



SUBURBAN KING COUNTY COORDINATING COUNCIL ON GANGS

Over the past decade King County has experienced an increase in juvenile gang-related crime and violence. Gang involvement is not just an inner city problem anymore; it spans all ethnic, cultural, geographical and socio-economic lines. While Seattle still has significant gang activity, gangs and youth violence are now very present in the suburban and rural communities of south and east King County.

Many suburban and rural communities are struggling to manage and respond to this increase in gang activity and youth violence. Gang involved youth present a unique challenge. They are often very high need with significant drug and alcohol issues, entrenched antisocial attitudes, and histories of trauma and violence. In order to effectively respond to the growing gang and youth violence problem in King County's suburban communities, the Center for Children & Youth Justice and our partners have convened a Council on Gangs comprised of high-level decision-makers from across South King County including mayors, police chiefs, and school district representatives.

The Suburban King County Coordinating Council on Gangs ("the Council") is designed to break down the systemic and procedural barriers that dissuade cross-system collaboration, coordination, and integration. Based on an understanding of the complexities of youth violence and the recognition that no single branch of government, jurisdiction, or agency is equipped to effectively address this issue, the Council seeks to promote a comprehensive response in which community organizations, schools, law enforcement, and local government agencies work together to develop policy goals and action strategies that reflect the current landscape of youth violence and utilize the best information, research, and practices available.

Success for the Council will be measured by the reduction of youth violence in general and gang activity specifically. In addition to driving policy decisions, the Council will evaluate and support the work that is already being done by: serving as a resource for information; collecting and sharing data; avoiding duplicate or conflicting efforts; leveraging resources; engaging youth and families; and fostering effective communication between agencies. In a climate traditionally defined by unilateral initiatives, competition for scarce resources, and unmet service needs, the Council is dedicated to establishing interagency, cross-jurisdictional partnerships that will provide the knowledge, relationships, and coordination of resources required to advance a comprehensive and collaborative response to youth violence in King County's suburban communities.

The Council is currently in the process of laying the foundation for a comprehensive plan that brings together efforts in prevention, intervention, enforcement and re-entry. The planning process begins with - and will be driven by - a thorough community assessment designed to identify the nature and scope of gang activity and youth violence in King County's suburban communities. In addition to putting the Council in good stead for the future attainment of federal funds, this assessment will provide the Council with the data necessary to create a targeted and effective plan to address youth gang violence.