



New York Gang Investigators Association



www.nygia.org

Advocate * Communicate * Educate

GANGS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Gangs are not a new phenomenon to local communities and gang violence has been growing steadily over the last couple of years. It was once believed that gangs were inner-city problems that would never expand to small, tight knit communities. This article is intended as a guide for parents and teachers, in order to better understand how gangs develop and the ways in which to combat them.

What is a gang?

A gang is defined as three or more people, who, acting as a group commit crimes and instill fear in a community to benefit themselves. These groups/gangs have many names such as Bloods, Crips, Black Gangster Disciples, Hoover Boys, Vatos Locos, Locos 13 and so on. Gangs can form based on racial, ethnic or geographic lines. Many of these groups will try to control a specific geographic area. A rise in violence may also be seen when a rival gang tries to control the same geographic area.

Why do children join gangs?

- A need to belong to a group.
- For protection from other gangs or individuals.
- Forced to.
- Peer-pressure.
- The excitement.
- Relationships

Signs that your child may be involved in a gang:

- Change in life long friends and reluctance for you to meet his/her new friends.
- Change in style of clothing (the wearing of one color predominantly – Red/Blue/Gold).
- Negative contact with people of authority (i.e.: teachers, coaches, parents and law enforcement).
- Any interest in or the making of graffiti.
- Symbols, including tattoos and/or body piercing, to identify him/her
- Violent outbursts.
- Being secretive of where he/she is going and whom he/she is meeting.

- Hand signs (a form of gang communication).
- Lack of interest in community activities (i.e.: sports, family gatherings, group activities).
- Poor school performance.
- Fear of going to school and/or disinterest in attending school.
- Drug and alcohol use.

What can parents and teachers do to keep children from joining gangs?

- Be involved in community activities with your child.
- Get to know your children's friends and their parents.
- Make surprise visits to your child's school and see if your child has changed his clothes from when he/she left in the morning.
- Have one on one talks with your child at least once a month.
- Monitor and control your child's behavior. Be firm but fair.
- Be a good role model for your child and set standards for acceptable behavior.
- Build positive self-esteem in your child. Children with positive self-esteem will be less likely to turn to gangs for recognition or status.
- Give your child positive role models to identify with and identify role models that live in your area that your child could go to for help or guidance.
- Contact the parents of a child that you see starting to move in a direction that you feel could be unsafe.
- Notify school administrators and local law enforcement of gang graffiti as soon as it appears.

Ways parents can help stop the spread of gangs:

- Work closely with local law enforcement and your schools.
- Make sure your community has established a safe place for your kids to go to for fun.
- Use qualified members from both law enforcement and your schools to set up programs to deal with kids who are involved with gangs.
- Set up peer tutoring groups for kids to be able to talk about problems.
- Consider banning clothing, which clearly identifies its wearer as a gang member, as well as pagers, cell phones or other gang identifiers.
- Set up procedures to deal with gang activity in your community.
- Don't wait until the gang problem gets out of control to do something about it.
- Discuss the dangers of gangs with your child before it becomes a problem.
- Tell your children that you disapprove of gangs.
- Inform your children of the danger of injury to them as well as the probability of arrest.
- Impress upon your children that you value them and want to help them with any problems.
- Encourage your children not to keep secrets.

Graffiti –

Gangs use graffiti to show their control over an area or to warn of their movement into an area controlled by another gang. Recognizing gang graffiti and its meaning and intent may enable you to foresee potential problems and act on them. Gangs use graffiti to intimidate individuals, to show alliances with other gangs, as well as to identify areas that they allegedly control. Also, in some cases to show how many members belong to that specific gang.

Graffiti forms:

- Popular Graffiti – Graffiti that has no true meaning except to the person who is writing it (i.e.: a person's initials, "for a good time call", and so on).
- Community Based Graffiti – Graffiti that has meaning in a certain area only.
- Gang Graffiti - evidences a particular gang controls an area or is trying to move into an area. This type of graffiti is also used to show that one is a member of a gang or just used to expand a gang's reputation in an area.
- Political Graffiti – Graffiti that is used to make a political statement. This graffiti is used at times when people want to talk about something that is usually not a mainstream topic.
- Hip-Hop Graffiti – This is the most popular style now observed in areas. Graffiti has many forms but this style is most recognized. This style is used by youngsters to claim their place as the best artist or best "tagger".

There are four basic types of gang graffiti:

- "Hitting Up" – This is graffiti used to promote a specific gang.
- "Crossing Out" – This is graffiti that one gang may create to "put down" another gang.
- "Roll Calls" – This is a list of members of a specific gang.
- "RIP" – This is used by gang members to show respect to a deceased member.

Three ways to look at graffiti to determine if it is gang related:

1. What colors are being used?

(i.e.: Red = Bloods, Blue = Crips, Gold/Yellow = Latin Kings, etc.)
This may help you identify the gangs and the writer.

2. What style of writing is used?

This is important sometimes as well. General gang graffiti is bland and in most cases has no art for to it. However, certain gangs are known for certain letters (i.e.: Hispanic/Mexican gang graffiti usually is done in block lettering).

3. What kind of area are you in?

Is the area known to be a gang area? If so, it is likely that the graffiti observed has gang related overtones.

Things to look for in gang graffiti:

1. The gang name.
2. The message the graffiti is trying to convey to the community.
3. The writer's identity.

Common gang graffiti locations:

- School playgrounds
- Local schools
- Ball fields
- School bathrooms
- Community centers
- School class rooms
- Bus stops
- Train stops
- Local shopping malls
- Local movie theatres

For further information on gangs active in the New York State area please contact the New York Gang Investigators Association at nygiamanagers@gmail.com.

© 2006 by New York Gang Investigators Association.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of New York Gang Investigators Association.

Report Approved 11/08/2006

Andrew M Grascia, MS

President

New York Gang Investigators Association

www.nygia.org