

RCW 43.310.005 Finding. The legislature finds and declares that:

(1) The number of youth who are members and associates of gangs and commit gang violence has significantly increased throughout the entire greater Puget Sound, Spokane, and other areas of the state;

(2) Youth gang violence has caused a tremendous strain on the progress of the communities impacted. The loss of life, property, and positive opportunity for growth caused by youth gang violence has reached intolerable levels. Increased youth gang activity has seriously strained the budgets of many local jurisdictions, as well as threatened the ability of the educational system to educate our youth;

(3) Among youth gang members the high school dropout rate is significantly higher than among nongang members. Since the economic future of our state depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce, this high school dropout rate threatens the economic welfare of our future workforce, as well as the future economic growth of our state;

(4) The unemployment rate among youth gang members is higher than that among the general youth population. The unusual unemployment rate, lack of education and skills, and the increased criminal activity could significantly impact our future prison population;

(5) Most youth gangs are subcultural. This implies that gangs provide the nurturing, discipline, and guidance to gang youth and potential gang youth that is generally provided by communities and other social systems. The subcultural designation means that youth gang participation and violence can be effectively reduced in Washington communities and schools through the involvement of community, educational, criminal justice, and employment systems working in a unified manner with parents and individuals who have a firsthand knowledge of youth gangs and at-risk youth; and

(6) A strong unified effort among parents and community, educational, criminal justice, and employment systems would facilitate: (a) The learning process; (b) the control and reduction of gang violence; (c) the prevention of youth joining negative gangs; and (d) the intervention into youth gangs. [1993 c 497 § 1.]