crucial time when youths are exposed to gangs and may consider joining a gang. Gang recruitment goes on in the schools, in neighborhoods, and through the internet. Youth as young as 8 years old are targets for recruitment.

Findings from the 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey<sup>4</sup> demonstrate that youth who self-identify as belonging to a gang are much more likely to be involved in violent and delinquent behaviors than those who do not belong to a gang. Gang involvement all too often leads a youth down a path of excessive violence, and increasingly negative outcomes.

**Prevalence of Delinquent Activity Compared to Level of Gang Involvement**



Safe, effective, and targeted anti-gang responses must be grounded in valid and reliable evidence of the gang problems within local communities. Law enforcement alone cannot reduce criminal gang activity and victimization. Long term success rests on changing behaviors. Keeping youth from joining gangs in the first place will take a multi-pronged approach that weaves together prevention, intervention, suppression, and deterrence strategies supported by strong community engagement. Focus on preventing youth from joining gangs is critical; however, work must also be done to break the cycle of criminal gang activity for those already involved in gangs. Effective prisoner reentry programs must also be part of the solution.

**OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES FROM 2007-2008**

**July 2007-December 2008: Empanelment of 18<sup>th</sup> Statewide Grand Jury**

The Office of Statewide Prosecution worked with Governor Charlie Crist to petition the Florida Supreme Court to convene the 18<sup>th</sup> Statewide Grand Jury. The Court issued the order to empanel the Grand Jury in June 2007 and determined the Jury to be based in West Palm Beach but investigate the increase in crimes related to gang activity statewide<sup>5</sup>. Jury selection began in August 2007. The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit served as hosts for its operation. This included the

work of Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll and the Office of Sharon Bock, Clerk and Comptroller. Organized by the Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution and led by Statewide Prosecutor, Bill Shepherd, evidence was presented to the Statewide Grand Jury to seek indictments and produce 3 formal reports, or presentments. The Statewide Grand Jury met for a total of eighteen months.

### ***Indictments***

The Statewide Grand Jury returned four racketeering indictments with several amendments against four gangs in Florida: SUR-13, Top 6, 773 Boyz, and Westside. Those indictments have resulted in 24 defendants sentenced for a total of 305 years in state prison for offenses including narcotics trafficking, attempted first degree murder, battery on a law enforcement officer, arson, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and violations of the Florida Racketeer Influenced and Corruption Organization (RICO) Act. (An additional three defendants of the Westside gang are still awaiting sentencing, and there are ongoing investigations.)

### ***First Interim Report***

The Statewide Grand Jury released its first report, *Criminal Gangs and Gang Related Violence*<sup>6</sup>, in December 2007. The subject of this report centered on law enforcement strategies and the legal framework established for combating gangs. Assessing previous progress and challenges, the report outlines key areas for systemic improvement through legislative action and through policy and procedure improvements. Findings are grouped around the following concerns: (1) lack of resources dedicated to law enforcement and prosecutors, (2) statutory shortcomings, (3) witness protection needs, (4) inconsistent law enforcement information sharing, and (5) insufficient public education. Recommendations focus on: 1) strengthening Florida's criminal statutes and adding new provisions, 2) making modest yet critical increases in funding to law enforcement investigators and prosecutors, and 3) increasing communication and the sharing of information within the law enforcement community. Many of the Grand Jury recommendations were taken into account to draft HB43/SB76 in 2008.

The subject of the Grand Jury's second interim report concerning check cashing is not discussed here<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Third Interim Report***

Released in July 2008, The Jury's final presentment, *Prevention, Intervention, And Rehabilitation Response To Criminal Gangs*<sup>8</sup>, premises that solutions to gang violence cannot be found through law enforcement alone. It stresses the urgency of a unified approach which combines enforcement and suppression with prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation strategies to address the increasing gang problem in Florida. Such an approach better serves the State in the long term by preventing youth from entering gangs, providing intervention for those who have affiliated themselves with gangs, and rehabilitating gang members once they are criminally prosecuted and have completed their sentences. The report outlines recommendations at the local, state, and federal level. It recommends the active engagement of parents, schools, community, government, law enforcement, and private business. Additionally the report

supports the recommendations outlined in the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy (issued June 2008) and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention *Best Practices To Address Community Gang Problems* (2008).

### **July 2007 – June 2008: Collaboration of the Executive Leadership Group**

In 2007, the Office of the Attorney General initiated a collaborative effort to develop a Statewide Gang Reduction Strategy. In conjunction with that initiative, an Executive Leadership Group comprised of the heads of eight state agencies with responsibilities for either law enforcement and/or children, and the heads of three statewide associations came together to begin formulating a strategy. Members of the initial Statewide Gang Reduction Strategy Executive Leadership Group included Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum; Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Commissioner Gerald Bailey; Florida Department of Education, Commissioner Jeanine Blomberg; Florida Department of Children and Families, Secretary Robert Butterworth; Florida Department of Corrections, Secretary James McDonough; Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Secretary Walter McNeil; Governor’s Office of Drug Control, Director Colonel Bill Janes; Florida Highway Patrol, Director Colonel John Czernis; Florida Sheriffs Association, President, Baker County Sheriff Joey Dobson; Florida Police Chiefs Association, President, Chief H.C. “Skip” Clark II; Leon County Sheriff Larry Campbell; Second Judicial Circuit, State Attorney Willie Meggs; and, Auburndale Chief of Police, Nolan McLeod.

Following a series of meetings, the Group was in agreement that a unified and deliberate effort had to be made to stop the growth of criminal gangs, reduce the number of gangs and gang members, and render gangs ineffectual in this state. The Executive Group established a workgroup made up of state staff located in Tallahassee and representation from the Florida Gang Investigators Association.

The workgroup focused on:

- An initial assessment of the nature of the gang problem in Florida,
- The status of current resources available for addressing gang problems through prevention, intervention, enforcement, and rehabilitation,
- The organization of a Gang Reduction Strategy Summit held December 19-20, 2007, and
- The drafting of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy document released June 2008.

### **December 2007: Gang Reduction Strategy Summit**

As the next step in developing a statewide strategy, the Office of the Attorney General convened a two day Summit in Tallahassee bringing together federal, state, and local expertise. The Summit was designed to gain a better understanding of the gang-related problems around the state, learn about local efforts and initiatives demonstrating a positive impact, and to receive input for developing an effective statewide strategy. Statewide participants included

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representatives from The Florida Consortium of Urban Leagues, Boys and Girls Clubs, NAACP, YMCA, and many other prevention-based youth service organizations. Also in attendance were school educators, business leaders, leaders from the faith-based community, federal, local, and state government officials, gang investigators, prosecutors, probation officers, and other criminal justice representatives.

Participants were broken out into six discussion groups around the topics of risk-based prevention, intervention, gang suppression and deterrence, prosecution and criminal justice enhancements, rehabilitation and reentry, and community resources- infrastructure and implementation

Key recommendations included:<sup>9</sup>

- Establish a process for gang prevention and intervention that will engage multiple community sectors
- Prioritize measures that provide active supervision of youth, including readily available and accessible afterschool programs
- Highlight the need for parent resources, including support groups
- Create proposals for vocational and educational programs which could divert at-risk youth from gang recruitment
- Begin comprehensive rehabilitation and re-entry efforts aimed at Florida's juvenile and adult inmates very early during their incarceration
- Establish measures that standardize the collection and reporting of gang intelligence data and information sharing among law enforcement agencies across the state

### **June 2008: HB 43/SB 76: Anti Gang Legislation Passed Into Law**

Working closely with Attorney General Bill McCollum and Statewide Prosecutor Bill Shepherd, Senator Jeff Atwater (R—North Palm Beach), and Representative William Snyder (R—Stuart) crafted tough anti-gang legislation following recommendations from the 18<sup>th</sup> Statewide Grand Jury.

Key provisions of HB 43 sponsored by Rep. Snyder and corresponding SB 76 sponsored by Senator Atwater include:

- Enhancements to s. 874.03, F.S., definitions of a gang member
- Provisions that target gang kingpins by making it a first-degree felony punishable by life imprisonment for directing criminal gang-related activity
- Strengthened witness protection laws, using the underlying criminal acts as the starting benchmark for tampering and harassment penalties

- New offenses to the definition of RICO predicate incidents to reflect common gang behavior such as fleeing to elude or accessory after the fact
- Prohibiting the use of electronic communications to further the criminal interests of a gang
- Allowing for civil injunctions against convicted gang members who knowingly associate with other criminal gang members or associates
- Provisions for a first-degree felony punishable by life imprisonment for a gang member who is also a convicted felon to be in possession of a firearm
- Provisions to make it a third degree felony to intentionally cause, encourage, solicit or recruit a person to become a criminal gang member that requires as a condition of membership or continued membership the commission of any crime.

The Florida Legislature passed HB 43 in May 2008. Governor Crist signed it into law June 30, 2008, taking effect October 1, 2008.

### **June 2008: HB 43 Establishes Coordinating Council on Gang Reduction Strategies**

The passage of HB 43 formalized the Executive Leadership Group by formally establishing them as the Coordinating Council on Gang Reduction Strategies. The Coordinating Council has eleven members. Eight members represent the following state agencies –Department of Children and Families, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Law Enforcement, Executive Office of the Governor Office of Drug Control, and Office of the Attorney General. Three members represent the following state associations – Florida Police Chiefs Association, Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, and Florida Sheriffs Association. The Attorney General serves as Chair, and the Commissioner of the Department of Law Enforcement is the Vice Chair. The Council was established to provide coordination of gang reduction strategic activities at the state level, and to provide guidance, if necessary, to local gang reduction task forces. No Legislative appropriations support this Council.

### **June 2008: Release of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy**

With the endorsements of the Florida Consortium of Urban Leagues, YMCA, NAACP and the Boys & Girls Clubs, the report was released in June 2008. The Florida Gang Reduction Strategy was a culmination of efforts by the Coordinating Council and the wide representation of Summit participants. A statewide plan outlining a framework to reduce and deter gang-related crime and violence throughout the state of Florida, the Strategy sets state goals and objectives through 2012. It does not dictate top down solutions, but instead provides guidance for building a coordinated statewide response to the gang problem. As stressed by Attorney General Bill McCollum, the key to success of the strategy is the coordination and cooperation among community leaders, the business community, government entities, law enforcement,

and elected officials to support effective programs for young people who are the most likely targets of gang recruitment, and for identified young gang members.

“Derrick Brooks Charities and the Florida Consortium of Urban League Affiliates support the gang reduction strategy because of its three prongs: prevention/intervention; law enforcement; and rehabilitation and reentry. This holistic approach allows us to continue our efforts in prevention, intervention and awareness. We believe the strategy will allow us to reduce the proliferating of gang problems in the state of Florida.”

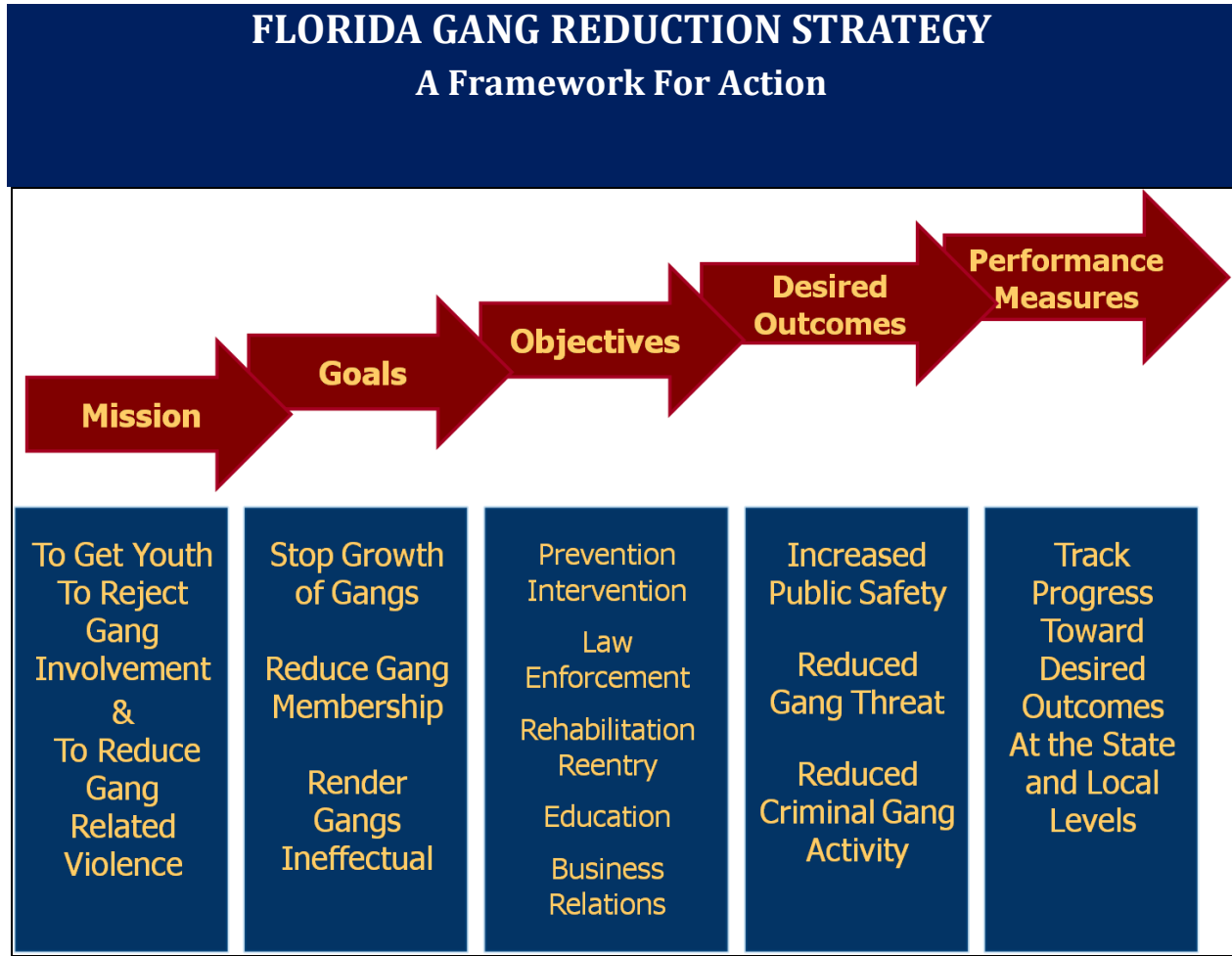
*Darrell Daniels, Director of the Derrick Brooks Charities Youth Programs for Hillsborough County.*

## FLORIDA GANG REDUCTION STRATEGY

The mission of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy centers on increasing public safety by empowering youth to reject criminal gang involvement and by substantially reducing gang-related crime and violence in Florida. Strategy objectives reflect the long term goals to stop the growth of gangs, reduce the number of gangs and gang members, and render gangs ineffectual.

### **Target Population**

The Strategy targets at-risk youth, gang-involved youth, and schools and communities where gangs are present through prevention/intervention measures. It targets criminal gangs, and gang members and associates involved in criminal activities through suppression and enforcement measures. And, it targets incarcerated gang members and former gang members through rehabilitation and reentry measures. The Strategy provides a framework which includes efforts to educate youth, make prevention/intervention services more effective, improve law enforcement information sharing, address re-entry issues and dramatically reduce gang membership and gang-related activities throughout Florida.



**Concept of Operation**

The driving operation of this Strategy is based on two concepts. First, change starts locally. Given the vast diversity of the state, a one-size fits all, top down solution will not work. A targeted response must begin with community-based solutions supported by a larger statewide framework.

Second, real impact will require the engagement of a wide representation of stakeholders. The coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and local governments, law enforcement, school systems, faith-based communities, prevention and intervention organizations, private business, elected officials, and other concerned citizens is essential to ensure a successful outcome. By bringing together this diversity of perspectives on topics related to gangs, the many great resources of talented experts are combined in order to develop thoughtful and deliberate solutions at the state and local community levels. This network of comprehensive state and community stakeholders can more effectively achieve (a) improved gang intelligence data collection and information sharing, (b) coordinated strategic planning, (c) the



implementation of best practices adapted to specific situations, and (d) the delivery of quality gang awareness and education training across the state.

### **Three Pillars**

The Strategy is based on a holistic approach that coordinates objectives around three broad courses of action necessary to address the complex aspects of the State's gang problem:

- Prevention/Intervention - targets at-risk youth, gang-involved youth, and communities and schools where gangs are present.
- Law Enforcement - targets criminal gangs, gang members and associates involved in criminal activities
- Rehabilitation/Reentry - targets incarcerated gang members, and ex-offenders who are gang members.

Five sets of objectives were developed as part of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy: Prevention/Intervention, Law Enforcement, Rehabilitation/Reentry, Education, and Business Relations.

#### ***Prevention/Intervention Objectives:***

- Objective 1: Expose Florida's gangs and their activities for their violent and destructive reality.
- Objective 2: Educate youth, parents and other mentoring adults to help Florida's youth reject gang involvement.
- Objective 3: Mobilize communities to repel gang appeal to Florida's youth.
- Objective 4: Provide effective prevention/intervention programs for those youth who are the most likely targets of gang recruitment and identified young gang members
- Objective 5: Encourage and assist with the creation of positive extracurricular activities and workforce development programs for Florida's at-risk youth.
- Objective 6: Support existing and new community groups/coalitions that take a stand against criminal gangs

#### ***Law Enforcement Objectives***

- Objective 1: Compile a statewide priority list and target every major criminal gang in Florida for dismantling by arresting and prosecuting gang leaders and key gang members.
- Objective 2: Identify and target for arrest and prosecution all gang kingpins in Florida and seek life imprisonment sentences.

## Florida Gang Reduction Strategy

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- Objective 3: Prioritize the prosecution of gun crimes related to gangs and gang members and target for prosecution those who provide guns to juvenile gang members ineligible to own or possess a gun.
- Objective 4: In areas of intense gang activity, build community policing, remove firearms from low to mid-level gang members and use injunctive powers to prohibit gang members from gathering.
- Objective 5: Improve intelligence gathering and information sharing on gangs and gang members and their activities among and between federal, state and local law enforcement, prosecuting authorities, schools and Juvenile Justice, Corrections, and Children and Families officials.
- Objective 6: Strengthen gang law enforcement and prosecution with more uniform, specialized training and designate one Assistant State Attorney in each judicial circuit whose sole, full-time responsibility is to prosecute and manage the prosecution of gangs, gang members and gang-related crimes.
- Objective 7: Coordinate federal, state and local law enforcement/prosecution efforts toward the common objective of combating gang activity in Florida, including setting priorities and targeting certain gangs, gang activities and gang-related prosecutions all over Florida.

### ***Rehabilitation and Re-entry Objectives:***

- Objective 1: Expand opportunities for criminal gang members in state or county correctional systems to participate in prison industry programs, educational programs, faith and character-based programs, drug treatment/rehabilitation programs and all other programs designed to rehabilitate offenders or assist offenders in preparing for re-entry into society upon completion of their sentences.
- Objective 2: Develop and implement specialized, individualized counseling and mentoring focused on motivating criminal gang members in state or county correctional systems to gain educational, vocational or job training, social skills, and lifestyle interests and habits that will turn offenders away from gang membership/participation and toward becoming productive members of society when released.
- Objective 3: Provide job placement for criminal gang members in state or county correctional systems upon release and provide a counselor/mentor for each such released offender to give guidance, assist with acquiring and keeping a job, educational advancement, and building positive relationships outside of gangs for a period of five years after release.
- Objective 4: Require all identified criminal gang members in state or county correctional systems, upon release, to register with an identified state office and keep their address, contact information and job status current for ten years after release and require such released offenders to report in person for counseling to a counselor/mentor at least quarterly for the first five years after release.

Objective 5: Train and qualify the necessary number of counselors/mentors/teachers to accomplish the individualized goals of gang member rehabilitation and re-entry from state or county correctional systems.

### ***Education Objectives***

Objective 1: Implement evidence-based violence prevention programs in schools that include anti-gang self-concepts and that teach resiliency skills which empower youth to reject gang involvement; implement school-wide bullying prevention programs; and provide students with positive and supportive role models.

Objective 2: Establish partnerships between schools and law enforcement which create school safety teams to assess the threat of gangs on school campus; establish policies and procedures that do not tolerate gang-related activity; consistently enforce gang suppression strategies; and apply effective reporting and documentation practices.

Objective 3: Institute protocols to identify students who are at greater risk of becoming gang-involved; provide proven behavioral intervention methods; make student assistance programs available which provide additional supports for academic, social, and employment skills development.

Objective 4: Train parents/families and school personnel how to identify gang-involved youth and gang-related behaviors and activities; train school personnel to safely interact with gang-involved youth; provide information for prevention and intervention resources.

Objective 5: Create collaborations with businesses, higher education institutions, and community organizations that support positive youth development opportunities such as mentoring relationships, participation in youth sports, fine arts, and other pro-social activities.

### ***Business Relations Objectives***

Objective 1: Develop and implement safety and security concepts in the workplace and marketplace.

Objective 2: Partner with community colleges, vocational and technical schools for job training skills.

Objective 3: Provide apprenticeships and work shadow job training opportunities.

Objective 4: Support community revitalization and redevelopment.

Objective 5: Identify and designate financial resources to mitigate gang activities.

## Organizational Structure

In order to organize local implementation of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy, the state has been organized into seven regional Gang Reduction Task Forces with the same composition as the state's Domestic Security Task Forces.

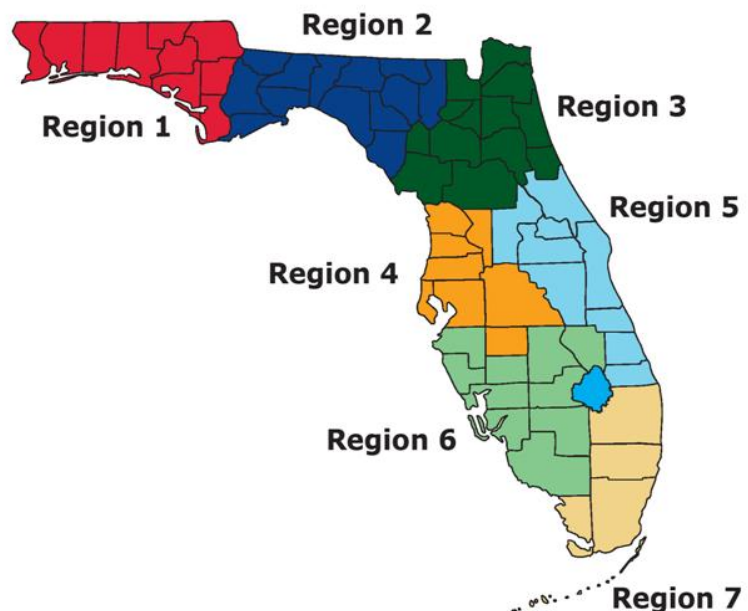
The Regional Task Forces are not statutory or official bodies of the state. Participation is completely voluntary. There has been no funding or material support from the state available to the Task Forces since the inception of this Strategy.

### ***Task Force Key Purposes:***

- Bring together the various community agencies, organizations, and leaders critical to this gang reduction effort under one umbrella.
- Improve upon regional and statewide gang intelligence sharing mechanisms.
- Oversee the collection of data necessary to measure progress in the strategy.
- Share information about community resources and services in order to better serve target populations.
- Develop county and regional plans of action based on the framework of the strategy.

## Regional Gang Reduction Task Forces

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- Act as a liaison between local community components and the state level Coordinating Council on Gang Reduction Strategies.

### Committees

A committee structure was proposed by Attorney General Bill McCollum, and adopted by the Regional Task Forces during the first organizing sessions.



Each Task Force is overseen by an appointed Chair and Co-Chairs for the region at large, and an appointed Chair for each county within the region. In addition, Task Force participants divide themselves into 5 subject committees: Education; Criminal Justice; Business Relations; Prevention/Intervention; and Rehabilitation/ Reentry. It is recommended that each standing committee be

populated by content experts as well as representatives from the other disciplines as a mechanism to break out of traditional silos and create a broader knowledge base for strategic planning.

As initial guidance, Task Force committees were encouraged to begin with the Strategy Objectives provided. However, consistent with the guiding principle that targeted solutions are best developed locally, committees have been tasked with developing their own goals and objectives in order to facilitate the reduction of gang related activities in their respective communities.

## 2008-2009 PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Coordinating Council Agency Updates 2008-2009



#### *Office of the Attorney General*

Since 2007, the Office of Attorney General has taken a lead role in advancing a strengthened approach to combat Florida's gang problems. Initiatives have included enhancing the legal framework, expanding public awareness, and coordinating the regional Gang Reduction Task Forces.

Addressed the legal framework established to prosecute gangs:

- Worked closely with the Legislature to strengthen and enhance the existing gang laws following the recommendations of the 18<sup>th</sup> Statewide Grand Jury
- Implemented a strategy, led by the **Office of Statewide Prosecution (OSP)**, which investigates and prosecutes gangs under the Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization Act (RICO). In partnership with many of Florida's law enforcement agencies and State Attorneys, OSP has led a unified attack against 12 gangs around the state thus far. Using RICO statutes, gangs are investigated as a complete enterprise; they are prosecuted as an entire organization instead of charging individual gang members in a piecemeal fashion. RICO allows prosecutors to couple prior criminal convictions with current criminal activity to give a jury the complete picture of a defendant's role in a criminal enterprise. This approach is labor-intensive in the investigative phase for police and prosecutors, but it produces a complete picture of the gang's activity when the case is presented to the court and the jury. It allows for minimized risk of witness intimidation by coupling historic convictions with new criminal activity. This approach is significant in two ways. It protects witnesses from potential threats and violence by supplementing their testimony with indisputable, proven fact that cannot be intimidated. Secondly, as the prosecutions progress through the court system, gang members seek to testify against one another and that process of betrayal among former gang members is just as critical to the implosion of the enterprise as the prison sentences themselves.



Coordinated the seven Regional Gang Reduction Task Forces

- Appointed a **statewide gang and prevention program coordinator** to organize the initial Gang Reduction Task Force meetings, provide process guidelines and strategic development tools, foster communications and collaboration among local, regional, and state entities, and develop materials to increase general public awareness of gang issues.
- Planned and hosted **seven Gang Reduction Task Force organizing sessions** around the state between September 2008 and February 2009. Initially, a subcommittee of the Coordinating Council met with the Attorney General and his staff at St. Petersburg College

Collaborative Labs to create a meeting structure. The purpose of each meeting was to bring together a wide representation of community stakeholders within each county in each region, present the Strategy and the Task Force organizational structure, appoint chairs, and begin local assessment and action plans. Working closely with the Office of the Attorney General, the Collaborative Labs of St. Petersburg College facilitated the focus group breakout sessions. The Lab has documented in depth meeting notes for each of the seven meetings<sup>10</sup>. Each of the 7 meetings was completely supported through corporate donations.

- Partnered with *Communities in Schools of Florida* to place AmeriCorps VISTA Members with the executive leadership of each Task Force region. A creative approach to providing Task Force additional staff, VISTA Members work to broaden community engagement in the Gang Reduction Task Force.

Advanced data collection efforts to measure trends in gang involvement

- Implemented a statewide data collection effort to assess the number of gangs and gang-involved persons per county.
- Collaborated with the Office of Drug Control and the Department of Children and Families to add additional gang questions to the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey. This is an annual survey which measures youth trends in substance use and delinquency behaviors.
- Increased public awareness of the state's response to its gang problems
- Developed the Florida Gang Reduction website (See [Floridagangreduction.com](http://Floridagangreduction.com))
- Provided numerous presentations and trainings around the state.



### ***Florida Department of Law Enforcement***

As part of an overall anti-violent crime strategy funded through a 2007 federal Bureau of Justice Assistance grant, FDLE launched several initiatives to address gang violence throughout the state. The strategy views gang violence as an organized criminal activity, and implements anti-gang initiatives that focus on investigations, intelligence, and training/awareness. The following initiatives align with the implementation of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy.

- Appointed a ***statewide coordinator for gang-related investigative initiatives*** to work with designated special agents in each region to develop cases that target gangs as an organized criminal enterprise. This approach has resulted in several successful RICO cases against gangs and gang members.
- Expanded FDLE’s intelligence infrastructure by designating ***regional intelligence agents and analysts*** in each region. These agents and analysts focus regional collection efforts to identify current and emerging trends with a priority on gangs.
- Increased the volume and significance of gang related intelligence through a coordinated effort to educate and inform local agencies about the benefits of contributing their gang-related intelligence to the criminal street gang module of the ***Florida Intelligence Site (InSite)***. There are currently 271 agencies participating in InSite, which represents a 60% increase in use of Florida’s gang intelligence database, which contains nearly 16,000 active gang cases and has documented nearly 24,000 gang members and associates.
- Developed and delivered basic, ***intermediate and advanced violent crime/criminal street gang awareness and training*** for local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. A total of 33 classes were conducted with 1,625 participants from local, state and federal agencies. FDLE also developed and distributed 1,198 copies of the gang awareness role call DVD “Gang Wise.”
- Provided leadership to each of the seven regional Gang Reduction Task Forces with the appointment of a Special Agent In Charge (SAC) as ***Gang Reduction Task Force Executive Co-Chair***.





### ***Department of Children and Families***

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides funding for substance abuse prevention and treatment services. All funded substance abuse prevention programs are designed to reduce risk and strengthen protective factors associated with substance abuse and which are also associated factors for youth crime and violence. Some of

DCF's programs do address gang involvement directly, but most address the common underlying risk factors. Special projects include:

- The 2009 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey which contains four questions about gang involvement in the middle school instrument and eight questions in the high school instrument.
- The recently published report, "Economic Costs of Underage Drinking in Florida" identifies juvenile crime and violence as the greatest cost accumulator (49%) of the economic costs of underage drinking. This relationship is a foundation for a federal grant application submitted by DCF in partnership with DJJ for conducting prevention activities in Dade, Broward, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Orange, and Duval counties. The award is pending the final federal budget.
- DCF's network of Community Substance Abuse Coalitions is using the economic impact report to re-assess the local relationship between underage drinking and youth crime and violence and to determine the local conditions that must be addressed to achieve better, healthier community outcomes.
- DCF conducts prevention programs in most counties in the state and has community substance abuse coalitions in 51 counties. Additionally, the following programs include activities specific to violence or gang prevention.
  1. *Too Good for Violence*
    - Drug Prevention Resource Center, Polk County
    - Guidance Clinic of the Keys, Monroe County
    - Operation PAR, Pinellas County
    - Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Citrus County
  2. *Project Drug Free: Reach for the Stars* (includes sessions specific to gang prevention)
    - David Lawrence Center, Collier County
  3. *Aspira Youth Leadership Development Program*
    - ASPIRA, Miami-Dade
- The Department contracts with its Community Based Care (CBC) Lead Agencies to provide Independent Living transition services to youth in and formerly in foster care. The CBC Lead Agencies are involved with local community agencies and stakeholders to promote positive peer and adult relationships and provide career planning, employment, and educational support. The purpose of Independent Living transition services is to assist older youth in foster care and young adults formerly in foster care to obtain life skills and education for independent living, employment, and to assume personal responsibility.

### ***Department of Corrections***



The primary focus for the Department of Corrections (DC) concerning the implementation of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy is to (1) safely and securely monitor and supervise gang members within its correctional facilities and those released on supervision; and, (2) work to improve outcomes for inmates and offenders. The Department has taken the lead in implementing the reentry objectives outlined in the strategy.

- Two new re-entry facilities were opened between 2008 and 2009. The re-entry facilities are designed to prepare inmates for transition back into their communities by emphasizing education, substance abuse treatment and life skills. The re-entry facility in Polk County, Demilly Correctional Institution, operates as a lower custody facility that provides programming and the work experience necessary for successful transition back into the community. The second re-entry facility, Baker Correctional Institution, serves inmates being released back into Duval County. The facility provides services that focus on evidence-based practices aimed at reducing recidivism. Inmates released from Baker C.I. are connected to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office *Portal of Entry*. This *Portal of Entry* is a partnership between the Department and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office that includes various rehabilitative services to better prepare inmates for their transition back into the community.
- Probation officers have improved their supervision practices of gang members by creating Individualized Supervision Plans for each offender on their caseload. These plans assist the offender in successfully complying with the terms of supervision.
- Probation officers have also teamed with local law enforcement to conduct sweeps of offenders' homes. In 2009, probation officers conducted 256 sweeps and arrested 885 offenders who were violating the terms of their supervision. During the sweeps at offenders' homes, officers recovered an Uzi submachine gun and an AK47 assault rifle, numerous pistols, shotguns, rifles and knives; swords, nunchuks and ammunition; pounds of marijuana (some packaged for sale), pills including Oxycontin, Ecstasy, methamphetamine and Xanax; rock and powder cocaine, and half a gallon of GHB, a date rape drug.
- The Department's Security Threat Group Unit continues to be steadfast in its resolve to disseminate critical information to local law enforcement about gang members who are about to be released from prison. The Department's Security Threat Group Unit also drafts an informative monthly newsletter that is emailed to staff, as well as outside law enforcement, that details gang information and keeps staff informed about gangs and their evolving criminal practices.
- State and regional DC staff actively participates in the seven regional Gang Reduction Task Forces in both county and regional committee roles.



### ***Department of Education***

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) is proud to be a partner in the Gang Reduction Strategy. Increased incidences of gang activity in communities and schools are a cause of concern for all educational stakeholders. The Department supports schools and school districts in their prevention efforts specifically aimed at keeping youth out of gangs. Florida Department of Education efforts aligned with the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy include:

- The creation of a gang awareness/prevention Web site for educators and parents: <http://www.fldoe.org/family/gangs.asp>
- The addition of two indicators to the OPPAGA School Safety and Security Best Practices that address the issue of gang activity in schools. Districts are required to conduct an annual self-assessment using the Best Practices per s.1006.07(6), Florida Statutes; in prior years, the Best Practices document has been helpful in improving districts' policies related to domestic security, sex offenders, and other critical school-related safety issues.
- Coordination with the state's seven Regional Gang Task Forces to enhance participation from the education community.

The Department recognizes that school success is a strong protective factor and that students who feel connected to school are less likely to become involved with criminal gangs.

- Florida Department of Education plans to enhance the parent and teacher resource information available via the Bureau of Family and Community Outreach's Web site and to continue to disseminate information on best practices with regard to gang prevention.
- FDOE plans to promote the importance of schools having an awareness of the level of gang activity within their communities and on their campuses, encouraging a strong and consistent coordinated response with local law enforcement.



### ***Department of Highway Patrol***

The Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) is Florida’s largest uniform law enforcement agency with statewide jurisdiction. Our statutory mission is to provide for highway safety through enforcement and education. The Patrol is also charged with assisting other agencies during natural disasters and civil unrest and when requested to assist with special situations. The Patrol has taken an aggressive stance toward the identification and arrest of gang members committing crimes in our primary area of responsibility – the streets and highways of our state. As a principal member of the Coordinating Council on Gang Reduction Strategies, the Patrol has worked diligently to implement the Council’s strategy as it relates to our mission.

#### **INTELLIGENCE**

- Developed a conduit to disseminate intelligence statewide to all sworn members through the securities of SafetyNet, a secure internal Intranet system.
- Established the Domestic Security and Intelligence Office which will coordinate and manage all intelligence information including gang issues.
- Gang Task Force Coordinators and members in the field collect and disseminate information associated with gangs through the statewide training coordinator and the Domestic Security and Intelligence Office.
- Supports the utilization of INSITE (Intelligence Network/Gang Database)

#### **OPERATIONS**

- Each Troop has designated a lieutenant or captain as the Gang Task Force Coordinator and they operate within the established regions.
- The Florida Highway Patrol has troopers assigned to multi-agency gang task forces to include the Miami-Dade Multi-Agency Gang Task Force, Broward County Multi-Agency Gang Task Force, and the Palm Beach County Violent Crimes Task Force.
- Members of the Contraband Interdiction Program (CIP) have been participating with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in criminal gang related operations such as those associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs, and also including *Operation Boomerang*, a seven month multi-agency investigation leading to 75 gang-related arrests in Tampa.

#### **TRAINING**

- Appointed a statewide training coordinator for the purposes of training, intelligence gathering, and intelligence dissemination.
- The Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) Training Academy has developed an intensive gang awareness course. This course enhances the troopers’ understanding and abilities to identify gang members, gang member associates, common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols, including, but not limited to, terrorist organizations and hate groups.
- The Florida Highway Patrol Gang Coordinator is a member of the National Alliance of Gang Investigators’ Association (NAGIA)



### ***Department of Juvenile Justice***

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice developed an Action Plan to implement the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy. Steps included:

- Established a Gang Free DJJ Steering Committee with representatives from all program areas to assist with identifying the needs at the local and regional levels.
- Created a Gang Free Mission Statement and Logo for the DJJ Internet/Intranet website that links to the Florida Attorney General's website.
- Conducted an overview of the Gang Free DJJ Initiative to DJJ Boards and Councils and at education conferences, roundtables and at DJJ/FGIA trainings.
- Identified DJJ personnel to serve as Regional Gang Coordinators, Circuit Gang Liaisons and Gang Representatives throughout DJJ units and facilities to enhance communication on identification, intervention and suppression efforts for gang involved youth.
- Provided Basic 101 Gang Awareness Training for 225 personnel statewide. Units/facilities continue to receive in-service gang awareness training that is delivered by law enforcement gang specialists. All Juvenile Probation Officers receive Gang Awareness Training during academy training, which is conducted by FGIA certified law enforcement gang specialists.
- DJJ Gang Liaisons, Gang Representatives participate in local law enforcement Intel/Task Force meetings with law enforcement agencies. DJJ Managers also participate in the Attorney General's Gang Reduction Regional Task Forces and sub-committees.

The Department continues to use a multi-disciplinary approach to address gang reduction strategies by working with local law enforcement, faith based programs, schools, and community organizations to strengthen families, educate communities, and provide pro-social activities.

Special agency initiatives that align with strategy include:

- DJJ has partnered with curriculum designers from New Freedom (Phoenix) to develop a curriculum specific DJJ involved youth throughout the DJJ continuum of services; detention, probation, day treatment, residential and aftercare. This process began with the development of curriculum for youth being served by detention services in the North Region. Trainers were identified and trained and methods for fidelity monitoring were established prior to implementation.
- Currently the TAG Detention Curriculum has been implemented in all eight of the north region detention centers. To ensure sustainability, each center has its own qualified TAG trainer. Eight individuals have successfully completed the TAG Train-the-Trainer course, which allows them to train other officers to facilitate TAG groups. An additional

five trainers from the DJJ Office of Accountability (OAA) are also available to train or provide support. The centers are required to conduct at least four TAG groups a week. Two facilitators per center have already conducted one round of the 30 lesson curriculum. The DJJ/Office of Accountability has begun fidelity monitoring and have staff assigned to each center for the purposes of data collection and fidelity monitoring. The pilot will end in March 2010, with research to determine whether the number of TAG groups conducted per month decrease physical PAR interventions and confinements, while controlling for how many youth were in the center.

- DJJ in partnership with law enforcement, judicial personnel, community organizations, and volunteers established the DJJ “Gang Free” Graffiti Abatement Projects in Manatee, Sarasota and Leon counties. The abatement projects in Manatee and Sarasota counties have been recognized by “Keep Manatee Beautiful.” Participation in community graffiti abatement projects include partnerships with DJJ detention, probation, residential and provider staff, law enforcement, judicial personnel, community organizations, and volunteers as well as those youth assigned to remove graffiti from community sites.



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# Florida Police Chiefs Association

Quality Law Enforcement for the Sunshine State

One of the most pressing challenges the state of Florida faces is the safety and security of our neighborhoods across the state. The prevalence of gang activity and gang-related violence in Florida is a growing threat to the safety and security of all Floridians.

In June, 2008, the Attorney General's Office initiated the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy. Through the implementation of the strategy, seven regional task forces have been formed throughout the state. The purpose of these task forces is to encourage coordination and cooperation among community leaders including the business community, government entities, law enforcement and elected officials. These partnerships are essential for meaningful solutions and success of this strategy.

The Florida Police Chiefs Association through its membership is proud to support the Attorney General's Gang Reduction Strategy by working with these community leaders as an integral part of the task forces. Several of our Police Chiefs and other members have taken on the responsibility of chairing committees in order to take a leadership role in carrying out the goals and objectives of their regional task force.

At this time, numerous police departments from around the state are actively working with statewide prosecution in developing cases on suspected and known gang members, in order to prosecute and bring them to justice.

The Association provides a forum for sharing information on the latest crime-fighting strategies, tools and techniques. By enhancing communications between agencies at all levels, the Association fosters the highest degree of police professionalism and competence.

The Florida Police Chiefs Association will continue to support the Gang Reduction Strategy and keep gang awareness at the forefront in order to strive to make our communities safer for all of the citizens we serve.

Respectfully,

Chief Dorene E. Thomas  
President

DET/am

Tallahassee Headquarters: 924 North Gadsden Street, Tallahassee, FL 32303 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 14038, Tallahassee, FL 32317-4038  
Telephone Lines: 1-800-332-8117, (850) 219-3631, (850) 219-3640 (Fax) Website: www.fpca.com



### **Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association**

Florida's State Attorneys play a vital role in gang reduction in and out of the courtroom.

- In their law enforcement roles, State Attorneys partner with other agencies to coordinate the overall community prosecution and policing efforts. Assistant State Attorneys are often assigned to neighborhoods to work with investigative officers, and together they focus on building strong cases against gang offenders. Sustained participation by State Attorneys in multi-agency task forces such as the Violent Crimes Taskforce in Palm Beach County allows prosecutors to become involved much earlier in the investigation of gang cases. The taskforce approach creates a seamless team of investigators and prosecutors from the initial stages of a case to the sentencing of the last defendant.
- State Attorneys have also increased information sharing with other law enforcement agencies and probation officers concerning gang-related activities. This greater communication encourages more frequent and informed contact with and supervision of gang offenders who may be on community release of some sort.
- Many State Attorneys are participating in specialized gang training and the assignment of prosecutors whose sole responsibility is to work directly with gang task forces and to prosecute and manage specialized gang offender caseloads.
- In the courtroom, Florida's State Attorneys are using statutory tools such as the RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization) Act, PRR (Prison Releasee Reoffender) Act, HFO (Habitual Felony Offender) and 10-20 Life sentencing enhancements to more aggressively remove violent offenders from the community for significant periods of time. This approach results in the dismantling of a gang's organization and leadership.
- As of January 27, 2010, the Florida DOC reported that state prosecutions have resulted in 7,133 gang members presently being incarcerated and another 1,604 gang members presently being on probation. Florida's State Attorneys plan to continue the multi-pronged approach described above in order to attack the problem of gang violence from multiple angles as we go forward in 2010 and beyond.



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**FLORIDA**  **SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION**

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Telephone 850/877-2165 • FAX 850/878-8665 • [www.flsheriffs.org](http://www.flsheriffs.org)

One of the main objectives of the Florida Sheriffs Association is to foster effective law enforcement through crime prevention, apprehension of criminals and the protection of life and property of the citizens of Florida. The Association works in partnership with state and local government to develop and implement public policies that will ensure a safer Florida for our citizens and visitors.

One of these key partnerships over the last few years has been with the Attorney General in his efforts to reduce gangs and gang activity throughout the state. The prevalence of gang activity and gang-related violence in Florida is a growing threat to the safety and security of all Floridians. The Florida Sheriffs Association through our staff and members is proud to support the Attorney General's Gang Reduction Strategy.

Since the implementation of the strategy in June, 2008, seven regional task forces have been formed throughout the state. The purpose of these task forces is to encourage coordination and cooperation among community leaders including the business community, government entities, law enforcement and elected officials.

The Florida Sheriffs Association through its membership is working with other community leaders as an integral part of the task forces. Several Sheriffs and other members have become active in serving on various committees and several have taken on the additional responsibility of becoming the Chairman of their regional task force in order to carry out the goals and objectives of the strategy.

At this time, sheriffs' offices from around the state are actively working with statewide prosecution in developing cases on suspected and known gang members, in order to prosecute and bring them to justice.

The Florida Sheriffs Association will continue to support the Gang Reduction Strategy in an effort to reduce the threat of gang-related violence and make our communities safe for all our citizens.



William O. "Bill" Farmer, Jr., President  
The Florida Sheriffs Association

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

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The Office of Drug Control has advanced the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy through its initiatives in community coalition building, data collection measures, and substance abuse prevention.

- The 2009 Florida Drug Control Strategy contains a specific objective to support the Attorney General's Gang Reduction Strategy through the coordination of community anti-drug coalition participation in the seven regional Gang Reduction Task Forces.
- To foster more purposeful anti-gang collaboration at the local level, the Office has supported the integration of anti-gang activities in the strategic plans of Florida's strong network of community anti-drug and prevention coalitions.
- In collaboration with the Department of Children and Families, and the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of Drug Control has added 4 additional gang-related questions to the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) which monitors trends in Florida youth's perceptions and attitudes about drugs and violence. Data collected from the FYSAS will provide state and county level trend information of youths' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to gangs. Subsequent analysis will be shared with key prevention focused stakeholders, including key community stakeholders so that they can address gang-related issues. (The next FYSAS will be administered the Spring of 2010 to more than 85,000 middle and high school students.)
- Florida Gang Reduction Strategy priority issues are represented at the Drug Policy Advisory Council (DPAC) which is facilitated by the Office of Drug Control.
- Recognizing that a major source of gang funding comes from street level control of narcotics distribution, the Office of Drug Control has increased its focus on strengthening inter-agency collaboration for substance abuse prevention and access to treatment with Florida's 67 anti-drug community coalitions in order to continue to reduce drug abuse throughout Florida's communities. Reducing overall substance abuse directly works to improve the social fabric of our communities, ultimately depriving the gangs of both new recruits as well as the primary source of their money, thereby advancing the Attorney General's Gang Reduction Strategy.

## Regional Gang Reduction Task Forces Progress 2008-2009

The seven regional Gang Reduction Task Forces provide a mechanism to organize local implementation of anti-gang efforts within the framework of the statewide Strategy. Mobilizing a statewide effort to coordinate the various disciplines and community sectors to voluntarily work together to reduce criminal gang activity is a monumental task. It does not happen overnight.

Each Task Force was launched with an initial organizing session hosted by the Attorney General and facilitated by the *Collaborative Labs at St. Petersburg College*. Although gang awareness and dedicated community resources varied by geographical location of the state, a common theme arose out of all seven meetings: Task Force activities must begin by (a) expanding awareness of gang issues to all community members, (b) accurately documenting the extent of local gang problems including those factors that contribute to criminal gang activity, and (c) bringing together vested stakeholders to cooperatively chart safe, effective, and targeted anti-gang responses.

### Indicators Underlying Success of Task Forces:

- ✓ Dedicated leadership
- ✓ Staff appointed to manage organizational tasks
- ✓ Good communication processes which reach all vested stakeholders
- ✓ Regularly scheduled meetings with focused agendas
- ✓ Consistent sharing of information and ideas among all stakeholders
- ✓ Use of “best practice” strategic planning tools

### ***Highlight of Task Force Major Accomplishments***

Progress and activities of each of the seven regional Gang Reduction Task Forces are too numerous to detail in this report. Specific progress has varied by region, but the deliberative efforts to bring together vested stakeholders to share information, resources, and ideas have been a growing dynamic in every region of the state. Overall accomplishments include:

- All Committee Chairs have been appointed in every region.
- For the majority of Task Forces, county and regional committees have been meeting regularly on a quarterly basis. These Task Forces have developed local goals and objectives, and are primarily in the phase of assessment and information sharing.
- Through specific efforts of the Executive Leadership of all seven Task Forces, approximately 75% of Florida’s local law enforcement agencies participated in the 2009 gang assessment survey coordinated by the Office of the Attorney General. As part of this same effort, Task Force Leadership used this opportunity to push for and

successfully see increased participation in FDLE’s InSite reporting database by local law enforcement.

- Three AmeriCorps VISTA Members have committed to 12 months of service, each, in Region 1, Region 2, and Region 7 with primary responsibilities for coordinating Task Force organizing activities and increasing community engagement.
- The creation of a Gang Reduction Oversight Council at the request of the Task Force Executive Leadership. Its purpose is to foster communications and collaboration amongst all seven Task Forces.
- Multi-county coordinated law enforcement gang sweeps, (i.e., Region 4’s eight county gang sweep conducted May 2009, and Region 5’s nine county probation compliance sweep conducted October 2009).
- Increased community gang awareness and prevention education.

***Additional Gang Reduction Task Force Information***

**Table 2: Results of OAG Statewide Gang Assessment by Gang Reduction Task Force Regions**

<b>Region</b>	<b>#of Documented Gangs</b>	<b># of Verified Members &amp; Associates</b>	<b># of Other Suspected Gang Affiliations</b>	<b>Total Gang Persons</b>
1	63	562	315	877
2	35	460	51	511
3	123	1110	333	1443
4	159	8779	816	9595
5	263	3884	2252	6136
6	86	3073	1216	4289
7	371	31334	1930	15396
Florida	1100	31334	6913	38247

*Information provided for 60 of Florida’s 67 Counties*

**Bay**  
**Calhoun**  
**Escambia**  
**Gulf**  
**Holmes**  
**Jackson**  
**Okaloosa**  
**Santa Rosa**  
**Walton**  
**Washington**

**Chair:** Sheriff Wendell Hall, Santa Rosa County  
**Co-Chair:** Sheriff David Morgan, Escambia County  
**Co-Chair:** SAC, Jay Etheridge, FDLE

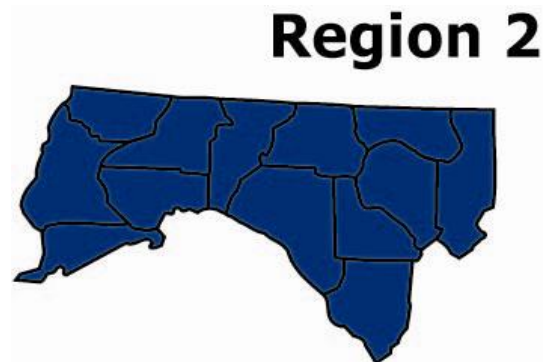
Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session:  
Emerald Coast Conference Center, Destin  
December 16, 2008



**Columbia**  
**Dixie**  
**Franklin**  
**Gadsden**  
**Hamilton**  
**Jefferson**  
**Lafayette**  
**Leon**  
**Liberty**  
**Madison**  
**Suwannee**  
**Taylor**  
**Wakulla**

**Chair:** Sheriff Larry Campbell, Leon County  
**Co-Chair:** Chief Dennis Jones, Tallahassee Police Department  
**Co-Chair:** SAC, Don Ladner, FDLE

Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session:  
Tallahassee Automobile Museum  
December 17, 2008



**Alachua**  
**Baker**  
**Bradford**  
**Clay**  
**Duval**  
**Flagler**  
**Gilchrist**  
**Levy**  
**Marion**  
**Nassau**  
**Putnam**  
**St. Johns**  
**Union**

**Chair:** Sheriff Rick Beseler, Clay County  
**Co-Chair:** Sheriff John Rutherford, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (Duval)  
**Co-Chair:** Sheriff Sadie Darnell, Alachua County  
**Co-Chair:** SAC, Dominick Pape, FDLE

Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session:  
Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village, St. Augustine  
January 14, 2009



**Citrus**  
**Hardee**  
**Hernando**  
**Hillsborough**  
**Pasco**  
**Pinellas**  
**Polk**  
**Sumter**

**Chair:** Sheriff David Gee, Hillsborough County  
**Co-Chair:** Sheriff Jim Coats, Pinellas County  
**Co-Chair:** SAC, Jim Madden FDLE

Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session:  
Collaborative Labs at St. Petersburg College  
September 9, 2008



**Brevard**  
**Indian River**  
**Lake**  
**Martin**  
**Orange**  
**Osceola**  
**Seminole**  
**St. Lucie**  
**Volusia**

**Chair:** Sheriff Don Eslinger, Seminole County  
**Co-Chair:** Chief Val Demings, Orlando Police Department  
**Co-Chair:** SAC Joyce Dawley, FDLE

Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session:  
Osceola Heritage Park, Kissimmee  
October 10, 2008



**Charlotte**  
**Collier**  
**Desoto**  
**Glades**  
**Hendry**  
**Highlands**  
**Lee**  
**Manatee**  
**Okeechobee**  
**Sarasota**

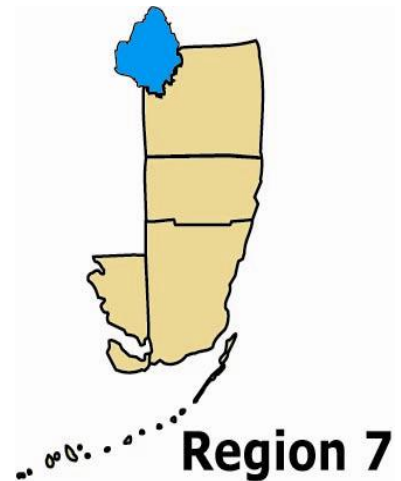
**Chair:** Sheriff Brad Steube, Manatee County  
**Co-Chair:** Sheriff Mike Scott, Lee County  
**Co-Chair:** SAC E.J. Picolo, FDLE

Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session  
Lee Civic Center, Ft. Myers  
November 14, 2008



**Broward**  
**Miami-Dade**  
**Monroe**  
**Palm Beach**

**Chair:** Sheriff Al Lamberti, Broward County  
**Co-Chair:** Sheriff Ric Bradshaw, Palm Beach County  
**Co-Chair:** Director, James Loftus, Miami-Dade Police Department  
**Co-Chair:** SAC Amos Rojas, FDLE



Collaborative Engagement Organizing Session:  
Sunrise Civic Center, Sunrise  
February 12, 2009

## 2010 STRATEGY PRIORITIES

Criminal gangs have had a progressively deleterious impact on Florida's communities for the past three decades. Prior to this initiative, anti-gang efforts have been predominantly implemented within silos. Recognizing that such an individualized approach is not enough, the members of the Coordinating Council have cooperatively pursued initiatives that use a multi-disciplinary approach to address gang reduction strategies. This report has highlighted the remarkable accomplishments of the Coordinating Council and regional Task Forces over the past two and a half years. The Coordinating Council will continue to vigorously pursue the goals and objectives of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy with the following priorities for 2010.

### Data Collection

#### Assess Gang Data Annually

- Collect and assess data pertaining to criminal gangs and their activities annually each September, and utilize results to adjust local community strategies.
- Collect and assess data pertaining to perceptions and attitudes about gang involvement among Florida's youth on an annual basis and use results to adjust local community strategies.
- Collect and assess information about local anti-gang strategies currently implemented in order to evaluate what is working.
- Collect information concerning local prevention, intervention, and prisoner re-entry resources in order to assess where the gaps exist.



### Improve Gang Intelligence Information Sharing

- Emphasize the value of FDLE's InSite Intelligence database as a statewide intelligence database.
- Work to improve technologies facilitating data sharing among disparate law enforcement intelligence systems.
- Train local agencies to maximize InSite benefits.
- Improve the Juvenile Justice Information System "gang alert" reporting mechanism.
- Plan to implement the Florida Highway Patrol Rapid ID technology system statewide.

### Community Engagement:

- Promote collaborative public-private partnerships at the local and state level.
- Conduct regular conference calls with Council staff and regional Task Force staff in order to promote networking, and information sharing within regions and across the state.
- Maximize participation of community volunteers.

### Strategic Programming

- Maintain pressure on criminal gangs through aggressive investigation and prosecution with emphasis on RICO prosecutions paying special attention to firearm violations.
- Maintain awareness of adaptations developing in the gang culture through an aggressive intelligence infrastructure.
- Increase the number of Graffiti Abatement Projects throughout the state.
- Pursue strong public-private partnerships which focus on family involvement strategies.
- Increase the number of re-entry facilities modeled after Jacksonville's Portal of Entry.
- Expand upon gang mentoring programs.
- Create a network of physicians willing to donate services for tattoo removal programs for former gang members.

### Education and Training

- Promote public awareness of the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy.
- Develop community gang awareness training and technical assistance projects.
- Include gang reduction education at the State Prevention Conference in September 2010.

- Incorporate anti-gang messaging into the Office of Drug Control’s ongoing drug prevention media campaign.
- Offer intermediate and advanced gang investigations/prosecution training opportunities to local law enforcement.
- Establish standardized Basic Gang 101 pre/in-service training requirement for all law enforcement, juvenile justice, education, and corrections staff.
- Update the Florida Gang Reduction Website as needed

**Florida Gang Reduction Strategy 2008-2012**  
*A Framework for Action*



## ENDOTES

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<sup>1</sup> This total comes from a question on the survey “How many law enforcement jurisdictions in your county excluding state level agencies?”. Respondents’ inclusion of K-12 and college campus police departments was inconsistent and, therefore, the total number of law enforcement jurisdictions reported here differs from the number reported by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

<sup>2</sup> As of December 2009, the DJJ Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) has identified youth in their system with a ‘marker’ (alert) that may indicate *potential* gang involvement. Alerts are entered by staff based on observations of youth, supplemental information (pictures, drawings, and other documents), statements by the youth and/or other sources with knowledge of a youth’s potential gang involvement. At this time, alerts are not routinely verified under the statutory requirements of s.874.03, F.S. for gang membership identification. Therefore, for this assessment, these youth are categorized as ‘other suspected gang affiliates’. In 2009, of the 26,635 youth on *active* supervision/placement, 1828 have been identified with gang alerts.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see for example: Hawkins, J. David and John A. Pollard. "Risk and Protective Factors: Are Both Necessary to Understand Diverse Behavioral Outcomes in Adolescence?", *Social Work Research*, 23, 3, (1999) pp. 145-158. And Howell, James C. "Moving Risk Factors into Developmental Theories of Gang Membership," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 3, 4, (2005) pp. 334-354.

<sup>4</sup> The Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey is an annual survey administered to public school students in grades 6-12. For more information visit: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/mentalhealth/publications/fysas/>

<sup>5</sup> The order in its entirety is available: [http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/pub\\_info/summaries/briefs/07/07-1128/Filed\\_06-20-2007\\_OrderImpanelingJury.pdf](http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/pub_info/summaries/briefs/07/07-1128/Filed_06-20-2007_OrderImpanelingJury.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Full report: <http://myfloridalegal.com/pages.nsf/Main/183DDD0436550DD7852573D10077DAC1>

<sup>7</sup> The second Interim Report, ***Check Cashers: A Call For Enforcement***. Full report: <http://myfloridalegal.com/pages.nsf/Main/AD14B6F69847762785257412006EDDBF>

<sup>8</sup> Full report: <http://myfloridalegal.com/pages.nsf/Main/6CFD3FD0110D5D8B852575590048C57D>

<sup>9</sup> The full recommendations of the Summit can be found at <http://www.floridagangreduction.com/flgangs.nsf/pages/Summit2007>

<sup>10</sup> The Collaborative Labs documented all meetings with their Real Time Records format. See [http://www.spcollege.edu/central/collaborative/08/AG/Gang\\_Reduction\\_RTRs.htm](http://www.spcollege.edu/central/collaborative/08/AG/Gang_Reduction_RTRs.htm)