

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

AS A PARENT:

- Get involved with your children's activities, find out who their friends are
- Know where your child is after school, what they are doing and with who
- Talk to your child's teachers and school personnel
- Get educated - learn about current gang symbols, signs and language, know what to look for
- Talk to your kids
- Increase your child's self-esteem, get them involved in positive activities
- Be a positive role model for your kids
- Spend time with your kids

AS A TEACHER:

- Look for signs of gang affiliation
- Inform school personnel of 'at - risk' youth
- If graffiti is present on school grounds, take a photo and contact the police so that the graffiti can be removed as soon as possible
- Get educated—find out about local gang activity
- Liaise with law enforcement—work together to help reduce gang activity in the area
- Give information on gang activities to school authorities

AS A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY:

- Get educated about gang activities, signs, symbols and other gang indicators
- Report gang activity to police immediately
- Support police and other public agencies efforts to reduce gang activity
- Remove all graffiti within 48 hours. Record and report it to local law enforcement

ARE GANGS IN YOUR COMMUNITY ?

- Do you have graffiti on or near your school?
- Do you have crossed out graffiti on or near your schools grounds?
- Have you seen students wearing colors, jewelry, clothing, flash hand signals or show other signs or gang-related behavior?
- Are drugs available in or near your school?
- Has the number of physical confrontations, threats, or intimidation increased in or near your school?
- Are weapons easily available in your community?
- Has there been a drive-by shooting in your community?
- Have you had a display or weapons in or around your school?
- Has the truancy rate and/or daytime burglaries increased in your area?
- Has the number or "racial" incidents/hate crimes increased in your community?
- Have gangs been present in your community before?
- Has the number of social groups with unusual names increased in your community

If you can answer "yes" to 3+ questions, gangs may be present in your local community

For more information contact:

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GANGS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

What you need to know

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WHAT IS A GANG?

A gang is defined as a group or association of 3+ individuals who have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, and who individually or collectively participate in violent drug-related criminal activity or anti-social behavior that creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the local community. Gangs mark out a certain area of the community as their 'turf' and often fight rival gangs for control of that area. Gangs use graffiti to mark the boundaries of their turf. If you see graffiti in your area it may be a warning sign that gangs are present in Jefferson County.

WHO JOINS A GANG?

Kids as young as 6 may show signs of being influenced by gang activity, particularly if family members are active gang members. However, young people are most at risk of joining a gang in their teens and membership may go on until they are 25 or dead whichever ever comes first. Gang members come from any racial, ethnic or economic group and should not be regarded as a problem specific to a particular community.

WHY JOIN A GANG ?

Kids who don't get the love and attention that they need are most at risk of joining a gang. Kids join a gang to give them a sense of belonging, and to feel safe so that they feel they have some control over their lives. Kids may join a gang because of the attention and security that a gang gives them. Kids may also join gangs because of peer pressure, the prospect of financial gain for some, it is simply the thrill of being involved in a gang. Kids may think that a gang provides them with all the things that their family does not.

IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW INVOLVED IN A GANG ?

Does a child you know exhibit some of the following characteristics ? If so, they may be involved in gang activity.

- association with known gang members or 'at risk' youth
- friends/gang members are referred to by their street 'nick name' as opposed to actual name
- no longer wants to participate in school activities and views school as a waste of time
- blatant disregard for house or family rules
- fascination and admiration for friends who participate in illegal activities
- notebooks, clothing and body are marked with gang graffiti/tattoos

- use of hand signs
- despite having no jobs or means of financial support, the child seems to always have new clothing, jewelry or other items
- general change in child's appearance/conduct i.e. clothing, walk, mannerisms and language
- increased absenteeism from school, increased contact with law enforcement and increased anti-social behavior
- demonstration of hostility and anger/resentment towards a particular group of people
- signs of alcohol or substance misuse

If a child you know shows a more than one of these risk factors, they may be involved in gang activity.

HOW DO GANGS RECRUIT?

Teens are enticed into gangs because they are influenced by the gangs' philosophy. Kids gradually isolate themselves from their family and community. They regard the gang as their 'family' and are extremely loyal towards their new family. Outsiders are the enemy.

Gang Awareness classes are available through local law enforcement. Contact the Delinquency Prevention Council for more information.