



JERSEY CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT



COMMUNITY RELATION UNIT

GANG AWARENESS

Parent and Community Awareness Strategies

What Parents Frequently Ask Gangs

1. ***Wanna-be's or Gonna-be's.*** These are youngsters who are getting close to an age where they might decide to join a gang; live in or close to an area where there are gangs; or have a family member who is involved with gangs.
2. ***Associates.*** Average age, 11-13 years old. These young people are not officially members of the gang but they act, walk, talk, and claim to be from the gang and become involved in some of its activities.
3. ***Regular Members.*** The Average age 14 – 17 years old. They are already initiated in to the gang. These regular members tend to back up the hard-core gang members. If they survive long enough, they could become hard-core.
4. ***Hard-Core.*** They are in the gang the longest and frequently are in and out of jail, unemployed, and involved with drug distribution and use. Average age is early to mid-twenties; however some are older or younger. They are very influential in the gang.

Why do gangs use graffiti and what does it mean?

As gang activity increases so does their graffiti. Graffiti has been called the newspaper of the streets. Each gang has its unique symbols and cryptic types of writing. Graffiti is not artwork; it is sophisticated communications that publicizes the gang's power, status, territory, sends messages, and warns intruders. Graffiti upside down or crossed out is generally a put down or threat to a rival gang or person. Death warrants for police officers have been known to be posted with graffiti.

What do you do about gang graffiti?

Read It! Record It! Report It! And Remove It! Gang graffiti left unchecked can be dangerous. Remember it can communicate an outright threat against an opposing gang or person. First the graffiti must be read and interpreted for danger signals. Second, it should be photographed. Then, a police report should be made for tracking purposes. Finally, the graffiti should be removed to reduce the likelihood of continued violence.

What are gang colors and gang signs?

Colors refer to a gang member representing his/her membership by wearing a specific gang logo, particular colors or clothing, a specific brand name of clothing or clothing worn in a predefined manner. This may also include hairstyles, jewelry, or even the way a person stands. Colors identify the gang member and shows member pride and affiliation.

Hands signals and gang slang are a means of communication. Symbols formed and flashed with the fingers, hands, and body have very specific meaning to the gang. The same goes for buzz words or phrases. Remember all of these signs may be area or geographic specific and meanings may vary.

How do you deal with gangs?

- Be decisive, firm, and fair. Lenient treatment is viewed as weakness and they will take advantage of you.
- Intimidation will not work; it will most likely lead to confrontation. Lectures do not work either. Gang members are looking for respect.
- Giving any public or media attention to a gang only feeds their egos and escalates gang activity.
- It is bad news to negotiate with terrorist so don't do it with gangs or their members, all it does is gives them more recognition and power.
- Remember the four "Rs" about graffiti-Read, Record, Report, Remove.
- Prevent conflict whenever possible-look for a common ground.

What are some typical pre-gang behaviors?

Gang involvement does not happen overnight. It is a gradual process and if you are alert you will see the signs.

- Poor progress or achievement in school
- Truancy from school
- Lack of hobbies or too much leisure time
- Frequent contact with authority figures or police
- Draws gang insignia/symbols
- Problems at home
- Lives in neighborhood where gang exist
- Friends are gang members or dressing down in gang attire
- Begins dressing in traditional gang clothes

These items are characteristic of gang involvement. However, some people who join or associate with gangs do not dress in the traditional attire and do not exhibit conspicuous behavior to show gang involvement. Parents must be aware of the behavior and activities of their children. Continual monitoring of behavior and positive verbal communication between parents and young people is a must for gang membership prevention.

What can parents do?

- Know your children's friends.
- Know who and what influences your kids.
- Know what your children are doing at all times.
- Become involved with them and occupy their time.
- Strive for good communication between you and your children.
- Again, spend time with them.
- Do not allow gang attire.
- Do not allow hanging out in the streets or mall.
- Be very suspicious of gang writing, graffiti, or tattoos.
- Encourage anti-gang attitudes at home.
- Learn about gangs and drugs.
- Participate in your child's education; find out what's happening at school.
- Get involved in community affairs.
- Set the example for your kids-they may do what you do.
- Believe in your young person.

What are some parental strategies to combat gangs?

- More recreational and leisure-time activities for youngsters.
- Increase parental supervision of children, their activities, and their friends.
- Collaborative efforts between police, community residents, and young people.

What are some community anti-gang strategies?

- Build methods of disseminating advice/information on dealing with gangs to youths and parents.
- Support initiatives that provide for a rich assortment of extracurricular programs for kids and the incentives for them to participate in them.
- Organize/support workshops on street gangs throughout the year.
- Run media series on street gangs, stripping them of their mystique and exposing them for what they are.
- Encourage service clubs and church groups to sponsor community speak-outs during the year on street gangs, with the help of the police departments, courts; youth services agencies, correctional institutions and schools.

Jersey City Police Department Gang Resources

P.O. Franklin Maisonet
Gang Awareness Officer
Community Relations Unit
201 547 5755 off.
201 547 5971 fax.

Det. Benjamin Wilson
Gang Specialist
Street Crime Unit
201 547 6821
201 547 6822

Jersey City Police Department
201 547 5477
Emergency 911

Community Relations Unit
201 547 5682

Graffiti Removal
201 432 4645 ext. 634

Hudson County Prosecutor
Gang Unit
201 915 1345

GANG ASSESSMENT TOOL

1. Is there graffiti on or near your neighborhood or community? (5)
2. Is the graffiti crossed out (10)
3. Do the young people in your community wear colors, jewelry, clothing, flash hand signs, or display other behaviors that may be gang related? (10)
4. Are drugs available in or near your community? (10)
5. Was there a significant increase in the number of physical confrontations with the past 12 months in or near your community (5)
6. Is there an increasing presence of weapons in your community? (05)
7. Has there been a drive by shooting in or around your community? (15)
8. Have you had a show of display of weapons in or around your community?(5)
9. Are the truancy rate and /or daytime burglary in your community increasing? (5)
10. Is there a history of gangs in your community? (10)
11. Is there an increasing presence of informal social groups with the unusual names that have words like: kings, disciples, queens, posse, or crew? (15)

Add up your score:

00 – 20 points = No problem

25 – 45 points = Emerging problem

50 – 65 points = You have problems

70 + points = There Are Serious Problems

At 50 + points a need exist to develop a gang prevention and intervention program