
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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CONTINUING VIRGINIA'S INTERAGENCY ANTI-GANG WORKGROUP

Importance of the Issue

Intelligence sources in Virginia indicate an emergence and growth of gangs and gang-related violent crimes in small cities and communities across the state. Areas once protected from the violent crime evident in larger cities have now become targets, making it an increasingly significant social policy issue. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Gangs are more organized, larger, more violent and more widespread than ever before." The Virginia Departments of Corrections, Juvenile Justice and State Police concur that gang activity in Virginia continues to be a significant public safety concern.

A recurring theme of gangs and gang activity is their propensity towards violence. Most are involved in all aspects of criminal activity including: drug distribution, murder, grand larceny and assault. Gangs and gang activity endanger all members of the community intensifying the necessity to address this problem.

It is well recognized that law enforcement alone cannot adequately address the problem of youth gangs. Strong anti-gang education and prevention efforts are essential to reducing gang membership. Children who have the active, involved support of adults and safe, positive places to be after school are less likely to join gangs.

Accordingly, it is appropriate that state government marshal all appropriate resources to combat this scourge.

Virginia's Interagency Anti-Gang Workgroup

While many localities have taken voluntary steps to address the gang problem within their communities, additional tools and resources are needed. Since its inception in January 2003, Virginia's Interagency Anti-Gang Workgroup has witnessed successful efforts in coordinating and leveraging resources to prevent and reduce gang activity in Virginia.

By the end of 2008, the Virginia State Police had identified 9,513 gang members affiliated with approximately 50 different gangs operating throughout Virginia. Of those, 549 individuals were arrested for criminal street gang activity, including 378 felony arrests and 171 misdemeanor arrests. The Department Of Corrections created a database which had approximately 6,396 inmates identified as gang members associated with 341 gangs are present in Virginia's adult correctional institutions. The Department of Juvenile Justice's Gang Management Unit developed a comprehensive database to assist in identification and assessment of gang-involved youth. This Gang Management System had 196 identified gang members representing 30 gangs in our juvenile correctional facilities.

It is important to continue the collaboration between and among relevant state agencies and to foster achievement in gang reduction and prevention efforts. Accordingly, based on the consultation with and the best professional advice from the Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Resources and Public Safety and the Superintendent of State Police, I hereby continue Virginia's Interagency Anti-Gang Workgroup, to promote collaboration among relevant state agencies involved in gang reduction and prevention efforts.

Composition of the Workgroup

Virginia's Interagency Anti-Gang Workgroup shall operate under the direction of the Secretary of Public Safety, in coordination with Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Resources. Recognizing that anti-gang efforts encompass many state agencies, this workgroup shall consist of designees from the following agencies:

- The Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council
- The Department of Correctional Education
- The Department of Corrections
- The Department of Criminal Justice Services
- The Department of Education
- The Department of Health
- The Department of Juvenile Justice
- The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services
- The Department of Social Services

- The Department of State Police
- The Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention
- The Office of the Attorney General
- The Office of Commonwealth Preparedness

In addition, representatives from the Virginia Association of Commonwealth's Attorneys, the Richmond Behavioral Authority, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, the Virginia Sheriffs' Association and Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for School-Community Collaboration will participate in this workgroup. Additional members may be appointed at the Governor's discretion.

Staff support for the Workgroup will be provided by the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety, the Governor's Office and such other agencies as may be designated by the Governor. All agencies of the Commonwealth will cooperate fully with the Workgroup and offer support as requested.

Duties of the Workgroup

The specific duties of Virginia's Interagency Anti-Gang Workgroup are to:

- Cultivate strong collaboration within and among every level of government regarding gang prevention strategies in Virginia;
- Prioritize, coordinate, and leverage Virginia's gang prevention resources to improve efficiency;
- Encourage and facilitate wider use of model programs and best-practice solutions for positive youth development throughout the Commonwealth;
- Provide training and tools to assist state and local prevention professionals, service providers, and the faith community in assessing needs, targeting resources, and planning services for youth and families;
- Disseminate gang-awareness information to citizens of the Commonwealth increasing their involvement in making local communities safe and fostering local opportunities for youth; and,
- Report to the Governor yearly by October 30, through the Secretary of Public Safety, regarding the Commonwealth's progress and achievements statewide in the area of gang prevention as well as any recommendations for strengthening the Commonwealth's anti-gang activities.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect until June 30, 2010, unless amended or rescinded by further Executive Order.

Given under my hand this 30th day of July 2009.

Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

Attest:

Secretary of the Commonwealth