

Youth Gangs: Going Beyond the Myths to Address a Critical Problem

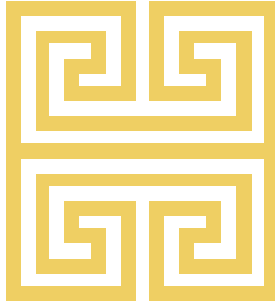
[Home](#)
[Getting Started](#)
[Day 1](#)
[Day 2](#)
[Day 3](#)
[Day 4](#)
[Day 5](#)
[Resources & Links](#)
[Event Support](#)

[Discussion Area](#)

Day 3

Assessing Youth Gang Problems in Your School and Community

When Renee Parker began conducting an assessment of the gang problem in a section of Miami, she asked some reformed gang members to talk to her and her advisory committee about what they were up against.



Parker also asked law enforcement officers who work closely with gangs to educate the advisory committee about gangs in the area. It was a critical step on their way to understanding the gang problem in their area, she said. The officers trained Parker and others on signs of gang membership. Even though the hard-core gangsters might no longer wear colors, have tattoos, or shoot hand signs, the younger “wannabes” who are less sophisticated probably will.

“We were told that gang members now are not like the gang members they used to have,” said Parker, project director of a Gang-Free Schools program in Miami. “They know we are looking for colors and tattoos so they don’t do that. You have to be very observant. The wannabes are the ones we end up with, and those are the most dangerous because they will do anything to be the big guy. There will be all sorts of signs: referrals to the principal, disrespect for authority figures, constant trouble with court, and refusal to comply.”

“When you think of gangs, these are not Bloods and Crips,” said Parker. “These are little groups of kids who are coming from other areas and don’t know anybody. They build these cliques for survival, protection, fun, and drug money. These kids are hustling to make money. A lot of these kids are very intelligent. What they need is hope.”

As Coordinators, you have multiple responsibilities and taking on a problem as big as gangs may seem daunting. Fortunately, you should already have several pieces in place that will help you do this work. With guidance from your advisory committee, you can conduct an assessment of the gang problem in your school. The assessments that you have already carried out could provide valuable information in putting together a picture of gangs in the school community.

The community members on your committee and your contacts can help you learn about the resources already available that could be used to address the needs of at-risk youth and those already in gangs.

Small Investment Yields Large Result

The 12-year-old boy was headed for trouble. Living in a cramped, hot two-bedroom apartment with his grandmother, mother, and brother, he was skipping school and already on juvenile probation. An outreach worker with a gang intervention program began showing up at the boy's home every day to remind him about school. He found a school where the youth could help coach girls' basketball and baseball. The outreach worker also noticed the stifling heat in the apartment when he came to visit. He and his intervention team arranged with a company to install an air conditioner.

"If it's nicer on the street than at home because it's hot and people are fussing, that's where he's going to spend time," said Renee Parker, project coordinator of the Miami Partnership for Action in Communities Task Force/Project Impact. "It helps the family know that we're there for them."

Has your school or district ever done a needs assessment for youth gang activity?

Yes

No

Current Results

Collecting the Data

The first step in addressing a gang problem in your community is understanding the scope of any gang problem. The depth of your assessment depends on your resources. But several practitioners interviewed said that it is critical to look at several data sources in order to get a full picture of the gang situation in the area. Law enforcement will likely only deal with the most serious gang members and may not have information on newer members who are not yet committing serious crimes. Adolescents may have insights into gangs at their schools, and community agencies still have another picture of gang involvement from youth that they serve. Each piece has its strengths and weaknesses, but all of them can add up to a more complete picture of gang activity in your area.

Experts recommend the local law enforcement department as the first stop in assessing a gang problem. Larger police departments may have an anti-gang unit; smaller ones should have police officers who are familiar with gangs in the area. As a first step, Coordinators can make an appointment with an officer familiar with gangs and ask for an hour to get an overview of the situation. Coordinators can make clear that they are not looking for individual names or information on ongoing investigations. You simply want to understand more about gangs in your community, including an overview of gangs, size of gangs, rivalries among gangs, turf issues, and adult involvement (for example, some adults go to schools to recruit for gangs with offers of free alcohol, drugs, and sex).



Click [here](#) for tips on questions to ask in a needs assessment.


It also helpful at the outset to determine the scope of the assessment: whether it will focus on only younger children at risk of joining gangs, adolescents on the cusp of joining a gang, active gang members, or all three. While it can be tempting to focus just on younger children, it will do little to address an immediate gang problem in your community.

"If you are worried about young kids getting involved with gangs and you're not doing anything about older ones, you're always going to be playing catch up," said Phelan Wyrick, Ph.D., Gang Program coordinator at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.


"You're going to tell them to stay in school and get good grades and they will look at the older ones who have dropped out of school, and are partying and have money, and see that people respect them or fear them. Young boys will say they [the gang members] have power. One way or another the older gang-involved youth are going to be a negative."

Coordinators should also investigate these avenues for information about gangs:




 **Police data.** Coordinators can ask the police officer they are working with if they collect data on gang-related incidents, and if so, to share those data. If they do not, you

can ask to review police incident reports to try to determine the extent of gang problems. If police do not mark reports as possibly gang-related, as many do not, Coordinators may want to ask for all reports on homicide and aggravated assault involving people under 20 years of age, which in many areas is a good proxy measure of gang violence. Coordinators may also want to limit their review to incidents within a defined geographical area, such as the schools they work in. However, it is also important to let the data speak for itself. For example, it may seem that most gang problems are in one neighborhood, but then the data reveals another story. *Click [here](#) for more information about analyzing police reports.*

 **Student and school-level data.** School data can help identify risk factors, such as school suspension, truancy, and dropout rates that may make students more vulnerable to joining a gang. Among the activities that Coordinators can take are the following:

- ◆ Collect school data on number of fights in schools, dropout rate, and truancy figures. These figures can serve as a proxy for potential gang activity.
- ◆ Conduct a student survey on their perceptions about gangs or conduct student focus groups. These surveys or interviews should also ask about students' perceptions of needs to address gang problems. *Click [here](#) for a sample student survey.*
- ◆ Conduct a teacher and school administrator survey about perceptions of gangs and social service needs of at-risk and gang-involved youth. *Click [here](#) for a sample teacher and school administrator survey.*

 **Community data** Hold focus groups of community members. Interview community members and leaders about their perceptions of gangs, including the police chief, elected officials, community organizations, neighborhood groups, parents and others. Again, ask them about the unmet needs they see. *Click [here](#) for a sample interview form for community members.*

According to *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide* (Washington, D.C. Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1998):

"These [social service] contacts are themselves important sources of information for the next step (identifying unmet needs). Because they typically have easy access to youth, service providers can be instrumental in setting up youth surveys. Contacting service providers also serves a public relations function; by informing them that a needs assessment is in progress and asking for their assistance, the assessors help to get service providers to buy in (and perhaps give the assessors good advice) early in the process. Finally, the information gleaned from the survey of existing services can provide vital clues to what the community thinks are the most important needs and problems, helping the needs assessors focus their efforts in the most pressing areas."

For interviews of youth and parents, it may be a good idea to contract with a local university or research firm to conduct in-person or telephone interviews. Some marketing professionals, professors or graduate assistants might do the work for free as part of a research project.

Current Activities and Resources

The next step is to inventory the activities and resources that are available in the community. In creating a response to gang problems, model sites around the country are looking for ways to link into existing programs rather than create new ones.

- ◆ Begin with any previous needs assessment that you have done and review for programs related to youth development, juvenile delinquency, and violence prevention. The programs do not have to have gang in their title to be effective in working on "gang" prevention and intervention.



- ◆ Ask local agencies and members of the advisory committee if their organizations have conducted a needs assessment or community mapping of resources. The local United Way, police department, or YMCA might have conducted an assessment of youth resources.
- ◆ Using any existing needs assessments as a start, survey community service providers to identify their current programs and whom they serve. Classify them by the needs they are trying to fill and any documented effectiveness of the program. Among the key questions to ask: (1) what are the objectives of the services?; (2) how are the services delivered?; (3) what geographic areas are served?; (4) to whom are services provided? (age, sex, qualification requirements); (5) when are the services provided?; and (6) what does it cost and who pays for it?
- ◆ Find out whether these organizations serve or would serve gang members. Some social service agencies might be initially reluctant to work with gang members but will do so under certain rules, such as not allowing gang members to wear gang colors or bring weapons into their program.

- ◆ Compile and analyze the data.

- ◆ All of the data combined should start to paint a picture of the gang issues in the community and how to target resources. For example, police reports might show that one of the major times for gang offenses is after school or that they occur on certain routes to school.
- ◆ An assessment also provides a research-based report of the gang problem, which can be helpful in making the case to the school, community officials, and community organizations about why they need to address it.

- ◆ Coordinators or committee members should prepare a short report on their findings.

According to *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide*:

“Sociologists, political scientists, and other academicians have done the survey research field a disservice by writing up their results in long, scientific-sounding articles. The principal results of a needs assessment survey can usually be presented in a few pages of text (perhaps six to eight) that summarizes the most important results and relationships and backs them up with a few simple tables. The assessment team should take its cue for report presentation from public opinion articles in the local newspaper or perhaps those published in *The Gallup Report* (a monthly magazine available in college libraries and many public libraries).”

Needs assessments accomplish four objectives, according to *Addressing Gang Problems*:

- They represent a complete picture of all needs, rather than a puzzle with missing pieces.
- They identify needs that policymakers do not already know about (or else verify that policymakers do not know about all the relevant needs).
- They show which needs are being met and which are not, and which needs are the most pressing. This allows decision-makers to set priorities.
- They help to develop a consensus among stakeholders -- people or groups who have some interest in the problem -- about what must be done.

Looking Ahead

The assessment guides listed below provide a wealth of information. When you have a chance, look them over and use what would work for your situation. Some of these programs ask program Coordinators to carry out a 6- to 18-month assessment. Yours does not have to be that extensive to yield valuable information.

The report should include social indicators, such as aggravated assaults in which the victim was under 20 years of age, school fights, and drop-out rates as indicators of bad outcomes.

The report should also point out the services that are available and gaps that need to be addressed. From there, it is important to develop a consensus around priorities in gang prevention and intervention. The team should first develop a consensus themselves and then take the findings to the public. Tomorrow we will look at options for interventions.



**Click to print today's materials
in PDF format.**



Discussion Questions

Please think about the questions below and share your responses, comments, and/or any questions about today's material in the [Discussion Area](#) .

- ◆ What are some ways that you can use your or others' existing needs assessments as a basis for learning more about gangs in your community?
- ◆ Other than the police, whom would you talk to first to learn about gangs in your community? Why?
- ◆ What do you see as the most pressing needs for youth who are becoming involved with gangs? For those who are already involved in gangs?

This completes today's work.

Please visit the [Discussion Area](#) to share your responses to the discussion questions!

References for Day 3 materials:

Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide (1998). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance. Also available on-line at: <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/164273.pdf>.

A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem (2002). Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Intergovernmental Research. Also available at <http://www.iir.com/nygc/acgp/assessment.htm>.

Parker, R. (July 2004) Personal communication.

Wyrick, P. (July 2004) Personal communication.



Youth Gangs: Going Beyond the Myths to Address a Critical Problem

Community Assessment Questions

[Return to Day](#)

3

When trying to learn more about gang problems in your community, the following questions can be helpful as you begin your assessment:

- ◆ Do gangs exist in our community?
- ◆ How do we know they exist?
- ◆ How long have these gangs been in operation?
- ◆ Approximately how many youth are involved in these gangs?
- ◆ How are youth recruited into these gangs?
- ◆ What behaviors do these gangs engage in?
- ◆ What specific harm do these behaviors cause?
 - Is someone being injured?
 - Is something being stolen? If so, what?
 - Is property being damaged?
- ◆ Could serious social or economic costs result from these behaviors?
- ◆ Who carries out these behaviors?
- ◆ What efforts, if any, have already been made to control gang membership or harmful activities?
- ◆ Are specific individuals, businesses, or community groups complaining about gang activities? If so, what specific behaviors or activities are they reporting?
- ◆ Are these behaviors being carried out at certain times and places?

Source:

Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide (1998). Washington, DC.: Bureau of Justice Assistance. Available on-line at: <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/164273.pdf>.

[Return to Day 3.](#)

8

Student and School-Level Data

Data collected from and about students, including school-level data, are an important part of the assessment. These data are useful in the identification of the proportion of youth in the community who claim gang membership or who are at high risk for gang membership. School-level data and information from school staff is vital to rounding out the picture of gang activity in the community. This chapter provides guidance on collecting data on the following:

- Student characteristics and disciplinary actions
- School-age youths' perceptions of gangs and gang activity (student survey)
- School staff perspectives on gang activity on campus

Table 4 identifies the questions to be answered about students, student involvement in gang activities, risk and protective factors, school staff perceptions, the information that will be needed to answer the questions, and the sources of that information.

Table 4: Student and School-Level Data			
Questions to Be Answered	Information Needed to Answer	Sources of Information	How to Obtain
1. What are the overall characteristics of each school?	Attendance trends, disciplinary statistics, free/reduced lunch rates, race/gender make-up	School or district records, and reports to state department of education	Retrieve from existing hard copy or automated data, or establish a system to collect information
2. What delinquent behaviors are students involved in?	Data on expulsion/suspensions by category and type, school disciplinary records, police reports, data from student survey	School records, staff, administrators, school resource officers, juvenile court statistics	Retrieve from existing hard copy or automated data, school resource officer, school district police department records, student survey
3. What are the characteristics of students involved in gangs?	Perceptions of school staff, student self reports	Staff in targeted schools, student survey	Focus groups, personal interviews with staff, student survey
4. What issues seem to be contributing to student gang involvement or risk for gang involvement?	Perceptions of school staff, administrators, and school resource officers	Staff in targeted schools	Focus groups or personal interviews with staff members
5. What risk and protective factors are impacting local youth?	Information on school, family, community, and individual risk and protective factors	Youth in local schools	Student survey
6. What are in-school youth's perceptions about gangs?	Perceptions about gang activity		

Student Characteristics and Disciplinary Incidents

Data on student characteristics and disciplinary incidents should be collected at selected schools and grade levels for the past three to five years. The number of schools and grades included in this data set will be negotiated at each site. Alternative schools, if applicable, should also be included.

Student Characteristics

Student/school data to be collected include the following:

- Enrollment of school
- Racial composition of school
- Gender composition of school
- Number of students who receive free/reduced lunch
- Other critical variables as determined locally

The majority of this information will be collected from the school or school district. Agencies outside the school system, including the juvenile court or police department, may keep information on school-based disciplinary incidents. Many large school districts maintain their own police department that may keep statistics relating to crime and gang-related incidents occurring in schools. School personnel may believe they are legally forbidden to share certain information about students and school-related incidents. However, certain staff or offices (i.e., law enforcement units) affiliated with the school are permitted to share data that can prove instrumental in completing the picture of a community's gang problem. Refer to **EXHIBIT 8.4**, "Consent and Confidentiality" on page 85 at the end of this chapter.

Disciplinary Incidents

Data should also be gathered on the types of disciplinary incidents and resulting action, such as suspension or expulsion taken by school staff. These data should be collected for each school involved in the assessment for the most current (full) school year. Disciplinary incident data to be collected include the following:

- Type of incident (see list below)
- Gang related or not gang related
- Disciplinary action taken (suspension, expulsion, etc.)

Disciplinary Incident List	
- Fighting - Hitting/Kicking - Disobeying School Officials - Truancy - Alcohol/Drugs - Threats - Weapons - Harassment - Theft	- Smoking - Pornography - Disruption of School/Class - Cursing - Throwing Objects - Extortion - Vandalism/Graffiti - Other (specify)

After data on student characteristics and disciplinary data are organized, the data should be displayed using appropriate charts or other formats. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Assessment Report:

1. What are the overall demographics of each school?
2. Are there any particular trends (enrollment, racial composition, percent free/reduced lunch, others)?
3. What are the trends regarding disciplinary incidents—gang activity, weapons, fighting, or other violent incidents, as well as incidents of a non-violent nature such as drugs?

Student Survey

It is recommended that data be collected through a survey of students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 regarding their perceptions about gangs and gang participation. It is recommended that a sample of in-school youth—including students in alternative schools—participate in a survey designed to:

- Identify differences between students who self-report gang membership and those who do not.
- Identify risk factors which may make it more likely that a youth will develop a problem behavior, including joining a gang.
- Identify protective factors which may moderate the effects of risk factors for gang membership or increase resistance to them.
- Identify students' perceptions about gang activity and gang crime.

Gang presence also seems to be linked to weapons, violence, and drugs in the school setting.

Gathering data about gang activity in schools has historically been difficult, but it is a vital facet of the Assessment Team's efforts. The threat of gang crime and violence posed by gang-involved youth is not limited to the streets, but also exists in many schools. The School Crime Supplement to the 1989 and 1995 National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS), analyzed in *Youth Gangs in Schools* (Howell and Lynch, 2000), found that the percentage of students reporting street gangs in schools increased by 100 percent between 1989 and 1995.

This analysis found that gang activity is not solely limited to urban schools. In 1995, almost one-fourth (25 percent) of students in rural school districts and 36 percent of students in suburban school districts reported the presence of gangs in their schools, compared to 43 percent of students in urban areas (Howell and Lynch, 2000). Gang presence also seems to be linked to weapons, violence, and drugs in the school setting. When students reported the presence of gangs in their school, they were three times more likely to report a student who brought a gun to school (25 percent vs. 8 percent) and twice as likely to report that drugs were readily available (35 percent vs. 14 percent). In schools where gangs were present, the odds that a student would be a victim of violence more than doubled (from 3 percent to nearly 8 percent), and 51 percent of students who reported that they had been violently victimized reported gang presence at school vs. 37 percent who said gangs were not present (Chandler et al., 1998). Violent victimization included physical attacks or taking property from the student directly by force, weapons or threats.

The connection between schools and gangs is reinforced by Wiebe, Meeker, and Vila's (1999) analysis of reported gang arrests by 22 law enforcement agencies within Orange County, California. Data from this report show that violent gang crimes escalate sharply early in the school day and peak in the early afternoon hours, compared to overall juvenile violence, which peaks immediately after the school day ends. The Orange County data indicate that gang activity in schools may play a role in gang-related violence in the community, and vice versa.

School-based risk factors such as poor school performance and poor school attachment are primary factors for eventual gang involvement (Howell, 1998; Kosterman et al., 1996). Recent research also indicates that data gathered from school-aged youth about their perceptions of gangs and gang participation may vary substantially from police data about gangs (Esbensen, 2000). This research data does not negate the truthfulness of police data, but simply indicates that different groups within the same community may have different perceptions about gangs, and also that gangs impact community members differently.

Decker and Van Winkle (1996) view gang-joining dynamics as consisting of both "pulls" and "pushes" for youth. Pulls pertain to the attractiveness of the gang. Some view gang membership as enhancing their prestige or status among friends, and joining a gang provides opportunities to be with them. Gangs provide other attractive opportunities such as excitement, selling drugs, and making money (Howell, 1998; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Pennell et al., 1994).

Social, economic and cultural forces push other adolescents in the direction of gangs (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Protection from other gangs and general well being is a key factor. Some researchers contend that minority youths' marginal feelings in multiple arenas of society give them a sense of identity and feeling of belonging (Vigil and Long, 1990). Some research suggests that many youth join gangs because they have been "injured" by social and family disorder, including abuse and neglect (Fleisher, 1998). For some youth, gangs provide a way of solving social adjustment problems, including the trials and tribulations of adolescence (Short & Strodtbeck, 1965).

One manner of predicting youth who may become involved in gangs is to identify youth who display risk factors for future gang membership (Howell, 1998).

School-based risk factors such as poor school performance and poor school attachment are primary factors for eventual gang involvement.

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model
A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem

Risk Factors for Gang Membership	
Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social disorganization, including poverty and residential mobility - Organized lower-class communities - Underclass communities - Presence of gangs in the neighborhood - Availability of drugs in the neighborhood - Availability of firearms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barriers to and lack of social and economic opportunities - Lack of social capital - Cultural norms supporting gang behavior - Feeling unsafe in the neighborhood; high crime - Conflict with social control institutions
Family	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family disorganization, including broken homes, and parental drug/alcohol abuse - Troubled families, including incest, family violence, and drug addiction - Family members in a gang - Lack of adult male role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of parental role models - Low socioeconomic status - Extreme economic deprivation, family management problems, parents with violent attitudes - Sibling antisocial behavior
School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic failure - Low educational aspirations, especially among females - Negative labeling by teachers - Trouble at school - Few teacher role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational frustration - Low commitment to school, low school attachment, high levels of antisocial behavior in school - Low achievement test scores, and identification as being learning disabled
Peer Group	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High commitment to delinquent peers - Low commitment to positive peers - Street socialization - Gang members in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friends who use drugs or who are gang members - Friends who are drug distributors - Interaction with delinquent peers
Individual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior delinquency - Deviant attitudes - Street smartness; toughness - Defiant and individualistic character - Fatalistic view of the world - Aggression - Proclivity of excitement and trouble - <i>Locura</i> (acting in a daring, courageous, and especially crazy fashion in the face of adversity) - Higher levels of normlessness in the context of family, peer group, and school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social disabilities - Illegal gun ownership - Early or precocious sexual activity, especially among females - Alcohol and drug use - Drug trafficking - Desire for group rewards such as status, identity, self-esteem, companionship, and protection - Problem behaviors, hyperactivity, externalizing behaviors, drinking, lack of refusal skills - Victimization

Other research supports that, along with risk factors, protective factors, or certain conditions in the individual or environment, can mediate or moderate the effects of risk factors (Pollard et al., 1997; Howell and Hawkins, 1998).

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model
A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem

Risk and Protective Factors	
Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low neighborhood attachment - Community disorganization - Transitions and mobility - Law and norms favorable to drug use - Perceived availability of drugs and firearms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rewards for community involvement - Opportunities for community involvement
School	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor academic achievement - Low degree of commitment to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for school involvement - Rewards for school involvement
Family	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor family supervision - Poor family discipline - Family conflict - Family history of antisocial behavior - Parent attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior - Parent attitudes favorable to drug use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family attachment - Opportunities for family involvement - Rewards for family involvement
Individual/Peer	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rebelliousness - Early initiation of antisocial behavior - Attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior - Attitudes favorable to drug use - Peer antisocial behavior - Sensation seeking - Peer rejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religiosity - Belief in the moral order - Social skills - Peer attachment

The student survey offers two distinct benefits to communities. First, it affords the opportunity to take advantage of prevention science. Delinquency prevention science incorporates the risk- and protective-focused prevention model pioneered in public health research, in the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. Risk and protective factors predict increased or decreased probability of developing problem behaviors, such as gang involvement. Risk factors are conditions in the individual or environment that predict an increased likelihood of developing a problem. Protective factors, on the other hand, are conditions in the individual or environment that buffer or moderate the effects of risk factors or increase resistance to them, and thus inhibit the development of problems even in the face of risk exposure. “It is possible now to move to outcome focused prevention, that is, to design systems for risk reduction and protective factor enhancement to achieve specified [delinquency] prevention outcomes” (Hawkins, 1999). For example, a comprehensive Seattle program for children aged 6 to 12

Risk factors are conditions in the individual or environment that predict an increased likelihood of developing a problem. Protective factors, on the other hand, are conditions in the individual or environment that buffer or moderate the effects of risk factors or increase resistance to them.

prevented violence, heavy alcohol use, sexual activity, and teen pregnancy by age 18, by reducing shared risks and enhancing protection in the family and school environments (Hawkins et al., 1999).

The second benefit of the student survey is that it produces valuable information that helps determine the seriousness of gang problems and what level of intervention is needed to reduce involvement of active gang members, and control the influence and delinquent and criminal activities of gangs. In addition to providing information on the characteristics of gangs in the community, the student survey measures the degree of bonding to gangs—among students who indicate gang membership. In an 11-city student survey that identified nearly a thousand gang members, each level of gang bonding was associated with progressively more frequent involvement in serious and violent delinquency, drug use, and drug trafficking (Esbensen et al., 2001). The survey items measure five levels of gang bonding:

Level one—Ever involved in a gang

Level two—Currently a gang member

Level three—Currently a member of a delinquent gang

Level four—Currently a member of a delinquent gang that is organized

Level five—Currently a core member of a delinquent gang that is organized

The student survey can make a significant contribution to each community's assessment of its specific gang problem. Analysis of survey information will make it easier to identify areas or populations that are experiencing high levels of multiple risk factors or low levels of protective factors associated with gang involvement (Pollard et al., 1997). This information will ultimately guide prevention planning and strategy development in the community.

Conducting the Survey

Surveying all youth in the target grades may be too costly and/or time prohibitive. It is suggested that at least a sample of youth from each school and in each target grade be surveyed. For example, 100 students in each school could be sampled. A consistent sampling strategy is recommended across schools/grade levels at each site. Technical assistance will be provided to select the sample population.

The student survey can be completed within the normal one-period classroom setting, using a self-administered anonymous questionnaire. Sample consent letters for active and passive consent can be found at **EXHIBIT 8.1** on page 73-82. The student survey can be found at **EXHIBIT 8.2** on pages 73-82. Information on consent and confidentiality can be found in **EXHIBIT 8.4** on page 85.

The Assessment Report should include charts, table, or graphs displaying the following information from the student survey.

Comparison of gang versus non-gang students

- Age, race, gender of total surveyed at each school
- Prevalence/frequency of delinquent behavior by age, race, gender
- Good/bad things about gangs by age, race, gender
- Risk/protective factors by age, race, gender

Students who admit gang membership

- Why they joined a gang by age, race, gender
- Participation in gang activities by age, race, gender
- Benefits of gang membership by age, race, gender
- Disadvantages of gang membership by age, race, gender

After data from the student survey are organized, answers to the following questions should be provided in the Assessment Report:

1. Who admits to involvement in gang activity?
2. How do students who self-report gang membership differ from those who say they are not in a gang?
3. How do school-age youth perceive gang activity in the school?
4. What specific risk factors are present in students' environment that may lead to gang membership or involvement?
5. What specific protective factors are present?
6. What high-risk behaviors do gang youth engage in? How does this compare to those who do not report gang involvement?

Exhibit 8.1

Sample PASSIVE CONSENT Letter

(Student Survey)

Dear *(Parent/Guardian)*:

(Community) is conducting an assessment of youth gang activity in the community. As part of this assessment, we are surveying school-age youth in grades () to ask their opinion about a number of things in their life. This information will gather opinions the youth in *(name of school)* have about their neighborhood and community, including friends, family, and school life. We also are surveying different groups in the community such as social service agencies, community leaders, law enforcement, parents, and others about their views on gang activity.

We would like your permission to survey your child, along with his or her classmates, to gather this information. The information your child provides will be kept strictly confidential. That is, it will absolutely not be shared with anyone. Because neither your name nor your child's name will appear on the survey, your child's response to any question cannot be attributed to him/her.

Your child's participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Only those children and parents who wish to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part in the survey at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact *(name)* at *(phone number)*. **If you do not want your child to participate in this survey, please sign the enclosed form and mail it back to**

_____.

Thank you very much for helping us with the important information that your son/daughter can provide.

Enclosure

Exhibit 8.1 (continued)

Sample ACTIVE CONSENT Letter

(Student Survey)

Dear *(Parent/Guardian)*:

(Community) is conducting an assessment of youth gang activity in the community. As part of this assessment, we are surveying school-age youth in grades () to ask their opinion about a number of things in their life. This information will gather opinions the youth in *(name of school)* have about their neighborhood and community, including friends, family, and school life. We also are surveying different groups in the community such as social service agencies, community leaders, law enforcement, parents, and others about their views on gang activity.

We would like your permission to survey your child, along with his or her classmates, to gather this information. The information your child provides will be kept strictly confidential. That is, it will absolutely not be shared with anyone. As neither your name nor your child's name will appear on the survey, your child's response to any question cannot be attributed to him/her.

Your child's participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Only those children and parents who wish to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part in the survey at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact *(name)* at *(phone number)*. Thank you very much for helping us with the important information that your son/daughter can provide.

Parent or Guardian, please check your decision below, sign, and return this form within ____ days.

____ I give permission for my child to participate in this survey.

____ I **do not** give permission for my child to participate in this survey.

Parent/Guardian

Date

Student Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. The survey asks your opinion about a number of things in your life, including your friends, your family, your neighborhood, your community, and your activities.

Your answers to these questions will be **CONFIDENTIAL**. This means your answers will stay secret. Your name will never be asked. Please **DO NOT** write your name on this survey.

This survey is completely voluntary. You can skip any question that you do not wish to answer.

Other students have said that this survey is very interesting and they enjoy filling it out. We hope you will also. Be sure to read the instructions below before you begin to answer.

1. This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers.
2. Answer by marking in the answer space and use the closest answer to the truth. If you are not sure what a question means, leave it blank.
3. Please follow these instructions carefully.

It is best to use a pencil.

Make heavy marks inside the circles.

Erase cleanly any answer you wish to change.

Make no other marking or comments on the answer pages.

4. Some of the questions have the following format:

Please mark the circle next to the word that best describes how you feel about that sentence.

Example: Pepperoni pizza is one of my favorite foods.

NO! no yes YES!

Mark “NO!” if you think the statement is definitely not true for you.

Mark “no” if you think the statement is mostly not true for you.

Mark “yes” if you think the statement is mostly true for you.

Mark “YES!” if you think the statement is definitely true for you.

In the example above, the student marked “yes” because he or she thinks the statement is mostly true. (Please mark only one answer.)



Time to Begin

These questions ask for some general information about the people completing the survey. Please mark the response that best describes you.

1) How old are you? Please circle the correct answer.
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 or older

2) What grade are you in? Please circle the correct answer.
6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th

3) Are you:
 Female Male

4) Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?
 No
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
 Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
 Yes, Puerto Rican
 Yes, Cuban
 Other Spanish _____

5) If you are not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, please mark what race you are.
 White
 Black, African American, or Negro
 American Indian or Alaska Native
 Chinese Japanese
 Filipino Asian Indian
 Native Hawaiian Samoan
 Korean Guamanian or Chamorro
 Vietnamese
 Other Asian _____
 Other Pacific Islander _____
 Some other race _____

6) Think of where you live most of the time. Which of the following people live there with you? (Choose all that apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Mother | <input type="radio"/> Grandfather |
| <input type="radio"/> Stepmother | <input type="radio"/> Uncle |
| <input type="radio"/> Foster mother | <input type="radio"/> Other adults |
| <input type="radio"/> Grandmother | <input type="radio"/> Brother(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> Aunt | <input type="radio"/> Stepbrother(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> Father | <input type="radio"/> Sister(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> Stepfather | <input type="radio"/> Stepsister(s) |
| <input type="radio"/> Foster father | <input type="radio"/> Other children |

7) How many brothers and sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters, do you have that are older than you? Please circle the correct answer.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

8) How many brothers or sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters, do you have that are younger than you? Please circle the correct answer.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

9) What is the language you use most often at home?
 English Spanish Another language (_____)

10) What is the highest level of schooling your father completed?

- Completed grade school or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Don't know
- Does not apply

11) What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed?

- Completed grade school or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Don't know
- Does not apply

Continue to the next page

12) Where are you living now?

- On a farm
 In the country, not on a farm
 In a city, town, or suburb

This section asks about your experiences in school.

13) Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?

- Mostly Fs Mostly Ds Mostly Cs
 Mostly Bs Mostly As

14) In my school, students have lots of chances to help decide things like class activities and rules.

- NO! no yes YES!

15) Teachers ask me to work on special classroom projects.

- NO! no yes YES!

16) My teacher(s) notices when I am doing a good job and lets me know about it.

- NO! no yes YES!

17) There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk with a teacher one-on-one.

- NO! no yes YES!

18) I feel safe at my school.

- NO! no yes YES!

19) The school lets my parents know when I have done something well.

- NO! no yes YES!

20) My teacher(s) praise me when I work hard in school.

- NO! no yes YES!

21) Are your school grades better than the grades of most students in your class?

- NO! no yes YES!

22) How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?

- Almost always Often Sometimes
 Seldom Never

23) How interesting are most of your courses to you?

- Very interesting Quite interesting
 Fairly interesting Slightly dull Very dull

24) How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?

- Very important Quite important
 Fairly important Slightly important
 Not at all important

Now, thinking back over the past year in school, how often did you...

25) Enjoy being in school?

- Never Seldom Sometimes
 Often Almost always

26) Hate being in school?

- Never Seldom Sometimes
 Often Almost always

27) Try to do your best work in school?

- Never Seldom Sometimes
 Often Almost always

Continue to the next page

These questions ask about your feelings and experiences in other parts of your life.

Think of your four best friends (the friends you feel closest to.) In the past year (12 months), how many of your best friends have:

- 28) Been suspended from school?
 None 1 2 3 4
- 29) Carried a handgun?
 None 1 2 3 4
- 30) Sold illegal drugs?
 None 1 2 3 4
- 31) Stolen or tried to steal a car or motorcycle?
 None 1 2 3 4
- 32) Been arrested?
 None 1 2 3 4
- 33) Dropped out of school?
 None 1 2 3 4
- 34) Been members of a gang?
 None 1 2 3 4

How old were you when you first:

- 35) Smoked marijuana?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 36) Smoked a cigarette, even just a puff?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 37) Had more than a sip or two of beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 38) Began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 39) Got suspended from school?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 40) Got arrested?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older

- 41) Carried a handgun?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 42) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older
- 43) Belonged to a gang?
 Never have 10 or younger 11
 12 13 14
 15 16 17 or older

How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to:

- 44) Take a handgun to school?
 Very wrong Wrong
 A little bit wrong Not wrong at all
- 45) Steal anything worth more than \$5?
 Very wrong Wrong
 A little bit wrong Not wrong at all
- 46) Pick a fight with someone?
 Very wrong Wrong
 A little bit wrong Not wrong at all
- 47) Attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?
 Very wrong Wrong
 A little bit wrong Not wrong at all
- 48) Stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?
 Very wrong Wrong
 A little bit wrong Not wrong at all
- 49) It is all right to beat up people if they start the fight.
 NO! no yes YES!
- 50) It is important to be honest with your parents, even if they become upset or you get punished.
 NO! no yes YES!
- 51) I think it is okay to take something without asking if you can get away with it.
 NO! no yes YES!

Continue to the next page

How many times have you done the following things?

52) Done what feels good no matter what.

- Never I've done it, but not in the past year
 Less than once a month About once a month
 2 to 3 times a month Once a week or more

53) Done something dangerous because someone dared you to do it.

- Never I've done it, but not in the past year
 Less than once a month About once a month
 2 to 3 times a month Once a week or more

54) Done crazy things even if they are a little dangerous.

- Never I've done it, but not in the past year
 Less than once a month About once a month
 2 to 3 times a month Once a week or more

How many times in the past year (12 months) have you:

55) Been suspended from school?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

56) Carried a handgun?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

57) Sold illegal drugs?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

58) Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

59) Been arrested?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

60) Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

61) Been drunk or high at school?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

62) Taken a handgun to school?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 to 5 times
 6 to 9 times 10 to 19 times 20 to 29 times
 30 to 39 times 40+ times

63) I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky.

- NO! no yes YES!

64) Sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it.

- NO! no yes YES!

65) I sometimes find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble.

- NO! no yes YES!

66) Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security.

- NO! no yes YES!

67) I think sometimes it's okay to cheat at school.

- NO! no yes YES!

68) Are there any gangs at your school?

- No Yes Don't Know

69) Do any of the students at your school belong to a gang?

- No Yes Don't Know

70) What about gangs that don't have members attending your school...have any of those gangs come around your school in the past six months?

- No Yes Don't Know

If you answered YES to any of the three previous questions, please answer these questions, otherwise continue on to the next section.

71) How often have gangs been involved in fights, attacks, or violence at your school in the past six months?

- Never Almost every day
 Once or twice a month Don't know
 Once or twice a week

72) Have gangs been involved in the sale of drugs at your school in the past six months?

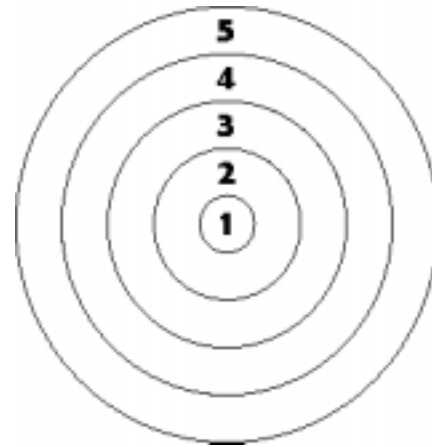
- No Yes Don't Know

Continue to the next page

73) Have any gang members brought guns to your school in the past six months?

- No Yes Don't Know

89) If you belong to a gang, suppose the circle below represents your gang. How far from the center of the gang are you? (circle the number that best describes your place in the gang)



Do the gangs around your school do the following things?

- | | No | Yes |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 74) Help out in the community | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 75) Get in fights with other gangs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 76) Provide protection for each other | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 77) Steal things | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 78) Rob other people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 79) Steal cars | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 80) Sell marijuana | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 81) Sell other illegal drugs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 82) Damage or destroy property | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The next section asks about your experiences with gangs. (A "crew" or a "posse" is considered a gang.) If you have NEVER been in a gang, please skip to the next section.

If you are in a gang, do the following describe your gang?

83) Have you ever belonged to a gang?

- No Yes

- | | No | Yes |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 90) You can join before age 13. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 91) There are initiation rites. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 92) The gang has established leaders. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 93) The gang has regular meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 94) The gang has specific rules or codes. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 95) Gang members have specific roles. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 96) There are roles for each age group. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 97) The gang has symbols or colors. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 98) There are specific roles for girls. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

84) If you have ever belonged to a gang, did that gang have a name?

- No Yes

85) Are you a gang member now?

- No Yes

99) Why did you join the gang? Mark all that apply.

86) How many members are there in your gang?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Not in a gang | <input type="radio"/> 11 to 20 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 to 5 | <input type="radio"/> 21 to 30 |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 to 10 | <input type="radio"/> More than 30 |

- For fun
- For protection
- A friend was in the gang
- A brother or sister was in the gang
- I was forced to join
- To get respect
- For money
- To fit in better
- Other (specify) _____
- Not in a gang

87) How many boys belong to your gang?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> No boys | <input type="radio"/> 11 to 20 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 to 5 | <input type="radio"/> 21 to 30 |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 to 10 | <input type="radio"/> More than 30 |

88) How many girls belong to your gang?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> No girls | <input type="radio"/> 11 to 20 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 to 5 | <input type="radio"/> 21 to 30 |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 to 10 | <input type="radio"/> More than 30 |

Continue to the next page

If you are in a gang, does your gang do the following things?

- | | No | Yes |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 100) Help out in the community | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 101) Get in fights with other gangs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 102) Provide protection for each other | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 103) Steal things | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 104) Rob other people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 105) Steal cars | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 106) Sell marijuana | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 107) Sell other illegal drugs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 108) Damage or destroy property | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

109) You're looking at CD's in a music store with a friend. You look up and see your friend slip a CD under her coat. She smiles and says, "Which one do you want? Go ahead, take it while nobody's around." There is nobody in sight, no employees and no other customers. What would you do now?

- Ignore her
- Grab a CD and leave the store
- Tell her to put the CD back
- Act like it's a joke, and ask her to put the CD back

110) It's 8:00 p.m. on a weeknight and you are about to go over to a friend's house when your mother asks you where you are going. You say, "Oh, just going to go hang out with some friends." She says, "No, you'll just get into trouble if you go out. Stay home tonight." What would you do now?

- Leave the house anyway
- Explain what you are going to do with your friends, tell her when you'd get home, and ask if you can go out
- Not say anything and start watching TV
- Get into an argument with her

111) You are visiting another part of town, and you don't know any of the people your age there. You are walking down the street, and some teenager you don't know is walking toward you. He is about your size, and he is about to pass you, he deliberately bumps into you and you almost lose your balance. What would you say or do?

- Push the person back
- Say, "Excuse me" and keep on walking
- Say, "Watch where you're going" and keep on walking
- Swear at the person and walk away

112) You are at a party at someone's house, and one of your friends offers you a drink containing alcohol.

What would you say or do?

- Drink it
- Tell your friend, "No thanks, I don't drink" and suggest that you and your friend go and do something else
- Just say, "No thanks" and walk away
- Make up a good excuse, tell your friend you had something else to do, and leave

The next questions ask about the neighborhood and community where you live.

113) If you wanted to get some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin), how easy would it be for you to get some?

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

114) If you wanted to get some cigarettes, how easy would it be for you to get some?

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

115) If you wanted to get a drug like cocaine, LSD, or amphetamines, how easy would it be for you to get some?

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

116) If you wanted to get a handgun, how easy would it be for you to get one?

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

117) If you wanted to get some marijuana, how easy would it be for you to get some?

- Very Hard
- Sort of Hard
- Sort of Easy
- Very Easy

118) If a kid smoked marijuana in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?

- NO!
- no
- yes
- YES!

Continue to the next page

119) If a kid drank some beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?

- NO! no yes YES!

120) If a kid carried a handgun in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?

- NO! no yes YES!

How wrong would most adults in your neighborhood think it was for kids your age to:

121) Use marijuana

- Very Wrong Wrong
 A Little Wrong Not wrong at All

122) Drink alcohol

- Very Wrong Wrong
 A Little Wrong Not Wrong at All

123) Smoke cigarettes

- Very Wrong Wrong
 A Little Wrong Not Wrong at All

About how many adults (over 21) have you known personally who in the past year have:

124) Used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs?

- None 1 adult 2 adults
 3 or 4 adults 5 or more adults

125) Sold or dealt drugs?

- None 1 adult 2 adults
 3 or 4 adults 5 or more adults

126) Done other things that could get them in trouble with the police like stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging, or assaulting others, etc.

- None 1 adult 2 adults
 3 or 4 adults 5 or more adults

127) Gotten drunk or high?

- None 1 adult 2 adults
 3 or 4 adults 5 or more adults

128) If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood where I now live.

- NO! no yes YES!

129) My neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know.

- NO! no yes YES!

130) I like my neighborhood.

- NO! no yes YES!

131) There are lots of adults in my neighborhood I could talk to about something important.

- NO! no yes YES!

How much do each of the following statements describe your neighborhood.

132) Crime and/or drug selling

- NO! no yes YES!

133) Fights

- NO! no yes YES!

134) Lots of empty or abandoned buildings

- NO! no yes YES!

135) Lots of graffiti

- NO! no yes YES!

136) How many times have you changed homes since kindergarten?

- Never 1 or 2 times 3 or 4 times
 5 or 6 times 7 or more times

137) There are people in my neighborhood who are proud of me when I do something well.

- NO! no yes YES!

Which of the following activities for people your age are available in your community?

138) Sports teams No Yes

139) Scouting No Yes

140) Boys & girls clubs No Yes

141) 4-H clubs No Yes

142) Service clubs No Yes

143) Have you changed schools (including changing from elementary to middle and middle to high school) in the past year?

- No Yes

Continue to the next page

- 144) How many times have you changed schools (including changing from elementary to middle and middle to high school) since kindergarten?**
 Never 1 or 2 times 3 or 4 times
 5 or 6 times 7 or more times

- 145) Have you changed homes in the past year (the last 12 months)?**
 No Yes

- 146) I feel safe in my neighborhood.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 147) I'd like to get out of my neighborhood.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 148) There are people in my neighborhood who encourage me to do my best.**
 NO! no yes YES!

The next few questions ask about your family.

How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to:

- 149) Steal anything worth more than \$5?**
 Very Wrong Wrong
 A Little Wrong Not Wrong at All

- 150) Draw graffiti, or write things or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission?)**
 Very Wrong Wrong
 A Little Wrong Not Wrong at All

- 151) Pick a fight with someone?**
 Very Wrong Wrong
 A Little Wrong Not Wrong at All

Have any of your brothers or sisters ever:

- 152) Drunk beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin?)**
 No Yes
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 153) Smoked marijuana?**
 No Yes
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 154) Smoked cigarettes?**
 No Yes
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 155) Taken a handgun to school?**
 No Yes
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 156) Been suspended or expelled from school?**
 No Yes
 I don't have any brothers or sisters

- 157) The rules in my family are clear.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 158) Has anyone in your family ever had a severe alcohol or drug problem?**
 No Yes

- 159) People in my family often insult or yell at each other.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 160) When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and who I am with.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 161) We argue about the same things in my family over and over.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 162) If you drank some beer, wine, or liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 163) My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.**
 NO! no yes YES!

- 164) If you carried a handgun without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?**
 NO! no yes YES!

Continue to the next page

165) If you skipped school, would you be caught by your parents?

- NO! no yes YES!

166) My parents notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it.

- Never or almost never
 Sometimes
 Often
 All the time

167) Do you feel very close to your mother?

- NO! no yes YES!

168) Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?

- NO! no yes YES!

169) My parents ask me what I think before most family decisions affecting me are made.

- NO! no yes YES!

170) How often do your parents tell you they're proud of you for something you've done?

- Never or almost never
 Sometimes
 Often
 All the time

171) Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your father?

- NO! no yes YES!

172) Do you enjoy spending time with your mother?

- NO! no yes YES!

173) Do you enjoy spending time with your father?

- NO! no yes YES!

174) If I had a personal problem, I could ask my mom or dad for help.

- NO! no yes YES!

175) Do you feel very close to your father?

- NO! no yes YES!

176) My parents give me lots of chances to do fun things with them.

- NO! no yes YES!

177) My parents ask if I've gotten my homework done.

- NO! no yes YES!

178) People in my family have serious arguments.

- NO! no yes YES!

179) Would your parents know if you did not come home on time?

- NO! no yes YES!

End of Survey

School Staff Perceptions

The experiences and perceptions of school staff can supplement a community's understanding of its local gang problem as school staff members and administrators have contact with a wide variety of students daily.

It is recommended that school personnel be interviewed to provide insight into the nature and prevalence of gang activity in and around the school. Those interviewed should include not only teachers and administrators, but others who have different types of contact with students: school resource officers, school health services personnel, counselors/mental health specialists, prevention/intervention program staff, secretaries, custodians, and bus drivers.

It should be understood prior to beginning the interviews that more than any other agency's staff, school personnel may feel uncomfortable discussing their institution's gang problem. They may feel that they are being disloyal to other staff or school administrators, or that any problems are a sign of personal or institutional failure. Therefore, steps should be taken to promote a comfortable environment and ensure that school staff members can speak candidly. One way to ensure this privacy is through a confidential interview using the interview instrument provided in **Exhibit 8.3** on page 84.

After data from the interviews are organized, data should be displayed in the Assessment Report using appropriate tables, charts, or other formats. Answers to the following questions should be discussed in the Assessment Report:

1. Do school personnel believe there is a gang problem in their school? Does this vary according to type of school personnel?
2. What types of problems do gang members present on the school campus?
3. What issues are contributing to gang activity in the school?

Exhibit 8.3

School Staff Perceptions Interview

1. Do you believe gangs are a problem in your school?

- Yes
- Do Not Know
- No
- No Response

If so, what signs do you see that lead you to believe that gang members are present in the school?

2. When were you first aware of gang problems in your school? _____

3. What types of problems do gang members present in or around the school?

4. When and where are the gang activities occurring most frequently in and around the school? (time of day, classroom, outside classroom, etc.)

5. What issues do you think contribute to gang activity?

6. Do you believe gang activity is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same level in your school as in previous years? Why?

- Increasing
- Decreasing
- Staying the same

Exhibit 8.4

Consent and Confidentiality

When conducting the student surveys, either active or passive consent of the parent or guardian should be sought. As difficult as it may be to get parents to return consent forms, the effort must be made. Schools or districts may have different policies and preferences. Passive consent generally yields 90 to 100 percent participation. Active yields about 40 to 50 percent, and about 10 percent simply never return the form. Check state, local, and school regulations to determine if active consent is required or if it is permissible to use passive consent. Please refer to **Exhibit 8.1** on pages 71-72 for sample active and passive consent letters.

If seeking active consent, parents or guardians should receive a letter explaining the survey and asking permission for the student to fill out the questionnaire. The parent/guardian must return the signed letter indicating that permission to participate is granted before a student may complete the survey.

For passive consent, parents or guardians of each student should receive a letter explaining the survey and asking permission for the student to fill out the questionnaire. The parent/guardian should be given the option to return the signed letter indicating refusal to participate; otherwise, permission is to be considered granted for the child to participate in the survey.

The consent form should be written to be understandable to the person who signs it. Use commonly understood words, not jargon. Consider that languages other than English may be spoken in the home, and consent forms may have to be translated into languages other than English. Participation cannot be coerced and the consent form must state that participation is voluntary and may cease at any time.

Prior to conducting the student survey, school personnel, including teachers and administrators, should be consulted well in advance. School districts and individual schools may have varying policies regarding non-school-related surveys such as time of day they can be administered or location. School personnel also may have to provide alternative arrangements for students who are not participating in the survey.

Some of the questions on the student survey may be of a sensitive nature; e.g., drug use, weapons possession, gang activities, and family life, etc., which argues that the protection of participant's identity is a key concern.

Two approaches satisfy this requirement—*anonymity* and *confidentiality*—although the two often are confused. A respondent may be considered anonymous when the interviewer or researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. The student survey should be considered anonymous; i.e., individual students cannot and will not be identified. In a confidential survey, the interviewer or researcher is able to identify a given person's responses but essentially promises not to do so. In order to guarantee confidentiality or anonymity, all names, addresses, or other personal identification should be removed from survey or interview forms.

The student survey will provide aggregate data from each school—individual students cannot be identified. However, the Assessment Team will likely face the confidentiality issue. The disclosure of certain education information regarding youth under the age of 18 is safeguarded by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Educators typically approach participation in student surveys with caution because they have legitimate concerns about the privacy of their students and the disclosure of certain kinds of information.

Exhibit 8.4 (continued)

FERPA protects the privacy interests of students and parents only with respect to education records and does not apply to student surveys that do not contain personally identifiable information (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997). Please refer to “Sharing Information: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs.”

FERPA allows an exemption, however, to provide student information from the school’s law enforcement unit records. Under FERPA, schools may disclose information from “law enforcement unit records” to anyone—federal, state, or local law enforcement authorities, social service agencies, or even the media—without the consent of the parent or eligible student. A “law enforcement unit” is an individual, office, department, division or other component of a school or school district—such as a unit of commissioned police officers or noncommissioned security guards—that is officially authorized or designated by the school district to (1) enforce federal, state, or local law, or (2) maintain the physical security and safety of schools in the district. The Family Policy Compliance Office, which administers FERPA, is available at (202) 260-3887 to answer further questions regarding FERPA.