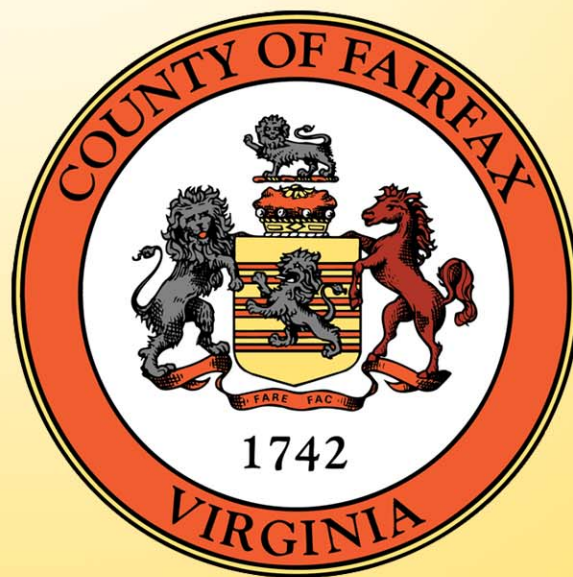


# FAIRFAX COUNTY GANG PREVENTION SUMMIT

Report to the Community:  
Actions and Recommendations



June 20, 2005

Presented by  
The Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention  
and The Fairfax County Gang Prevention Steering Committee

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In his inaugural speech in 2003, Chairman Gerald E. Connolly laid out six priorities for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. While these priorities were not to the exclusion of other issues, they were items of particular importance on which the Board needed to focus for the next term. The County has been seized with a mission in these six areas and has moved forward on all of them, including the anti-gang efforts.

Public safety is the second-largest section of the County's budget, and with more than 1 million residents, Fairfax County has long been one of the safest jurisdictions in the country. One of the few clouds on that bright horizon is the rise of gang activity in the region. Gangs and their activities challenge the County's fundamental mission to keep every neighborhood and community safe. The problem of gangs must be combated and the County's children prevented from undertaking this destructive and dangerous lifestyle.

Although gangs pose a significant threat to public safety, this is actually a community issue that should be addressed through cross-agency, communitywide initiatives that strengthen and improve collaboration on County, school, private, faith-based and community-based gang prevention, intervention and suppression strategies.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has long been involved in gang prevention and related activities, such as establishing the Police Gang Investigative Unit in 1994, and providing numerous youth recreation and education programs over the years. Now, on the Chairman's initiative, the Board has also established a cross-agency, communitywide Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention to strengthen and improve collaboration across the County.

In his 2005 State of the County Address, Chairman Connolly addressed the progress underway in the Board's gang prevention priority, including identifying gaps in what is already being done in the areas of prevention, intervention and suppression of gangs; coordinating resources and efforts; and attacking the gang issue on all fronts. Chairman Connolly emphasized that eliminating existing gangs and their offenses through a comprehensive effort is necessary to maintain the protection of the community and prevent Fairfax County's children from ever joining gangs – an investment that will pay safety dividends for the County's future.

At the Fairfax County Gang Prevention Summit on February 25, 2005, representatives from multiple County agencies, members of the public, community-based nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, public schools and regional partners met to generate ideas to combat gang violence in the County. The Gang Prevention Summit provided an opportunity to focus attention on gang activity in Fairfax County, present the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model, and provide an open venue for County agencies and other stakeholders to band together to collectively address the issue of gangs in an efficient and effective manner.

During the nearly four months that have passed since the completion of the Gang Prevention Summit, much has been done regarding the implementation of the OJJDP model and coordination of resources both within County government and the general public. The accomplishments achieved to date have been driven by the insights gained from the Gang Prevention Summit, the efforts of the Gang Prevention Steering Committee chaired by County Executive Anthony H. Griffin and the contributions of the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention.

It is important to note that implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model is not a simple process and cannot be accomplished in a short period of time. Many large challenges and tasks lie ahead for the Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention, members of the community, County agencies, the school system, the business community, nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations that choose to participate in gang prevention activities. However, through continued coordination of resources within the County and community, partnering with nonprofit organizations and the faith-based community, Fairfax County can make significant strides in eliminating gangs and gang activity in Fairfax County.

The June 20, 2005, "Report to the Community: Actions and Recommendations" from the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention and the Fairfax County Gang Prevention Steering Committee highlights what actions have been accomplished and outlines recommendations for the next steps needed to effectively move forward with the implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.

## **Accomplishments**

- A commitment to implement the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model has been made by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County Police Department, Fairfax County Sheriff's Office and Office of the County Executive.
- In response to information obtained from the Gang Prevention Summit and presentations made directly to the Board of Supervisors by youths representing Neighborhood Pride, six youths have been hired by the Department of Community and Recreation Services as limited term employees for the summer. These individuals will focus their work activities on community outreach and program evaluation at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church and the Area II Human Services office. In addition, they will work with staff to develop new outreach strategies to increase the number of at-risk youth in summer programs.
- Multi-agency teams have begun to pilot wraparound services for youths involved in gang activity and their families. These multi-agency teams are building on the concept of a Child Specific Team, which has been used successfully by Human Services.
- In accordance with the requirements of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model, the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force Intervention and Prevention Committee has authorized and

funded a regional assessment of gang activity, which will include Fairfax County. The funding of the assessment will be drawn from the funding provided to the Northern Virginia Gang Task Force from Representative Frank Wolf.

- As there is no standard national definition of what a gang is or who constitutes a gang member, to avoid confusion and develop a level of consistency among County agencies, the definition currently employed by the Fairfax County Police Department as delineated by the Code of Virginia has been adopted and is to be utilized countywide. A gang is defined as a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose, who engage in criminal activity and conform to one or more of the following traits: share a common group name; share common symbols, tattoos or graffiti; share common style of dress; frequently congregate upon, or lay claim to, a geographic location; and associate on a regular or continuous basis.
- The Fairfax County Public Schools in association with the Fairfax County Police Department will institute the Healthy Choices educational program for all middle school children enrolled in Fairfax County Public Schools in place of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program previously offered in a select number of middle schools. The Healthy Choices program will be provided in conjunction with the health and physical education curriculum.
- Educating the public and private sector through the dissemination of consistent and accurate information regarding gangs was designated as a high priority by the Summit participants and the Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention. Currently, Fairfax County employees, primarily the Police Department, routinely make gang prevention presentations to different segments of the population. In order to assist the Police Department and ensure that a common message is being delivered by many voices, a speakers bureau is being developed under the direction of the Office of Public Affairs and the Gang Prevention Coordinator.
- Coordination has begun among County human services agencies, the Department of Community and Recreation Services and the Boys and Girls Club of America. To date, County staff has assisted Cox Communications in its endeavor to develop a Fairfax County Boys and Girls Club of America Board of Directors, met with national representatives from the Boys and Girls Club regarding targeted outreach gang prevention and intervention programs, and toured the Culmore Boys and Girls Club site.
- Thanks to the significant investment in after-school programs by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Fairfax County School Board and the School-Community Coalitions, the schools have significantly increased the availability and quality of after-school opportunities. Twenty-four of the 25 middle schools offer at least three days of activities weekly to an average 226 students per school.
- Cox Communications has aired gang-focused public service announcements and rebroadcast the Gang Prevention Summit.
- The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services has allocated \$146,997 that is earmarked for training and prevention services.
- County staff members are currently working with Cox Communications and representatives from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington to provide

support in identifying sites and partners for future Boys and Girls Clubs in Fairfax County.

## **Next Steps**

- Publicize within County agencies, schools and to the general public the working definition of gangs and who constitutes a gang member adopted by the Steering Committee and already in use by the Police Department. A gang is defined as a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose, who engage in criminal activity, and conform to one of more of the following traits: share a common group name; share common symbols, tattoos or graffiti; share common style of dress; frequently congregate upon, or lay claim to, a geographic location; and associate on a regular or continuous basis.
- Publicize the importance and opportunity for businesses, the faith-based community, civic organizations and others to become involved in the prevention of gangs in Fairfax County.
- Complete identification of agency staff members who will serve as the gang resource person and the contact person for their agency.
- Under the direction of the Office of Public Affairs and in conjunction with the Gang Prevention Coordinator, implement the Gang Prevention Speakers Bureau and identify and train the participants.
- Coordinate efforts with the Department of Systems Management for Human Services and Resource Information Management Services to enhance the ability of service providers and community members to access the services database specific to gang services.
- Through continued discussion with the Police Department's command staff and research efforts, develop a set of best practices for meeting the safety needs of individuals getting out of gangs or testifying in gang-related cases.
- Implement quarterly meetings with the Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention and nonprofit organizations such as the Partnership for Youth and faith-based organizations in order to build community capacity within the County to effectively address gang issues.
- Establish an ongoing data collection and analysis process to assess the impact of the program.
- Finalize planning and coordination with the Boys and Girls Club of America regarding the expansion of club sites in Fairfax County.

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### **III. REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY: ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This report is presented to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on behalf of the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention and the Fairfax County Gang Prevention Steering Committee.

The contents of this report include historical information on the formation of the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention, a summary of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model, common themes that emerged from the Fairfax County Gang Prevention Summit and updates on current and future action plans.

During the four months following the Gang Prevention Summit much has been accomplished, yet many large tasks lie ahead for the Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention, members of the community, County agencies, the school system, the business community, nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations that choose to participate in gang prevention activities. Addressing the issue of gangs and the implementation of appropriate gang prevention services should not and cannot be the sole responsibility of the County. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Comprehensive Gang Model, the entire community must join together, share resources and work in unison to be successful. Success in gang suppression, intervention and prevention will occur only if services are coordinated, public and private partnerships are formed and there is ongoing and diversified education and training of all members of the community regarding gangs.

The implementation of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model in Fairfax County is in its infancy. It will take time and require nontraditional ways of thinking and an ongoing commitment from the leadership within County government, the schools and community members who are affected both directly and indirectly by gang activity. The ongoing commitment of the Board of Supervisors, in addition to law enforcement, social services and education, has provided a strong foundation for successfully implementing this comprehensive gang model. Because of this strong base, the initial implementation steps will not require a large expenditure of financial resources. The immediate action plans provided in this document embrace the rich universe of resources available to the people who call Fairfax County home.

#### **History**

On January 26, 2004, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors directed the County Executive to develop and present a proposal to the Board for a cross-agency effort to enhance the coordination of activities regarding gangs and to involve the Fairfax County

Public School system as well as community-based organizations, including the Fairfax County Partnership for Youth. The Board of Supervisors also directed the inclusion of a community coalition connected to high schools and their feeder schools, as well as representatives from regional shopping malls or centers.

On July 12, 2004, the Board of Supervisors established the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention, chaired by the County Executive and led by a steering committee. This measure also funded the creation of a Gang Prevention Coordinator position.

The membership of the Council is based on the premise that gang prevention, intervention and suppression must be a public, private and community-based effort. The Council is responsible for coordinating the County's preventive and community education efforts and reports to the Board of Supervisors. The Council also seeks to educate and engage members of the community, including parents and other community leaders associated with youth, to work together to help prevent and eliminate gangs in the community. The Council is pursuing five strategies, which are taken from the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: Community Mobilization, Social Intervention, Opportunities Provision, Suppression and Organizational Change and Development.

## **Gang Prevention Summit**

The Fairfax County Gang Prevention Summit was conducted on February 25, 2005, in the Fairfax County Government Center. The event was sponsored by the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention and attracted more than 300 registrants. The Summit participants included representatives from multiple County agencies, members of the public, community-based nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, public schools and regional partners.

Following opening remarks by County Executive Anthony H. Griffin, Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly, Fairfax County Schools Superintendent Dr. Jack Dale and Police Chief David Rohrer, the participants attended one of five breakout sessions. The topics discussed in the breakout sessions included the five strategies identified by the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model for effective gang prevention: Community Mobilization, Social Intervention, Opportunities Provision, Suppression, and Organizational Change and Development.

## **OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model Strategies**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model is a research-based program designed to reduce and prevent youth gang violence through an integrated approach involving community agencies and organizations. The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model calls for five core strategies to be delivered when implementing the model: Community Mobilization, Social Intervention, Opportunities Provision, Suppression, and Organizational Change and Development.

***Community Mobilization*** – Involve local residents, youth, community groups and agencies in prevention, intervention and suppression efforts.

### *Common Themes*

- The issue of gangs cannot be solved by County agencies alone. If gang prevention is going to work, residents, former gang members, community groups, nonprofit organizations, the media and faith-based organizations must be involved in the development and implementation of any initiatives.
- In order to engage the community, more people need to be educated about gangs through speaker presentations, videos and public service announcements. Those who need to be further educated include families, children, County staff, school staff and community leaders. There is a need for improved awareness of services.
- Communities, especially those most affected by gang activity, must be educated about gangs, empowered to take an active role in their communities and have the necessary funding and services to address the issues.
- Existing services must be brought to the communities in which people most affected by gangs reside. Services will not be adequately accessed by the communities that most need them if they cannot reach the services easily and economically. Enhanced outreach services to these communities would assist residents in becoming more knowledgeable regarding available services and more comfortable about accessing services.
- Considerable resources have been allocated toward the suppression of gangs. As we move forward, emphasis also must be placed on intervention and prevention.

### *Immediate Actions*

- Fairfax County Gang Prevention Summit held. (Completed 2-05)
- Members of the Coordinating Council identified. (Completed 2-05)
- Gang Prevention Coordinator hired. (Completed 2-05)
- Cox Communications earmarked \$2 million for gang prevention public service announcements, which have aired on Cox Channel 35. (Ongoing)
- The Fairfax County Police Department, Department of Community and Recreation Services and the Gang Prevention Coordinator have provided more than 100 presentations to multiple organizations, which included Spanish-only presentations. The Northern Virginia Gang Task Force has made 85 presentations this year to approximately 3,000 community members. Members of the Fairfax County Public School's Safe and Drug Free Schools Division have made 47 gang

- presentations during the past year in addition to providing schools with anti-gang informational brochures for parents. (Ongoing)
- Currently 14 Family Resource Centers operate in Fairfax County that provide programs designed for the specific communities where they are located. (Ongoing)
  - Six youths have been hired this summer by the County to assist with gang prevention programs and services. The youths will be responsible for evaluating County programs that serve youths, developing and implementing an outreach plan to recruit underserved youths to Teen Services programs in the Department of Community and Recreation Services (DCRS), and developing and implementing gang prevention programs at DCRS locations. The youths will be supervised by DCRS. (Completed 6-05)

#### *Council Action Plan Recommendations*

- Identify formal and informal leaders inside hard-to-reach communities through the efforts of faith-based organizations, neighborhood groups and grass-roots organizations. Use those individuals to motivate and educate members of the community so they can move away from feeling fear and move toward feeling empowered.
- Identify, engage and learn from youth who are not in school. This information could be used to refine prevention strategies.
- Consider using the skills of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers in community outreach activities.
- Consider using the skills of Neighborhood College and Citizen Police Academy graduates.
- Create more diverse outreach strategies than currently exist in the County by gaining the assistance of multilingual community members and also by increasing the number of multilingual County employees.
- Find and publicize former gang members' positive success stories to encourage kids to leave gangs and to combat perceptions of gangs.
- Engage targeted communities through nontraditional methods such as community events that involve current gang members, former gang members and families. Use these opportunities to develop relationships with community members.
- Recognize that outreach strategies must consider that in many households, individuals work more than one job.
- Utilize forums where people are already gathered, such as social or community events, instead of calling meetings.

***Social Intervention*** – Provide social services to gang youths and their families through County agencies, schools, grass-roots groups, faith-based and other organizations.

*Common Themes*

- The need exists for more outreach workers who are multilingual and multicultural, knowledgeable about resources and able to connect with families. The County must develop a master inventory of services, so that youth service providers and parents can easily identify and access services relevant to gangs.
- Communities want to participate in the gang prevention effort and need to be educated further about gangs and how to become more involved in prevention.
- Families need additional resources to assist them in recognizing when their child needs help and assistance with accessing services for gang-involved children as well as children at risk.
- Those communities most affected by gang issues are more apt to access services if those services are specifically located in those communities.
- Faith-based organizations, former gang members and community leaders must become more involved in mentoring, after-school programs and providing educational options (ESOL, parenting classes, etc).

*Immediate Actions*

- Adapt the current Child Specific Team process for at-risk children to include children who are gang involved or who have been identified as gang associates.
- Expand the services offered by the Coordinated Services Planning phone service to include resources regarding gang suppression, intervention and prevention services. Partner with a nonprofit organization to extend such services past 4:30 p.m. and on weekend and holidays.
- Under the direction of the Office of Public Affairs develop a speakers bureau that can provide a variety of gang presentations to wide-ranging audiences, yet deliver a common message. (In progress)
- Expand the Road Dawg Camp program, originated at the West Springfield District Station, to other district stations. (In progress)

*Council Action Plan Recommendations*

- County agencies must pay more attention and direct services toward issues such as why kids join gangs, in addition to multicultural issues such as families and children not living together or the relationship issues that arise when youth who have not been living with their biological parents for extended periods of time reunite in this country.
- As a prevention tactic, County/school service providers should examine school registration records and identify youths whose last residence was outside the country and activate special services for those individuals immediately.
- The Fairfax County Public Schools should review the funding and utilization of the Parent Liaison initiatives to determine what additional resources might be needed to ensure that the program is uniform and it is available to all in need throughout the school system.

***Opportunities Provision*** – Develop a variety of educational, training and employment programs or services targeted to gang youths and other at-risk youths.

*Common Themes*

- Enhance the availability of after-school programs within the public schools and in the community to create a safe haven for children and provide educational support along with positive activities.
- Expand funding for alternative schools and alternative education options especially for those individuals who may not be able to earn a traditional academic diploma. Also, more proactively address truancy and students who skip class.
- Complete a needs assessment and designate funding for identified services. Funding initiatives must have sustainability.
- Create employment opportunities for communities where individuals are most needy. Also reinstate job training funding and have job fairs at high schools for children and adults.
- Connect with students and individuals not enrolled in the school system and address their needs.

*Immediate Actions*

- Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services sponsored a “Teen Summer Job & Activity Fair” at the James Lee Center. (Completed 5-05)
- Coordinate with the Workforce Investment Board to explore the expansion of the Job Hut Program into Fairfax County and job skills training for youth currently housed in facilities operated by the Fairfax County Juvenile Court. (Ongoing)
- Continue implementation of the pilot Project Graduation program at Annandale High School designed to provide youths in gangs or at risk for joining gangs additional educational support and job skills training. (Initiated 3-05)

*Council Action Plan Recommendations*

- Create opportunities for parents to gain skills to advocate for themselves and their children.
- Create forums and opportunities to share and exchange information where parents are located. Do not make them leave their communities to get services.
- Address barriers to outside groups providing after-school services, such as transportation to the faith communities offering programs and space, or create opportunities for faith-based organizations to operate after-school activities in the schools.
- Fairfax County Public Schools will examine additional alternative policies to current suspension and expulsion actions in the schools. Alternatives may include more utilization of in-school suspension centers or expansion of the Support of Suspension (SOS) sites throughout the County.
- Provide greater outreach efforts to youths who are not or have never been enrolled in school.
- Create incentives/breaks for those who volunteer or donate space for neighborhood resource centers.

**Suppression** – Close supervision or monitoring of gang members by agencies of the criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools and grass-roots groups.

#### *Common Themes*

- Go into communities where gang members live and get the community involved. Establish relationships with the youths and listen to what they say.
- Create more forums in communities and in schools where parents and educators can learn more about gangs and access resources.
- Provide more opportunities for youths to be involved in pro-social activities beyond athletics and academics. It is critical to address the after-school hours and the utilization of mentors.
- Improve police presence, develop relationships between police and community, and recruit more Hispanic/minority employees for the Police Department.
- Coordinate existing services, identify what works in regard to gang prevention and set up community liaisons/outreach workers to tie the community resources to the families.

#### *Immediate Actions*

- Juvenile Probation and Adult Probation have partnered with the police in special gang suppression operations in high gang activity areas. Juvenile and adult probation officers have utilized the services of the Police Department to perform house visits and educate parents about how to identify signals of their child's possible gang involvement. (Initiated 2-05)
- Juvenile Probation established a gang liaison position within the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to allow for the sharing and exchanging of specific information as directed by the Code of Virginia. (Initiated 3-05)
- As there is no standard national definition of what a gang is or who constitutes a gang member, in order to avoid confusion and develop a level of consistency among County agencies, the definition currently employed by the Fairfax County Police Department as delineated by the Code of Virginia has been adopted and is the definition to be utilized countywide. A gang is defined as a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose, who engage in criminal activity, and conform to one of more of the following traits: share a common group name; share common symbols, tattoos or graffiti; share common style of dress; frequently congregate upon, or lay claim to, a geographic location; and associate on a regular or continuous basis. (Completed 4-05)
- The Fairfax County Police Department has partnered with other law enforcement agencies in the Northern Region to collectively employ anti-gang efforts on a regional level. (Completed)
- The Fairfax County Public Schools, in conjunction with the Fairfax County Police Department, will institute the Healthy Choices educational programming for all middle school children enrolled in Fairfax County Public Schools, in place of Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.). (2005-06 school year).

*Council Action Plan Recommendations*

- Enhance community policing efforts so law enforcement officers can better connect with the communities they serve.
- Assign police officers to satellite offices or resource centers in a consistent manner so the community knows the officer and the officer knows the community.



***Organizational Change and Development*** – Develop and implement policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources.

*Common Themes*

- Gang Prevention Summit participants indicated the importance of including youths in the development and implementation of services. They indicated that understanding the specific needs of youths and engaging them in the process would assist in ensuring that effective and efficient services are being implemented.
- The organizational structure that is created needs to be able to move into specific targeted communities and provide programs and services. The organization should not expect or wait for individuals to step outside their community to seek services.
- Organizations must be responsive to families, respect differences and ensure that frontline staff members working on the gang issue are trained in the correct proficiencies to address the problem areas.
- Expand the use of technology in gang suppression, intervention and prevention efforts.
- Develop and implement a gang intervention team.

*Immediate Actions*

- Employment of the Neighborhood Pride teens with the Department of Community and Recreation Services to assess the type of programming currently being offered at the James Lee Center in regard to specific gang prevention efforts. (Completed 6-05)
- Identify and invite teens to participate with the Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention in developing gang prevention programming.
- Complete a community assessment survey and use current data to identify specific areas within the County that are in need of higher level of services.

*Council Action Plan Recommendation*

- The Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention will continue to work with County staff to evaluate policies and procedures to maximize the potential resources.

## **IV. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

Child Specific Team (CST) – The CST process brings together parents and their children, community members and professionals in an effort to help the family.

Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention (CCGP) – The CCGP was established by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to provide coordination and oversight of the County’s prevention, intervention and suppression efforts through community education and engaging members of the community, including parents and other community leaders.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) – The OJJDP is a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice that provides national leadership, coordination and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization.

Resource Team – The Resource Team will develop and review the current status of the gang problem, existing programs, and gaps and overlaps in the current delivery of services to at-risk youths and their families.

Steering Committee – The Steering Committee provides support and makes decisions for planning and implementing the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.