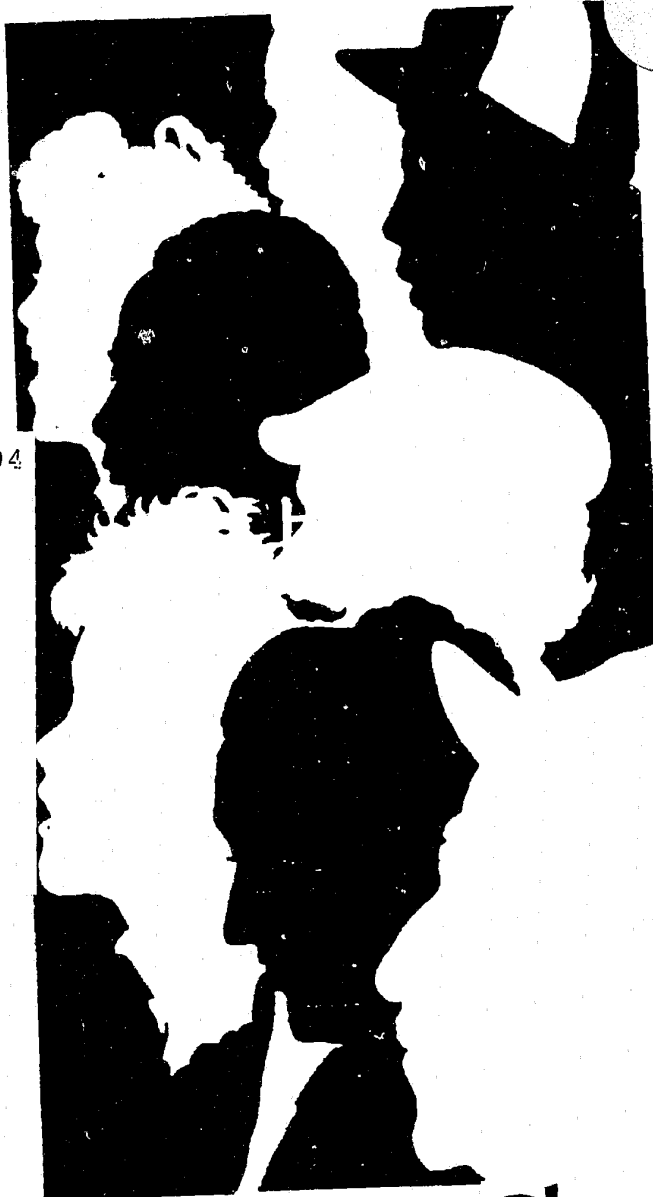


Report of the Task Force on Juvenile Gangs



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State of New York

Leonard G. Dunston, Director
New York State Division for Youth

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Report of the Task Force on Juvenile Gangs

**Leonard G. Dunston, Director
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INTRODUCTION

A serious juvenile gang problem currently exists in the United States. While the appearance, fading, and re-appearance of such law-violating youth groups has been a recurrent phenomenon in American history, the 1980s have brought a new and more virulent level of such activity. The wide availability and profitability of diverse and potent drugs, changing American traditions which permit and at times encourage increased use of aggression, and a broad array of disadvantageous social and economic conditions have each contributed importantly to this heightening of juvenile gang existence and activity. Several recent surveys, national or in States other than New York, have sought to specify more fully the causes of such gang development; the scope and nature of their size, membership and activity; and means for their prevention, deterrence and remediation (Huff, 1989; Needle & Stapleton, 1983; Philibosian, 1986; Quicker, 1983; and Spergel, 1989). These efforts combine to underscore:

1. The difficulty in defining what constitutes a "gang," and the manner in which the definitions put forth differ from one region of the country to another.

2. The diversity and intransigence of purported causes currently giving rise to gang formation and activity, and the manner in which such causal thinking must determine efforts at its remediation.

3. The crucial need for carefully formulated strategies or statements of guiding philosophy to help determine and direct such remedial efforts.

4. The need for the development, support and implementation of effective remedial programming, aimed at prevention, deterrence and rehabilitation.

5. The need for such programming to go beyond only youth-directed efforts to include effective systems-change intervention directed to family life, schools, the employment market, and other significant components of the context in which gang members live, and gangs flourish. The New York State Task Force on Juvenile Gangs was organized in the fall of 1989 to be responsive to these earlier conclusions. To ensure both depth and diversity of gang-relevant expertise, the Task Force was constituted to include several youth agency

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administrators serving the needs of at-risk youth, police gang unit directors, New York State Division for Youth program and local service administrators, faculty from relevant academic disciplines (Social Work, Criminology, Sociology, Psychology), and representatives of the New York City Board of Education, the New York City Department of Corrections, the New York State Department of Education, and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. In addition to the rich, gang-relevant knowledge and experience thus reflected a major and successful effort was made in forming the Task Force to similarly reflect the broad regional and ethnic diversity so characteristic of New York State. Our goal in broad terms was to ascertain the juvenile gang pattern currently existing in New York State, and formulate both program and strategic recommendations designed to ameliorate this pattern, seeking in these recommendations to serve both New York State's citizens and the gang youth themselves. In order to concretize these goals, we set ourselves the following specific tasks, the results of which constitute the body of the present report.

1. Define the term "gang," as it is reflected in the behavior and relationships of juveniles in New York State.

2. Describe the current gang demographics of New York State, including estimates of the number of gangs and participating youth, member characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.), growth patterns over time, drug and violence involvement, and other salient characteristics.

3. Formulate a comprehensive, utilitarian perspective on youth gangs, to serve as a guiding New York State philosophy to deal with juvenile gangs. Such a strategic statement, as well as both the program and strategic recommendations to which it gives rise, should be reactive to gangs as they do exist and proactive to the positive needs of both youth at risk of gang activity and the general citizenry. It should lay a philosophical groundwork for system-change and youth change intervention and—since gang youth display different levels of involvement in anti-social behavior—concern itself with prevention and remediation issues.

4. Select and recommend to New York State for expanded implementation a small number of effective programs to prevent or remediate anti-social gang behavior and promote

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alternative prosocial behavior. Program recommendations should be based upon professional expertise and experience, as well as that obtained from a panel of gang-involved youth themselves. Programs recommended should be the best available in terms of their demonstrated effectiveness, and demonstrated responsiveness to the constructive needs and aspirations of both gang-involved youth and the citizens of New York State.

5. Develop and present to New York State a sequence of strategic recommendations designed to enhance the quality and effectiveness of existing and potential programming for youth at risk of gang involvement. These recommendations should be collectively designed to generate, implement and sustain the best possible programming for such youth, and do so in a manner fully responsive to the real-world opportunities and constraints inherent in the family and community environments in which many of them reside.

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DEFINITION

As the nature of juvenile gangs in the United States has changed over recent decades, so too have the formal definitions of "gang" put forth:

The gang as suggested above has been viewed as a play group as well as a criminal organization (Puffer 1912; Thrasher 1936); also as malicious and negativistic, comprising mainly younger adolescents (A. Cohen 1955); or representing different types of delinquent sub-cultural adaptation (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). Definitions in the 1950s and 1960s were related to issues of etiology as well as based on liberal, social reform assumptions. Definitions in the 1970s and 1980s are more descriptive, emphasize violent and criminal characteristics, and possibly a more conservative philosophy of social control and deterrence (Klein and Maxson 1987). The most recent trend may be to view gangs as more pathological than functional and to restrict usage of the term to a narrow set of violent and

criminal groups (Johnstone 1981). Definitions determine whether we have a large or small, or even no problem, whether more or fewer gangs and gang members exist, more or fewer arrests are to be made, and which agencies will receive funds to deal with the problem in one way or another (Spergel, 1989, p. 14).

At the current time, gang definitions vary greatly from region to region, from one gang-relevant professional group to another, and among academic disciplines. To some extent this definitional diversity reflects true differences in the actual nature of the juvenile groups involved in different parts of the country; in other instances the differences appear to be a result of the wearing of differing professional or academic glasses when observing the same phenomenon. The Task Force, reflecting both its several varied professional perspectives as well as the realities of gang composition and behavior in New York State, de-

"...gang definitions vary greatly (among) regions, gang-related professionals and academic disciplines..."

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defined "gang" as:

An ongoing identifiable group of adolescents (highly organized or loosely structured) which has engaged in, or is considered likely to engage in unlawful or anti-social activity either individually or collectively which may be verified by police records or other reliable sources; and who create an atmosphere of

fear and intimidation within the community.

EXCLUSION:

Gangs or groups that initially come together for the sole purpose of furthering a business enterprise.

Note that unlike the more structured, long-lived, territorial, colors-oriented gangs more typical of Los Angeles, and even Chicago, the typical New York State gang is a loose association of irregularly anti-social youth, often anonymous, more nomadic than territorial, and of shifting or changeable leadership. As one Task Force member with many years of gang experience aptly put it:

These groups are like pick-up basketball teams.

They live all over the city and come together at school. They meet on a subway platform, a leader steps forward and they're off and running.

The following excerpt from a recent report by the Youth Gang Intelligence Unit of the New York City Police Department assists further in elaborating the Task Force's definition of "gang."

There are serious law-violating youth groups in the City of New York. However, many of them do not fall under the classic category of gangs. But that does not mean they are not causing community and police problems and violating laws. The traditional New York City youth gang with a structured organization is becoming a thing of the past. What we generally see are small groups known as posses or crews or just disorderly groups of law violating youth, with no real or identifiable leadership. There are no "colors", tatoos or identifiable clothing to indicate what gang or group they belong to or graffiti identifying "turf"

"The traditional New York City youth gang with a structured organization is becoming a thing of the past."

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claimed by them. Members can belong to more than one group, posse or crew. Most of the units are short-lived. The constant intermixing of members in different groups results in their disintegration and the establishing of new groups being placed under investigation. New York City gangs and/or groups tend to be individual groups with little or no affiliation with other gangs or groups. Turf depends for the most part on where the group gathers. There are no clubhouses, so they usually hang out near schools or subway stations which are near the school, or at a transfer point on the way home. The gangs or groups are not controlling their home or neighborhood area or using it as a place to be protected. Membership in gangs tends to be about 25 and loosely knit.

Finally, an optimal current definition of youth gangs in New York State is also more fully clarified by mention of what such gangs are not. It is common in the United States to assume that a central defining feature of gang structure and

behavior is organized involvement in illegal drug trafficking and that, in a real sense, juvenile gangs are drug organizations. Such, however, is largely not the case in much of New York State. The New York City Police Department's Report comments in this regard:

In New York City, drugs are controlled by organized crime groups. Young, weak, undermanned and poorly organized street gangs cannot compete with the older, more powerful and violent groups. The fragmented street gangs do not have the network or the power to distribute or control drugs on a large scale. What we see are the drug organizations employing youth in various aspects of their drug business. They are employed as steerers, lookouts, dealers, enforcers or protectors from robbers and other drug organizations. The primary difference between a drug organization and a youth gang is that in a drug organization all members are employees while

"..drug organizations employ youth...as steerers, lookouts, dealers, enforcers or protectors..."

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youth gang membership
only requires affiliation.
We do not see our youth
gangs becoming drug or-
ganizations.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

The specific demographics of gang membership and activity in the major New York State population centers are as follows:

NEW YORK CITY

Number and Membership

Currently there are 37 active street gangs with a membership of 1,036 and another 51 gangs under investigation with an alleged membership of about 1,020.

Activities

At present the gangs and groups don't have clubhouses but frequent certain areas of the city. During the week and particularly during the school day, these gangs are seen at schools and on the transit system. Turf tends to be where the group occupies space at any given time. Most of the gangs/groups are not based in their neighborhood and activity from the non-neighborhood groups tends to be profit-oriented where the neighborhood activity tends to be more assault-oriented.

Growth Patterns

Organized street gang activities in New York City have decreased from the 1970s when gang incidents and arrests were recorded in the thousands. The last five years, gang arrests have averaged about 160 a year.

During this same period, the number of associate arrests (more than one person arrested, which could indicate group activity) has averaged about 19,500. Youth arrests and associate arrests continue to be high where identifiable gang arrests are relative low and stable. Indications are that today's anti-social and criminal youth prefer anonymity from identifiable groups and no permanent association with any one group.

Drug and Violence Patterns

Drug trafficking and drug abuse continue to be a serious problem in the City. In New York City drug traffic is usually controlled by organized criminal groups comprised of adults. The fragmented youth gangs do not have the network or the power to control or distribute drugs on a large scale. The pattern of violence in New York City tends to be concentrated in

and around the schools and transit systems. Most of the activity is committed from Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The number one activity during this time is robbery accompanied by assault

“..New York City has 37 active street gangs with a membership of 1,036 and another 51 gangs under investigation with a membership of 1,020...”

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either near a school or on a transit facility.

Other characteristics

1. Age 13-23
2. Gender mostly male, some female

3. Ethnicity (by gang organization)

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Hispanic	13	0
Black*	8	0
White	6	0
Chinese	3	0
Vietnamese	1	0
Hispanic/White	4	0
Hispanic/Black	1	0
Hisp/Blk/White	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Total # of Gangs	37	0

*One Black gang with a Black female chapter.

4. Recruitment

At present recruitment is typically initiated by those wanting to belong to the gang. The exception to this would be the Asian gangs which still heavily recruit through fear and strong-arm tactics. There seems to be no ritual to get into the gang or dues to pay after admission.

5. Leadership

Although most groups claim not to have a leader, some names have surfaced as the head of some of New York City's gangs. Today's gangs are not organized and structured like the gangs of the 60s and 70s. Today, gangs are loosely organized with little structure, if any.

Activity can be initiated by any member of the group at any time.

BUFFALO

In the Buffalo area there are no active, structured juvenile gangs known at this time. There are various related types of law-violating youth groups, such as street posses, teams and crews identified by street names (e.g., Box Street Boys) and neighborhood locations (e.g., Fruit Belt Posse, Uptown Boys, Downtown Boys). The leadership of these groups usually depends on what is happening in the neighborhood at that time and may change from week to week. Usually law-violating youth groups appear at times of opportunity when a victim is available and circumstances are right.

ROCHESTER

There are approximately 11 gangs in the Rochester area, involving an estimated 215 youths. Members range from 13 years of age to approximately 25, and are primarily black males. Females are also members, but currently are generally inactive. Gang membership appears to have decreased during 1989, and most crime committed by gang members is perpetrated by individuals

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acting alone or in small groups. In addition to such crimes as assault, burglary and drug use, gang members have recently become active in the sale of narcotics.

SYRACUSE

It is estimated that almost 200 youths are members of the four juvenile gangs which currently exist in Syracuse. Membership levels appear to be growing in 1989, after approximately seven years of little or no gang activity. As in the other New York State cities, gang membership is concentrated in the low income areas of the city. In Syracuse, gang youth - usually 14 to 18 years old - are primarily Hispanic, with some gang activity observed involving both black and white juveniles.

ALBANY

Albany's gang activity is reported to be different in some major respects than most other New York urban centers. A large concentration of youth aligned with the "five percent Nation-Muslim Sect" has been observed. Juvenile members of this organization are increasingly involved in the organized sale of narcotics. Albany also has a small number of white supremacy youth gangs (skin-

heads), who have been involved in crimes of arson and vandalism.

MT. VERNON

Four known gangs exist in the City of Mt. Vernon, with an approximate membership of 80 youths. In addition, 15 other possible gangs are under investigation. Gang membership is primarily African-Americans and Jamaicans, ages 13-16. Leadership appears to fluctuate, and organization is loosely knit. Gang activity has emerged mainly in the last two years, and consists largely of drug selling, assault, car thefts and extortion. Much of the gang activity occurs in or near the City's one senior high school.

OTHER CITIES AND COUNTIES

A number of New York State population centers report no substantial organized gang problems at the current time. Unorganized, unruly, law-violating youth groups are present, however, in most of these centers. These locations are:

- City of New Rochelle
- City of Utica
- City of Yonkers
- Nassau County
- Suffolk County
- Westchester County

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PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Decade of the Child

In January, 1987, Governor Mario M. Cuomo declared a "bold and broad commitment" to the children of New York State when he proclaimed the Decade of the Child. In his State of the State Message to the Legislature Governor Cuomo remarked:

New York's children are in danger. They are threatened by poverty, inadequate education, even terrible physical and mental abuse. The statistics are frightening:

□ in 1980, one in five New York children lived in poverty; by 1984, the population had grown to one out of every four; for minority children, one out of two are poor;

□ over 500,000 children have no health care coverage;

□ more than 24,000 children dropped out of New York City's high schools in 1985;

□ over 760,000 young adults are believed to be functionally illiterate.

Too many children bear children; too many children lack decent and safe housing; too many children receive inadequate education. They are our future. We have no time to lose.

For most of this century,

New Yorkers called for public assistance to low income families and children because it was the right and compassionate thing to do. Over the last generation, we began to understand that the provision of effective, efficient and accountable public services to assist low-income families and children was essential to our own self-interest. Today, it is even more evident that public and private efforts on behalf of families and children are no longer just a matter of self interest, they are a matter of economic survival in the twenty-first century. The problem is pervasive and deep.

It demands nothing less than a bold and broad commitment of government at all levels, in partnership with the whole community.

With that in mind, we must make a commitment to our children, in every conceivable way. Not just this year, not just next year: we must make the next ten years, the Decade of the Child!

Division for Youth Mission

The Division for Youth has as

"New York's children are in danger. They are threatened by poverty, inadequate education, even terrible physical and mental abuse."

- Gov. Mario M. Cuomo

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its stated purpose "Preventing Delinquency Through Positive Youth Development". As such, the agency is most concerned with youngsters from birth through age 21; and particularly with those programs and services that impact upon their normal growth and development. The agency is mandated to provide prevention services to youth as well as direct (re)habilitative care for those youth adjudicated through Family Courts as either Juvenile Delinquents (JDs) or Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS); as well as those youth designated Juvenile Offenders (JOs) by adult courts.

Prevention

Caplan (1964), a community mental health specialist whose work has been applied to other human services areas, defined three categories of prevention:

□ Primary - those prevention activities that attempt to reduce the number of disorders or problems of all types in the community;

□ Secondary - those prevention activities that attempt to reduce the duration of disorders or problems; and,

□ Tertiary - those prevention activities that attempt to reduce the damage which may result from the disorders or problems.

Bolman (1969) amplifies these categories in ways directly

relevant to the goals of the present Task Force:

Primary prevention attempts to prevent a disorder from occurring. Secondary prevention attempts to identify and treat at the earliest possible moment so as to reduce the length and severity of disorder. Tertiary prevention attempts to reduce to a minimum the degree of handicap or impairment that results from a disorder that has already occurred. (p.208)

The Task Force and its recommendations as embodied in this report bear most directly upon primary prevention (to reduce the likelihood of gang involvement for at-risk youth not yet involved) and secondary prevention (to reduce the personal and societal consequences of involvement for at-risk youth peripherally or irregularly thus involved) and with concern, but also with somewhat less emphasis upon tertiary prevention (of relevance to youth deeply and regularly involved in organized gang activity). We believe prevention, particularly primary prevention, is a process that attempts to change the conditions that create problems for youth

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within our society. Toward that end, to the extent the State of New York is able to create systems, develop programs, and institute services that change the conditions which create the need for youth to be involved in gang activity, is the extent to which we, all of us, will be able to implement the Governor's dream contained within the Decade of the Child.

Youth Development

Within the Division's Mission, and at the heart of the Task Force's aspirations for youth at risk of gang involvement, Youth Development refers to those programs and services that are necessary to insure positive growth. By positive growth, we mean those constructive activities that a youth engages in which enhance that youth's feeling of self worth, confidence, and esteem. At the very least, certain core factors need to be addressed in order to insure positive youth growth and development. These include, but are not limited to:

✓ **Health** - A primary requisite for successful youth development is adequate levels of health care provided to that youth. Many of the youth involved in gang activity are not afforded appropriate preventive medical interventions. Often these youth do not have health education opportunities,

such that they do not have basic understandings of hygiene, disease prevention and control. Additionally, basic medical care is often times not available to them should they become ill.

✓ **The Family/Community** - The literature in child development is replete with the effects family has on a child's life, especially during the formative years.

The family and community are both essential to a child's moral, social, spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. The extent to which a youngster learns social rules, employs pro-social behaviors, internalizes moral development, structures values, is directly related to their interactions with family and community members.

✓ **Education and Training** - A youth's positive development is directly correlated with involvement in school. Youngsters who successfully participate in and complete education have greater opportunities to develop into constructive participating citizens. Data indicate that one-third of all New York State youth who enter high school never graduate. As such, basic literacy requisites, in order

"..at the heart of the Task Force's aspirations for youth at risk of gang involvement ...are programs and services (to) insure positive growth."

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to function adequately within contemporary society are lacking. Thus, youth, including those who ultimately are at risk of becoming gang members, often do not find jobs, retain employment, or develop work ethics that produce fully functioning citizens.

✓ **Leisure** - The constructive use of leisure time, and appropriate knowledge of and access to recreational activities, are basic to positive youth development. Many of the youth who participate in gang activities never develop recreational skills to use constructively in their leisure time. As such, having fun is defined by the group, in this case the gang, and often involves anti-social and criminal activity.

normal growth and development of young people make them highly vulnerable to its pervasive, negative effects. We are most concerned with two of its manifestations: Personal and Institutional.

Personal Racism involves those attitudes that individuals hold, and subsequent behaviors that they perform which are prejudicial and discriminatory. Personal Racism involves the name calling, bias-related violence, overt physical oppression, sexual harassment and a plethora of other activities that impact upon certain classes or categories of people. The effects of personal racism upon those who are its victims include the development of low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, as well as the acquisition of those aggressive behaviors which often characterize living within a hostile environment.

Institutional Racism is the systematic denial of a group of people to the power, privilege, and prestige that is available within an existing culture or society. The effects of institutional racism include issues of access to power (social and economic), resources, as well as affiliation. Such limited access to power is a direct result of the fear of those who are in power to relinquish their position.

“.. limited access to power is a direct result of the fear of those who are in power to relinquish their position...”

Youth Vulnerability

There are many encumbrances that interfere with the positive development of youth, three of which—racism, poverty and cultural acceptance—are prepotent, and deserve primary attention.

□ **Racism.** One of the major factors that increases youth vulnerability is racism. Racism is a most insidious social plague. The intrusion of racism into the

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Indirectly, people who are in power fear role reversal and thereby fear becoming victims themselves. The fact that certain classes of people are denied access to the "In group" and its resources, often lead those very same individuals to form groups of their own, often anti-establishment in nature, which are then characterized by the established groups as "antisocial", such as gangs, posses, or clubs.

□ **Poverty.** Poverty is so broadly oppressive in its consequences, that it often leads youth to develop a pervasive attitude of *hopelessness* relative to both their present and future lives. Beyond the need for basic shelter and food, poverty limits opportunities for young people to participate in constructive leisure activities, purchase goods and services, or develop responsible patterns of economic behavior. The conditions of poverty debilitate the very essence of positive youth development, in that young people find it difficult to meet basic needs, both physical and psychological, which ultimately lead to self-effacing feelings; a lack of pride, self-worth, and esteem for self and/or others. In essence, the conditions of poverty often inhibit young people from pursuing their dreams. For some groups of youngsters, their lack of economic inde-

pendence leads them to anti-social activities, and negative peer groups.

□ **Cultural Acceptance.** Awareness and acceptance of, and pride in, one's cultural heritage also lies at the very foundation of positive youth development. Racism, poverty, and a widespread perception that at-risk youth are "culturally-deprived" or "culturally-disadvantaged" erodes this foundation. Rather than enhancing youths' sense of origins, history, language, and values, their purported deficiencies, minority-status, and lack of a strong sense of culture are too often perpetuated. How, under such vulnerability-promoting circumstances, can youth develop into confident and productive adults, with an adequate level of personal self-esteem and cultural identity? Must we continue to permit gang identification and involvement to be the main and often only opportunity for many youth to find such esteem and identity? The Task Force believes otherwise, and wishes to underscore the especially potent role we believe cultural acceptance can play in decreasing youth vulnerability.

"Poverty often leads youth to develop a pervasive attitude of hopelessness relative to both their present and future lives."

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“...the quick fix, get rich fast, don't work hard ethic is often ingrained in our children at a very tender age.”

□ While racism, poverty and cultural acceptance have overarching impact on the growth and development of youth, there are several other factors which affect how successful or

unsuccessful youth may be as they seek to effectively negotiate their environments. These include:

Inadequate Support Networks

- Youth need a cadre of people, both adult and peer, available to them to: relate to, problem solve, be supportive in times of stress, and intervene with and for them when crises occur. These support networks can also provide positive adult role models and opportunities for youth to help each other. In essence, it is the support network that provides the extended family and community within which the young person develops and prospers. The development of positive self-concepts, the feelings of confidence and competence, are often reflected in the groups with which the youth identifies, and the community in which the youth lives. Oftentimes a strong support network provides alternatives to ineffective family units or negative influences that lead youth to anti-

social and criminal behaviors.

Unequal Access to Resources and Services - Even if programs and services, materials and goods are available at adequate levels, equal access to these products for youth who are at risk of gang involvement is unlikely partly because of economics, and partly due to lack of skill, these youth are often unable to adequately and successfully participate in programs and services. Furthermore, when programs and services are available within their own communities, negotiating public transportation, or not having transportation available at all, often impedes their access to them.

Negative Media Influences - Television, movies, radio, and music have had a profound effect upon youth development. The advent of more liberal societal norms; and the frequent promotion of drugs, sexual activity, and violence in every form of our media, has created a generation of young people who are exposed to behaviors before they have yet matured, developed their own value systems, or explored alternatives. The media have also trained our young people in the quick, fast pace use of all the glitter of modern technology, without attending to their basic developmental needs as children. As

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such, the quick fix, get rich fast, don't work hard ethic is often ingrained in our New York State children at a very tender age. Television, in particular, frequently impacts negatively the activities in which youth participate, and influences their everyday behavior in anti-social, egocentric directions.

Aggression - We live in an often hostile society, in which aggression is learned at a very young age, and in which aggression is all too often immediately and richly rewarded. We teach our children, through media and actual direct experiences, that the bigger, tougher, meaner persons usually get what they want, when they want it. This attitude is often practiced and supported in our homes, schools, and communities. Thus, by the time children reach second grade, they have often already learned to take, harass, intimidate, in order to survive and get their basic needs met. Such learned behavior, when combined with racism, poverty, and a failure of cultural acceptance; limited access to positive youth development programming; as well as the influences from the media, often make this generation of youth an easy target for the pervasive gang activity we now experience.

Youth At Risk

Youth who are involved with gangs, or at the periphery of gang activity often are unable to imagine a positive future. They describe their futures pessimistically. Many do not believe they will reach middle age. As such, their life script is brief, often volatile, without constructive aspiration. These youth do not dream hopeful dreams, but rather fantasize pessimistic scenarios.

□ **Youth Who Are at the Periphery of Gang Activity** - There are three distinct factions of youth at the periphery of gang activity. The first consists of those who tend to be younger in age than the youth who have actually committed themselves to gang activity. Their involvement in gang activity is often a result of impulsive, unplanned behavior which is prompted by peer pressure. These youth gain a false sense of prestige and power from their participation in the gang activities and are often motivated simply by the thrill of occasional participation in anti-social or criminal behavior. When these youth do become involved in criminal be-

“Youth involved with gangs are unable to imagine a positive future and do not believe they will reach middle age. They do not dream hopeful dreams, but fantasize pessimistic scenarios.”

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havior, they tend to participate in crimes against property and generally do not participate in crimes that cause physical injury to others. Additionally, these youth tend to be followers rather than leaders. If given attractive alternatives to gang activity, they are most likely to channel their energy into activities that do not involve anti-social or criminal behavior. These youth appear to have at least one positive role model at home or with whom they are close. These role models seem to be able to exert just enough positive influence upon them to limit their antisocial activity to occasional, spontaneous incidents. If caught in criminal activity and processed through the criminal justice system, these youth will often find the negative aspects of their experience enough to discourage future gang activity.

The second faction consists of youth who are undomiciled, or whose home is unavailable to them. These youth are often labeled "the Throw Aways," because no one wants them. They are left to fend for themselves on the streets. Often they are older, 16 or over, unschooled, and untrained. In order to survive, they turn to anti-social, gang activity. In part, the gang provides their family needs, provides shelter, and more im-

portantly, earning power.

The third faction consists of youth who, primarily because of hoped for economic advantages, are attracted to adult gangs involved with lucrative drug dealings. In turn, drug gang leaders find it especially convenient to use young people to distribute drugs and act as look-outs and couriers for drug monies, since juvenile laws are more lenient. Youth potentially can make hundreds of dollars a day, which makes the economic lure to these gangs irresistible. Unfortunately, many of these youth become the primary means of support for their families and create yet other problems within their family units. Indeed, the economic potential of being involved in drug gang activities, provides these young people alternatives to the abject poverty and limited socio-economic environments in which they live.

□ **Youth Who Are Gang Members** - Young people who are fully integrated into gangs, usually have been involved with anti-social criminal behavior for several years. They often have juvenile records, and have spent some time out of their communities incarcerated in Division for Youth facilities or other child caring institutions. Often these youngsters have been labeled by their schools

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through Committees on Special Education as "emotionally disturbed," "behaviorally disordered" or "developmentally delayed." Whatever the label, however, these youth are often as much as five years below grade level in math and reading. They have already developed a value system that incorporates a para-military style, rigidity of thought and action, as well as a lack of regard for property and life. These youth are often capable of destroying property and hurting people with malice, and little feelings of remorse.

Summary

In summary, it is this Task Force's philosophical position that New York State - its leadership and its citizenry - must energetically and creatively respond to the overridingly negative life circumstances of many of its youth; namely, (1) inadequate access to such central youth development resources as health-promoting services, supportive family and community networks, adequate education, and constructive recreation; and (2) the debilitating and denigrating consequences of racism, poverty, and the failure of cultural acceptance. Greatly heightened concern with not only at-risk and current gang youth themselves, but especially with the

diverse and pervasive social pathologies just enumerated which daily impinge upon such youth must be our continuing vital focus.

"New York's leaders and citizenry must energetically and creatively respond to the overridingly negative life circumstances of its youth."

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PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

A major survey was conducted by all Task Force members in order to identify high quality intervention programs for at-risk youth which we might collectively recommend for support and perhaps expanded implementation in New York State. Task Force members were asked to independently, and then collectively consider (1) existing programs, (2) programs which previously existed but which have been phased out, and (3) programs which never existed, but which are nevertheless attractive in conceptualization.

Spergel's 1989 national survey of gang intervention strategies employed in 45 American cities revealed that:

Five strategies of intervention were identified as the basis for agency programs dealing with the gang problem. They included *community organization*, e.g., community mobilization and networking; *social intervention*, focusing on individual behavioral and value change; *opportunities provision*, with special focus on improved basic education, training and job opportunities for youth; *suppression*, which emphasizes arrest, incarceration, and close monitoring and supervision of gang members; and *organiza-*

tional development and change or the creation of special organizational units and procedures.

In considering and selecting programs worthy of recommendation, the Task Force sought to be fully responsive to the diversity of such national gang intervention programming, both because such programming reflects valuable professional expertise, and because of our shared belief that effective programming will often be *multi-level* programming; i.e., targeting intervention efforts not only toward the youth themselves, but, simultaneously, also to the community and larger society of which they are a part.

Two other selection criteria helped shape our program recommendation decisions. In our view, effective programming is *prescriptive*, in both its planning and implementation. Both program substance and delivery must be differentially responsive to the developmental levels, motivational patterns, learning styles, as well as community beliefs and traditions of the youths to whom it is offered.

To the extent possible, programming for at-risk and current gang member youths should also be fully *community-based*; i.e., developed in the community, for the community, and

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by the community. Just as this Task Force sought information from, and explored its planned recommendations with a large panel of current gang youth, program developers must be in a full feed back loop with those persons constituting the context in which such programming will be employed, the community of which the youth are a part. Finally, gang intervention efforts have been shown to be most effective when the relevant program-offering agencies work in close and continuing

coordination. Program providers, administrative leaders, law enforcement and prosecutorial personnel, relevant academics must meet, coalesce, and develop services to youth jointly and cooperatively. The programs described below are the fruits of this survey and screening effort. We recommend each to be of highly probable effectiveness, and worthy of continued, expanded implementation for youth at risk for, or currently involved in juvenile gang activity.

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1. YOUTH OPTIONS UNLIMITED (Y.O.U.) Bronx and Brooklyn

Adolescents involved with the Family Court—persons-in-need-of-supervision (PINS) and juvenile delinquents (JDs)—are typically among the most educationally needy children in New York City. They tend to be significantly below age-appropriate grade and skill levels and have histories of school-related behavior and/or emotional problems and truancy. While most of these youngsters remain at home during their court cases, and most case dispositions do not specify out-of-home placement, more than 3,000 children are detained each year, and even more are placed after adjudication in longer-term residential facilities. When they return home, they have the added problem of going back to schools that may not be eager to have them and that may not have met their needs adequately in the past.

An interagency subcommittee comprised of the agencies responsible for or concerned with court-related children - the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the State Division for Youth (DFY), the Office of the Coordinator of Criminal Justice (OCCJ), and the Mayor's Office of Youth Services - has been working for several months with the Board of Education to design a program specially targeted to this difficult-to-serve and high-risk group.

Project Y.O.U. (Youth Options Unlimited) is an educational program administered by the Alternative High School Programs of the New York City Board of Education. For the 1989-90 school year the program will be in two sites - Mission Society in the Bronx and Bushwick Youth Center in Brooklyn. From one hundred fifty (150) to three hundred (300) youngsters will be served. About half of the students will be court-related; the other half will be referred by community school districts and would share many of the educational problems of court-related youngsters. Project Y.O.U.'s mixed population will decrease the negative impact of labeling court-related students and will provide an educational option for students whose educational needs are difficult to meet in currently operating school programs. Project Y.O.U. is an interim educational service with the goal of placing most of its students in other educational programs within one year.

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Project Y.O.U.'s academic program will be organized around "career choice" clusters paralleling course offerings by the Division of High Schools. This would permit students to enter the same cluster in their next school, facilitating continuity of educational services and minimizing disruption. Project Y.O.U. will offer course work up to the tenth grade level and GED preparation for older students, with the goal of making an appropriate choice of a high school, a part-time job, and/or full-time vocational training.

2. PROJECT V.O.I.C.E. (THE VOCATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE - PUERTO RICO) Manhattan

The Vocational Occupational International Cultural Exchange, V.O.I.C.E., is an extension of the New York City Vocational Training Center, an Alternative Vocational High School of the Board of Education of the City of New York. V.O.I.C.E. was designed to provide the "high risk" disadvantaged student with an opportunity to participate in a cultural exchange program. By providing a setting that will allow the disadvantaged student to give of himself, it is believed that he will return not only with an appreciation of another culture, but it will promote greater self-esteem and encourage the participants to set higher goals.

Projects identified allow the participating students to demonstrate their skills while aiding those who are less fortunate. The project identified for V.O.I.C.E.-Puerto Rico is the construction of an early childhood school.

3. LOWER EAST SIDE PREPARATORY SCHOOL Manhattan

The Lower East Side Preparatory School has its origins in the Free School Movement of the Sixties. It went under the auspices of the Board of Education in September, 1973. The school is a reflection of the diverse cultural and social backgrounds from which the six hundred plus population is drawn (58% Asian, 32% Black, Hispanic, White). As one of New York's seventeen alternative high schools, two very

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distinct groups of students are served. Transfer, referral and walk-in students from the larger comprehensive high schools opt to enroll for a myriad of reasons: superintendent suspensions, school phobic, overage for grade level, no credits, parental choice, victims of the anonymity of the larger comprehensive high schools, separate from negative peer influences, etc. Newly arrived Asian immigrants over 17 years of age have chosen the program because of the extensive ESL/Bilingual program and because they would not be able to get a high school diploma in a neighborhood high school.

Our average students remain at LESP for 2-1/2 years. In order to enable these older students to accumulate credit towards a diploma, a variety of programs is offered: P.M. School, Shared Instruction, Executive Internship, Part-Time Coop, Concurrent Options. Additionally, a three-week academic program, Camp Success, is held at Pace University's Pleasantville campus and provides students with the unique opportunity to earn high school credit in six different subject areas while experiencing college life on a first-hand basis. More than 75% of our graduates go on to college. New York Working, a full-time school-based employment center with a professional job developer, secures part-time and summer employment while assisting students with career training and counseling.

With the instructional program as the focal point, on-going staff development assisted by Project Basics, under the Urban Coalition's Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) addresses current research based teaching methodologies, such as peer evaluation and coaching, cooperative learning, critical thinking, learning styles, etc. In recognition of the expanding role of our inner-city schools, LESP has actively recruited and incorporated the participation and assistance of private industry, universities, colleges, CBO. Exemplary partnerships have been established with American Home Products, British Petroleum of America, Irenecs, Inc., Borough of Manhattan Community College, Pace University, Hunter University, City-Kids Foundation, Foreign Policy Association, and Chinese American Planning Council.

LESP is one of only three high schools in the UFT's restructuring school-based management initiative: "Schools of Tomorrow...Today" that empowers teachers and admin-

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istrators to collaboratively develop, administer and evaluate the educational program.

The 91.1% graduation and the 84.3% attendance rates, as well as the 14% decrease in dropout statistics, resulted in LESP's designation as one of the Chancellor's Rewarding Success School and reaffirms LESP's commitment to meet the needs of the at-risk student.

4. RANGER CADET CORPS Manhattan

The Block Banner Proposal intends to reactivate Harlem's famed Ranger Cadet Corps, a youth group which was in operation from 1965-1972. During the period from 1965-1972, the rangers were organized from 25 volunteer members into a cohesive unit of 1,000 resident youngsters. They were involved in various community projects and civic awareness. They were mobilized for school demonstrations, clean-up drives, parades and recreational outlets.

The members were instilled with a feeling of pride in their accomplishments, pride in themselves and pride in their unit.

The Cadet Officers will work closely with the school and parents, in order to correlate behavior patterns at home which are in conflict with training procedures or appropriate community demands.

5. ROCHESTER YOUTH OUTREACH PROGRAM Monroe County

The Youth Outreach Program was established by the Rochester Police Department to: (1) hire and train youth outreach workers; (2) afford the Rochester Police Department the opportunity to establish better community relations with the younger members of the community; (3) respond to the needs of area youth in a pro-active rather than reactive manner; (4) reach youths involved in organized groups/gangs who may or have become involved in illegal or disruptive behavior; (5) refer youths involved with gangs to agencies that can assist them with specific problems.

Over the three-year period of the program, there have

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been many accomplishments and successes. Outreach workers have been successful in referring group members to various community agencies for help with personal problems; (i.e. drug abuse, school, work, etc.). With input from the workers, the Rochester Police Department Teens on Patrol Program has hired over 60 teens that have been identified as youth group members over the last three years. The workers have also been instrumental in forewarning the Department about planned confrontations between rival groups, and major problems have been averted. In addition, they have become known in the community and on several occasions have been called upon to speak to groups of teens about involvement with "gangs," and have acted as positive role models for many of the area youth.

6. ROCHESTER YOUTH SERVICE CORPS Monroe County

The Rochester Youth Service Corps is a community of out-of-school youth, 18-23, which performs priority human service and physical work projects, while integrating Corps members into the active lives of their communities, and empowering them to improve the quality of their lives and to secure meaningful, productive, long-term employment.

Goals:

- To market the Corps widely throughout the community as an exciting opportunity to serve the community and enhance Corps members' lives.
- To recruit youth who represent the racial, ethnic, cultural and economic diversity of the local community, and are a combination of high school graduates and dropouts.
- To select projects which represent community priorities identified by the broad community, and cannot be conducted with existing community resources.
- To enhance educational opportunities, to increase academic achievement and to establish learning as a life-long activity for each Corps member.
- To establish individual educational goals for each Corps member which correspond with his/her functional academic level at admission to the Corps, and with the Corps member's future career goals and interests.

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- To identify, with entering Corps members, the specific support services each needs to participate successfully in Corps activities and to secure and sustain competitive employment at the end of the Corps participation.
- To identify community resources which are available to support Corps members during and after Corps participation and link the Corps program with these resources.
- To assist Corps members in identifying individual short, medium and long-range career goals which are compatible with their interest, skills and economic needs.
- To assist Corps members in developing training and employment plans which will lead to the attainment of their career goals.
- To prepare Corps members to meet the realistic expectations (in terms of job behaviors and attitudes and entry-level job skills) of employers.
- To empower each Corps member, upon program completion, to secure employment compatible with his/her interests, skills, career goals and economic needs

7. YOUTH D.A.R.E.S Brooklyn

The primary objective of YOUTH D.A.R.E.S. (Dynamic Alternatives for Rehabilitation through Educational Services) is to offer positive alternatives to "at risk" youths and their families. Below is a description of the programs sponsored by YOUTH D.A.R.E.S. to address the complex problems faced by youths in today's society:

61st Precinct Youth Program.

This program is the "core" of YOUTH D.A.R.E.S. It provides educational, counseling, and crisis intervention services. The components of the 61st Precinct Youth Program are:

A) Project B.E.S.T. (Begin Excelling Starting Today) - Comprised of an Alternative High School, General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) Classes, Educational Therapy, and School Advocacy. The high school educates students who have not met with success in a traditional school setting.

B) Family Mediation Project - Fosters open communication in families that are experiencing internal strife. Families meet with one of the trained mediators to discuss problems

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and, most importantly, to derive their own solutions.

C) Court Advocacy Project - Offers alternatives to incarceration for criminally involved youngsters. Very often, youths are probated by the courts to the agency for educational and counseling services.

D) Counseling Project - Provides direct counseling to youths with emotional or other problems. If necessary, youngsters with severe psychological problems are referred to one of the many mental health clinics with whom we have a networking arrangement.

E) Recreation Project - Provides basic recreational activities for young people. We operate our programs out of local public schools.

8. BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA Statewide (Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Binghamton, and New York City)

Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Inc. is a youth development agency with primary focus upon youth from disadvantaged life situations. Boys and Girls Clubs of America is a member-affiliated organization with over 1500 organizations located in the urban centers of cities across the nation. Boys and Girls Clubs organizations are facility-centered, delivering a wide range of programs and activities designed to enhance emotional, social, and vocational opportunities for youth.

These programs include:

Project Smart Moves - Designed to deter abuse of substances and delay the onset of sexual experimentation.

Targeted Outreach - Designed to assess, intervene, monitor the activities of youth determined as "high-risk" and envelop them in positive alternatives.

Keystoning - Designed to promote leadership development through participation in a social/citizenship development-formed group with peer leadership and service to club and community as primary foci.

Gang Prevention - A specialist has been hired to provide resource, information and training to local Boys and Girls Club organizations regarding means for preventing gang involvement.

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Delinquency Prevention Strategy - Training is provided to local organizations to assess their programmatic responses and train staff to positively intervene on behalf of "high-risk" youth.

9. YOUNG PEOPLE'S EAST HARLEM RESOURCE CENTER

Manhattan

(Implemented by: Youth Action Program of East Harlem Block Nursery, Inc., New York City)

The Youth Action Program, a \$3.5 million grassroots organization with a staff of 50 employees, is an educational and community organizing program helping inner city, at-risk young people take responsibility for improving their communities and their lives. It is based on the premise that teenagers have clear ideas about what is wrong in the world and about how things could be improved. Youth Action draws out these ideas and provides resource and technical assistance for implementation. Community improvement projects are designed and governed by volunteer youth, and are administered by adults accountable to the youth governing committees. Participants are also provided with counseling, homework assistance, and vocational and leadership activities.

Requirements for membership in the Resource Center include remaining drug and alcohol free, refraining from negative behavior, and formulating short and long-term goals.

10. DELINQUENCY PREVENTION THROUGH YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Manhattan

(Implemented by: Hotline Cares, New York City)

This program recruited, trained and involved youth volunteers ages 12-21 in providing assistance to other youth and families. Services included: crisis intervention through telephone and walk-in counseling, emergency food and financial assistance, information and referrals, advocacy, street outreach to troubled youth, and drug abuse prevention activities.

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Hotline's youth volunteers developed a sense of responsibility, discipline and self-awareness which, in turn, improved their ability to solve personal problems and enhanced their potential for personal growth.

11. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Suffolk County

*(Implemented by: Colonial Youth Center,
Mastic Beach)*

This project is designed to decrease juvenile delinquency in one of Suffolk County's most turbulent communities. The target population is a group of at-risk students, ages 14-16, who have been assigned to an alternative education program in the junior high school. Programs and services teach specific skills and lead to increased self-confidence, resulting in a reduction in recidivism and a return to the mainstream of the school.

Services are coordinated through collaboration with the school, police, probation, social services, youth bureaus and other agencies that are involved in meeting the needs of these students. Every student has the opportunity to participate in the Center's on-going Peer Leadership Program. In addition, students design and implement a community service project.

12. BROWNSVILLE COMMUNITY NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION CENTER, INC.

YOUTH TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS Brooklyn

Adolescent Vocational Exploration Program. The Adolescent Vocational Exploration Program is designed to service youths ages 14-17, who are in need of extraordinary support due to environmental, economic or personal circumstances. This program is an innovative attempt to link career awareness with educational needs and combine involvement with the private sector through field visits, speakers and use of vocational exploration placements. New York State Education Department provides the curriculum format and program evaluation which allows successful AVE participants to receive up to one regents credit for their partici-

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pation in the summer classroom component, combined with the fall components of counseling, advocacy and support services.

Youth Work Skills Program. The Youth Work Skills Program is designed to service 30 participants who are out-of-school, economically disadvantaged and are at a reading score at or below fifth grade level as measured by a standardized achievement test. It is a program funded by the New York State Department of Labor to improve their basic educational skills, job-seeking capabilities and employability through the provision of basic skills remediation, worksite training, support and counseling services. Preference is to be given to homeless youths and adolescent parents.

Youth Training and Employment Program. The Youth Training and Employment Program is an after-school program funded by the Special Legislative Grants Unit of New York State Division for Youth. The program is designed to service youths ages 14-20 who are in school, in career awareness, educational remediation, employment training, job training, interview techniques, job placements and public speaking.

Juvenile Justice Prevention Program. The Juvenile Justice Prevention Program is designed to provide service to twenty high risk youths ages 12-21, to decrease the number of youths involved in the Criminal Justice System and serves as an alternative to incarceration.

13. RHEEDLEN FOUNDATION New York City Wide

Rheedlen is a comprehensive service program focusing exclusive attention on the problem of truancy among the young by serving both children and their families. They have six program sites: a main building on the Upper West Side of New York City and five sites located within school buildings in Central Harlem and the Clinton (Hell's Kitchen) area of Manhattan. Their workers make hundreds of home visits each week to pick up children to take them to school and to medical and eye examinations. Rheedlen also provides after-school remedial lessons in reading, math, and socialization skills, emergency food and shelter, crisis intervention, recrea-

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tional services, field trips, parental counseling, and escort services. In addition, they provide a quiet place to do homework, a safe place to be after school, and a sense of belonging.

14. PROJECT REACH Manhattan

Project Reach, under the auspices of Chinese-American Planning Council, is a community-based crisis counseling and advocacy center serving approximately 200 young people, ages 12-21, from the Chinatown-Little Italy/Two Bridges community, as well as from Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx. They deal with young people who are running away from home, dropping out of school, hiding out with gang groups, seeking out "support" in sexually premature relationships, or attempting suicide. Still others face problems surrounding "coming out" as lesbian or gay, deciding about an unwanted pregnancy, dealing with a sexually abusive relative, or coming to grips with a parent who is dying of AIDS. At Reach, the attempt is made to provide a safe and supportive space where young people can begin to identify and work together to resolve their own problems.

Gangs are an everyday reality for many young people, both females and males, in this community. The fact that an overwhelming number of young people who come to us have been either incarcerated (21%), court-involved (22%), run-aways (27%), truants/drop-outs (50%), substance users and abusers (36%), in violent conflict with parents (53%), or depressed and suicidal (23%), place these young people and their peers at great risk for gang involvement. Thirty-seven percent of our crisis caseload involves young people who are in, close to, or dependent on local street and gang youth. Fortunately, Project Reach's "open door policy" has enabled young people in this community to see Reach as neutral territory where assistance and support are available.

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At present, Project Reach is the only drop-in center servicing the needs of Asian American youth in New York City.

15. INNER CITY ROUNDTABLE OF YOUTH (ICRY) Manhattan

The Inner City Roundtable of Youth is a youth service organization established in 1975 to help deal with a wide array of personal and community problems associated with gang-involved and at-risk youth. Their initiatives include drug abuse advisory and treatment activities, alternative vocational training projects, programs focused on prevention and alternatives to incarceration, and interventions oriented toward homeless, runaway youth as well as AIDS and AIDS-related problems.

Much of the work of ICRY is based upon an entrepreneurial model, developing youth-community-run venture enterprises as employment and career incentives, and as a means toward youth empowerment.

16. UNITAS THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY Bronx

The Unitas Therapeutic Community in the Fox Street neighborhood of the Bronx, is found wherever young people are—at home, in the school yard, in the street.

Unitas is often dubbed the "clinic of the street," a public recognition of the fact that it is not tied to one setting or style, but rather exists and operates in and among the young people themselves and those adults who work with them.

Unitas teaches young people how to nurture, challenge, and help one another. In the process, they create a sustained support and understanding that is often lacking or insufficient elsewhere.

Conceptually, Unitas is grounded in a systems approach to the delivery of services. It taps existing peer, family, and community support networks and works with these to provide services to youth. A wide range of treatment modalities are used, including individual, family, group, and art therapy as well as remedial education.

Bilingual-bicultural staff (many of them young adults from

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the neighborhood who grew up with the program) provide services, and emphasis is placed on involving the nuclear and extended family in the therapeutic process.

17. ULYSSES YOUTH UNLIMITED PROGRAM *Tompkins County*

Ulysses Youth Unlimited Program was the first drop-in, multi-service center to be developed in a rural community and has been the model for other rural programs. Over its 15-year history, the program has employed youth workers who, in addition to planning activities at the Youth Center located in a church basement, have reached out to youth on the street and in the halls of the high school.

The goals of this program are:

1. To provide constructive leisure-time activities to youth in the target population.
2. To provide youth opportunities for education concerning adolescent issues such as peer relations, sexuality, self-esteem, substance use, and family life.
3. To provide youth opportunities for employment education, employment experience, and career exploration.
4. To provide parents of youth opportunities for information, education, and support services concerning parenting issues.

18. HUNTINGTON FAMILY CENTER TEEN SERVICES *Onondaga County*

Huntington Family Center's Teen Department serves youths between the ages of 12 and 18 in a variety of capacities that enrich socialization, education and recreation. Programs available in the Teen Department include:

Educational Component. This consists of truancy program; tutoring; homework club; a computer program; educational seminars focusing on topics such as drug and substance abuse, sexuality, teen suicide and job-seeking skills; a Teen Advisory Council made up of active teens who take responsibility for recruiting teens into programs and for planning special events and fund-raisers. Two teens from the Teen Advisory Council serve as representatives on the Hunting-

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ton Board of Directors.

Recreation Component. This includes the Huntington Drop-In Center and Game Room open on a daily basis, weekly field trips and special events such as roller skating, camping, tournaments, dances and trips.

Skill Development Component. Consists of special interest groups such as arts & crafts, ceramics, pottery, wood-working, cooking, sculpting and weight lifting.

Sports Component. Includes seasonal leagues such as football, basketball, volleyball, softball and bowling. The Teen Department also holds an annual sports banquet.

Computer Literacy Program. This special program offers young people aged 10 to 14 the unique opportunity to become more familiar with computers and their various uses. Young people who participate in the program learn Logo and basic computer languages as well as become exposed to various forms of software.

19. OFFICER CORRECT/YOUTH ID PROGRAM Manhattan

The program was developed by the New York City Department of Correction as an educational tool to provide information on crime and drug prevention, safety precautions and career development.

The program is administered by specially trained correction officers who have first-hand knowledge of crime, its causes and the circumstances that lead individuals to be placed in our correctional system.

The program is conducted at the Correction Academy. Staff visit students in the classroom where a presentation on the Department is given. They discuss the role of a correction officer, how the Department of Correction functions within the criminal justice system, and a brief idea of what a real typical day in a detention facility would be like. A date is then scheduled for the Academy visit.

Transportation to the Academy is provided by the Department. Upon arrival, the youngsters are greeted and engaged in a discussion about the importance of staying in school, drug education and prevention and career development.

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A unique "loss of freedom" educational tool is used as a crime preventative. Each student is allowed to spend time in a mock jail cell to observe the reality of incarceration. Later, on an outside video monitor, they see themselves in the cell as a recording of jail sounds plays in the background.

A staff member conducts a group discussion on the "loss of freedom" experience. The students are encouraged to participate in the discussion and express their thoughts and feelings about what they have seen, heard and experienced.

At the end of the day, the entire group is sworn in as junior correction officers and given an Officer Correct Button and a certificate of achievement for having participated in the program, and a photo ID card.

20. THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAM *Statewide*

Initiated by the Board of Regents of New York State in 1987, the Community Schools Program is a statewide attempt to enhance to reciprocal relationship that ideally can exist between a school and its surrounding community. The 20-such schools which currently constitute this program are typically located in communities whose resources have not been adequate to deal with the level of community deterioration which they have experienced. Youth enhancement, school growth, and community renewal, therefore, are closely interfaced program aspirations. These aspirations are sought via the pursuit and support of the following "community school characteristics:"

1. A developmental curriculum which assures progress in basic academic skills and which provides challenge and enrichment.

2. An instructional program which increases time on task through flexible use of time beyond the conventional school-day afternoons, evenings, weekends, summers, etc.

3. School buildings open and accessible to children from early morning through the evening, at least six days per week, all year.

4. Elementary programs which begin in early childhood (at least pre-K), and secondary programs which provide intensive and sustained support throughout early and late

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adolescence.

5. A school acting as broker for health, nutritional, and social services, making them accessible on the school site to children and their families.

6. Schools which serve as sites for educational, cultural, and recreational activity for children and their families and for the community at large.

7. Productive linkages with nearby community colleges, other higher education institutions, business, community based organizations, cultural institutions, churches, temples, and other agencies and institutions.

8. Parents actively involved in school affairs, helping with their own and other children and pursuing their own education.

9. A diversified program team, including teachers, teaching assistants and/or aides, parents and/or other adult mentors, and college-age students.

10. Administrators capable of exercising educational leadership and of coordinating a wide variety of educational, social, health, recreational, and other services.

11. Principals, teachers, other staff members sharing in the planning with the school program and enjoying substantial autonomy in carrying out their decisions.

12. A staff which continually seeks ways to improve and extend its program in the interests of children.

13. Instruction which makes creative use of the new learning technologies.

14. School buildings which provide a clean, safe, and friendly environment conducive to effective teaching and learning and which are adequately equipped.

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STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

PREVENTION

Both preventive and rehabilitative programming for youth at risk of gang involvement are valuable and necessary. Given the major difficulty in competing with the substantial financial rewards often received by youth already heavily involved in drug-related gang activities, the Task Force recommends primary programming attention be devoted to primary and secondary preventive efforts seeking to preclude or reduce such gang involvement.

PROSOCIAL

Programming for youth at risk of gang involvement should emphasize the teaching, development and continued use of constructive, prosocial behaviors which are utilitarian in helping the youth lead an effective, satisfying and socially valuable life. Programming singularly devoted to changing youth behavior by punitive, sanctioning means should be discouraged.

COMPREHENSIVE

Programming for youth at risk of gang involvement must be both youth—and system—oriented. Too often have such youths alone been targeted for

intervention efforts, with program failure the result. Family-oriented youth programming must seek to impact on the entire family system of which the youth is a part. School-oriented programs must seek to alter both the youth's approach to school, and the school's approach to such youth. Job-oriented programs must seek to enhance the youth's job-related skills and motivations, but also increase training for and the availability of appropriate employment.

COORDINATION

The diverse youth care, educational, employment market, criminal justice and other agency personnel responsible to initiate and implement comprehensive programming for youth at risk of gang involvement must function as a coordinated body. In-place networking systems for the sharing of appropriate information, willingness to put youth concerns ahead of turf concerns, and creative use of time and energy in order to combine and build upon one another's professional efforts, are each requisites of successful coordination.

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SCHOOL-BASED

The public school, as both a convenient and central physical site and as an often turf-neutral location, is viewed as a particularly desirable locus of effective programming for youth at risk of gang involvement. The Task Force especially wishes to commend the likely value of school-based programming—for youths and their families—conducted at times in addition to the typical class day; e.g., after school, evenings, weekends. Optimally, in our view, schools can function as “community hubs,” offering attractive and valuable programming during the very hours of the day and evening in which youth are most likely to get into difficulty.

COMMUNITY-BASED

Optimal programming for youth at risk of gang involvement will be planned and implemented at a level most aware of and most able to be responsive to the real-world needs and aspirations of such youth. We believe that the youth's own community is the optimal level, and would urge that all such programming involve major and continuing input from members of the youth's own geographic, ethnic and socio-economic community. Such involvement

should draw upon not only purported “community leaders,” but also youth themselves.

YOUTH INPUT

The enhanced availability of potentially effective programming for youth at risk of gang involvement will not be of value unless such youth view it as relevant to their lives and aspirations, and thus are motivated to seek it out and participate. Such perceived relevance and optimal motivation is substantially more likely to occur to the degree that at-risk youth are sought out and encouraged to speak out regarding their own appraisals of such programming. The present Task Force has done so with approximately 100 youth, and found their inputs to be consistently useful. It is recommended that a systematic means be developed for obtaining such youth perceptions regarding programming and related matters, and that these means be utilized in the future on a regular and continuing basis.

PRESCRIPTIVENESS

While it seems but a truism to assert that “different youth benefit from different programs,” program implementors often act otherwise and employ but one program or type of program with many diverse

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types of youths. The Task Force, in contrast, strongly recommends a prescriptive orientation to program development and implementation in which the unique needs of culturally diverse youth are significantly taken into account and responded to in the form of different programs, different program combinations and sequences, and different program implementors depending upon program-relevant youth characteristics, as well as characteristics of their peers, family, community, and the program-providing agency.

STAFF TRAINING

Increased time, energy, creativity and funding needs to be devoted within New York State to the selection and training of skilled youth care workers. This need is particularly salient for workers dealing with youth at risk of gang involvement. Such youth are often minimally motivated for program participation, difficult to involve by traditional means, and may recurrently engage in illegal behaviors. For programs to function effectively with such youngsters requires especially high levels of staff member empathy, cultural sensitivity, and program-relevant skills. Judicious staff selection and heightened levels of staff train-

ing are necessary to rise to these programmatic challenges.

PROGRAM INTEGRITY

If youth at risk of gang involvement are to be served adequately, it is critical that programs developed be actually implemented according to planned program procedures. Too often, mostly as a result of too few personnel or inadequate funding, programs of apparent substantial potential are actually implemented inadequately. For example, the major evaluations in the 1950s and 1960s of the detached worker approach to gang delinquency reduction were all negative. Compared to unserved youth, those who—at least on paper—were receiving the services of a detached worker committed as many or more delinquent acts. The programs were deemed a failure, ignoring the crucial implementation fact that huge caseloads and major administrative demands meant that worker and youth actually met but a few minutes per week. There must, therefore, be program plan-program implementation integrity.

PROGRAM INTENSITY

Not only is it necessary for effective programming that the intervention as planned corre-

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spond to the intervention as actually administered (i.e., program integrity), but so too must there be heightened concern with the level, amount or dosage of the intervention (i.e., program intensity). In general, it will be the case that "the more the better," whether referring to amount of youth contact with the intervenors; amount of counseling time, recreational time or job skills training time; or amount of family or community involvement in programming for youth.

CONSTRUCTIVE GANG FUNCTIONS

While deploring the illegal activities in which many gang youth participate, and while recognizing that such activities form much of the basis for the existence of the Task Force, it also is to be recognized that gang involvement may at times serve a number of constructive, positive functions in the lives of participating youth. Self-esteem, peer acceptance, increased pride, feelings of empowerment, hopefulness, social skills, and a sense of family lacking elsewhere in the youth's world may each be enhanced. New York State's primary effort must be directed toward reducing the level of illegal gang activity currently operative. Recognizing, and in some

instances even encouraging, the constructive features of such involvement is not incompatible with this goal.

EVALUATION

Too often, programming for youth at risk of gang involvement takes on a life of its own, independent of actual effectiveness in changing youth behavior. Programs continue in either the absence of evaluation altogether, or with the "support" of inadequate, largely anecdotal evaluation. The Task Force wishes to underscore the crucial need for all youth programming to be rigorously, systematically and independently evaluated—using quantitative or qualitative research methodologies—for its objective efficacy in changing the behavior, attitudes and/or values of the youth it was designed to serve.

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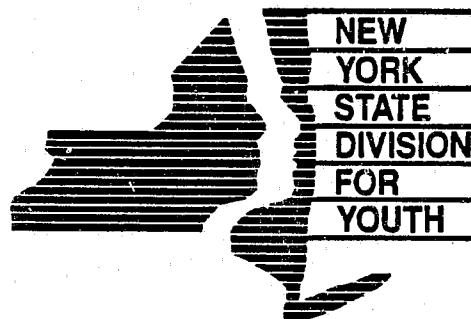
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NOTES



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