

Youth Gangs (continued)

Youth gang membership

There is no consensus on the definition of a youth gang. However, research describes a set of broad characteristics in identifying gangs:

- Formal or semi-formal organizational structure,
- Clearly identified leadership,
- A specific territory,
- Patterns of interaction, and
- Engagement of a group in serious or violent behavior.¹³

Gang membership may often be less of a long-term commitment than is commonly believed. Studies in Denver and Rochester¹⁴ report that half of the male youth gang members belonged to a gang for less than one year. The studies also found that gang members are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime.

Many researchers have found that youth gangs have low levels of organizational sophistication and are typically loose in structure.

Child Abuse

According to the National Youth Law Center, in homes where domestic violence occurs there is a 30 to 60 percent likelihood that child abuse also is happening.

In 2008, 72,423 children were referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) in Washington State. This reflects a decrease of 1,932 from the number of children referred in 2007 (74,355). Throughout the past ten years, referrals to CPS have varied from a low of 74,979 in 1999 to a high of 78,336 in 2004. The average number of CPS referrals per year (1997-2006) is 76,623.

According to Washington's Children's Administration, approximately 40 percent of the referrals for child abuse and neglect are screened out "because there is not sufficient information to locate the child, the alleged perpetrator is not a caretaker, the risk factor does not exist, or the allegation does not meet the legal and/or WAC definition." Thus, the number of confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect in Washington State in 2007 is estimated to be approximately 45,213.

According to staff in Washington's Division of Children and Family Services, at least 50 percent of the families of victims of child abuse contained an adult with a substance abuse problem. In addition, research continues to document a link between domestic violence and substance abuse, and domestic violence and child abuse. According to the National Youth Law Center, in homes where domestic violence occurs there is a 30 to 60 percent likelihood that child abuse also is happening.

¹³ *Youth Gang Membership Risk Factors Amenable to Change*, from "Strategic Response to Youth Gangs," Wyrick and Howell, OJJDP, September 2004.

¹⁴ Thornbery et al

Child Abuse (continued)

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Child abuse and neglect have known detrimental effects on the physical, psychological, cognitive and behavioral development of children (National Research Council 1993). These consequences range from minor to severe, and include physical injuries, brain damage, chronic low self-esteem, problems with bonding and forming relationships, developmental delays, learning disorders, and aggressive and anti-social behaviors. More recently, Vincent Felitti, M.D. has demonstrated a connection between childhood abuse, particularly sexual abuse, and adult obesity, thus increasing weight-related health risks. Child maltreatment has been linked with long-term negative societal consequences. For example, studies link child maltreatment with increased risk of low academic achievement, drug use, teen pregnancy, generational child abuse and neglect, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminality (Widom, 1992; Kelly, Thornberry, and Smith, 1997).

"Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States," written for Prevent Child Abuse America by Ching-Tung Wang, Ph.D. and John Holten, Ph.D., states, "It is well documented that children who have been abused or neglected are more likely to experience adverse outcomes throughout their life span in a number of areas" (summarized):

- Poor physical health
- Poor emotional and mental health
- Social difficulties
- Cognitive dysfunction
- High-risk health behavior
- Behavior problems

The authors go on to estimate the cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States in 2007 to be \$103.8 billion. This cost is based on the number of children who could be classified as being abused or neglected according to the Harm Standard in the Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-3) and only the cost related to victims are included.

While the causes of child abuse and neglect are complex, research has identified risk factors that contribute to child maltreatment. These factors include: family history of abuse, parental substance abuse, mental illness or mental retardation, childhood disability, domestic violence, lack of parenting skills and knowledge, extreme poverty, social isolation, and life stress overload. Effective prevention programs identify family risk factors and develop service approaches that target these risk factors.

TABLE 32
Referrals to Child Protective Services
1999 - 2008

Month	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
January	6,335	6,446	6,933	6,645	6,296	6,582	6,983	6,729	6,386	6,270
February	6,143	6,177	6,245	6,104	6,666	6,067	6,298	5,768	6,597	5,988
March	6,701	7,280	7,358	7,320	7,832	6,764	7,029	7,702	7,587	7,250
April	6,622	6,317	6,134	6,559	7,136	6,626	7,041	6,634	6,099	6,506
May	6,792	7,292	7,414	7,717	7,075	7,373	7,690	7,478	7,411	6,825
June	5,870	5,999	6,364	6,757	6,662	6,185	6,146	6,229	6,430	6,439
July	5,306	5,291	5,237	5,427	5,517	5,797	5,466	5,497	5,401	5,577
August	5,170	5,666	5,794	5,990	5,852	5,400	5,481	6,038	6,022	5,817
September	6,147	5,905	6,138	6,760	6,245	6,671	6,336	6,075	6,436	6,270
October	6,680	6,846	6,815	6,831	6,763	7,274	7,128	7,058	6,932	6,559
November	5,520	6,083	5,819	6,107	6,251	5,739	5,792	6,123	5,840	6,081
December	5,137	5,053	5,162	5,553	6,041	6,143	5,661	5,557	5,330	5,397
TOTAL	72,423	74,355	75,413	77,770	78,336	76,621	77,051	76,888	76,471	74,979
Average Per Month	6,035	6,196	6,284	6,481	6,528	6,385	6,421	6,407	6,373	6,248

Data obtained from Research & Data Analysis, Dept. of Social & Health Services, EMIS Reports, Case Management Information Systems (CAMIS) Intake Referral Statistics Report, Total Intakes by Program, 2008 data using EMIS report update 1/20/2009.
 * The data represent counts of field workers receipts of reportings and referrals about incidences (includes multiple counts of incidents and/or individuals). The data provided is the "Actual" number of referrals received.

Graph 15
Referrals Received by Child Protective Services
1990 - 2008



Source: DSHS Research & Data Analysis, Exec. Management Information System, Case Management Information System (CAMIS) - Intake Referral Statistics Reports (updated January 2009 using EMIS report update 1/20/2009).