

# GANG ACTIVITY

## YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY

No community, ethnic group or socio-economic group is immune to the destructive influence of gangs. Gangs and the gang lifestyle are in constant competition with parents and family for the attention and affection of our children. But as a responsible parent you can have a positive impact on your child and win the battle against gangs.

Being a responsible parent has never been easy. It is a task made even harder trying to balance the demands of working one or even two jobs to support a family with the needs of your family and children. However, if you do not learn to become a responsible parent you will lose the battle with gangs and you will lose your children. Generations of children will continue to be lost to the destruction caused by gangs.

Gangs can be organized around racial or ethnic groups, illegal moneymaking activities or territory. Gang members are normally male, between the ages of 15 and 22 years, but the numbers of female gang members and young gang members are growing dramatically. Gang members signal their solidarity through distinctive clothing or head coverings, including specific colors; special vocabulary; tattoos; hand signs; or "tagging" their "territory" with graffiti.

As a responsible parent be aware of some of the signs that your child may be associating with a gang. Look for changes in the type of friends; change in dress habits, such as wearing the same color combination all the time; gang symbols written on books or clothing; tattoos that may even be homemade; extra unexplained cash from unknown sources; a declining interest in school with slipping grades; a growing alienation from family; and even carrying weapons.

One sign that may appear innocent to a parent but may signal involvement with a gang is wearing athletic clothing, including jerseys and baseball caps, with distinctive colors or numbers. Your child may have no particular fondness for or attraction to a sports team but still wears the team's distinctive clothing because of the colors or numbers.

## HOW CAN YOU TRY TO SAFEGUARD YOUR CHILD AGAINST GANGS?

Make sure your child doesn't need the attention and affection of a gang. Show your child love and reassurance. Supervise your child's activities. Help them become involved in athletic or other activities that interest them. Know your child's friends and their families. Place a high value on education and help your child succeed in school. Do everything possible to prevent your child from dropping out of school.

Young people seek gang involvement for self-esteem, to gain "respect" and to become part of a "family." Make your family more important to your child than the "family" offered by the gang. Talk to your child about your values and why you think gangs are dangerous.

Discuss the violence, drug dealing, and the blind hatred of others that are all part of the gang environment. It may be difficult, but try to spend quality time with your child and become more involved with them and their activities. Above all, listen to your child.

An important reference for parents is available at [www.fbi.gov/becrimesmart.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/becrimesmart.htm) where you can locate a publication entitled "The Parent's Reference on Gang Involvement" on the "About Protecting Your Kids"

page. What is particularly significant about the information available on this website is that the information is provided in multiple languages and it covers many more important topics for parents.

### **IS THERE A SERIOUS GANG "PROBLEM" IN EDGEWATER NOW?**

No. But is there a constant battle for our children waging in Edgewater between the gang lifestyle and our families and parents? Without a doubt. We as a community and as parents and families must win that battle. The Edgewater Police Department is always ready to provide assistance or support to parents and families who are trying to understand or cope with the destructive influence of gangs. Call the Police Department at 303-235-0500 anytime to request information about gangs or to speak with an officer about your child and gangs. Remember it is always better for your child if you ask the difficult questions and get the answers before a possible problem spirals out of control. And remember it is always about saving our children, our future generations, from gangs.