

YOUR CHILD AND GANGS

Remember, as parents you need to look for patterns:

Be Aware if Your Child

- > Buys (or wants to buy) an excessive amount of distinctive clothes for their wardrobe.
- > Wears sagging pants on hips or waist.
- > Wears an excessive amount of gold jewelry.
- > Dresses and styles their hair similar to their friends.
- > Uses excessive amount of gang slang.
- > Withdraws from family members.
- > Associates with undesirables.
- > Stays out later than usual.
- > Desires too much privacy.
- > Develops major attitude problems with parents, teachers, or those in authority.
- > Starts to use drugs.
- > Uses hand signs.
- > Receives money or articles without your permission or awareness.
- > Makes open display of tattoos.
- > Becomes suddenly hyperactive.
- > Writes graffiti on school notebook or clothing.
- > Has a nickname like "Tripper," "Joker," or "Mad Dog."

Changes in the selection of friends, patterns of dress, secretiveness about his/her activities, and diminishing interest (beyond what is normal adolescent behavior) in family, are all early signs of gang or drug involvement. Be observant and don't be afraid to confront early. Contact your local police or your school counselor immediately.

First Steps

Parents equipped with education, a focus on a spiritual base, parental love, and open lines of communication provide youth with the emotional strength to resist peer pressure. Remember:

- Praise often.
- Help set realistic goals.
- Give real responsibility.
- Demonstrate love... unconditionally.
- Listen more and lecture less.
- Set good examples.
- Set firm rules...follow through.
- Spend time with your child.
- Intervene early.
- Enroll in a parenting program.

Source:
Carson Sheriff's Station, Crime Prevention Unit: "Streetwise"

PROTECT YOUR CHILD

To schedule a free presentation
for your parent group about
gang awareness call

1-213-978-8100

RESOURCES

- Los Angeles City Attorney
Gang Prosecution and Prevention Division
(213) 978-4090
- Los Angeles City Attorney
Safe Neighborhoods Division
(213) 575-8500
- Los Angeles City Attorney
Safe Schools Division
(213) 978-8399
- Los Angeles Police Department
Gang Operation Support Division
(213) 847-1610

Suggested Reading:

[Gang Free Zones: A Training Manual For Gang Prevention In Schools.](#) The At Risk Resource Network. P.O. Box 9245, Oakland, CA 94613-0245

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SAVE OUR
CHILDREN

Gang Awareness
Information for Parents

FACTS ABOUT GANGS

GANGS???

Your child may become involved in a gang if there are signs of gang activity in your community. Often parents don't know their kids are "gang active" until they become "hard-core" when it's too late. How can you help? The first step is *awareness*.

Gang membership does not occur overnight. Pre-gang behavior usually begins at the elementary school age and becomes well solidified by middle school.

What is a Gang?

A gang is a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose. A gang identifies with or claims a territory in the community, and engages, individually or collectively, in violence and other criminal activity.

Gangs may have identifiable leadership and internal organization or be loosely knit.

Gangs usually form along racial or ethnic lines.

Gangs follow strict codes of conduct and ethics as defined by the gang.

The Gang's main concern is to be recognized for their criminal activity and establish a reputation.

Gang members may not have formal educations but can be intelligent. They are street wise and accomplished in the art of manipulation.

Gang members often come from uninvolved families, have family members who were involved in gangs, or do not feel a part of a system that has mainstream values such as hard work and economic security.

Gangs are not just restricted to poor communities. They can be found in all communities and socioeconomic levels.

Sources:

Alternatives to Gang Membership, Paramount, CA
California Council on Criminal Justice National PTA
National School Safety Center, Malibu, CA
Students At Risk Resource Network, Oakland, CA

Street Gangs

Gangs are predominantly territory-oriented. Each gang has its own turf and graffiti marks its boundaries. Anyone not belonging in the area and who resembles a rival gang member may become the subject of attack. Gangs tend to form along racial lines. However, it is not uncommon for gangs to accept members from an ethnic group different from the majority of members.

GANG AWARENESS

Gang Names

Many gangs adopt names that have significance to their own neighborhoods (ex. streets, parks, hills, valleys, or housing projects).

Nicknames/Monikers

Many gang members adopt nicknames, also known as monikers, when recruited. The gang tends to select a name that fits the individual's physical/psychological characteristics.

Leadership

Leadership roles in street gangs are usually not formally recognized positions. A member who demonstrates dominant characteristics or a specific criminal skill assumes this role. With smaller gangs, it is more likely that a single individual will become a recognized leader.

Cliques and Sets

Many gangs are sub-divided into sets or cliques. A clique or set will usually have its own name. "Sets" usually apply to African American gangs and "cliques" apply to Hispanic gangs.

Why Do Young People Join Gangs?

There are a variety of reasons, including the excitement of gang activity, peer pressure, attention, financial benefit, family tradition, low self-esteem, and a lack of realization of the hazards involved. In many cases, young people are not actively discouraged from gang involvement by their parents. Often, parents don't realize that their children are engaged in gang activity.

How Are Gang Members Identified?

Most gang members are proud of their gang and freely admit their membership. Many display tattoos openly and dress in a style identifying their particular gang. Their personal belongings are frequently covered with graffiti and bear the gang's logo and the member's gang name. Many gang members "shoot signs" with their fingers; that is to say, they make gestures with their hands and fingers which identify their gang. Many individuals on the fringe of gang involvement are reluctant to identify themselves as gang members. They often state that their friends are gang members but they are not. However, rival gang members, shooting from a speeding car, do not make a distinction between a gang member and his associates.

GANG BEHAVIOR

Gang Activity – What Do Gangs Do?

It is not practical to examine everything a gang does. In fact, many gang activities are frequently shared by a large portion of society. But when a gang is involved in a weekend party, or attends a public event such as visiting an amusement park, the potential for violence and criminal activity is far greater than for any other person.

Effect of Gang Involvement

Gang membership extracts a terrible toll from the lives of all that have contact with the members. Parents and relatives of gang members live in fear for two reasons: the first is for their own safety and that of other non-gang family members, and the second is for the survival of their gang member son or daughter. Non-gang member friends are cast aside and soon the youth's only friends are gang members. Gang membership, although temporary for some youth, will shape the individual's future. All levels of formal education are discarded because they differ from the gang's objectives. Gang members not killed or seriously injured often develop patterns of alcohol and narcotics abuse and extensive police records that will limit their employment opportunities.

Graffiti

Graffiti, a form of vandalism, is a problem that impacts our neighborhoods in a variety of ways. Of great concern is the inherent violence associated with gang graffiti. Gang members use graffiti to mark their gang's "turf" or territory. They also use it to advertise the gang's status or power and to declare their own allegiance to the gang. When a neighborhood is marked with graffiti indicating territorial dominance, the entire area and its inhabitants become targets for violence. Anyone on the street or in his home is fair game for drive by attacks by rival gang members. A rival gang identifies everyone in the neighborhood as a potential threat. Consequently, innocent residents are often subjected to gang violence by the mere presence of graffiti in their neighborhood.