



Hamlet Hood

Experienced Investigator To Lead DJJ's New Gang Intervention Specialist Team

Youth gangs, and how they present themselves, are changing. Aside from the well-known nationally identified gangs that often are in the news, an increasing number of youth are seeking their own identity, relying more on unnamed group violence for protection and survival. Many communities in Virginia have a gang presence and don't even realize that they do.

In his new role as Chief Intelligence and Intervention Officer, 40-year law enforcement veteran Hamlet Hood will lead a team of investigators and instructors that will identify gang-like behavior among youth in Virginia. Their goal: To redirect youth who may be headed down a destructive path of behavior to the proper referral, program, treatment, or facility.

"For most of my career, I've worked in communities that had limited positive opportunities for youth, and a high risk for exposure to violence," Hood says. "By identifying the specific needs of the youth in these communities, I was able to develop

strategies and training opportunities for the positive support of our youth. That's what our new Gang Intervention Specialist (GIS) team will be all about."

The GIS will include certified regional gang investigators, probation officers from each of DJJ's court service units, and staff from Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center, Central Admissions and Placement unit, DJJ's Department of Education, and Community Placement Programs. The team will identify individuals who exhibit gang-like behavior and share that information with community leaders. Each team member will receive specialized training on how to identify and document possible gang behaviors in our youth.

Hood retired as a lieutenant from the Richmond Police Department in 2012 after a 29-year career there. As the leader of RPD's gang unit, he developed community training programs to address gang-vulnerable youth. In 2012, he joined DJJ as a gang investigator and trainer, and conducted gang awareness trainings for federal, state, local and community agencies. He also is a faculty member and law enforcement coordinator for Gang Busters, a cooperative effort between the Virginia Commonwealth Attorney's Services Council and law enforcement professionals.

He has received many awards, including the Silver Medal of Valor from the Greater Richmond Retail Merchants Association, two recognitions from Richmond City Council for his community/police relationship building efforts, and more than 100 commendations. He is an active member of the Astoria Beneficial Club, Inc., one of Richmond's oldest African American benevolence and service clubs. He was recognized as the 2017 Astorian of the Year for his work in the community. In 2021, he became a trustee with the Christopher F. Foster Scholarship Foundation.