

Youth Violence and Gangs - What You Need to Know

Definition of a Gang

A gang is a group of three or more people using common identifying signs, symbols and colors demonstrating their common purpose to engage in criminal, violent or anti-social activity such as graffiti, vandalism, extortion, intimidation, robbery, theft, drug sales and use, and violence (e.g. drive-by shootings).

What are the Warning Signs?

- Staying away from home or school
- Isolation
- Lying / stealing
- Increased problems with the law
- Hand-signals
- Change of friends
- Personality changes
- Alcohol / drug use
- Unexplained wealth
- Graffiti
- Dress in a particular color/style/brand
- Change in vocabulary

Gang Prevention

What can parents do?

- Talk with and listen to your child.
- Spend quality time with your child on a regular basis.
- Put a high value on education.
- Praise and acknowledge your child's accomplishments.
- Keep your child busy - occupy their free time with constructive activities.
- Know your child's friends.
- Know what your child is doing, where they are going and whom they are with.
- Talk about gangs with your child before there is a problem.
- Take an interest in your child's day-to-day activities.
- Be a good role model.
- Network with other parents.
- Work as a community to look out for and protect each other's children.

What can schools do?

- Talk to the students. They know what gangs are at the school and who the members are.
- Listen to parents concerns. Check out gang and criminal activity parents tell you about and report back what you find.
- Offer after-school activities and let parents know about them.
- Teach communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Teach tolerance and understanding of others.
- Enforce the discipline code.
- Provide job opportunities.
- Establish a mentoring program.
- Demonstrate intolerance for gangs. Ban gang related clothing and gear.
- Adopt a drug-free policy and support it.
- Promote opportunities for parents, school staff and community organizations to work together.
- Remove graffiti from school grounds. Pay particular attention to rest rooms, lockers and other secluded places. Report the graffiti you see to the police.
- When gang activity occurs at school, don't try to handle it yourself. Call the police and allow them to take appropriate action.

What can community members do?

- Organize a graffiti paint-out.
- Volunteer at youth centers.
- Join your block watch or tenant association.
- Organize sports teams.
- Become a mentor and share your skills.
- Report suspected gang activity to the local police department.
- Hire a teenager and encourage local businesses to do so.
- Recognize and believe that concerned, caring adults can make a difference.

Helpful Websites

Gang Information

www.westchestergov.com/gangprevention
Westchester County Government Gang Prevention website

This site contains information about why young people join gangs; how to identify gang involvement; and valuable resources on gang prevention and intervention for parents, schools, police, and communities.

www.ngcrc.com

National Gang Crime Research Center

The NGCRC is a non-profit agency with the mission to: (1) Promote research on gangs, (2) Disseminate up-to-date, reliable information about gangs through the publication of the Journal of Gang Research and (3) Provide training and consulting services about gangs to federal, state and local government agencies.

www.iir.com/nygc

National Youth Gang Center

The National Youth Gang Center conducts assessments of the scope and characteristics of youth gang activity in the United States, develops resources and makes them available, and provides training and technical assistance in support of community-based prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts.

www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org

Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs.

www.sic.state.ny.us

The New York State Commission of Investigation

The New York State Commission of Investigation's report, Combating Gang Activity in New York: Suppression – Intervention – Prevention is available on this website.

Gang Prevention & Intervention

http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg_in dex.htm

OJJDP Model Programs Guide

This guide is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities.

www.great-online.org

GREAT: Gang Resistance Education & Training

The G.R.E.A.T. Program is a school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curriculum. The program's primary objective is prevention of delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership. G.R.E.A.T. lessons focus on providing life skills to students to help them avoid delinquent behavior and violence to solve problems.

www.safeyouth.org

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

Interpersonal violence is one of the most important issues facing our nation's youth. The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center web site and call center, 1-866-SAFEYOUTH (723-3968), serve as a user-friendly, single point of access to Federal information on youth violence.

Law Enforcement

www.nagia.org

National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA)

NAGIA is a cooperative organization composed of representatives from 16 regional gang investigators associations representing over 15,000 gang investigators across the country, as well as federal agencies and other organizations involved in gang-related matters.

www.gangsor.us

Gangs Or Us

The goal of GANGS OR US is to provide law enforcement and corrections personnel, parents, teachers, and concerned citizens the assistance and knowledge necessary to determine if street or prison gangs are in your community or corrections facility.

<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=1309> **COPS Gang Toolkit**

The COPS Gang Toolkit consists of resources for law enforcement officials, educators, and parents to address specific types of crimes committed by gangs.

Communities/Parents/Schools

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/welcome_flash.html

US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO)

CCDO helps communities help themselves, enabling them to reduce violent and drug crime, strengthen community capacity to increase the quality of life, and promote long-term community health and resilience.

<http://home.inreach.com/gangbang/magw.htm>

Mothers Against Gang Wars

Mothers Against Gang Wars is dedicated to ending gang violence and the destruction of youth. The organization was formed by Sandra Davis, a former gang member, who was able to go out into the streets and get an understanding of where young people were coming from and what was needed to offer them alternatives to a life of violence.

www.gangoutreach.com

Gang Outreach

Gang Outreach is a faith-based, award winning, multi-racial, multi-cultural gang prevention and intervention program in Lake County, Illinois, providing services to positively influence the lives of at-risk youth. The program includes activities which inspire and instill within the youth a desire to fulfill their potential in life. Gang Outreach accomplishes its goals by partnering with parents, ex-gang members, mentors, community-based organizations, police departments & probation officers.

Organizational Resources

Center of Study and Prevention of Violence
Institute of Behavioral Science of Colorado at Boulder Campus
Box 412
Boulder, Colorado 80309

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/index.html>

Discipline in Schools
National Center for Education Statistics
555 New Jersey Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20208
<http://nces.ed.gov>

The National Report on School Violence
Business Publishers Inc.
951 Pershing Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National School Safety Center
141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite 11
Westlake Village, CA 91362
<http://www.nsscl.org>

If you need assistance in identifying programs in Westchester which address youth violence contact the Westchester County Youth Bureau at (914) 995-2745.

Website: www.westchestergov.com/youth

*Portions of this fact sheet are taken from the Oklahoma Gang Investigation Association; the United Family of Concerned Citizens and the NYC Department of Education, Office of School Intervention and Development