



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# **UPDATE: Gangs in Schools Task Force Legislative Report**

**December 2015**

**Authorizing legislation:** RCW 28A.300.490

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.490>)

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## **Executive Summary**

How gangs affect school safety is a crucial question for schools, as well as for parents and citizens. Since 2007, the Gangs in Schools Task Force has met and submitted legislative recommendations. The Task Force has chosen to focus on three primary areas: data, policy guidance, and training.

Due to many turnovers in organizational staffing and task force membership, and a lack of legislative support for earlier years' work, the Gangs in Schools Task Force has not met since 2013. Task Force reports from earlier years can be found on the School Safety Center [Gangs in Schools](#) web page.

## Background

In 2007, the Legislature passed [Substitute Senate Bill \(SSB\) 5097](#), which required the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a Task Force to examine how gangs are affecting school safety. The Task Force was directed to annually report its findings and recommendations to the education committees of the Legislature. The Gangs in Schools Task Force submitted legislative recommendations for several years. Ultimately, the Task Force chose to focus activity on three primary areas of activity with direct impact on gang activity in schools: data, policy guidance, and training. However, due to turnovers in organizational staffing and task force membership, and a lack of legislative support for earlier years' work, the Gangs in Schools Task Force has not met since 2013.

## Update Status

1. **Data:** Eight potential Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) questions were identified for inclusion on the 2014. The questions relate to youth gang affiliation and activity. Ultimately, one question was selected for inclusion in the 2014 survey. Response to the new question is available through HYS.

It should be noted that there is *no category* for reporting gang activity defined in federal or state reports.

2. **Policy guidance:** Previously, the Task Force examined local, regional, and national policies and guidance for dealing with gang activity in schools. The information was used to draft policy guidance that districts and communities might use. Included are definitions and identification criteria for recognizing gang activity within a school setting. This guidance can be used by districts to create their own, local gang activity in schools policies and procedures. The guidance documents is posted on the OSPI [Gangs in Schools](#) web page.
3. **Trainings:** Since the previous report, there have been no trainings offered through the Task Force.
4. **Meetings:** As noted above, the Task Force is no longer meeting. If gang activity in schools issues were to arise, they would be addressed within the School Safety Advisory Committee.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

As noted above, if issues around gang activity in schools arise, they will be addressed within the School Safety Advisory Committee. The Gangs in Schools Task Force report also reiterates the three recommendations previously forwarded to the Legislature. If addressing gang activity within schools is to be a priority for schools and districts, the Legislature will need to:

1. Provide funding to support for future Task Force work.
2. Provide funding for training, data collection, implementation of innovative programs, and promising practices. It is also recommended that funding be provided to support the work of promising, community-based efforts.
3. Provide a dedicated apportionment for transition/re-entry programs for adjudicated youth. As a component of its draft policy and procedural guidance, the Task Force recognizes the importance of wrap-around educational and re-engagement services for students who are suspended or expelled for gang-related activity. The Task Force recommends funding such activity.

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