



Community Council

# **Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention**

Final Report  
of the  
Implementation Task Force

Jim Sporleder and Julia Leavitt

Co-chairs

October 2013

# Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention

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## SUMMARY

In 2010, police agencies were tracking 300 to 500 gang members in the Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla area, and gang activity in the region was increasing. Individual and family lives were being disrupted. The region was experiencing a degradation of public safety, learning environment and community image. Costs for police and emergency services were increasing, and resources for intervention and suppression were stretched.

Realizing that proactive measures may reduce the growth of gang membership, Community Council selected “Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention” as its 2010-11 study topic. The study committee concluded that the reasons for gang membership are complex and that preventing gang membership requires a multifaceted approach—a coordinated use of community resources and broad community participation. Eleven recommendations and six sub-goals for community action were developed. The full study report can be found at [www.wcommunitycouncil.org](http://www.wcommunitycouncil.org).

Co-chairs Jim Sporleder and Julia Leavitt convened a task force in Fall 2010 to advocate for implementation of the recommendations. Task force members include:

Charlotte Bouta  
Tim Copeland  
Federico Diaz  
Allison Davis-Gingell

Guy Gingell  
Dorothy Knudson  
Sarita McCaw  
Larry Mulkerin

Eloise Phillips  
Ted Richerzhagen  
Damien Sinnott

Participating for part of the project period were: Mark Higgins, Stan Hughes, Carlos Jaque, Jose Quijano and John Turner. Julie Reese, Community Council executive director, provided staff support for the committee.

The task force is an advocacy team that serves as a catalyst for action by working with established community organizations and government agencies to implement effective and sustainable solutions. Over the two-year implementation period, the team met in committee about 20 times. They also met with community members individually and in small groups.

Some of the recommendations they took to the community related to broad issues and multiple stakeholders; others were more narrowly focused. Some called for specific outcomes; others were more general. Two involved the formation of new groups. As is to be expected, implementation results were mixed. Of the 11 recommendations, six were substantially implemented and five were partially implemented.

The advocacy team accomplished several important tasks: public awareness of gangs and options for reducing gang membership increased, collaborative relationships among community stakeholders were encouraged, and prevention was established as a long-term community approach for dealing with gang issues.

While the team does not claim direct responsibility for all of the achievements that helped address the recommendations, our efforts were instrumental in bringing greater focus to these issues, and we helped to influence favorable outcomes.

We also recognize that actions taken in the two-year implementation period are first steps. We anticipate that community members will continue to address gang membership prevention.

Jim Sporleder and Julia Leavitt, Co-chairs

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES OF ADVOCACY EFFORTS

### Recommendation 1

*A bicultural, civic committee comprised of representatives from existing community organizations and agencies involved with youth should be formed to focus specifically on gang prevention. They should educate the community about gangs to increase public awareness, public safety and encourage public participation with prevention. This committee should continue the efforts established by the Implementation Task Force.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

#### **Action Taken:**

No committee has been organized to focus on gang prevention, specifically. During the advocacy period, task force members realized that with increasing frequency many groups working with youth and families are dealing with gang issues and issues that may lead to involvement with gangs. For example, Walla Walla groups that are focusing part of their efforts on gang prevention include Commitment to Community, the Walla Walla Public Schools Diversity Committee, Community Investors, and the Clearinghouse for Hope steering committee.

Blue Mountain Action Council is organizing a group of community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, integrated community healthy youth initiative that will, as one of its goals, continue to promote prevention of gang activities in the community.

### Recommendation 2

*A partnership of individuals, community organizations and, where appropriate, local government should collaborate to:*

- A. *Assist neighborhoods at high risk of gang activity to organize prevention activities:*
  - a. *Residents should be educated about the connection between graffiti and other activities that can lead to gang action.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

#### **Action Taken:**

##### Public Education

The Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce sponsored a roundtable session on gangs. Panelists Walla Walla City Police Chief Chuck Fulton and Walla Walla County Sheriff John Turner provided information about area gangs and their activities and Co-Chairman Jim Sporleder called attention to the study recommendations and the Implementation Task Force's advocacy efforts.

## Graffiti

Tagging (graffiti) is a visible indicator of gang activity and should be eradicated as soon as possible. Removal of graffiti on private property often takes more time than is desirable, as property owners prefer a professional job instead of quickly painting it out. Removal in the rural areas is also slow.

College Place has an ordinance that requires immediate removal of graffiti and allows the City to prosecute parents of juveniles who produce graffiti. If not completed within 30 days, the City is authorized to remove the graffiti.

With Ordinance 99-9, the City of Walla Walla has chosen to prosecute vandals who create graffiti, rather than penalize property owners who are victims of the crime. The city does not have an ordinance that directly requires a property owner to cover graffiti unless some other nuisance violation for which the property owner is responsible has encouraged or facilitated the graffiti. Code enforcement falls under the city-county community development agency.

Volunteers working through the Walla Walla Police Department (WWPD) encourage property owners to eradicate the graffiti as soon as possible. WWPD has developed educational materials and consistent procedures for working on graffiti removal with the public. If owners are unable to remove the graffiti, they may authorize volunteers to do so. For the last two years, work crews from the Washington State Penitentiary, Jubilee Youth Ranch students, Commitment to Community, and community volunteers have done "paint-overs" in Walla Walla. Walla Walla Area Crime Watch applied for and received a Sherwood Trust grant to purchase a glass-bead blasting machine to assist with removal. They donated the machine to the WWPD. Crime Watch also provided some of the supplies needed for painting. The City of Walla Walla replaces garbage cans covered by graffiti upon request.

A citizens' group working through the Milton-Freewater Chamber of Commerce obtained program guidelines from the WWPD to begin Milton-Freewater graffiti removal program.

*b. A support group for parents of gang members and youth at risk of gang involvement should be organized to share ideas and to increase family resources for prevention. Community agencies should be asked to facilitate this process.*

✦ Status: **Not Implemented**

*c. Neighborhood organizations should be established to continue educating children about the harm that comes from joining gangs.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

### **Action Taken:**

Farm Labor Homes' after school program, their collaborative activities with the YMCA and Commitment to Community's work with Walla Walla elementary schools are helping to open communication and build trust between school and families. They provide opportunities for educating children about the harm that comes from joining gangs.

The task force asked a community member to help involve the faith community to help with this effort. He suggested using the “Navigator” model (matches those who need help with others who know how to access the resources) and encouraging the boards of directors of Latino churches to help. This will require a team to make a presentation about how their church could help. The idea had not been pursued by the end of the 2-year implementation period.

*B. Encourage independence and resilience in the children, youth and families in neighborhoods at greatest risk of gang involvement by:*

*a. Promoting volunteerism in youth outreach and mentoring.*

✦ Status: **Substantially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

Spring 2013, coaches at WWCC began matching young athletes with college athletes in a mentoring program. Efforts to contact other coaches were unsuccessful.

*b. Supporting the efforts of the Children’s Resiliency Initiative to communicate to families the key characteristics of resiliency.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

The Children’s Resiliency Initiative in Walla Walla County is actively working to educate parents, educators and medical professionals about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and to train them to overcome the effects of ACEs.

Columbia County has received a 5-year grant to implement a comprehensive community program that includes addressing ACEs.

*c. Encouraging the extension of child and youth programs and adult life skills training into the neighborhoods.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

Commitment to Community brings youth activities into low-income neighborhoods where a large number of young people are involved with or are living near gang activity. Included are: YWCA’s Fun Factory (summer), YMCA “Y on Wheels” (school year), Walla Walla Parks and Recreation Department’s UPlay (summer) and indoor soccer (winter). Summer 2013, the YMCA of Walla Walla offered programming for youth living at the Farm Labor Homes.

Children’s Home Society and Child Protective Services are collaborating with Commitment to Community to provide parent mentoring for struggling families.

- d. *Providing training for neighborhood conflict coaches and mediators who can work to deescalate tensions within the neighborhood.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

Commitment to Community staff members receive conflict resolution training and pass those skills along to neighborhood residents through example and coaching.

The College Place middle school launched a program in 2012 as a direct result of the study. The program couples social-emotional behaviors and conflict resolution skills with class mentoring. Using a model similar to that of Jr. Achievement, 5<sup>th</sup> graders have weekly lessons on topics such as recognizing and demonstrating empathy, cause and effect, active listening, causes of conflict, etc. Students also have one-on-one time with the adult leader. A group of 17-year-olds also works with 10-year-olds.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Explore opportunities for mobilizing the medical profession to serve as a conduit to resources for parents of at-risk youth.*

✦ Status: **Substantially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

Task force advocates took a multi-faceted approach to achieving this goal:

- Educating medical professionals about local gang issues and resources available
- Establishing a Nurse-Family Partnership program

Educating medical professionals

Task force members developed a list of questions for medical professionals to assess their awareness of resources for at-risk youth and their parents and to determine if they already refer them to those resources. Most were not sure to which resource families should be referred, so usually they provided families with a generic list of community resources. No providers were aware of any resource that specifically dealt with violence prevention. None of the surveys were returned.

While attempting to schedule meetings at clinics and hospitals, it was evident that most providers were not aware that there is a gang presence in our community. Task Force members organized presentations for staff. Walla Walla Police Department gang officers Saul Reyna and Kevin Bayne, Walla Walla County Sheriff John Turner and Deputy Luke Watson talked about local gangs and community resources; task force members discussed the study; and copies of the study report were distributed. Approximately 50 attended the July 2012 presentation at the Walla Walla Clinic. A second presentation was made to 30 professionals at Providence St. Mary Medical Center, September 2013.

### Nurse-Family Partnership

The Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) program is an evidence-based, primary prevention program that strives through home visits by nurses to empower first-time mothers living in poverty to change their lives and the lives of their children. Between conception and the child's second birthday, the mother receives frequent home visits and intensive education on parenting, health, safety, social and life skills. As a result, the child is less likely to be abused and more likely to complete high school and avoid becoming involved in criminal activities. The NFP program and intervention by home visiting nurses have been highly successful. Child Outcomes are documented in a database (Efforts to Outcomes) that allows each program to evaluate its success, perform quality assurance, measure individual staff performance, pull individual outcome reports, and run comparison reports with the national and/or state average reports, to name a few.

The NFP program is a public health model designed to fit county public health departments; however, funding is a major issue. The Walla Walla County Health Department unsuccessfully applied for funding to start a NFP program locally. Federal funding was offered through the Affordable Health Care Act when President Obama mandated that home visitation be provided to high-risk families. Funding allocations in Washington were determined by a 2010 Washington State Department of Health needs assessment of the 39 counties in the state. A number of risk factors were rated, such as number of teen pregnancies, number of children under 18 living in poverty, infant mortality rate, total juvenile arrests/1000, etc. In order to qualify, a county's ratings had to rank among the 20 worst in the state. Walla Walla was rated 23<sup>rd</sup>.

National and Washington state NFP consultants encouraged Walla Walla to pursue a partnership with the Tri-Cities for a regional pilot project. That possibility is still under discussion. Oregon's Umatilla and Morrow County Health Departments are collaborating for a half-time program.

According to a NFP National Service Office program consultant (June 13, 2013), more funding will be released in 2015, and the state budget under the home visiting services account has increased by \$1M. Additional funding from federal and state sources may be used along with other sources such as grants, etc. The Task Force learned that it is not required to work through a local public health department (as first understood), and partnering with outside agencies is possible and encouraged.

Family Medical Center in Walla Walla currently operates the First Steps Program that consists of home visiting by a nurse, social worker or a nutritionist to pregnant women on Medicaid. Unlike the NFP program, the number of visits is limited during and after the program, and there is no comprehensive standardized education and data collection.

Work on this recommendation will continue beyond the close of Community Council's implementation period. A task force member and the NFP nurse consultant are exploring possibilities for a local NFP program. Because a Yakima NFP program partners the Farm Workers' Clinic and the local hospital, a proposal to form a partnership to start a NFP in Walla Walla will be presented to Providence St. Mary

Medical Center and the Family Medical Center, a branch of the Yakima Farm Workers' Clinic. Funding will be a big part of the discussion.

## **Recommendation 4**

*Walla Walla Community College, Blue Mountain Community College, and the local offices of the Employment Security Department should be encouraged to work with community agencies in developing employment opportunities for at-risk youth. Any agency working with youth should be encouraged to develop viable employment and skill development opportunities.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

### **Action Taken:**

This recommendation will have little effect in preventing gang membership as much recruiting of gang members begins before age 14, the minimum age for work. Employment opportunities may help gang members who wish to separate themselves from the gang. Task Force members pursued two facets of the issue: employability and job availability.

### Employability

Local school administrators were instrumental in the Washington State Board of Education's decision to reopen the option for students to complete their "collection of evidence" for graduation. As a result, affected gang members have the opportunity to complete their high school graduation requirements.

Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) and Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) provide viable pathways to employment by academically preparing their students. They each offer GED and professional/technical programs, but the rate of transition from GED to academic or professional/technical programs has been low. BMCC is exploring an online GED program with robust human support.

BMCC is having success with an alternate school program at Echo in which students work on a senior project at high school and attend night school at BMCC.

WWCC operates a Gates Foundation pilot program called Skill Steps to encourage a college bound career mentality in young people. The pilot provides experience in a professional setting, helps students to learn management skills and to understand available options and offers the security of a "group" setting. The participants receive \$1,000 scholarships and become mentors to future participants.

Work Source provides employment workshops. 95% of listed jobs require high school graduation or GED.

### Hurdles encountered:

- Unemployment in Milton-Freewater is not resulting in people seeking more training to be employable; they are leaving the area.
- Many potential students in the Milton-Freewater area do not have reliable transportation to either WWCC in Walla Walla or BMCC's Pendleton campus.

- Preventing gang membership often means targeting individuals in junior high and younger, and age is a hurdle for employment. The law only allows youth ages 14-16 to work in low-to-the-ground agriculture situations when school is not in session. Work permits (initiated by the employer) are required to employ those 16-18 years of age.
- Career exploration is now at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade level.
- Students' worldview is narrow—they need to learn to dream big.
- Recruiting Latino mentors has been difficult.

### Job Availability

The Task Force has not effectively connected with the Latino community at large and has not effectively recruited employers who would chance hiring gang or ex-gang members.

As unemployment has risen, employers are more likely to hire experience. It will take some “selling” for employers to take a chance on young workers, especially those who might have some connection to a gang.

Blue Mountain Action Council offers on-the-job training for youth and adults. They use community groups like the Veterans' Administration, schools, YMCA, YWCA, Salvation Army, etc. to place volunteers.

Lillie Rice Center is interested in collaborating with businesses by supervising young people aged 16 or older. (They serve the same role by supervising the developmentally disabled.)

The Southeast Area Technical Skills Center is under construction on the Walla Walla Community College campus. Scheduled to open Fall 2014, the skills center will initially offer digital media technology, welding manufacturing, renewable resources technology, and health occupation programs. It is anticipated that the skills center will serve regional high schools, including Dayton, Waitsburg, Touchet, Prescott, and College Place. Agreements could also be reached with local private schools and with the Milton-Freewater, Oregon, School District.

Walla Walla's Community Investors, an informally structured group of individuals focused on children's issues, is talking about youth employment—employment laws, apprenticeship, job shadowing, skill building.

The subcommittee working on this recommendation did not have adequate time to pursue the following tactics fully. Steps to be taken in the future include:

- Monitor Skill Steps at WWCC and the BMCC program at Echo. If Skill Steps documents its effectiveness, help seek additional funding to continue and expand the pilot.
- Help young parents to develop a working family mindset. Break the cycle of generational poverty. One way to reach some of these families would be through Garrison night school.
- Mentoring should be part of an employee's job track. Work with Latino and faith-based communities to recruit mentors. Encourage employers to spend time selecting and training mentors.
- Adapt the Skill Link program model for those younger than 16. Encourage the business community to offer job shadowing and to partner with community agencies.

- Youth activities such as athletics, arts, 4-H, CCY, etc. are opportunities for younger people to develop self-esteem and interact with others who are interested in them. Recruit adult leaders.
- Explore ways to increase transportation options for students in Milton-Freewater to WWCC or BMCC.
- Adapt the Skill Steps program model for those younger than 16. Develop funding to provide incentives and collaborate with community agencies.
- Encourage businesses to develop youth internships and employment opportunities.

## **Recommendation 5**

*Each community in the region should establish a teen center with its own facilities so that it is able to operate during hours appropriate for youth use.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

### **Action Taken:**

As the advocacy team began its efforts, Juntos, an all-volunteer group focused on providing a positive alternative to gang membership, was using church facilities in College Place for youth activities.

At the time of the study, Community Center for Youth (CCY) was operating in Walla Walla, but was experiencing ongoing funding and personnel challenges. In August 2013, CCY merged with the YMCA. The merger reduces CCY's administrative costs, allowing CCY to maintain free programming at their current location. The consolidation will also allow CCY members to access activities at the YMCA's Park Street facilities on a sliding-fee scale.

A group of Walla Walla community leaders is working to establish support for a youth center through which youths can easily access community resources, a "clearinghouse of hope". They envision a homeless shelter for unaccompanied minors and a range of activities and services to meet the needs of area youth.

Realizing that successful teen centers are easily accessible places where youths feel safe, task force members and members of several area churches held informal visits about opening church facilities for neighborhood teen gatherings. Challenges to using church facilities include liability, concern for church members' safety, facility wear, a commitment for church members to be on hand to supervise, etc. At the same time, students were recruited to informally survey their peers at Milton-Freewater's Central Middle School, Lincoln High School and Walla Walla High School about students' desires for community teen centers. The response was ambivalent except to note that they would not participate if the center were housed in a church. Additional conversations with congregations were not pursued.

## **Recommendation 6**

*Walla Walla's Safe Schools Committee and similar committees in the surrounding communities should conduct a thorough review of the schools' curricula and instruction targeted at skills that reinforce all-inclusive behaviors, conflict resolution, and community-building, stressing the importance of building those skills from kindergarten on.*

✦ Status: **Substantially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

Washington Education Service District 123 developed a gang prevention curriculum that is available to all the schools in the region; however, none is using the curriculum. Lack of time in the school day was cited as the reason. A task force survey found that all school districts in the region mandate anti-bullying and conflict resolution training for students, indirectly addressing gang behaviors.

Walla Walla Public Schools have revised all building plans to prepare staff to handle violence.

Community groups often offer programs that teach skills and reinforce positive interaction. For example, as part of their kind campaign, Girls' Circle in Walla Walla invited girls from the surrounding area to a presentation of the movie, "Finding Kind".

**Recommendation 7**

*Law enforcement officers should continue and possibly expand the use of home visits to meet with parents of students disciplined at school for gang activities.*

✦ Status: **Substantially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

Home visits help make parents aware of their child's relationship with a gang. To be most effective, they need to take place before the youngster reaches mid-teens. Task force members spoke with all intervention specialists in Walla Walla, College Place and Milton-Freewater schools about employing this prevention tool.

Representatives of College Place, Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla police departments, the Umatilla and Walla Walla county sheriff's offices and the Washington State Police told task force members that they make home visits to inform parents when their son or daughter is showing signs of gang membership or affiliation. Their caseload rarely permits these "early" contacts with the parents. They must focus on suppression, investigation, and monitoring gang activity to prevent violence. Law enforcement agencies are not funded for prevention services.

**Recommendation 8**

*The Juvenile Justice Center, schools and social service agencies should adopt parent empowerment models to help parents avoid gang risk factors.*

✦ Status: **Substantially Implemented**

**Action Taken:**

No agency in the area is focusing exclusively on gang risk factors.

At least 10 Walla Walla organizations have a parent empowerment component to their programs. During a meeting with leaders of several of these programs, it was suggested that community groups should work together, pool their resources, and all use programs already in the community. A coalition

could establish goals, pool resources and communication, avoid duplication of services, and help the schools meet national standards.

- **The Moms' Network** offers parenting classes and family activities with fees waived for low-income families, but parents from gang environments are rarely involved. Challenges to participation include lack of transportation, language (though an interpreter is present) and fear related to their undocumented status. The Mom's Network is forming a partnership with Walla Walla Public Schools.
- **Walla Walla Community College** offers parenting classes for **Lincoln High School** students who are or will be parents and a weekly mother-daughter lunch/discussion group.
- **Children's Home Society's Home Team** offers parent empowerment training to parents of the young people they serve.
  - **Nurturing Parenting** serves a diverse group, including some teen moms of children whose father is gang-affiliated. It is rare for fathers to participate.
  - **One on One Home Teen** provides outreach for teen parents and serves some gang-affiliated teen moms.
- **Trilogy** offers **Community Reinforcement and Family Training**, how to get a loved one into treatment. Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) refers parents to Trilogy for support and guidance.
- **Lincoln High School** is a partner with a Gates to provide parenting classes for teen-aged parents. Four mothers were participating September 2013, and the school district anticipates that additional parents will join the classes.

In 2013, the Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) contracted with a trainer to offer a six-month program for families called The Parent Project. This program uses a social responsibility curriculum to keep students in school and to reduce gang violence. Program attendees meet three hours weekly for 10 weeks and 2 hours weekly for 6 weeks. A support group model is implemented in the last six weeks as the means for the group to continue meeting after the facilitator is removed. When teen and parent curriculums are provided concurrently, participants hold each other accountable; attendance and follow through improve. The Department of Child and Family Services has successfully used this program in Walla Walla, Dayton and Prescott. It has been well received by the Latino community when offered in a location where participants are comfortable and a Spanish-speaking facilitator has been available.

JJC has also started Family Therapy Court for families with mental and substance abuse issues.

Adults establishing one-on-one **mentor** relationships with youth are likely to be successful in offering positive alternatives to gang membership. The Friends of Children of Walla Walla meets the needs of some young people, but the need for Hispanic and male mentors is great. Friends' mission does not formally offer support to the parents of the young people in the program.

One option explored by the task force was for business owners to offer paid-time for employees to become parent mentors through programs such as the Children's Home Team.

## **Recommendation 9**

*The justice system should explore ways to be tougher on gang-related crimes.*

✦ Status: **Partially Implemented**

### **Action Taken:**

Elements of the justice system are exploring ways to get tougher on gang-related crimes. Eight gang-related bills were filed during the 2011-12 session of the Washington State Legislature. (See Appendix.) Four passed their committees of origin. Bills authorizing the creation of gang courts (HB 2535) and adding commercial sexual abuse of a minor (SB 6256) to the list of street gang-related offenses passed.

Bills creating a grant program to support local gang intervention and gang violence prevention programs and allowing prosecuting attorneys to seek injunctive relief against individuals shown to be members or associates of a criminal street gang (HB2594) were on second reading in the House Rules committee when the regular legislative session concluded. These bills did not move forward during the special session.

Four bills failed to pass out of their committees of origin:

- HB 1126 and SB 5799 would have established a grant program for gang prevention and intervention programs;
- HB 1913 would make criminal gang intimidation of a law enforcement officer a crime; and
- SB 6008 concerned criminal street gangs.

Based on the belief that the legislature appears fully aware of and engaged in establishing appropriate punishments for gang-related crimes, the Task Force took no action except to monitor related actions of the legislature.

## **Recommendation 10**

*To the extent appropriate, all law enforcement jurisdictions should be encouraged to designate a law enforcement officer to specialize in gang issues.*

✦ Status: **Substantially Implemented**

### **Action Taken:**

Task force members attended a regional law enforcement agency meeting to encourage each to designate a point person to receive all gang-related information. Agencies represented were the Walla Walla City Police Department, College Place Police Department, Milton-Freewater Police Department, Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, and the Washington State Patrol.

Though each agency would benefit from having an officer or team to focus only on gangs, funding is a challenge. Most agencies have experienced cuts in their budgets and positions are lost when officers retire, and manpower is inadequate for designating a full-time officer(s) to focus on gang activity only. They cope by being aware of trends, proactively allocating resources, working closely, and sharing

information. There is good communication among agencies and a collaborative relationship when gang activity crosses state lines.

College Place and Milton-Freewater Police departments and the Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office each designate an officer to be informed of new graffiti and any gang activity that happens during a shift. The designated officer has his regular responsibilities as a patrol officer, but follows-up on reports and communicates with other agencies as time permits during his shift.

Walla Walla Police Department has two full-time officers designated to focus on gangs and any gang activity, crimes, graffiti, and investigation. The officers work hard to build a rapport with the gang members with whom they come into contact, but their work is focused on suppression and there is no time for home visits or to act on other prevention strategies.

## **Recommendation 11**

*Explore specific needs, such as tattoo removal and relocation of members who want to leave a gang. Identify funding sources.*

Status: **Substantially Implemented**

### **Action Taken:**

Exploring tattoo removal and how it might be provided locally has been the catalyst for the development of "Ink Out," a cutting-edge new program in the Walla Walla Valley. The project has been developed by and is moving forward under the leadership of a committee of community members, medical staff, and hospital administrators. The program goes well beyond tattoo removal by including mentoring, community service and funding to assist program participants with their pursuit of positive alternatives to gang membership.

Tattoo removal is accomplished using specialized laser equipment and requires multiple treatments. The procedures must be administered under the supervision of a physician. Dr. Robert Betz agreed to oversee the process, and Walla Walla General Hospital agreed to house the equipment. The Donald and Virginia Sherwood Trust provided grant funding for the equipment that removes tattoos and can be used for other medical procedures as well.

The Community Board has worked diligently to establish protocols. Many others have stepped forward to play critical roles:

- The Lincoln Health Center is the point of contact for candidates to request services.
- Walla Walla General Hospital will schedule the appointments for service.
- Doctors are volunteering their time.

To qualify for free services, the candidate must complete community service hours and provide a plan for changing his or her lifestyle. The candidate must also agree to working with a mentor who remains involved for the course of treatment.

Community medical professionals will be trained to use the laser equipment, and they will have access to the machine for other procedures (such as removal of tattoos unrelated to gangs) for a fee. A portion

of those fees will be placed in a fund with Blue Mountain Community Foundation for scholarships to help ex-gang members move forward in their lives.

Since this is the only program of its type in the region, services will also be available to gang members from other communities. They will be required to have a mentor, and a reasonable fee will be charged for services. Ink Out will work with Washington State Penitentiary inmates being released to remove tattoos that would interfere with obtaining a job.

Note: In August 2013, the program's first two clients were accepted. Both had already made positive life changes and were erasing tattoos (obtained at an early age) to set a good example for their children.



*The study process that Community Council facilitates is citizen-driven and funded through the generous support of the regional community. Donations, grants, memberships, and special event revenues provide essential financial support for each 3-year study-action cycle. This community support contributes to the success of the Community Council study process and is greatly appreciated.*

*Community Council gratefully acknowledges the following foundations and trusts that provided grants for the “Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention” study and advocacy phases and the Community Partners who committed multi-year Visionary support for Community Council between 2010 and 2013:*

Blue Mountain Community Foundation

Bonnie and Clifford Braden Trust

Columbia REA

Mary Garner Esary Charitable Trust

Jane and Jeffrey Kreitzberg

Pelo Foundation

Julie and Ryan Reese

Donald and Virginia Sherwood Trust

J.L. Stubblefield Trust

Tallman’s Pharmacy

Kenneth B. Wells Trust

Yancey P. Winans Testamentary Trust

Anonymous

*Community Council’s Implementation Task Force also wishes to thank those who have been actively involved with implementing recommendations developed as part of the “Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention” study.*

For a copy of the study report and more information:

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## Appendix

### Recommendation 9

Eight gang-related bills were filed in the 2011-2012 session of the Washington State Legislature. The following summary provides the bills' identifiers, summaries, links to the bill digest and videos of hearings where available.

#### **HB 2432 - Promoting local intervention and prevention programs for reducing gang violence.**

##### *Bill Summary –*

- Authorizes the Washington State Partnership Council on Juvenile Justice (Council) to award grants to support local projects focused on criminal street gang prevention and intervention and designates a grant application review committee.
- Provides minimum requirements for grant applicants.
- Creates the Criminal Street Gang Prevention and Intervention Grant Program Account in the State Treasury, authorizing the funds to be spent on the grant program created by the act.
- Requires entities receiving awards from the Council to report to the Council on the use of those funds, and requires the Council to report to the Legislature regarding the grant program.
- Authorizes an appropriation of \$5 million from the State General Fund for the 2013 fiscal year.

##### *Bill Status -*

1/31/12 -Passed by Early Learning and Human Services Committee; 7 to 1.

Referred to Rules, second reading.

2/6/12 – Public hearing in Ways and Means.

##### *Bill History –*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2432&year=2011>

##### *Bill Digest -*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/2432%20HBA%20ELHS%2012.pdf>

##### *Video of hearings -*

[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011190](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011190)

[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011234](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011234)

[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwliveplayer&eventID=2012020086](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwliveplayer&eventID=2012020086)

## **HB 2535 - Creating a juvenile gang court**

### *Bill Summary –*

- Authorizes counties to establish and operate juvenile gang courts, where juvenile offenders involved in criminal gangs may receive evidence-based services designed to reduce gang-related offenses while under continuous court supervision.
- Provides minimum requirements for admission to a juvenile gang court, allowing individual counties to set standards that are more stringent.
- Requires the counties operating juvenile gang courts to track data regarding the participants, and requires the Administrative Office of the Courts to study the data and report to the Legislature regarding recidivism outcomes.

### *Bill Status –*

1/27/12 -Passed by Early Learning and Human Services Committee; 7 to 1.  
Referred to Rules, second reading.

### *Bill History –*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2535&year=2011>

### *Bill Digest -*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/2535%20HBA%20ELHS%2012.pdf>

### *Video of hearings -*

[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011218](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011218)  
[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012010189](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012010189)

## **HB 2594 - Concerning criminal street gangs**

### *Bill summary –*

- Allows prosecuting attorneys to seek injunctive relief against individuals shown to be members or associates of a criminal street gang.

### *Bill Status –*

1/31/12 -Passed by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee; 9 to 1.  
Referred to Rules, second reading.

### *Bill History –*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2594&year=2011>

### *Bill Digest -*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/2594%20HBA%20PSEP%2012.pdf>

### *Video of hearings -*

[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011210](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011210)  
[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011279](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012011279)

## **SB 6256 - Adding commercial sexual abuse of a minor to the list of criminal street gang-related offenses**

### *Bill summary –*

- Revises the definition of "criminal street gang-related offense," for purposes of the sentencing reform act, to include commercial sexual abuse of a minor.

### *Bill Status –*

2/2/12 -Passed by Judiciary Committee; 8 to 0.  
Referred to Rules, second reading.

### *Bill History –*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6256&year=2011>

Video of hearing:

[http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012010180](http://www.tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012010180)

## **Failed Legislation**

Four bills failed to pass out of their origin committees.

### **HB 1126 – Concerning criminal street gangs**

#### *Bill Summary –*

- Establishes a grant program for gang prevention and intervention programs.
- Modifies terms of community custody, eligibility for a juvenile deferred disposition, and the offenses of Criminal Gang Intimidation and Criminal Street Gang Tagging and Graffiti.
- Creates special allegation procedures and a sentencing enhancement for criminal street gang-related offenses.
- Authorizes a nuisance abatement action for property where multiple criminal street gang-related offenses have occurred.
- Permits county prosecutors and municipal attorneys to seek a protection order against a criminal street gang associate or member.

#### *Bill History –*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1126&year=2011>

#### *Bill Digest -*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/1126%20HBA%20PSEP%2011.pdf>

### **HB 1913 - Making criminal gang intimidation of a law enforcement officer a crime.**

#### *Bill Summary –*

- Establishes the crime of Criminal Gang Intimidation of a Law Enforcement Officer as a class B felony offense.

#### *Bill History –*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1913&year=2011>

*Bill Digest -*

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/1913%20HBA%20PSEP%2012.pdf>

**SB 5799 - Concerning criminal street gangs**

*Bill Summary –*

- Provides the criminal justice community and local communities with the effective tools they need to protect the citizens from gang-related crime better.
- Creates the gang violence prevention and intervention grant program account.

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5799&year=2011>

**SB 6008 - Concerning criminal street gangs**

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6008&year=2011>

Find more information about the *Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention* study at [www.wcommunitycouncil.org](http://www.wcommunitycouncil.org).