

YOUR CHILD AND GANGS

Remember, as parents you need to look for patterns:

Be Aware if Your Child

- 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 gifts without your permission.
- Has and displays of tattoos.
- 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 intervene early and often. Contact your local police or your school counselor immediately.

First Steps

Parents equipped with education, 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

FOR SUPPORT SERVICES DIAL 2-1-1

For information on support services (counseling, afterschool programs, tutoring, job training, child care, etc.) please contact 211 LA County by dialing 211 or visit their website at www.infoline-la.org. Operators are available in many languages.

RESOURCES

- Los Angeles City Attorney
Safe Neighborhoods and Gang Division
(213) 978-4090

Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney
200 N. Main Street, 8th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 978-8100
Fax: (213) 978-8312
www.atty.lacity.org

*Originally compiled by the Los Angeles County
Reserve Probation Program
Edward Velasquez, Reserve Deputy Probation Officer
(323) 887-7900*

OFFICE OF THE LOS ANGELES CITY ATTORNEY MIKE FEUER



Gang Awareness Information for Parents

FACTS ABOUT GANGS

GANGS? – NOT MY CHILD!

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 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 established in 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 leadership and internal organization or be loosely knit.
- Gangs usually form along racial or ethnic lines.
- Gangs follow strict codes of conduct.
- Gangs want to be recognized for their criminal activity and establish a reputation.
- Gang members may not have formal educations but they are "street smart" and accomplished in the art of manipulation.
- Gang members often have family members who are also gang involved and do not share mainstream values such as hard work and economic security.
- Gangs can be found in all communities and socioeconomic levels.
- Gangs have their own turf and gang graffiti marks its boundaries.

Anyone not belonging in the area and who resembles a rival gang member may become the subject of attack.

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

GANG AWARENESS

Gang Names

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

Nicknames/Monikers

- Many gang members adopt nicknames, also known as monikers.
- Monikers tend to fit 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.

Cliques and Sets

- Many gangs are sub-divided into sets or cliques.
- "Sets" usually apply to African American gangs and "cliques" apply to Hispanic gangs.

Why Do Young People Join Gangs?

- A variety of reasons:
 - excitement of gang activity
 - peer pressure
 - attention
 - financial benefit
 - family tradition
 - low self-esteem
- In many cases, young people are not actively discouraged from gang involvement by their parents.

How Are Gang Members Identified?

- Gang members often freely admit gang membership and openly display gang tattoos.
- They often dress in a style indentifying their gang and they decorate their belongings and bedrooms with graffiti bearing the name of the gang and the gang member.
- Many gang members use hand signs or symbols associated with their gang.
- Individuals on the fringes of a gang may be reluctant to identify themselves as gang members and may only admit that their friends are gang members.
- However, rival gang members do not make such distinctions and association with gang members is a very dangerous activity.

GANG BEHAVIOR

Gang Activity – What Do Gangs Do?

- Gangs engage in criminal and nuisance activity such as selling drugs, robbery, assault, graffiti, drinking in public, etc.
- 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 crime 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:

1. Their own safety and that of other non-gang family members.
2. 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.

Gang Graffiti

- 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 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 gang graffiti in their neighborhood.