

# WARNING SIGNS OF GANG ACTIVITY

You may already think that gangs are a “problem” in your local community - but do you know what to look out for? How can you tell if someone you know is actively involved in gang activity? This fact sheet seeks to provide you with some basic knowledge about gangs.

## ***BE AWARE THAT IT IS A COMBINATION OF THESE GANG INDICATORS THAT MAY INDICATE INVOLVEMENT IN GANG ACTIVITY***

### **GENERAL GANG INDICATORS**

- Wearing clothing of a specific color, i.e. blue or red, or of a particular sports team
- Wearing baseball caps or accessories that are tilted to either the left or right side—such as a shaved eyebrow or bandana with left or right appendage
- Kids may ‘decorate’ their arms etc with tattoos that are gangs signs or symbols
- Kids may use hand signs or their own ‘language’ to communicate with friends
- Look out for schoolbooks/homework/desks that are covered in gang graffiti
- Watch out for kids who gradually isolate themselves from their family and instead come to see the gang as a ‘replacement family’
- Hanging out with peers who have a reputation for trouble in the community
- Kids who no longer have any respect for authority figures and whom constantly break family rules
- Kids who are fascinated with the ‘gangsta lifestyle’, music, videos and movies
- Kids who suddenly acquire cash or jewelry without being able to explain where it came from
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- A change in personality and behavior
- Use of a nickname as opposed to their ‘given’ name

### **SOME LOCAL GANG INDICATORS\***

- Law enforcement reports the following gangs are currently active in the county: Surenos (Sur-13), 3P’s (Tres Puntos), Latin Kings, Mexican Mafia (MM), Unknowns, and Gangster Disciples. There may be others, but these are the ones known to law enforcement.
- Gangs are not limited to any one racial/ethnic group. Some gangs are exclusively Caucasian, African-American, Asian, or Latino. Others are mixed race/ethnicity.
- Gang members may wear a particular color such as, blue, black or white. However, gangs realize that law enforcement knows what to look for and therefore no specific colors are worn by a gang member. Gang members may wear particular sports jerseys i.e. North Carolina, Raiders and Steelers
- Gangs use various symbols to mark their ‘territory’, such symbols include three dots on the hand, a three point crown, a five point crown, five point star, six point star. Gangs also use numerals such as XIII, X3 and 13 . Sometimes they use numbers in place of letters, e.g., “7” for “G” (7th letter of the alphabet).

\* This list is not exhaustive. Gang signs, symbols and colors are constantly changing.

## COULD SOMEONE YOU KNOW BE AT RISK OF JOINING A GANG?

Research shows that people who join gangs may have experienced or exhibited the following factors:

- Males are more likely to join a gang although the number of female members/gangs is steadily increasing
- Kids can become gang members at any age, even as young as 6
- Kids who do not have a positive male role model in their lives
- Kids who “follow the crowd” and lack confidence in themselves
- Kids whose family members/friends are already involved in the gang lifestyle
- Kids who come from families that have an unstable background i.e. parents with a history of substance misuse or alcoholism
- Kids who are low academic achievers or whom consider school a waste of time
- Kids who demonstrate difficulty in controlling their temper or whom have a history of committing criminal or violent acts
- Kids who feel like ‘outsiders’ at school
- Kids who are victims of abuse or neglect
- Kids who are jobless and whom lack work skills
- Kids who think it’s no big deal to go out and commit crimes

## GRAFFITI

If you see graffiti in your school or neighborhood - **DO NOT IGNORE IT!!** For gangs, graffiti is the ‘newspaper’ by which gangs make their presence known in order to stake a claim of a specific area within your community. Graffiti is used to challenge rival gangs over ‘territory’ and to issue threats to rival gang members. As soon as you see graffiti in your community, it must be reported to local law enforcement, photographed and removed as soon as possible.

### **REMEMBER - READ, REPORT, RECORD AND REMOVE ALL GRAFFITI**

#### **HELP KEEP GANGS OUT OF JEFFERSON COUNTY BE VIGILANT!**

- Stay informed about current gang trends, signs and symbols
- Watch out for kids who shown any gang indicators
- Record and report gang-related incidents to local law enforcement
- Develop a close relationship with local law enforcement
- Deal with alleged gang members in private, scolding them in front of their peers only validates their gang affiliation which is exactly what they want—to feel important
- Involve kids in after-school programs
- Read, report, record and remove all graffiti