

Chapter 1. Introduction

During the 1980s, the gang problem in the United States became widespread and communities around the country were struggling with an increase in associated youth violence. In 1987, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) began supporting a research and development project to design a comprehensive approach to reduce and prevent youth gang violence. The initial phase of this project was directed by Dr. Irving Spergel at the University of Chicago. The project concluded in the early 1990s and resulted in the development of the Spergel Model of Gang Intervention and Suppression, later renamed the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model (Model). The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model was based on best practices to address gang-related violence and crime as implemented in a number of communities around the country.

Drawing principally on social disorganization theory to frame the development of the Model, Dr. Irving Spergel and a research team from the University of Chicago expected that there were core strategies to address gang youth, their families, and the community institutions that would promote youths' transition from adolescence to productive members of society. With this in mind, law enforcement and other agency personnel in 65 cities reporting problems with gangs were surveyed. Analysis of that information, in conjunction with site visits and focus groups, led Dr. Spergel to conclude that communities should adopt activities in five specific areas (referred to as the five strategies):

Community mobilization: Involvement of local citizens, including former gang youth, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.

Opportunities provision: The development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeted at gang-involved youth.

Social intervention: Youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other criminal justice organizations reaching out and acting as links to gang-involved youth, their families, and the conventional world and needed services.

Suppression: Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision or monitoring of gang youth by agencies of the criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.

Organizational change and development: Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem.

In 1993, Dr. Spergel began implementing the initial version of the Model in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. The goal of the project was to reduce gang-related violence connected to two local gangs. Called the Gang Violence Reduction Program, the project lasted five years. An evaluation of the project was conducted, with several positive results: serious violent and property crimes were reduced, gang involvement of older gang members decreased, gang members participated successfully in educational and employment endeavors, and violent crime and drug arrests for the target group were reduced. (Spergel, 2007)

In 1995, OJJDP began to test the OJJDP Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program in five sites—Bloomington, Illinois; Mesa and Tucson, Arizona; Riverside, California; and San Antonio, Texas. In the process of establishing these sites, it became clear that to successfully implement the Model, the lead agency and its partner agencies

must fully understand the Model, the implementation process, and perhaps most important, the nature and scope of the community's gang problems. Experience with these sites reinforced the principle that a thorough assessment of the community's gang problem was a prerequisite to implementation. The evaluations of each site, as well as the evaluation of the Little Village project, can be accessed through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Search/SearchResults.aspx?txtKeywordSearch=Spiegel&fromSearch=1>.

Responding to the continuing problems of youth gangs and youth gang violence, over the past ten years OJJDP launched three initiatives based on the lessons learned from the original urban sites' demonstration of the Model.

In 1998, citing recent evidence that youth gangs were emerging in rural areas, OJJDP developed the **Rural Gang Initiative** (RGI), which included conduct of a comprehensive gang problem assessment and development of a plan to implement the Comprehensive Gang Model. Four RGI sites were funded.

In 2000, OJJDP began the **Gang-Free Schools and Communities Initiative**. In this initiative, the Gang-Free Schools Program sought to develop a school component to the Comprehensive Gang Model to develop programs within the school setting and link the school component to community-based gang prevention, intervention, and suppression activities. Four Gang-Free Schools sites were funded. Six sites in the Gang-Free Communities Program were given seed money to demonstrate the Model, but they were to leverage local resources more extensively.

In 2003, OJJDP launched the **Gang Reduction Program** to reduce gang activity in targeted neighborhoods in four cities. The program integrates prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry activities and uses existing community resources to sustain itself.

While these projects have had varying degrees of success at the local level, the nation's youth gang problem as a whole continues to affect a large number of jurisdictions, according to annual National Youth Gang Surveys (NYGS). Since the early 2000s, not only has every large city (population more than 100,000) in the United States experienced gang problems in some form or another, but so have a majority of suburban counties and a sizeable number of smaller cities and rural counties. In fact, it is estimated that more than 3,500 jurisdictions experienced gang problems in 2007, a 25 percent increase from the 2002 estimate. Moreover, during this same period, the number of reported gangs and gang members increased 25 percent and 8 percent, respectively, reaching an estimated nationwide total of more than 27,000 gangs and 788,000 gang members in 2007 (OJJDP 2007 Fact Sheet).

Of course, it is the *activities* of gang members that are of central concern, particularly their involvement in serious and/or violent offenses within the community. NYGS data reveal a substantially varying pattern of gang crime across the country. In terms of lethal gang violence, NYGS data show that, with few exceptions, nearly all gang-related homicides recorded annually by law enforcement occur in the largest cities and metropolitan counties. However, the less-populated areas are not without gang crime problems. In these communities, gangs are frequently reported to be involved in property and drug offenses. Of further concern, NYGS data reveals recent increases in two serious gang-related offenses, aggravated assault and drug sales, among a majority of gang-problem jurisdictions nationwide (OJJDP 2006 Fact Sheet). Data from these survey findings indicate that gangs continue to remain a significant and ongoing problem across the United States.

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model remains one of the few approaches to gangs that encompasses a multidisciplinary response to gangs on multiple levels—prevention, intervention, and suppression—and that has been shown to reduce serious gang-related crimes in affected communities. This manual is based on the best practices of almost 20 years of implementation experience with the Model in communities large and small.

Purpose of the Implementation Guide

The purpose of this guide is to assist communities in designing a plan to implement the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model (Model). It is intended for use by the Steering Committee and project staff as they determine the goals and objectives of their plan.

A companion guide, *Assessing Your Community's Gang Problem*, contains information and direction about the importance of conducting an assessment prior to developing an implementation plan. Sites that conducted a comprehensive assessment found they were better equipped during the planning and implementation process to design appropriate responses. The assessment process helped sites determine types and levels of gang activity, gang crime patterns, community perceptions, and service gaps. The assessment also enabled sites to better target appropriate populations, understand why those populations merited attention, and make the best use of available resources.

In this manual, the following information is provided:

1. An overview of the Comprehensive Gang Model. (Chapter 2, page 4)
2. A guide to using assessment data from a local community to plan a comprehensive response to gangs that fits the community's needs, history, and challenges. (Chapter 3, page 8)
3. An overview of the Model's five strategies, including in-depth descriptions of what each strategy means, in practice. (Chapter 4, page 21)
4. A description of the staffing structure necessary to ensure that the implementation plan is carried out on a day-to-day basis. (Chapter 5, page 29)
5. An overview of Model activities, sorted by prevention, intervention, and suppression categories. (Chapter 6, page 44)
6. A description of the work of the Intervention Team, including examples of individual agencies' activities and the role each agency plays in the Model. (Chapter 7, page 49)
7. An exploration of how gang members should be case managed by the Intervention Team. (Chapter 8, page 57)
8. An in-depth discussion of the street outreach component of the Model. (Chapter 9, page 67)
9. An overview of evaluation and sustainability activities within the Model. (Chapter 10, page 76)

For more information on the research and development of the Model, as well as information about demonstration sites, refer to *Best Practices To Address Community Gang Problems*, pp. 1–4 and Appendix A (OJJDP, 2008). This document is available at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/publications/PubAbstract.asp?pubi=253257>. It is also recommended that project staff review *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach* by Dr. Irving Spergel for a more in-depth discussion of Dr. Spergel's theory (Oxford University Press: New York, New York, 1995), *Reducing Gang Crime: The Little Village Project* (Spergel, 2007), and *The Comprehensive, Community-Wide, Gang Program Model: Success and Failure* (Spergel et al., 2006).