

# Youth gang prevention

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



Youth Gang Prevention EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Gang prevention, intervention and suppression for youth at risk and gang members are strategies for addressing the recent increases in youth and gang related problems in the city of Norfolk, Virginia. State and local policymakers as well as citizens are concerned about public safety and want to avoid a continued increase in gang activity and membership. An effective response to the problems of youth must be built on a thorough understanding of the problem.

There is an important role for Norfolk State University (NSU) to assist the City of Norfolk in addressing the problem and designing an effective program built on the strategies of prevention, intervention and suppression. This white paper outlines such a program and related strategies, which we believe will be a successful response to youth at risk and gang members. This program is focused in the six communities adjacent and next to the Norfolk State Campus, and is designed to support and enhance community organizations and families in their effort to address youth at risk and reduce violence.

The program includes the strategies of prevention, intervention and suppression, and is highlighted by a five point component structure. These five points are as follows: 1) } build a solid community social network of community organizations, churches, government agencies, police units, local businesses, schools, and so forth,. 2) a range of services/workshops/training and educational opportunities offered and available to the residents of the communities identified by key street workers, clergy, parents, police, and other youth. ) the utilization of keyfamilyand ex gang members in working directly with youth and gang members with experience in addressing such

problems. 4) the creation of an educational ladder designed to provide alternative patterns of behavior and provide opportunities for the youth and the parents. 5) an evaluation plan focused on determining which aspects of the program are most effective and cost beneficial. ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM This program expands on the discussions held on campus.

It builds on the range of services and workshops provided by NSU and other groups working in this area and directly with NSU. This program is intended to include what is currently available and expands the capability of folks within NSU so as to support and strengthen families and youth in their development. It is very much intended to assist in diverting youth into alternative patterns of behavior and to reduce the need and/or preference for violence. FIRST COMPONENT

The proposed project has five components. The first is to build a network of social, economic and religious organizations in the six communities adjacent to Norfolk State University. Such a network is critical so that information, brochures and direct contact can be made with community residents and organizational leaders. We will most likely need to meet with them most likely in their habitat so as to explain the intent of the program and what we would have them to contribute to the overall effort.

Most important would be for them to help distribute the information we prepare, be able to answer basic questions or connect residents with key personnel in the project. We would very much like for some to consider holding workshops and/or educational programs in their facilities. The type of locales that we are considering would be the public and private schools, the

Churches, recreation and community centers, hair salons and barbershops, and any other places where people gather.

The work on our part would be to meet face to face with the managers/ workers/ owners and discuss our effort. We would show them our brochures and other information and leave them with the names of two or three people to call in case they need to contact us, as well as maintaining consistent contact over a period of time so that they will understand the need to address the youth related problems. SECOND COMPONENT The second component would be the somewhat detailed and clearly spelled out range of services/workshops/training/and educational opportunities available through our project.

The set of services we intend to use have been provided for several years by the Virginia Gang Prevention Program, which includes God's X Gangsters. They are familiar with and have provided some services in the areas we intend to serve. NSU has been partnering with them for a little over three years, have been the site of a couple of conferences, and it is where many meetings of the group have been held all within the School of Social Work and NSU's Brambleton Center of late. more lately its Brambleton Center.

In this context we envision developing a peer mentoring program in the community, such as gang prevention for youth, gang intervention for youth, intensive gang intervention services, group/6-week certificate, gang awareness for parents/parents' in-home/group, intensive in-home services, train the trainers, and certificate training for trainers. These workshops and training programs have already been provided, but we will need to do it in a

consistent, systematic and developmental manner, and make certain that we cover a community.

Family Systems Inc is another community based agency which serves the youth and their families. It has some interesting programs already being provided to youth such as an entrepreneurial group and a youth skills group. It has a staff well connected to youth, families, courts and police, and would significantly provide additional services to this program. There are also other treatment opportunities for parents and youth when such services are indicated.

We are looking at the risk factors that God's X Gangsters have learned are associated with gang involvement and youth at risk. These risk factors are failure in school, family problems, substance abuse, pattern behaviors and "conduct" problems, gang membership and gun possession, and incidents of violence. These are important indicators to make others aware of what the program will address and to make certain that these youngsters need special attention. THIRD COMPONENT One of the most important new services we will embrace is the creation of an educational ladder.

This ladder would form the basis of creating opportunities and provide a source of hope for parents, teachers, and youth. In this context, we would work with the youth to determine their needs, whether it be learning to read and write, reading comprehension and literacy, assisting in obtaining a GED, moving into learning a trade, going to community college, or coming to NSU. This opportunity ladder would assist providers of service with a chance for

growth in addition to the suppression model and the reinforcement of our treatment model so prevalent in addressing such problems.

We envision that this type of service would also be made available to family members, so they can be a source of encouragement for the youth and others. The full range of services we are capable of providing include, anger management/conflict resolution, one-on-one social mentoring, social skills training, goal setting, attitude formation, empathy development, problem solving skills, bully prevention/violence reduction and substance abuse awareness and reduction.

These courses/workshops would be addressed in weekly modules in addition to the initial six week training module where the overall program is introduced and discussed. **FOURTH COMPONENT** In this component we want to make it easy and possible for people to sign up for these services and/or workshops. This will likely be accomplished when the information is distributed in the community organizations and commercial operations. There will be a checklist which we will use to contact those who complete them and indicate what they would like us to address.

It is likely that we might see several services or courses checked off and we would maintain a list of needed service as well as a mailing list of folks for us to contact for over time. We would also have a blank where one would like for the services to be held, and we would go to those locations. It may be that we would hold some classes in barbershops, which would be an excellent resource because we want to address people in their own back

yard and then encourage them to go to other locations when they feel comfortable.

It is very likely that we will incorporate the interns in social work and in the Psy. D. programs, under supervision of professional faculty and other treatment professionals. The interns would assist in organizing after school educational and recreational programs as well as assisting in the development and implementation of service learning efforts. They would help in distributing the program information and when indicated would co-lead groups. In other situations, they would help with short-term intervention, make referrals and bring attention to youth at potential for trouble.

In another context, we have worked with and used Liberty Counseling services and we would likely use them as a case permits. We intend to use the NSU Counseling Center when appropriate and on a case-by-case basis. The services that NSU uses would be based at the Brambleton Center, where it is envisioned that the project would be housed. It will be necessary and important for the NSU security personnel to work closely with the City of Norfolk Police Department in order to coordinate activities.

This collaborative effort is key as we are addressing the six communities surrounding NSU. One important feature of this coordinated effort would be to identify youth at risk and gang members for our own work force to make either the first or follow up contact as we seek to reduce violence, rather than seek arrest and adjudication. In these contacts where an assessment of the problem would be made, it is critical that our work force have the service

possibilities and the educational opportunities readily available. FIFTH COMPONENT

The fifth component would be evaluation. Such an evaluation would be based on a developmental model where we would constantly use the data to enhance the specific courses, etc. We would work with our Assessment unit to develop evaluative feedback information for the programs provided so that we can make well-informed decisions about our overall effort. We would be particularly interested in determining what works, what is most cost-effective, where are the favorable locations, and so forth. This information is critical if we are to show success. use money wisely.

One last but not least point is that while a very effective project can be developed and implemented we would need a source of funds. This is not easy to note particularly when the economy is so poor and our University and City are in economic turmoil; however, we will need to explore funding for the project. To date, Prof. Banks has agreed to work with Prof. S. Lowe and Prof. J. Robinson on developing the educational ladder, Interim Director D. Sanderlin and Mr. Turan Smith from the Brambleton Center is are working on identifying key community resources for the network, and Pastor B.

Emory is coordinating the service component of the project. These folks have agreed to work as part of a team to design an effective project associated and driven via NSU. Chief Walker, Dr. Coleman and I will work together to coordinate the overall project. CONCLUSION This project incorporates the strategies of prevention, intervention and suppression in a program designed



to deal effectively with youth at risk and gang members in the six communities surrounding Norfolk State University.

The program is built on a five point component system which is well integrated so that each contributes to and strengthens the others. It is also community based relying on the strengths and resources of these communities, in addition to the resources of NSU and its educational thrust and extensive community and outreach effort. The evaluation effort is intended to provide continuous feedback to the leadership of NSU, the leadership of the City of Norfolk, and others within the communities, as well as contributing to the understanding of addressing the problems of youth at risk.