

Yakima Valley Gang Violence Prevention



Report pursuant to Section 128(191) of [Chapter 297, Laws of 2022](#)
(the supplemental operating budget)

September 30, 2023

Report to the Legislature

Director Mike Fong

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PREVENTION/COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT**

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Executive summary

Overview

The Washington State Legislature appropriated \$500,000 to the Department of Commerce for fiscal year 2023 for a contract with a community-based nonprofit organization for a community consortium to develop and implement strategies to prevent gang violence in Yakima County. The consortium, in conjunction with a public radio station, must conduct a Spanish-language public radio media outreach campaign with the aim of linking gang-involved youth with employment, educational, and training opportunities. In conducting the outreach campaign, the consortium may work with schools, grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, law enforcement, families, and juvenile justice agencies. The project is in response to high gang violence rates in the Yakima Valley. From 2010 to 2023, 28% of murders in the City of Yakima were related to gang activity.¹

Commerce contracted with the Northwest Communities Education Center (NCEC) and Radio KDNA to lead the project. The two organizations led the Gang Violence Consortium, focusing on school districts in Grandview, Sunnyside, Granger, Toppenish and Wapato. The consortium called for community institutions to work together to prevent students from joining gang-related activities. Partners included law enforcement, schools, social services agencies, and grassroots organizations.

Legislative mandate

Section 128(191) of [Chapter 297, Laws of 2022](#) (the supplemental operating budget) directs:

- (191)(a) \$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for a contract with a community based nonprofit organization located in the Yakima valley to develop a community consortium for the purpose of developing and implementing strategies for the prevention of gang violence in Yakima county.
- (b) The consortium must include representation from community-based organizations, gang-involved youth, law enforcement agencies, and state agencies involved in juvenile justice.
- (c) The consortium must develop after-school activities such as counseling, tutoring, and computer literacy for gang-involved youth, in conjunction with local school districts.
- (d) The consortium must, in conjunction with a public radio station, conduct a Spanish-language public radio media outreach campaign with the aim of linking gang-involved youth with employment, educational, and training opportunities. In conducting the outreach campaign, the consortium may work with schools, grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, law enforcement, families, and juvenile justice agencies.
- (e) In developing its outreach and intervention activities, the consortium may facilitate workshops and conferences, either in person or virtual, with educators, parents, and youth.
- (f) By June 30, 2023, the department must provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature. The report must include:
 - (i) A description of the gang violence prevention programs conducted by the consortium and how they were implemented;
 - (ii) A description of any virtual community events, workshops, and conferences held; and

¹ [Murder Map Dashboard \(yakimawa.gov\)](#)

(iii) The number of individuals who participated in or received services through the programs conducted by the consortium, including any relevant demographic data for those individuals.

Introduction

Yakima Valley Gang Violence Consortium

Commerce awarded the Yakima Valley Gang Violence Prevention Program Grant to the Northwest Communities Education Center (NCEC) and Radio KDNA. Radio KDNA is a Spanish-language public radio station that launched in 1979. It operates in Eastern Washington's Yakima Valley within a 100-mile radius of the lower Yakima Valley broadcast area. KDNA aims to encourage and motivate its listeners by educating, informing, and mobilizing them to become involved in the Valley's culture and on topics that affect their health, education, and civic engagement. The [radio station allows](#) Spanish-speaking listeners to learn English and "become citizens and to fully understand all the implications of benefits received from schools, state, and federal agencies."

The Gang Violence Consortium focused on the Grandview, Sunnyside, Granger, Toppenish, and Wapato school districts. The Consortium called for local groups – including law enforcement, schools, social service agencies, and grassroots organizations – to work together to prevent students from engaging in gang-related activities in the five districts, with the cooperation of law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies. The Consortium produced a comprehensive and collaborative project that focused on:

- Reaching underserved populations with limited literacy and that experience cultural and information isolation.
- Providing resources for after school activities, including mentoring, job training, and placement services.
- Producing a radio show utilizing its people to promote educational gang prevention/intervention programs. The radio show aired seven days a week during prime time hours.
- Providing after-school tutoring and remedial classes in English, math, and science.
- Conducting parent workshops and giving regular presentations to students.

Outreach campaign

The outreach campaign aired from July 2022 to June 2023 on radio and social media. The campaign provided 48 one-hour radio programs about gang and drug intervention and prevention programming that reached 25,000 listeners across Yakima County. Programming included:

- Six informational capsules that pinpoint opioid misuse, drug awareness, and treatment education.
- Short radio novellas or short radio dramas that use storytelling to illustrate the negative impact of gang affiliation on families.
- A social media campaign to share resources, including parenting guides about gangs, domestic violence affecting children, and warning signs of gang involvement linked by hashtags such as #RadioKDNA, #Prevention, and #GangViolence.

There was also direct contact with students at risk of gang violence. A common theme for youth enticed to join the gang lifestyle is a lack of school engagement. Direct Service to Students offered after-school tutoring programs for students to catch up on missing or failing classwork so students would not fall behind in school. In the Mabton School District, 12 students participated in a credit retrieval program to support those falling behind in academic classes. This program provided a resource for students to stay on track with schoolwork.

Community events

From July 2022 to June 2023, NCEC/Radio KDNA participated in community activities to bring awareness about gang violence to different events. Over the year, 17,027 people received information about gang violence and awareness, substance abuse, health care, and other community and nonprofit resources. Outreach staff reached out to area farmworkers to share information about gang awareness.

Some examples of community events and number of participants reached:

- Sunnyside High School fall school conference: 150 people
- Yakima's Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) hosted the OIC Family Night Harvest Party: 250 people, including parents, grandparents, and youth.
- Granger School District Literacy/Migrant Night: 250 people.
- Fred Hutchinson Resource Fair: 300 people, with an emphasis on health.
- Valley Vista Health Fair: 350 people, with an emphasis on nonprofit resources, health care, and law enforcement information.
- Workshops and conferences: Gang prevention workshops for parents and students were held in February. Material focused on promoting awareness of the dangers of gangs, helping others to understand signs to look for, and where to go for help.

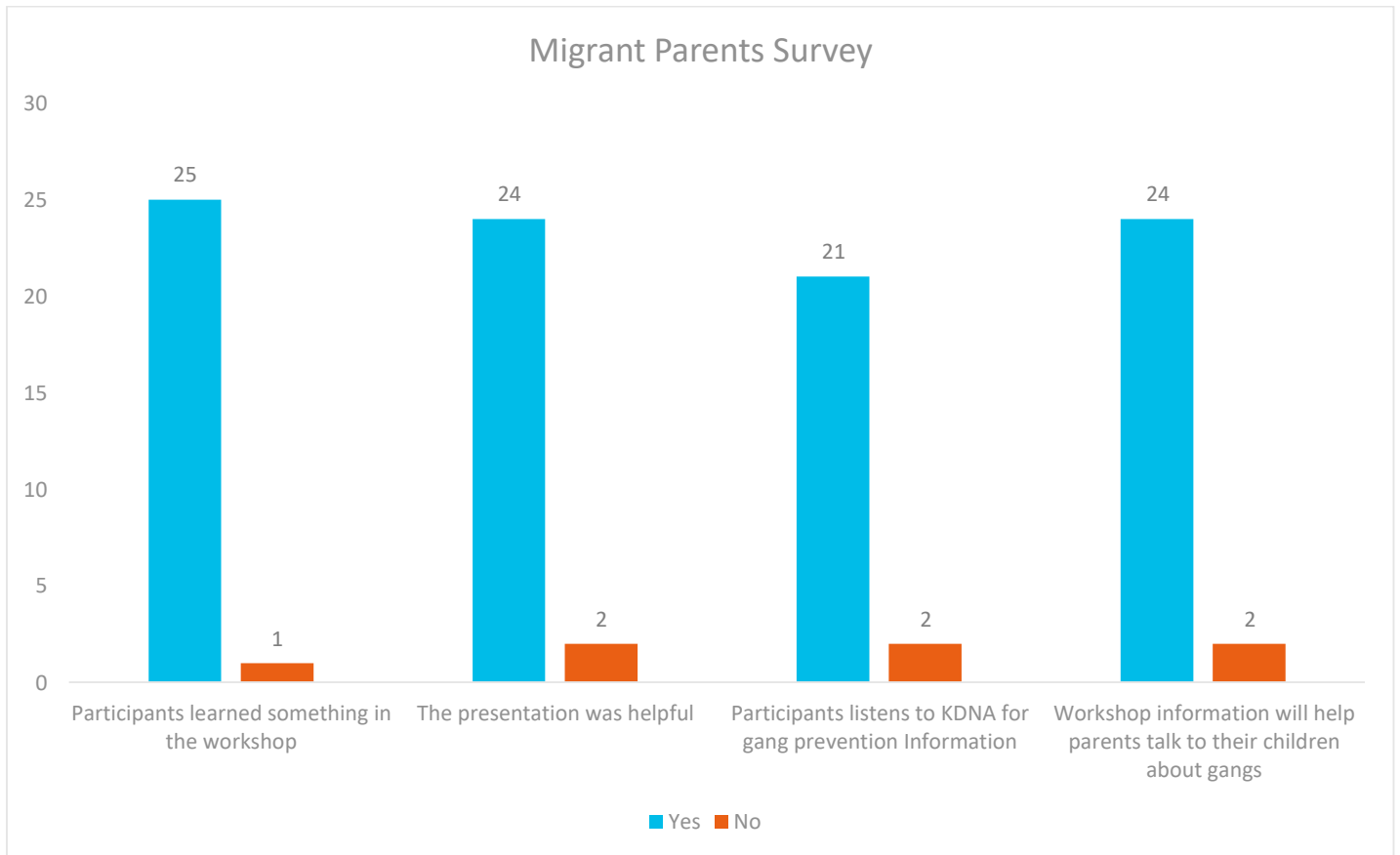
Workshops and conferences

During this program year, the outreach staff facilitated one main conference, four parent workshops, and three student workshops in the Grandview, Sunnyside, Granger, Toppenish and Wapato school districts. The school districts assisted with developing workshop material. A total of 567 students attended the workshops, which focused on the following:

- Educating parents about the dangers of gang violence
- Raising student awareness about the consequences of gang involvement
- Educating students on who to talk to about gangs and drugs

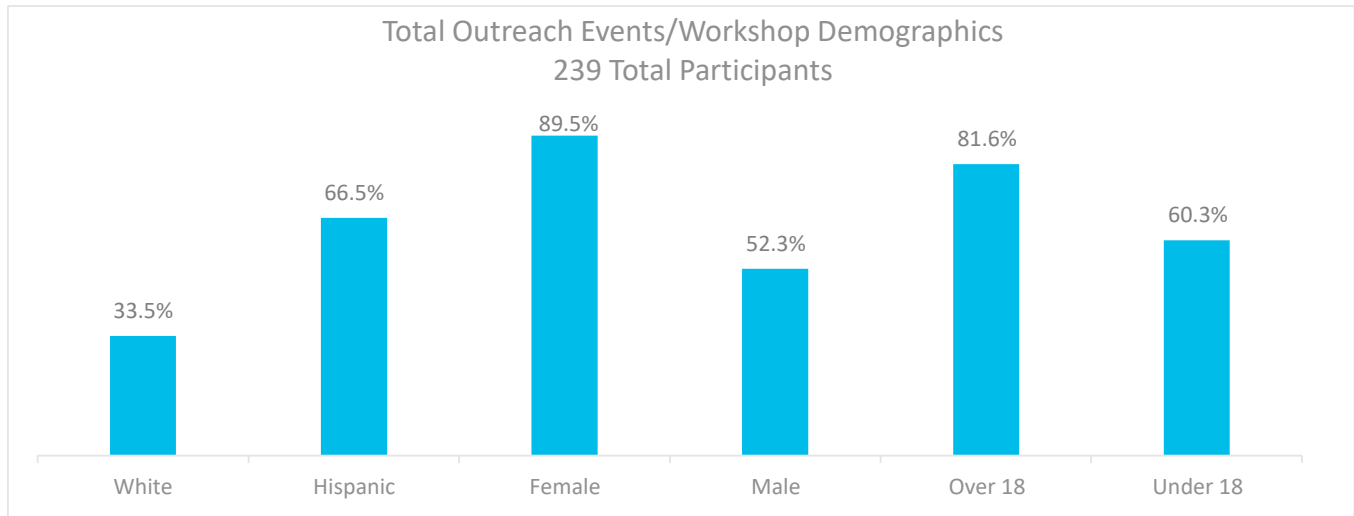
Program evaluation

This community partnership offered workshops and events to educate parents and school-age youth about the danger of drugs and gangs. The migrant parents' workshop educated parents about gangs, available resources and how to talk to their children about gangs. Twenty-six migrant parents attended the workshop. The chart below, based on post-conference surveys, shows that the vast majority of parents found the material valuable.



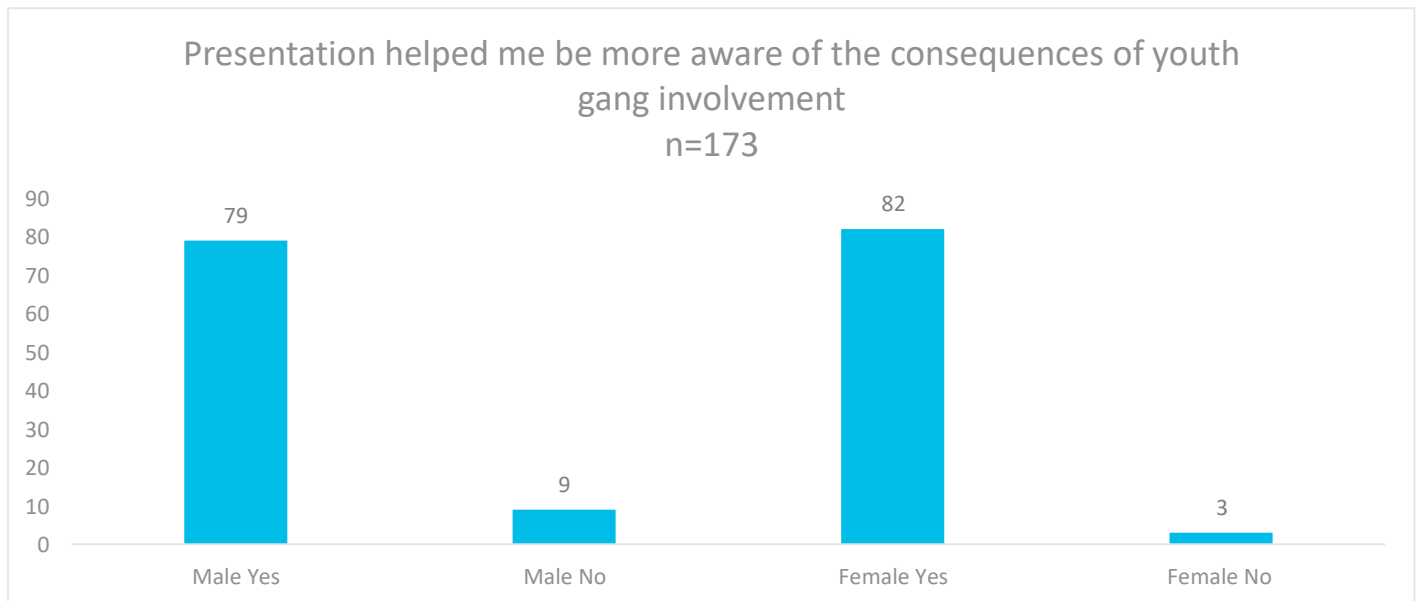
Outreach events

The program held outreach and community events in the cities of Grandview, Sunnyside, Mabton, and Wapato. In total, 239 people attended. The chart below demonstrates the demographic makeup of attendees at community events.

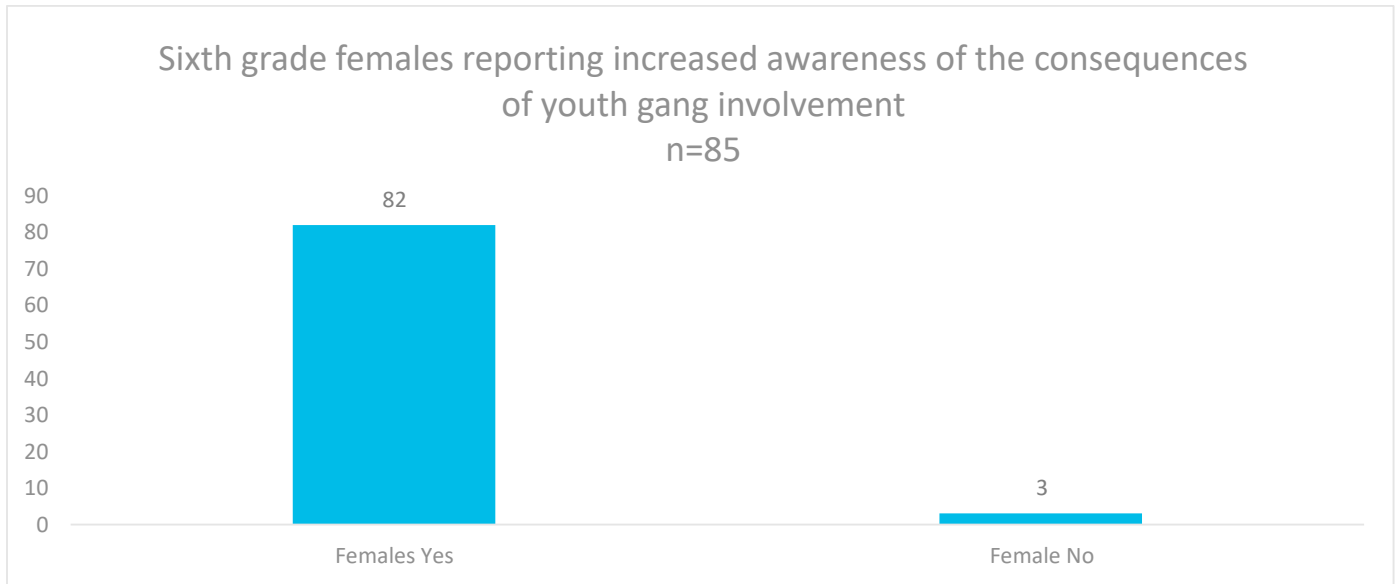


Student presentations

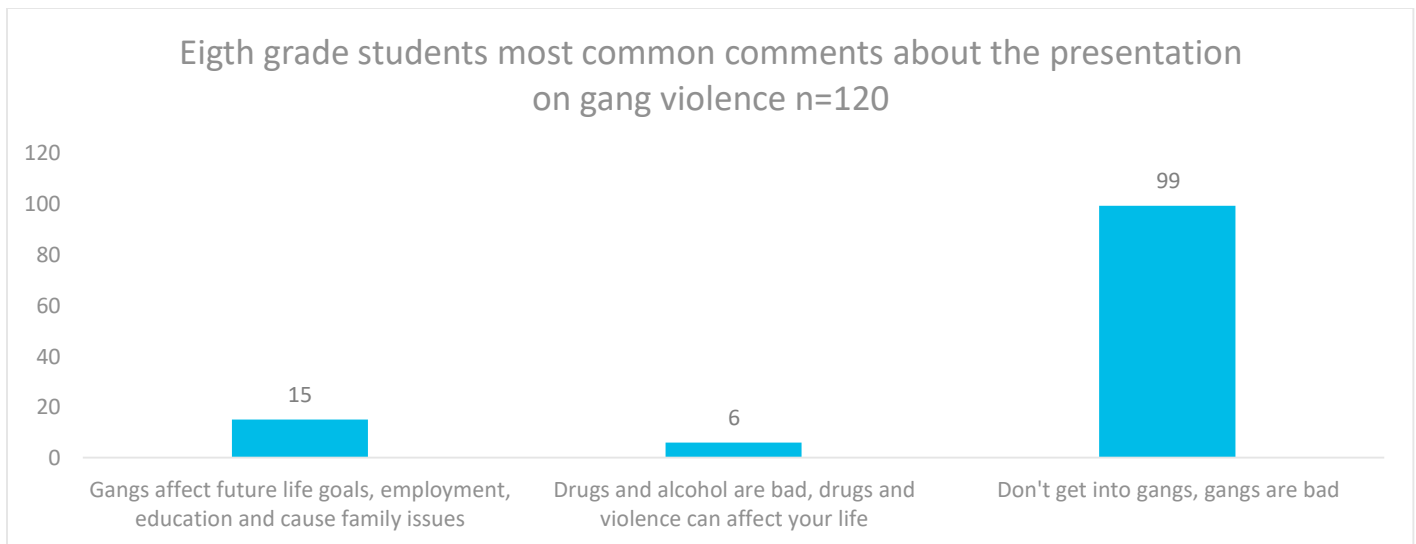
Presentations focused on providing sixth- and eighth-grade students information about drugs and gang involvement. A total of 173 students participated in the workshop, with most students reporting that they learned something and had a better understanding of the consequences of youth gang involvement.



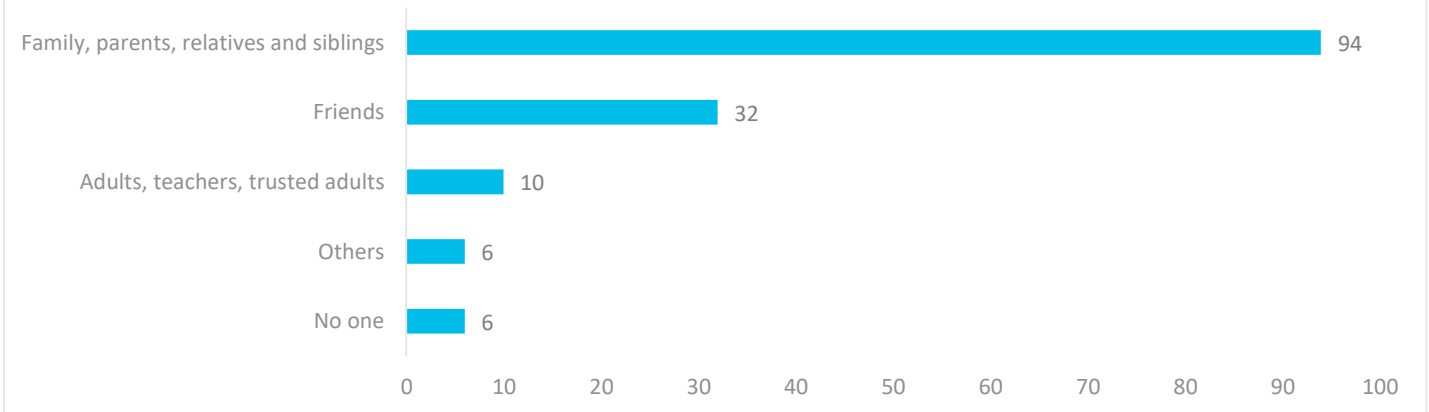
Among female sixth-grade students, 96% reported the workshop resulted in greater awareness about gang involvement.



When eighth grade students were asked what they learned, 82% came away with the message to not get into gangs and that gangs are bad. When the same students were asked whom they would talk to about gangs, 63% indicated they would speak to family, parents, relatives, or siblings.



Eighth grade most common responses on who they will talk to about gangs n=148



Next steps

For the 2023-2025 biennium budget, the Legislature appropriated \$375,000 each year to the Youth Gang Violence Intervention Program for NCEC/KDNA to continue to coordinate gang violence prevention consortium activities with entities, including community-based organizations, law enforcement, and members of the faith community. NCEC/KDNA plans to expand after-school activities and referrals to social services for students and young adults in the Yakima Valley. Social services may include referrals to employment, mental health care, tutoring, and basic needs services. NCEC/KDNA will continue to operate a Spanish-language public radio station with the mission of addressing the social, educational, and health needs of economically disadvantaged Spanish-speaking residents of Central and Eastern Washington.