



GANGS IN NORTH CAROLINA

AN ANALYSIS OF GANGNET DATA



Governor's Crime Commission
North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety
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Since 1997 the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center (NCCJAC) of the Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) has investigated and published more than a dozen reports on the existence and extent of criminal gangs in North Carolina. Once thought of as a juvenile activity or not significant enough to investigate or report, these activities earned a dominate role in criminal justice activities in the first decade of the 21st century. In the past 10 years, a codified definition of what constitutes a criminal gang has been established. New laws and enhancements to existing laws and sanctions have been implemented and a tremendous amount of state and community funding has been expended in efforts to deter, prevent, divert, investigate and suppress gang activities. Communications across jurisdictions, law enforcement agencies, state and federal prosecutors and corrections have been greatly advanced with the growth of the N.C. Gang Investigators Association, N.C. GangNET, Project Safe Neighborhoods, the High Point Model and other efforts all designed to confront the issue of criminal gangs. The ability for this agency to collect meaningful data has strengthened since nearly all communities are now willing to identify and report on the activities of criminal gang members and the gangs they represent either via N.C. GangNET, informal meetings or surveys. Today data is now available to provide a meaningful snapshot of what the data tells us about criminal gangs and their members in North Carolina.



The NCCJAC does not attempt to serve as experts on gangs and criminal gang activities. This can only be accomplished by local law enforcement when talking about the groups and individuals within their respective jurisdictions. This sociological and criminological topic is too broad to afford topical expertise, but there is ability for specialization in specific elements of the multifarious components that make up the subject of criminal gangs and their activities. This agency has made great efforts to specialize in the demographic composition and geographical disbursement of gangs and their members as reported via several data sources, most recently relying on the N.C. GangNET databases.

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A Fallacy of Comparisons

Nearly every report on gangs in North Carolina has been compared to earlier reports. As mentioned in previous gang reports, this could be a mistake and lead to a misrepresentation of what the data actually conveys. The NCCJAC provides information on what current identified gang and gang member activity has been reported to N.C. GangNET at a specific time. We can say that at a given point in time there are X number of gangs and Y number of gang members as reported by responding agencies. This does not account for potential under-reporting or over-reporting by responding agencies; it merely reflects the official data submitted by gang intelligence officers. Because of certain federal guidelines, individuals in law enforcement intelligence databases like N.C. GangNET must be removed if there has been no new information entered on them for a five year period. As a result, some validated gang members are automatically removed from the system, reducing the number of gang members

and — if they were the last remaining or only member of a particular gang set — this information would also be removed. In our past reports, this was not the case. Often, an agency responding to a GCC survey would provide information on all gangs and gang members being followed since their gang unit was formed. This could have been 10 years worth of gang intelligence but only a portion was still active as gangs or gang members. The point is that the data presented in this report is accurate as of the end of 2010 and offers no direct comparison to previous reports.



The State of Gangs in North Carolina as of January 1, 2011

Methodology

The NCCJAC uses data as it exists in the N.C. GangNET databases. A brief history and explanation of the N.C. GangNET data reveal its strengths and weaknesses. The foremost weakness is without the full participation of all law enforcement and correctional agencies the data is less than complete. Second, the database was designed to track gang members at an individual level and not to provide aggregate data which must be ferreted out via data manipulation. Another shortcoming is that while the N.C. Department of Correction “security threat group” information is being bridged from prison data into N.C. GangNET, data from community corrections or probation on “community threat groups” has yet to be included. Primary strengths of this data are that there are 231 agencies providing information on gang members operating in 57 counties inclusive of our most populous counties. The system provides a standardized method for entering data that validates gang membership and connections with other validated gang members, associates and non-validated suspected gang members. It is because of the strict definitional criteria for validation as a gang or gang member that NCCJAC prefers to use this data when addressing the demographic and geographic descriptors of North Carolina gangs and their members.



N.C. GangNET is a web-based set of databases that exist in three nodes. The western node located with the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Police Department replicates to the central node located at the State Bureau of Investigation Fusion Center and the eastern node located with the Durham County Sheriff’s Office which also replicates to the central node. The Department of Correction is defined as a user whose data is bridged to the central node by way of the eastern node team. While DOC threat groups are validated using DOC criteria, their information is important because most of these individuals



will at some point be released into communities across the state, where it will be important for law enforcement to understand their potential relationships with local gangs.

N.C. GangNET was originally funded by the GCC in 2003 to assist the Durham County Sheriff's Office and the Durham Police Department by providing a centralized criminal gang intelligence database for the identification and tracking of gang members and their activity in Durham County. This software was originally developed for the military to track potential

terrorists and has since been adapted and used by many states and federal law enforcement agencies to track gang member activities showing common linkage with people, automobiles and locations.

The Data

A review of NCCJAC reports on the subject reveal that gang activity has been present in North Carolina communities since well before initial research on the topic started back in 1997 and was present in many communities before law enforcement was willing to accept or acknowledge its existence. Today GangNET provides an information resource to tap in order to obtain a snapshot of gang activity in the state. The picture continues to be a bit fuzzy as there are law enforcement agencies that do not have the personnel resources to enter information into the N.C. GangNET system or do not have investigators trained to recognize and document these types of individuals. This is not due to a lack of available gang training, N.C. GangNET training or access to N.C. GangNET. All of these have been made available to law enforcement via funding from the GCC. Given these caveats, the gang data for the state as of the end of December 2010 is provided below.

The Number of Gang Members

The number of individual gang members within the state's communities tracked in N.C. GangNET totals 12,845 individuals, with an additional 3,500 inmates bridged from DOC that meet the security threat group validation. The total number of gang members in communities and incarcerated is greater than 15,000. Specific numbers for a total may include duplicate entries occurring in both law enforcement gang intelligence data and in DOC security threat group data that could not be eliminated because of data reasons. This year's data is inclusive of validated gang members or security threat groups and does not contain suspected members, gang associates or the community threat groups as defined by DOC Division of Community Corrections.



Gang Member Gender

Data continues to reveal that gang membership in North Carolina is predominately a male activity. Among the data analyzed this year for validated gang members only, excluding the DOC data, there are 11,908 validated male gang members and 937 female gang members. The data is observed to be uniform across the eastern and western nodes with both reporting 93 percent male and 7 percent female activity. Table 1 illustrates validated gang member gender data.

Gang Membership by Gender

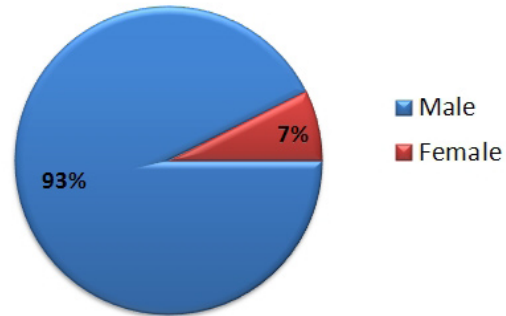


TABLE 1: VALIDATED GANG MEMBERS BY NODE AND GENDER

Gender	Western Node	Eastern Node	Totals
Male	4,609	7,299	11,908
Percent of Total Node	93%	93%	
Percent of Total Male Statewide	39%	61%	93%
Female	352	585	937
Percent of Total Node	7%	7%	
Percent of Total Female Statewide	38%	62%	7%
Total	4,961	7,884	12,845
Percent of Total Statewide	39%	61%	

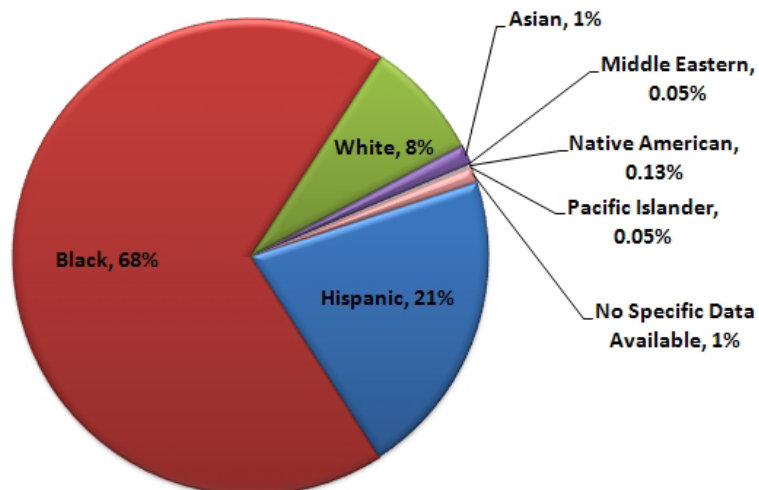
Note: There have been approximately 3,500 Department of Correction Security Threat Group Members that have been bridged from the DOC Database into the N.C. GangNET database. Some of these were already documented in the N.C. GangNET data. Including DOC, actual validated gang members currently in N.C. GangNET is in excess of 15,000.

Gang Member Race/Ethnicity

The demographic breakdown of race and ethnicity provides some interesting data. The number of validated Asian gang members in the western node of 148, or 3 percent, of that node's total validated gang members indicates that Asian gangs are a larger problem in agencies reporting in or near Charlotte. Validated Asian gang members represent less than 1 percent of the eastern node population with just 24 members. Likewise, validated Hispanic gang members in the western node represented 29 percent of that node's gang membership with 1,145 individuals but only 16 percent of the validated gang members in the eastern node with 1,245 individuals. However, in the eastern node, the 5,946 validated gang members who were black represented 75 percent of those being tracked and on the western node only 57 percent with 2,828 gang members. White gang members represented 1,043 of the statewide gang membership as 10 percent of the western node and 7 percent of the eastern node. All other racial or ethnic groups each represented less than 1 percent of node or state totals. Table 2 offers a complete breakdown of validated gang members according to race/ethnicity by node and for the state.

Table 2: Validated Gang Members by Node and Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Western Node	Eastern Node	Totals
Hispanic	1,445	1,245	2,690
Percent of Total Node	29%	16%	
Percent of Total Hispanic Statewide	54%	46%	21%
Black	2,828	5,946	8,774
Percent of Total Node	57%	75%	
Percent of Total Black Statewide	32%	68%	68%
White	475	568	1,043
Percent of Total Node	10%	7%	
Percent of Total White Statewide	46%	54%	8%
Asian	148	24	172
Percent of Total Node	3%	<1%	
Percent of Total Asian Statewide	86%	14%	1%
Middle Eastern	5	1	6
Percent of Total Node	<1%	<1%	
Percent of Total Middle Eastern Statewide	83%	17%	0%
Native American	3	14	17
Percent of Total Node	<1%	<1%	
Percent of Total Native American Statewide	43%	82%	0%
Pacific Islander	2	5	7
Percent of Total Node	<1%	<1%	
Percent of Total Pacific Islander Statewide	29%	71%	0%
No Specific Data Available	55	81	136
Percent of Total Node	1%	1%	
Percent of Total No Data Statewide	40%	60%	1%
Total	4,961	7,884	12,845
Percent of Total Statewide	39%	61%	



Gang Member Age

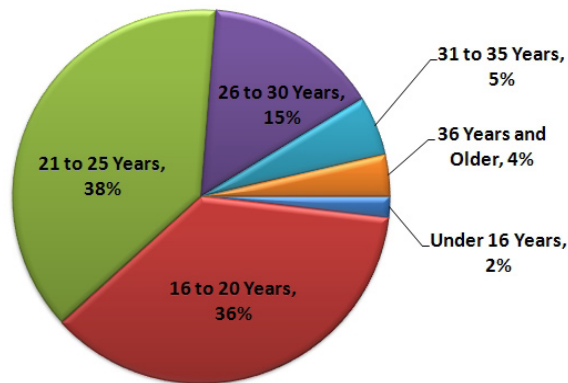
One of the most interesting elements of gang studies that has become available since the initial use of N.C. GangNET information is age descriptors. For the greater part of the past decade every time criminal gangs were mentioned there has usually been an adjective attached referring to youths or juveniles. According to the data, this may be an unwarranted description. Also, while the N.C. Attorney General's Office has provided an opinion that the inclusion of juveniles, those individuals age 15 and younger, into N.C. GangNET does not violate state law, there could be some individual law enforcement agencies that have policies, either internal or community, of not entering juvenile data. While allowing for the potential element of data underreporting, information reveals that in the six age groups presented 62 percent of the validated gang members are age 21 and older. However, 36 percent are what might be deemed as youthful offenders ages 16 to 20. Only 244 or 2 percent of all validated criminal gang membership was attributed to juveniles ages 15 and younger. Perhaps the most telling part of this data can be observed in the pie chart associated with Table 3 that illustrates 74 percent of validated criminal gang members are between the ages of 16 and 25 — adult criminals in North Carolina. Table 3 offers validated gang member age group data by node and for the entire state.

Table 3: Validated Gang Members by Node and Age Group

Age Group	Western Node	Eastern Node	Totals
Under 16 Years	141	103	244
Percent of Node/Group	3%	1%	2%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	58%	42%	100%
16 to 20 Years	2,148	2,701	4,849
Percent of Node/Group	42%	33%	36%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	44%	56%	100%
21 to 25 Years	1,787	3,284	5,071
Percent of Node/Group	35%	40%	38%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	35%	65%	100%
26 to 30 Years	661	1,335	1,996
Percent of Node/Group	13%	16%	15%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	33%	67%	100%
31 to 35 Years	182	507	689
Percent of Node/Group	4%	6%	5%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	26%	74%	100%
36 Years and Older	145	333	478
Percent of Node/Group	3%	4%	4%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	30%	70%	100%
Totals	5,064	8,263	13,327
Percent of Total Statewide by Node	38%	32%	100%

Special Note: These totals differ from other totals because many gang members have given differing birth dates during police interviews. As a result, some gang members are counted more than one time due to variance in birth dates.

Validated Gang Members by Age Group



Validated Gang Members Under Age 17

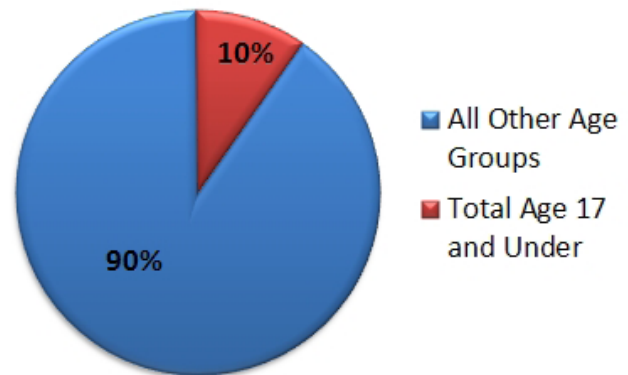
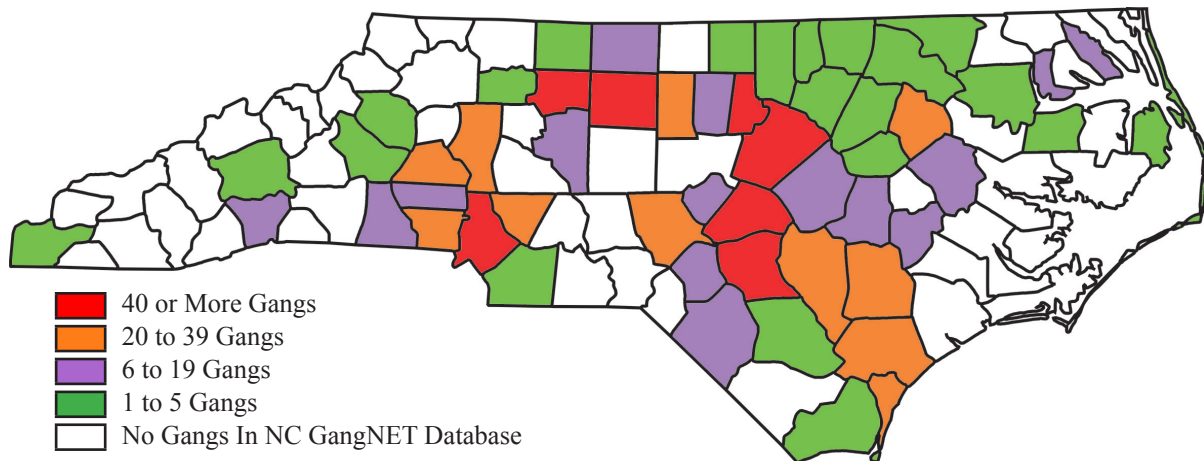


Table 3.1: Validated Gang Members by Node and Age Group 17 Years and Under (Juveniles per Other States)

Age Group	Western Node	Eastern Node	Total
15 and Under	141	103	244
Percent of Node/Group	3%	1%	2%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	58%	42%	100%
16 and 17	510	553	1,063
Percent of Node/Group	10%	7%	8%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	48%	52%	100%
All Other Age Groups	4,413	7,607	11,920
Percent of Node/Group	87%	92%	90%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	37%	64%	100%
Total Age 17 and Under	651	656	1,307
Percent of Node/Group	13%	8%	10%
Percent of Total Statewide Age Group	50%	50%	100%
Total	5,064	8,263	13,327
Percent of Total Statewide by Node	38%	62%	100%

Table 3.1 provides some information to compare to what other states report as juvenile gang data. As can be gleaned from the chart above and data associated with Table 3.1, approximately 10 percent of validated gang members in N.C. GangNET fall in the age group as under 18 years. The vast majority of validated gang members in the database are adult criminals, mostly under age 30. (Note that in North Carolina individuals aged 16 and over are adjudicated as adults. In all other states, with the exception of New York and Connecticut, individuals aged 18 and older are adjudicated as adults.)

Map 1: Counties With Gangs Listed In N.C. GangNET Database

Gangs by Geographic Location

One of the most important issues for the Governor’s Crime Commission has been identifying areas with the greatest funding and programmatic needs. The geographic data assists in efforts to ensure that communities with an identified and data driven need are given appropriate consideration when they submit a grant proposal. As the Governor’s Crime Commission’s statistical branch, the NCCJAC has always strived to accurately depict the nature and extent of gangs and gang activity across North Carolina. N.C. GangNET has made this a far more standardized task than in earlier years. Map 1 provides a graphic illustration of the extent of gangs within our state’s counties. The areas that make up the Interstate corridors for I-40, I-95, I-85, I-77 and I-26 transverse the most populous communities and the surrounding areas that have experienced urban sprawl. They also serve as feeder communities for the metropolitan workforces — those areas that tend to have the largest number of gangs. The less populated and more rural counties either report lower numbers of gangs active in their jurisdictions or either do not have the manpower, access or desire to enter information into the N.C. GangNET system.

While we do not attempt to identify all of the gang sets located in each county or offer the number of validated gang members by county, it was determined the best information to provide would be the number of validated gangs within counties participating in N.C. GangNET.

Another point of interest is that a validated gang could be a motorcycle club, street gang, white supremacist group, any number of separatist groups or militias that have been validated through the criteria as defined in N.C. GangNET bylaws or state statute. The vast majority of gangs and individuals within the N.C. GangNET system fall under what is generally perceived as a street gang.



Table 4: Gang Numbers by Node and by County

GangNET Eastern Node Counties				GangNET Western Node Counties	
Alamance	24	Nash	3	Buncombe	1
Bertie	1	New Hanover	35	Burke	1
Bladen	5	Northampton	2	Cabarrus	27
Brunswick	1	Orange	7	Caldwell	2
Chatham	11	Pasquotank	9	Catawba	23
Chowan	6	Pender	38	Cherokee	5
Cumberland	50	Person	3	Cleveland	15
Dare	1	Pitt	18	Cumberland*	1
Duplin	24	Robeson	8	Davidson	7
Durham	41	Sampson	29	Forsyth	43
Edgecombe	20	Stokes	1	Gaston	24
Franklin	5	Vance	4	Guilford	84
Granville	5	Wake	99	Henderson	8
Halifax	1	Warren	2	Iredell	23
Harnett	40	Washington	1	Lincoln	10
Hoke	6	Wayne	7	Mecklenburg	56
Johnston	16	Wilson	1	Randolph	6
Lee	17			Rockingham	12
Lenoir	9			Union	1
Moore	22			Yadkin	1
Total Eastern Node: 572				Total Western Node: 350	
* A Cumberland County gang member(s) was identified in a Western Node jurisdiction.					

Fifty-seven counties reported 922 Validated Gangs in the N.C. GangNET database. This total does not include Security Threat Groups or Community Threat Groups as designated by the DOC Division of Prisons and Division of Community Corrections.

Summary

The NCCJAC had expected to see a leveling off of the increased counts of gangs across the state as more agencies developed specialized gang units and gang investigators and as more agencies began using N.C. GangNET. This seems to be occurring. There is a realization that the data presented in this report is an understatement of the extent of gangs and gang members, but is a very good portrayal of the situation. There are major agencies that have not entered data for extended periods. This could be because they have entered all the gangs and gang members they have identified and little new intelligence has become available, they could have had personnel changes with their GangNET certified person leaving their gang unit or any number of other reasons. N.C. GangNET is not a perfect system for developing statewide gang data, but it far exceeds any other methodology because it relies on data entered by the most active gang investigators in the state.

North Carolina is not only fortunate that the Attorney General's Office offered an opinion that allows the inclusion of juveniles in GangNET (ages 15 and younger) but also because, unlike other states, our 16 and 17 year old gang members are included without any restrictions. There are possibly some agencies, who on advice of their agency or city/county attorney are not including those age 15 and below, however it is likely not enough to greatly skew the percentages of gang members under age



18 much higher than the 10 percent as depicted in Table 3.1. What can be seen as a result of this reporting is that the age group under 18 years of age represents 10 percent of our validated gang members. So much focus has been on "juvenile" or "youth" gangs that often people lose sight that the vast majority of validated gang members in North Carolina are adults. This does not distract from the continued need to address the problems that lead to youth involvement in gangs.

There are two things that can be determined by the map showing the numbers of gangs within counties. First is that the largest concentrations of gangs are in some of our most populated or easily accessible counties with major roadways and interstate highways, and law enforcement agencies in those counties have some of the most active gang units and are eager to share their intelligence with other agencies in efforts to keep communities and citizens safe.

One of the primary reasons that this demographic data is important at a state level is to have a picture of where and at whom to direct funding if and when it becomes available. It is acknowledged that it would be wise to continue efforts to deter and prevent young people under age 18 from joining gangs, since this group makes up a relatively low percentage of the total gang membership. The most efficient method of accomplishing this would be to provide gang prevention programs in schools, identify the youth who are most at-risk for joining gangs and focus more intensive prevention programs on them. More programs aimed at intervention and suppression should be directed at the current gang members that are age 18 and over. Efforts such as the High Point Model as described by David Kennedy of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and used by North Carolina's U.S. Attorney's Offices via Project Safe Neighborhoods. Continued suppression through standard law enforcement and prosecutorial use of existing laws to intervene and suppress criminal activities.



Additional efforts should utilize the data provided to focus efforts on the communities most affected by gang involvement. In North Carolina a gang member is most likely to be a black male under age 30 who resides in a more populous county in close proximity to a major highway. There are some pockets of Asian gang membership in or around the Charlotte area and it would make sense to develop some programs that focus on this population. Likewise, there are a significant number of Hispanic

gang members across the state. One of the most difficult problems confronting the development of programs for this population is the tremendous cultural diversity that exists within the Hispanic/Latino community. Programs designed with a Mexican population in mind might not be appropriate for a Honduran or Puerto Rican person. However, the single largest area of concern is identifying the causes of the disproportionate involvement of young black men in gangs. Understanding the complexities that have created this social phenomenon would provide information necessary to develop meaningful programs for this community.



The data indicated that when DOC information is included, there are more than 15,000 validated gang members in our communities and incarcerated in prisons. There are an additional 2,634 affiliates or suspected members that do not yet meet the criteria set for validation. These would be the most at-risk for joining because of their close association with validated gang members. Given this group (1,293 eastern and 1,341 western nodes) there are close to 18,000 people either in gangs or closely associated with gangs in the N.C. GangNET system.

Future Activities



N.C. GangNET is an evolving system that will possibly find a new central home within the next year. As funding diminishes in both the eastern and western nodes for programmers, the ability to access data to develop reports such as this will be greatly diminished unless there are programmers and data management personnel assigned to the central node. The data will continue to be useful to the gang officers who enter and view the data, as long as the project is funded.

Late last year Governor Bev Perdue issued Executive Order 69 which codifies and creates a statewide Governor's Gang Task Force whose primary duties are to compile a statewide comprehensive plan for addressing the gang issue in North Carolina. This plan will include a blueprint for establishing a well-coordinated statewide enforcement program as well as delineate plans for enhanced data sharing across and between the law enforcement, judicial and correctional sectors of the criminal justice system. The task force will also be responsible for identifying current and emerging gang issues, investigating, researching and recommending legislative and executive policy changes to better prevent, mitigate and suppress gang activity and gang involvement. The task force will meet quarterly with an anticipated final report or statewide plan being published in the fall of 2012.

