



# News Release

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## **Surrey school district leads community partners in “wrap around” approach to teen gang prevention**

A comprehensive and collaborative youth support project for students at risk of joining gangs or engaged in gang activity has been launched in Surrey.

The *Wraparound Surrey Project* brings together several community partners in Surrey to provide longer-term, encompassing services and support for gang-associated youth and their families, as well as resources and education for the broader community.

The Surrey school district, in partnership with the City of Surrey, Surrey RCMP, the Integrated Gang Task Force of British Columbia, Public Safety Canada and several community service organizations will work together to support at-risk youth for up to three years to encourage the students towards stability and academic and personal success.

“Youth gang-related violence is a community issue and it’s great to have the involvement and resources of all these community agencies in a focused effort to address the problem,” says Surrey Board of Education chair Laurae McNally. “The *Wraparound Surrey Project* is an innovative and intensive approach and the board is proud of the fact it is a Surrey School District initiative.”

Through the project, 11 to 17-year-old Surrey school district students exhibiting risk factors are provided a personalized care plan to address the risks that may lead to gang-associated behaviour. The plan extends into most facets of the young person’s life; personal, family, school, peer and community; thus “wrapping” the student with a network of support and encouragement.

A *Wraparound Surrey Team* has been established consisting of five full-time Surrey school district staff trained in youth intervention strategies and three full-time police officers from both the BC Integrated Gang Task Force and Surrey RCMP. Using recognized and validated assessment tools, the team will assess each student referred to the program and prepare an individualized support plan. The team then works to ensure all elements of the plan, including those that involve the student’s family, school and community, are implemented and maintained.

“This project, in conjunction with on-going enforcement and the formation of community coalitions throughout the region, is a cornerstone of the multi-faceted approach to addressing gang violence,” says B.C. Integrated Gang Task Force superintendent Dan Malo. “Through this initiative we are targeting youth before gangs do and we’re convinced that once the *Wraparound Surrey Project* is proven successful, there will be opportunities for others to adopt and adapt the model to issues within their own communities and we’re pleased to be playing a role in the project.”

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“This program is another excellent example of the collaboration that occurs between the Surrey RCMP and the Surrey school district in the development of and execution of strategies to address youth issues,” says Surrey RCMP chief superintendent Fraser MacRae. “The *Wraparound Surrey Project* is an initiative that has tremendous potential to make a difference.

“We are particularly pleased to be partnering with the Integrated Gang Task Force and other community partners, as the partnerships are the strength of this program,” adds MacRae. “Gang recruitment and engagement of youth in gang activity and lifestyle is a problem that all communities face and it is our collective responsibility to develop responses and strategies that address this issue”.

Based in its own Surrey office, the *Wraparound Surrey Project* currently has a capacity for 60 students who are involved in gangs, display gang “wannabe” behaviour, or with a high level of risk factors predictive of gang involvement. The *Wraparound Surrey Project* will also lead general youth gang education, prevention and training initiatives for students, school staff, parents and the community.

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