Gang Information

Gang activity flourishes because of denial by parents, communities, and school districts until...a tragedy occurs!

GANG VIOLENCE

Street gangs have long been considered loosely organized thugs, engaged in petty thefts and drugs on a local level. But today's street gangs are very different.

Today, sophisticated gang operations have members crossing state lines establishing syndicates and recruiting members as young as 10 years old in communities across the country. Gangs use children because they know that whatever the child under thirteen does, he or she cannot go to jail. These criminal organizations engage in high-stakes narcotics and weapons trafficking, gambling, robbery and other equally serious crimes. Never before have gangs been so mobile and so dangerous, and the problem is spreading.FACTSAt lease 400,000 youths are currently in gangs nationwide. (FBI)Violent street gangs are active in 94 percent of all medium and large sized cities in America. (Journal of American Medical Association)Many of these cities have up to 40 different gangs.
(The American Street Gang)

There is no easy answer to solve the problem of gang violence. Only through the combined efforts of parents, schools, churches, community leaders and law enforcement will gang violence begin to subside.

WARNING SIGNS OF GANG ACTIVITY

Most gang members are proud of their gang and freely admit their membership. Many dress in a particular style or color identifying their particular gang. Their personal belongings are frequently covered with graffiti and bear the gang symbols or logos and member’s street name. Look for and don’t ignore these warning signs:Changes in clothing patterns with a preference towards a particular color, sports or team logos.Cap tilted to one side or the other, earring in left/right ear, belt buckle to left/right of center.Use of hand signs and signals - usually as an alternate form of communication.Tattoos or branding of the body with distinctive designs, logos or names.Withdrawal from family involvement; an unusual desire for privacy. Associates with troublemakers and secretive peers. Frequently out late, breaks curfew rules or laws.Gangster influenced music, videos, books and movies. Imitation of gangster lifestyle.Unexplained cash, material items, wearing a lot of jewelry or medallions.Drug/alcohol use.Abrupt changes in personality and behavior.Prefers use of nickname or street name.

GRAFFITIOne of the first indications that gangs are being formed in your
community is the appearance of graffiti!

To most people, graffiti represents thoughtless vandalism and childish pranks. To gang members, graffiti is a marking of territorial boundaries and serves as a warning or challenge to a rival gang. Graffiti is the underground newspaper of gangs. It can point out which gangs are fighting with each other, immortalize deceased gang members and honor leaders within each gang.

Graffiti is typically found on the rear of buildings and gradually moves toward the front as gang activity increases. It is imperative that graffiti be reported to your local law enforcement agency and removed immediately/

The 4 "R"'s of Gang Graffiti:
READ, REPORT, RECORD AND REMOVE ALL GRAFFITI!

INTERVENTION / PREVENTION

PARENTS & FAMILIES

Many kids join gangs because they do not receive adequate family attention, the gang provides love, identity and status; in turn they develop loyalty to the gang.

Many parents are unaware that their children are involved in gang activity. They must get involved and learn to recognize the warning signs and discuss gangs with their children. It’s the responsibility of parents and family to help children understand the realties of a criminal record, and the finality of death, which so often is the result of gang violence. Parents should encourage children to identify and report other youth who are pressuring them to use or deal drugs or participate in gang activities. Intimidation and fear can preoccupy and destroy a child’s ability to concentrate on schooling and pursue a meaningful life.

TIPS:Be a good listener to your child and help them develop their self esteem.Watch for negative influences; meet and greet friends and parents of friends.Communicate with them about their hopes and dreams as well as their fears and

concerns.Be a role model, show your children how to deal appropriately with conflicts and problems.Discuss the importance of school and good grades. Emphasize good study habits.Establish rules and set limits. Be consistent and fair in punishment.
Volunteer at child's school.Demand accountability for time spent, money and clothes.
Spend quality time with children.Show respect for child's feelings.

GANG ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL

Teachers and support staff should:Be aware of what information is pertinent to gang activities.Document and report gang related activities to the proper authorities. Develop and enforce a clear, no tolerance policy regarding gangs, drugs, weapons and graffiti!Always deal with an individual student privately. Dealing with them in front of their peers validates "gang affiliation or membership" which is what they want.Look for, document and report warning signs!

TIPSGang symbols or graffiti on student’s personal belongings, notebooks, homework, in lockers.Change in personality and academic performance.Defiance, fights and disturbances between youth.Clustering of youths in "sets", "packs" or "clicks".Possession of weapons, drugs, drug paraphernalia or large sums of money.Incidents of violence or drug activity along bus routes.Students repeatedly involved in "protecting" other students. Changes in patterns of dress: baggies, sportswear, haircuts, monogrammed clothing.Increase in student harassment complaints, threats or extortion.Expensive jewelry, clothing, cars.Poor attendance and/or excessive tardiness. Rumor of gang activities, open admission of a gang affiliation or intention to joinCarrying a pager/beeper.

COMMUNITIESEstablish quality community relationships with local police. Remove graffiti immediately!Repair all street lights and install new ones where possible.Establish community partnerships with the police, clergy, social groups, and the business community.Ensure adequate security at public events where youths gather.Develop and maintain crime prevention programs; neighborhood watch, anti-robbery, anti-domestic violence and abuse programs.In partnerships with local businesses, develop programs to increase employment and job-skills.

Mentoring programs for at-risk youth, parenting skills classes, pregnancy prevention, and pre-natal classes.