



## Northwest Gang Investigators Association

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Why do youth join gangs?

This depends on the socioeconomic background of the youth. In general, children will often join a gang for a sense of power, excitement, recognition, or prestige. They believe that belonging to a particular gang will allow them to achieve a level of status that was impossible to attain outside of the gang.

- \* Prestige or power
- \* Friendship or brotherhood/sisterhood
- \* Protection/security from gang violence
- \* Making a lot of money fast
- \* Feeling of belonging and being cared about
- \* Media glorification of the gang lifestyle

#### What is a Gang?

A gang is a group of people who want to be seen as different from others and want others to perceive them as a distinct group. This group is organized, has leadership, and is committing criminal and-or delinquent acts in the community.

Gangs establish their reputation by the types and severity of the crimes they commit. The more heinous the crime the more juice or reputation the gang gets. In the seedy street gang world, the more juice you have the more respect you get!

#### What are some parental anti-gang strategies?

- \* More recreational and leisure-time activities for youngsters
- \* A crack-down and tougher law enforcement against gang activities in the community
- \* Stepped-up efforts to combat the chief source of a gang's income (DRUG SALES)
- \* Increased parental supervision of children, their activities, and their friends
- \* Collaborative efforts between police, community residents, and children

### **How do you deal with gangs?**

Be decisive, firm, and fair. Lenient treatment is viewed as weakness by gangs and they will take advantage of you. Intimidation and lectures will not work; this will most likely lead to an unwanted confrontation.

Gang members are looking for respect. Giving any public or media attention to a gang only feeds their egos and escalates their gang activity. It is bad news to negotiate with terrorist or criminals, so don't do it with gangs or gang members. All this will do is give the gang more recognition and power.

### **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 warning 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 insignias/symbols/signs
- \* Problems at home
- \* Lives in neighborhood where gangs already exist
- \* Friends are gang members or dressing down or sagging and bagging 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 their 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 do you do about gang graffiti?**

Remember the four (4) R's...Read It, Record It, Report It and Remove It!!!

If gang graffiti is left unchecked can become very dangerous. Remember, graffiti can indicate an outright threat against a rival gang or against a specific person. The graffiti must first be read and interpreted for danger signals. Second, the graffiti should be well documented and photographed. Then, a police report should be made for tracking purposes. Finally, the graffiti should be quickly removed to reduce the likelihood of continued violence.

### **Why do gangs use graffiti and what does it mean?**

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 communication that publicizes the gang's power, status, territory, sends messages, and warns other gangs and intruders.

Graffiti that is drawn upside down or crossed out is generally a 'put down' or threat to a rival gang or person. Some gangs will even use graffiti as 'Death warrants' towards police officers.

### **Do females join gangs?**

Current trends show that female gang membership is sky rocketing across the Nation. Females are valued by the majority of gangs and are often placed in support roles like carrying the weapons and drugs. In the Pacific Northwest we have several all girl gangs.

### **How do gangs recruit their members?**

Current gang members will often use peer pressure or fear and intimidation tactics to get others to join their gang. Kids are often confronted by gang members in their

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neighborhoods or in school and are asked to join the gang.

A Chicago public school survey showed that 41% of students were contacted and asked to join gangs. Young people are told the Big Lies about all the good things that happen when they join. They are told they will earn a lot of money, make friends, go to parties, and belong to a close family that will care for and love them.

### **What are some community anti-gang strategies?**

- \* Establish a gang intelligence unit in the community police agency-a clearing house for tracking and monitoring gangs
- \* Build methods of disseminating advice/information on dealing with gangs to children and parents
- \* Enact ordinances, both school board, city, and state, that make it a felony for gangs to recruit in school or intimidate youngsters to join a gang
- \* 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 to be taught to parents, grandparents, and guardians of school-age children
- \* Provide public seminars 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 a battery of community speak-outs during the year on street gangs, with the help of the police departments, courts, youth services agencies, correctional institutions, and schools
- \* Organize an army of citizens to patrol through their community and erase gang graffiti whenever it appears

*Questions or comments can be submitted to: [support@nwgia.com](mailto:support@nwgia.com)*