



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Gangs in Schools Taskforce

2016

Authorizing legislation: [2007 Substitute Senate Bill 5097](#)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2007&bill=5097>

[RCW 28A.300.490 - Task force on gangs in schools](#)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.490>

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Executive Summary

Due to task force membership, organizational turnover and the resulting lack of participation, 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. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction intends in 2017 to review the future role of the task force.

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 task force membership, organizational turnover and the resulting lack of participation, 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.

Update Status

Data: Eight potential Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) questions were identified for as priorities. 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 current state or federal reports.

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 are posted on the OSPI [Gangs in Schools](#) web page.

Trainings: Since the previous report, there have been no trainings offered through the Task Force.

Meetings: As noted above, the Task Force is no longer meeting.

Conclusion and Next Steps

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

1. Provide funding to support 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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