



# **Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program**

**A FY 2010-2011 Progress Report to the General Assembly**

**Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

**Linda W. Hayes, Secretary**

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This legislative report is submitted in response to S.L. 2009-451 Section 18,5.(a) and (b)

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A GANG PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PILOT PROGRAM**

**SECTION 18.5.(a)** As part of the Governor's Comprehensive Gang Initiative, the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention shall establish a two-year Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program that will focus on youth at risk for gang involvement and those who are already associated with gangs and gang activity. The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention shall:

- (1) Ensure that measurable performance indicators and systems are put in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program, and
- (2) Conduct both process- and outcome-focused evaluations of the pilot program to determine community and institutional impacts of the pilot program pertaining to gang behavior, desistance, and activities. These evaluations may consider the degree of successful implementation of the program and measurable changes in gang-related and gang-affiliated behaviors noted in institutional, court system, communities, and related programs.

**SECTION 18.5.(b)** The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention shall report to the Chairs of the Senate and House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittees on Justice and Public Safety and the Joint Legislative Corrections, Crime Control, and Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee on the implementation and continuing operation of the pilot program by April 1 each year. The report shall include information on the number of juveniles served and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pilot program. In addition, the report shall include the information set out in subsection (a) of this section.

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## **Executive Summary**

The NC Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (NC DJJDP), under the authority of the Governor's Crime Commission and the state administration of the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne/JAG) program has funded the NC Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program (GPI) through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The two-year GPI pilot program focuses on youth at-risk for gang involvement and those who are already associated with gangs and gang activity. This pilot program was funded in the amount of \$6,000,000 for FY 2009-2011 with (ARRA) funds through the Governor's Crime Commission.

Based on an analysis of the North Carolina Juvenile On-line Information Network (NCJOIN) data for fiscal year (FY) 2007-2008, 18,469 youth were administered a risk assessment; 1,130 were determined to be gang-affiliated (6.1%); and 600 (3.2%) were judged to be gang members. The FY 2007-2008 data also indicate that 44% of the youth in the state's youth development centers (YDCs) are assessed as gang-involved.

## **NC Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program Project Overview**

The overarching goal of the Gang Prevention and Intervention program is reduction in gang activity as a strategy to reduce juvenile crime, both crime prevention and recidivism. This program targets youth who are identified as being at risk of gang involvement and those already associated with gangs. Intervention strategies focus on keeping youth from becoming gang members or, if they are already gang members, to help them dissociate from gangs. The GPI pilot program specifically targets youth at two YDCs and selected catchment area counties (one urban and one rural), as follows:

- The urban corridor involves the Stonewall Jackson (Cabarrus) YDC (60 youth in Fall 2010) and Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Rowan catchment area counties.
- The rural corridor involves the Edgecombe YDC (28 youth in Fall 2010) and Edgecombe, Wilson, Nash, and Halifax counties.

To provide oversight and support for this initiative, NC DJJDP has employed an overall project manager, two gang coordinators who are geographically allocated to each catchment area and an administrative support position.

The GPI pilot program includes the following components:

- Implementation of a cognitive-behavioral curriculum, Real Experiences About Life (REAL), in the two selected YDCs, along with related staff training;
- Implementation of evidence-based transition/reentry services for gang-affiliated youth returning to the community with community-based funding through local Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs);
- Implementation of selected National Gang Model (NGM) strategies in urban and rural corridor catchment counties to address community-based gang issues; and

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- Training of court services, detention center, and YDC staff in gang awareness, screening youth for risk factors related to gang affiliation and activity, and providing practical strategies for managing gang-related behaviors at all levels of engagement.

NC DJJDP contracted with ETR Services, LLC (ETR) to evaluate the extent to which the GPI pilot program was successful in achieving its desired outcomes, thereby reducing juvenile crime. Evaluators gather data on five groups of youth organized by the following services that they receive:

- **Group One:** Youth at the target YDCs who have received the GPI curriculum and returned to pilot reentry programs in the targeted counties of the urban or rural corridor;
- **Group Two:** Youth at the target YDCs who have received the GPI curriculum and returned to counties that do not have the pilot reentry program;
- **Group Three:** Youth at non-targeted YDCs, who returned to pilot reentry programs in the targeted counties of the urban or rural corridor;
- **Group Four:** Youth who are returning from out of home placements but return to pilot reentry programs in the targeted counties of the urban or rural corridor; and
- **Group Five:** Youth under court supervision receiving services in the catchment counties through pilot reentry programs in the targeted counties of the urban or rural corridor.

NC DJJDP selected the YDC in Lenoir County as a comparison site because the age of the facility and its program composition match the Edgecombe and Stonewall Jackson YDCs, except for the GPI initiative services. (Attachment A – County Map)

In designing the evaluation plan for the GPI program, ETR prepared an evaluation framework that traces the path of youth through the pilot initiative based on the program’s logic model for North Carolina Detention Facilities. Based on the NC DJJDP logic model and the goals of the GPI program, evaluators developed the following evaluation questions to guide the data-gathering process:

1. How effective was the training in preparing YDC staff in implementing the REAL curriculum?
2. How effective was the National Gang Center (NGC) training in preparing court staff and community providers in gang awareness, screening youth, and effective gang management?
3. To what extent was the REAL curriculum instituted in the selected YDCs?
4. What type of reentry services did the DJJDP and community program provider staff provide the target youth?
5. To what extent did the youth in the pilot programs complete the YDC service plans prepared for them?
6. To what extent did the youth in the JCPC pilot programs complete the community service plans prepared for them?
7. To what extent did the youth in the JCPC pilot programs demonstrate gang avoidance or gang dissociation?

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8. To what extent has the JCPC program made progress toward meeting its stated goals and objectives?

ETR uses mixed methods of data gathering to ensure triangulation of findings. Staff prepared interview and observation protocols to guide the data collection process (Attachment B – Evaluation Framework).

For this mid-term evaluation report, ETR completed interviews with 38 stakeholders in individual or group interviews and facilitated two focus groups with 15 Youth Counselors at the YDCs who have direct supervision of the youth. They observed three YDC and/or National Gang Model training sessions. ETR also gathered and analyzed the community partners' reports on the achievement of their measurable objectives and the extent that their activity engaged new workers or prevented layoffs (part of the ARRA funding requirements). Quantitative and qualitative data were arrayed by research question to document the implementation and progress of the GPI pilot project.

Limitations of the evaluation include a delay in receiving authorization to proceed that led to a late start in data gathering and the short duration of the funding period. With such a complex intervention, a two-year project is unlikely to demonstrate its value fully.

### **Training**

The Methodist Home for Children, Inc. (MHC) trained the YDC staff for the implementation of the REAL curriculum at separate sessions at the two pilot YDCs in May 2010. The focus of the training was how to “present the new curriculum and the psychological constructs and principles that undergird the curriculum to YDC staff, particularly group leaders.”

MHC trainers introduced participants to the Motivational Interviewing (MI) process and the REAL curriculum modules. The initial training marked the first exposure of many youth counselors (YCs) to MI techniques; therefore, trainers allowed participants to work in small groups to practice and develop the necessary skills to lead a REAL group. Although feedback on the initial training was generally positive, youth counselors look forward to consistent follow-up training by NC DJJDP to ensure that staff competencies are being maintained. Non-YDC staffs are requesting REAL training as well, so they can reinforce what the youth are learning through it.

The NGC initially performed an assessment of training needs in March 2010. A NGC staff member conducted a technical assistance visit to each of the pilot YDCs. During these visits NGC personnel interviewed YDC staff, chief court counselors, area court administrators, and community programs on practical strategies for managing gang behaviors in YDCs and detention centers and for improving the transition/reentry process.

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The NGC trainings were effective in preparing court staff and community-based providers in gang awareness, screening youth for gang involvement, and introducing effective gang-management skills. Everyone who participated in the training agreed that having experienced juvenile justice officers who could easily and comfortably relate to the audience and lead the sessions was most beneficial.

### **Program Implementation**

Implementation strategies focus on guiding and supporting youth to make better choices that will prevent them from joining gangs or have them dissociate from gangs if they are already engaged.

Stakeholders applauded the initiation of the GPI pilot program in NC, both as a gang prevention and intervention strategy and as a deterrent to youth crime in general. They hoped that ways could be found to extend the program to include more youth across the state. The approach crossed agency boundaries and promised to lead to greater collaboration. The speed of the implementation limited efforts to develop ownership of the program specifics by the staff whose jobs are affected by GPI. The speed of implementation also resulted in a lack of role clarity among participants.

The pilot program began at the local level in June 2010 with training offered in the REAL curriculum and MI skills and on the NGM. Community service providers received contracts to offer post-release services, and some of those services began while the youth were in secure confinement. The implementation process for GPI affected the workload and responsibilities of staff in the YDCs and in the community, and not all the ramifications of these changes were understood during the early months of the pilot program.

We have attempted to institute the REAL curriculum at the selected YDCs, and progress has been made to achieve that goal. Efforts are also being made to integrate the REAL curriculum with the existing Model of Care. Both models address youth risk factors and support good behavior; however, their focus differs. While the Model of Care focuses on developing youth skills through behavior repetition, the REAL curriculum focuses on therapeutic interaction with youth. As of December 2010, stakeholders report that it is too soon to know how effective the REAL curriculum will prove to be.

When youth are committed to the YDC, they receive a medical treatment plan and a service plan they are required to complete prior to release. Developing the YDC service plan is a team effort that includes the social worker (who leads the planning effort), the youth counselor, court counselor, staff psychologist, parent/guardian, and youth. Other stakeholders may also be invited to take part in service planning process, such as school representatives, community program coordinators, gang coordinators, and JCPC area consultants. Based on these interviews, the NGC designed two training sessions delivered near the two YDCs and advocates, or community program providers, may also participate in the planning efforts.

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Staff report that youth willingness to change is based on their years of involvement with gangs. The longer youth remain gang-involved, the less willing they are to change. The main reported factor that contributes to youth completing their YDC service plans is their length of stay at the YDC.

Once youth leave the YDC, they are placed under the supervision of court counselors and receive services based on their needs and as assigned by the court counselors. Developing the reentry/transition service plan is a team effort that includes many members of the YDC planning team and is led by the court counselor. The court counselor is responsible for setting the rules for the youth as well as ensuring they receive court-assigned services. In addition to the reentry service plan, community providers prepare a plan for each youth based on the services they offer. JCPC-funded programs offer some services to youth in all the catchment counties.

JCPC-funded services vary by county. Each county performs a needs assessment to determine the JCPC-funded services youth need most. Some counties have additional services funded through other means, so youth in those counties are more likely to have the range of their needs met. Among the seven catchment area counties, all the services youth are likely to need are offered. One recommendation suggested peer sharing about how to meet all youth's needs.

GPI staff, YDC staff, court counselors, and community program providers were asked about the effectiveness of the GPI program in changing youth attitudes and behaviors. Respective to gang dissociation most YDC staffs said it is too early to measure effectiveness, but were hopeful that the program will help youth change their attitudes about gangs and make good choices. While a third of the respondents reported that the program is effective so far, one respondent believed that it is effective only while the youth are in the YDCs. Two staff members at another YDC did not observe any youth changes as a result of the program.

## **Youth Data**

The GPI database reported information on 174 youth in the two YDCs combined. Youth came from 37 NC counties with the most coming from Mecklenburg (33) and Guilford (25). Sixty-six (66) youth came from the seven-county catchment area that is a part of the GPI program.

On the initial assessment of gang involvement (range 1-5 with one being no attachment to five being hard core), less than four percent had no involvement and over sixteen percent were judged to be hard core. The majority of youth scored either two or three on the five-point scale (Attachment C – Levels of Individual Gang Involvement). For the youth for which there were both admission and release scores, all the youth scores were lower at release and none of the youth who were hard core at admission remained hard core at release.

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For the 15 youth for whom there were release data on their attitude toward gangs, their attitudes were less positive toward gangs. While the youth scored relatively high in their initial self-efficacy scores, these scores were higher at release for the 11 youth for whom there were data at entry and release. On the URICA<sup>1</sup> change assessment, there were scores for 79 youth at the beginning of the program and fourteen youth at two points in time. The average readiness to change score remained in the “contemplation” level, but at a higher average score and with fewer youth scoring very low.

The weekly ruler data collected as the youth worked their way through the five modules of the REAL curriculum indicated that most youth were in the “contemplation” stage of readiness to change. The majority of staff agreed with the youth’s self-assessments on readiness to change. As the youth advanced through the modules, their readiness to change became stronger and their confidence that they could change became stronger. Again, the majority of the staff agreed with the youth’s self-assessment as the youth advanced through the modules. Leader reports on the youth’s stage of change indicate that while a majority of youth was considered to be at the “pre-contemplation” and “contemplation” stages during the first module, by the fifth module a majority of youth were considered to be in the “contemplation” and “preparation/determination” stages.

### **JCPC-Funded Community-Based Programs**

Another area to highlight in the Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program is the JCPC-funded community-based programs in each of the seven-county catchment areas related to the two YDCs in the pilot program. The Request for Proposals focused on three priorities: Transition/reentry; evidence-based programming emphasizing prevention and intervention strategies aimed at youth at-risk for gang involvement and youth already associated with a gang; and lastly, the vocational/career development programs. In the rural Edgecombe corridor, the community-based programs varied their strategic approaches. Funding was provided in Nash, Wilson, Edgecombe, and Halifax Counties. In the urban Stonewall Jackson (Cabarrus) corridor, the community-based programs included funding in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, and Rowan Counties. A total of 21 community-based programs were funded with the help and guidance of the local NC DJJDP staff and the County JCPC’s. The 21 program agreements were awarded \$2,416,634.00 (Attachment D – Community Programs).

### **Planning for a Transitional Home in 2011**

With many youth leaving youth development centers, there needs to be a period of transition prior to reintegrating back in the community. Specifically, youth at-risk for gang involvement and /or those who are already associated with gang and gang activity may need a safe haven away from their local community. The NC DJJDP seeks to provide housing and transition services to these youth at a six single room facility located in Craven County. This transitional home would allow the Department to provide supervision to post release and Level III youth (committed to the NC DJJDP) who are



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age 16 or older whose natural home environment is not positioned to sustain positive growth or development. We will anticipate that youth housed at the transition home have a need for alternative, community-based living for at least 6 months.

Because the GPI program has operated in the communities for a short time, only a few community service providers were serving youth who had been released from the YDC after experiencing the REAL curriculum. Reports from community providers were based more on their anticipation of how youth will respond to their service strategies rather than on their actual experience with them. Youth data indicate that youth were more open to change at release than they had been at admission to the YDCs.

## **Challenges**

For implementing the REAL curriculum training, the challenge has been in preparing youth counselors with MI skills and finding ways to prepare new staff hires to implement the curriculum. MI requires the staff to have strong group facilitation skills, more than just understanding the curriculum content. Youth counselors reported that they were not using MI effectively. They did not know how to balance the Model of Care and REAL expectations when they differed; and they were not confident that they handle power struggles with the youth effectively. YDCs report that staff turnover leads to youth counselors trying to learn REAL without the formal introduction to it. Community service providers report that they would benefit from training in REAL to support its principles with the youth when they are released to the community.

The NGM training was well-received, and some stakeholders believe that all staff involved with GPI should receive both the YDC (REAL) and the NGM training to see the whole intervention and how the components work together. Community service providers generally had little gang training before GPI. As nonprofits, they have few opportunities for professional development, and they are eager to take advantage of any training experience they could profit from.

Implementing GPI met challenges in the speed with which the roll out occurred that limited the usual agency buy-in strategies for making significant changes. The program requires that agencies, partners and other stakeholders collaborate when they have typically worked independently. Role expectations and some job descriptions are not yet clear.

The two target YDCs differ in their size and operational make up. The REAL curriculum is not being implemented in parallel ways at the two facilities.

The most repeated concern of staff in the YDCs and the community providers is that youth need to return to the environment that led to their gang and court involvement. Because of their young age, supporting the youth to become independent is not an option for most. Some foster care alternatives exist, but they are few.

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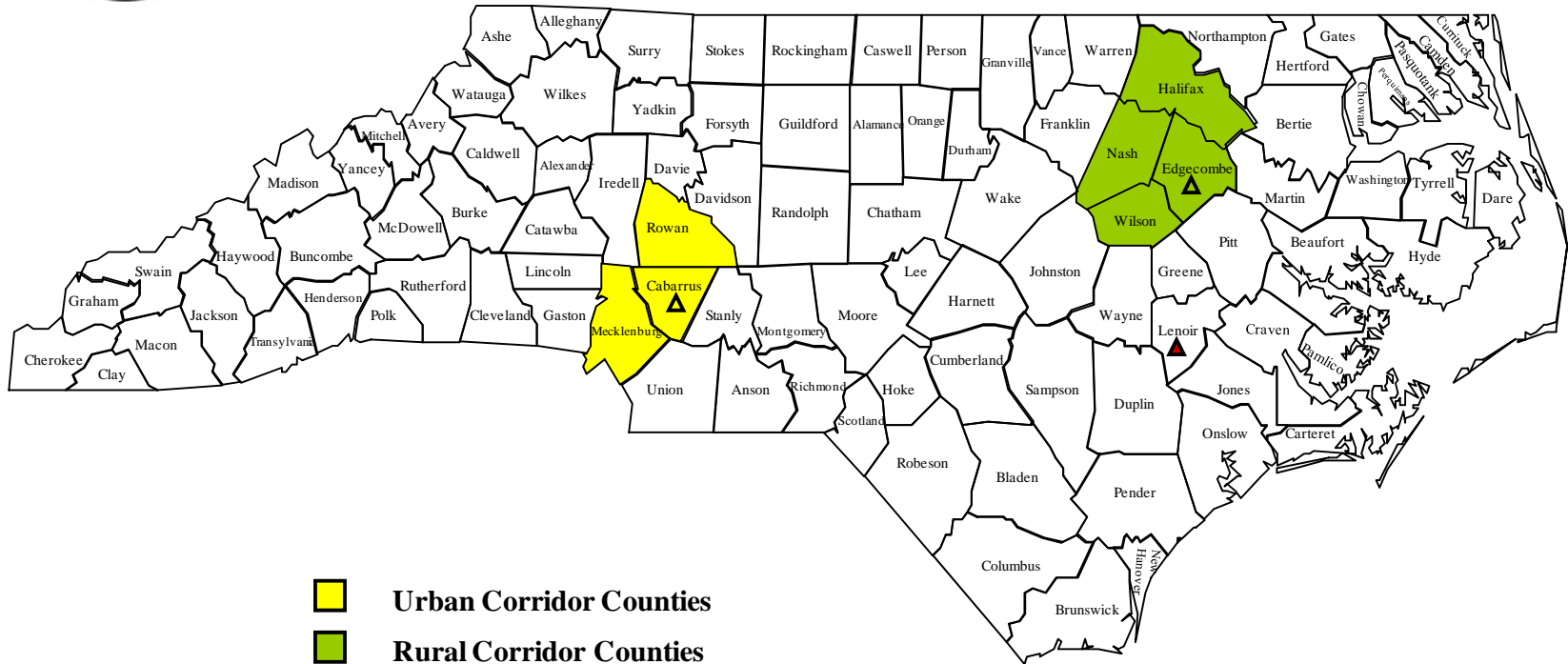
Few youth were released to the community by December 2010, but the challenges that community service providers are already meeting include the difficulty gaining compliance from some youth and their families, the lack of reliable transportation for getting youth to services and the lack of transportation funds for bringing services to youth. Some counties have fewer youth service resources. As a consequence, not all youth returning to the community have all the services that could support their re-engagement. Community service providers report the difficulty of re-engaging youth with school because some schools do not want to readmit them. As youth from 12-18 years of age, redirecting them to the workforce is not a strong alternative. Without a school or work assignment, it is difficult to keep the youth engaged in constructive activity.






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- Implementation of selected National Gang Model (NGM) strategies in urban and rural corridor catchment counties to address community-based gang issues
- Training of court services, detention center, and YDC staff in gang awareness, screening youth for risk factors related to gang affiliation and activity, and providing practical strategies for managing gang-related behaviors at all levels of engagement.
- Reintegration into a safe community from youth development centers. DJJDP has entered into a contract with Methodist Homes for Children to provide a safe haven and transition services for youth on post release supervision who cannot return to their local communities due to former gang involvement or lack of a family support. While housed at the facility in Craven County, the youth will be engaged in an independent living curriculum including:
  - Financial management and savings plan
  - Substance abuse education
  - Social skills/interpersonal skill building
  - Vocational training/Job readiness/employment
  - GED or Community College curriculum courses
  - Bi-weekly leadership groups held at the facility
  - Positive recreation and leisure activity
  - Discharge planning – community integration

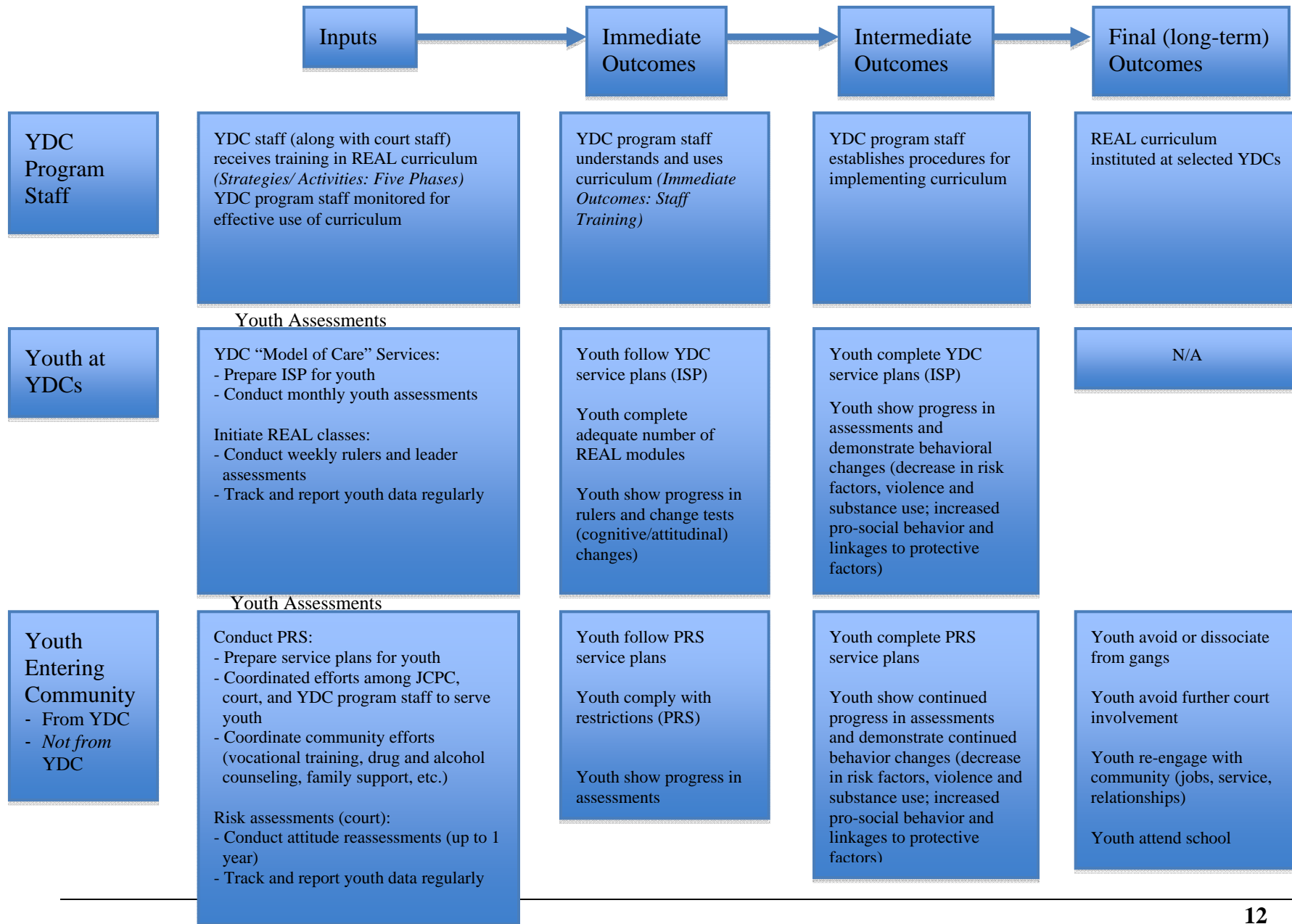
# Attachment A – County Map

## Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program



-  **Urban Corridor Counties**
-  **Rural Corridor Counties**
-  **Cabarrus YDC**
-  **Edgecombe YDC**
-  **Lenoir YDC Comparison Site**

# Attachment B – Evaluation Framework



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# Attachment C

## Levels of Individual Gang Involvement

Table 1

LEVEL I

FANTASY

- Knows about gangs primarily from the media (music, movies, and literature)
- May or may not know about “real” gangs
- May or may not like, respect, or admire a gang, gang member, or the gang lifestyle

LEVEL II

AT-RISK

- Knows about gangs and gang members first hand
- Occasionally casually associates with gang members
- Lives in or near gang areas (turf)
- May like or admire gangs or gang members as individuals
- May like and/or admire the gang lifestyle, but does not participate

LEVEL III

WANNA-BE/ASSOCIATE

- Knows and likes gang members first hand
- Regularly associates with gang members
- Considers gangs and related activity as normal, acceptable, and admirable
- Finds many things in common with gang members
- Is seriously thinking about joining a gang

LEVEL IV

GANG MEMBER

- Is officially a gang member
- Associates almost exclusively with gang members to the exclusion of family and former friends
- Participates in gang crimes and most other related activities
- Is not considered hard-core by fellow gang members or others
- Has substantially rejected the authority or value system of family and society

LEVEL V

HARD-CORE GANG MEMBER

- Totally committed to the gang and gang lifestyle
- Totally rejects anyone or any value system other than the gang
- Is considered hard-core by self, other gang members, and authorities
- Will commit any act with the approval or a demand from the gang
- Does not accept any authority other than the gang

E. H. Johnson, *Handbook on Crime and Delinquency Prevention*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 1 – 12.

# Attachment D

**Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
Gang Prevention and Intervention Pilot Program  
Community Programs**

County	Contract Amount	Sponsoring Agency	Program Name
Cabarrus	\$ 75,000	Boys & Girls Club of Cabarrus County	Boys & Girls Club Delinquency and Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach Program
Cabarrus	\$ 194,647	Monarch	Monarch Community Reentry Team
Edgecombe	\$ 50,000	Methodist Home for Children	Edgecombe Vocational Job and Educational Program
Edgecombe	\$ 60,000	Methodist Home for Children	Methodist Home for Children Transition/Reentry Program
Edgecombe	\$ 19,827	Pride in Carolina	Pride SAAT
Halifax	\$ 80,000	Methodist Home for Children	Halifax Vocational Job and Educational Program
Halifax	\$ 92,700	Methodist Home for Children	Methodist Home for Children Relocation Therapeutic Foster Care
Halifax	\$ 63,000	Methodist Home for Children	Methodist Home for Children Transition/Reentry Program IFPS
Halifax	\$ 33,756	United Services Youth, Inc.	United Services Youth, Inc.
Mecklenburg	\$ 339,765	Mecklenburg County - Manager's Office	Gang of One - Greenville Center Culinary Program
Mecklenburg	\$ 851,977	Mecklenburg County - Manager's Office	Gang of One Reentry and Intervention Team
Nash	\$ 60,000	Methodist Home for Children	Methodist Home for Children Transition/Reentry Program
Nash	\$ 51,640	Methodist Home for Children	Nash Vocational Job and Educational Program
Nash	\$ 30,000	Pride in Carolina	Pride SAAT
Rowan	\$ 19,164	Adolescent & Family Enrichment Council	Parent Advocate
Rowan	\$ 67,740	Rowan County Youth Services Bureau, Inc.	Reentry Transition Beds
Rowan	\$ 145,876	Rowan County Youth Services Bureau, Inc.	Wraparound Rowan
Wilson	\$ 60,000	Methodist Home for Children	Methodist Home for Children Transition/Reentry Program
Wilson	\$ 30,326	Pride in Carolina	Pride SAAT
Wilson	\$ 70,100	St. John Community Development Corporation, Inc.	Save A Youth (S.A.Y.) Vocational Program
Wilson	\$ 21,116	Y.O.U.T.H. of Wilson	Youth of Wilson Gang Intervention Program

**TOTAL FUNDING FOR ALL PROGRAMS: \$2,416,634**  
**TOTAL NUMBER OF PROGRAMS CURRENTLY OPERATING: 21**