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From the Los Angeles Times

## Study: Effort to Rid L.A. of Gangs Is Failing

A nonprofit says anti-gang programs lack focus and that the city should target the problem's root causes.

By Patrick McGreevy  
Times Staff Writer

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The city of Los Angeles is losing the battle against street gangs because it has failed to properly fund and focus efforts to keep youngsters from joining gangs in the first place, a study released Wednesday has found.

The study by the Advancement Project, a nonprofit group, suggested that the 23 antigang programs spread throughout various city departments and costing \$82 million annually be put under a single authority.

"You've had a pretty ad hoc, scattered, incoherent approach to the problem," civil rights attorney Connie Rice, co-author of the study, told the council's Ad Hoc Committee on Gang Violence and Youth Development. "Somebody needs to be responsible. There needs to be centralized accountability."

Rice said the last phase of the study, to be completed by the end of the year, will look at possible models for better coordination of anti-gang programs, including appointing a gang czar at City Hall, creating a city department, reorganizing an existing city office or convening a task force.

The Los Angeles City Council commissioned the study in response to a continuing plague of gang violence in recent years, despite increases in spending on anti-gang efforts.

"We frankly haven't gotten gang violence under control at all," said Councilwoman Janice Hahn, a committee member.

Bureaucratic problems that have stymied the efforts were highlighted Wednesday when the council had to take emergency action in response to reports that more than 40 anti-gang workers in the L.A. Bridges program have not been paid for a month.

The study cited city reports that the vast majority of anti-gang funding, \$56 million, has gone to suppression programs aimed at the arrest, incarceration and containment of gang members, with only a small amount going to prevention and intervention programs.

"What you are saying is if you have a better balance of intervention and prevention, what you have is less need for some dollars in suppression," Councilman Tony Cardenas, committee chairman, said to Rice during Wednesday's hearing on the study. "So what you are doing is you are being much more efficient and effective in utilizing public funds."

The use of injunctions to limit gang activity has resulted in "over-broad enforcement" and an "unclear exit strategy" for former gang members to be removed from an injunction.

Researchers mapped out neighborhoods where gang violence is greatest and found a correlation in many cases with high school dropout rates and poverty.

City efforts must better address those root causes, the study said.

"It is about the conditions in the neighborhoods that allow the gangs to dominate," Rice said.

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