

How Can You Help Your Child?

Talk to Your Child About the Negative Consequences of Gang Involvement

Explain the negative consequences of gang involvement and that you are concerned for your child's safety associated with this behavior. Let them know joining a gang is dangerous and you do not want to see them arrested or hurt. Set the following expectations:

- do not hang around gang-involved individuals or where gangs congregate
- do not mimic gang-related hand signs, even as a joke
- do not wear items of clothing that have meaning to gang

Get to Know Your Child's Friends

Peer pressure can be a big influencer for youth to join gangs. Become familiar with attitudes towards gangs and illegal activities among your child's peers.

Become Familiar with Social Media Sites and Monitor Internet Activity

Discuss with your child the possible dangers of online activity and spend time to observe what sites they frequent. If you feel your child is participating in, or accessing undesirable sites, you can utilize Web sites' parental controls, or locate their computer in a common area that is easier to monitor.

For more information about

Internet safety, visit <https://respons-ability.net/free-resources/>



Discuss Appropriate Ways to Deal with Peer Pressure

Explain to your child that if a friend is pressuring them into doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable, it is best to walk away from that situation. It is important that the child discuss the situation with a trusted, responsible adult, such as a parent or teacher. The adult can then help the child process the situation and take any further action, if warranted.

Limit Interaction with Others who may be Gang-Involved

Living with or associating with others who are involved in gang activity, particularly family members, is one of the biggest risk factors for joining a gang. Look for signs of changing behavior, dress, school performance, or other signs of gang involvement. If this occurs, intervene immediately, contacting outside resources, if necessary.

Set Clear Boundaries and Expectations

It is important that parents teach clear expectations and impose fair consequences when needed. Be consistent and firm, while still demonstrating love and support for your child.

Set Aside Time for Family Bonding

Whenever possible, spend time as a family. Eat and talk together, play games, travel together (even if it is for dog walks, visiting the park, going shopping, etc.). Encourage your child to share their feelings, emotions, worries, etc., and that you can be trusted and will provide support and encouragement.

If you suspect your child is being drawn towards gang involvement, or would like to have more information or support for your child, please contact Jordan School District Gang Mentor, Ned Heitz at 801-567-8313 or ned.heitz@jordandistrict.org



Parent's Guide to Gangs

This guide was prepared to address common questions about gangs and enable parents to recognize and prevent gang involvement. It is important for parents to play an active role in their child's growth and development, which will help them stay away from gangs. To help children avoid gangs, parents need to be aware of their child's activities, foster a close and loving relationship, and provide a home system of structure, support, and accountability. The following are answers to common questions regarding gang involvement.

Why be concerned about gangs?

Gangs are dangerous. Gang members participate in criminal activity and are more likely to be arrested. Gang-involved youth are more likely to be involved with violence, often resulting in injury or death, as well as drug and alcohol problems that may affect them for the rest of their lives. The likelihood of a gang member graduating high school is low, and the likelihood of dropping out of school at a young age is high.

Why do youth join gangs?

Feeling alone, young people may join gangs for social relationships that give them a sense of identity. When gang members recruit young kids into gangs, they lure them through money, status, and pride. Kids may also join a gang because they are feeling pressured by friends to join, or they may fear for their safety and seek protection.

How do I know if my child may be involved in a gang?

The most common age of new gang membership is around 15 and children as young as 10 may be exposed to gangs and are vulnerable to recruitment. Boys are more likely to join, compared to girls, however girls can become involved for the same reasons. It is important for parents to pay attention to even small changes in behavior. The following page lists some of the common identifiers to be aware of. Taken individually, these identifiers do not necessarily indicate gang involvement, but be mindful that more than one of these may warrant further investigation.

Signs to be aware of

Colors

Today's gang members, to some degree, try to minimize the display of specific colors. However, most gangs still use one or more colors to represent themselves and may be displayed on shirts, belts, shoes, and shoelaces. Presence of specific colors may also appear in decorations, school supplies, or other drawings and doodling.



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Clothing

Youth involved in gangs may dress a specific way to identify with a particular gang which might include bandanas in certain colors; pants worn below waist level; or colored fabric belts, sometimes with a metal buckle bearing numbers or symbols associated with the gang. Sports apparel is also popular among gangs.



Credit: pixy.org



Credit: Ned Heitz

These items can be purchased in specific colors, as well as non-traditional colors that are associated with the gang. Examples include hats and t-shirts. Jerseys with numbers and colors that are associated with a particular gang are also easily purchased.

Graffiti

Whether gang related or not, graffiti is an act of vandalism and considered illegal. Gangs use graffiti to mark territories, intimidate, or threaten and challenge other gangs. It can be very dangerous and should be removed as quickly as possible. Gang graffiti will typically include numbers, symbols, nicknames, and geographical locations. Youth involved in gangs may have in their possession items such as spray paint, wide-tipped markers, or drawings of graffiti.



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Symbols and Numbers

Gangs use symbols and numbers to represent their gang and for other meanings. Common numbers in our area include 13, 14, and 18 and Roman Numerals X3, X8, XIII, XVIII, and XV3. 801 area code and city/gang abbreviations are also common. Although meanings vary, 3 dots arranged in a triangle, often between the thumb and index finger, are common. All of these may be evident in graffiti, tattoos, or writing



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Social Media

It is important for parents to be aware of their child's social media use for a variety of reasons. Gangs will use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and multiple other sites to represent their gang, recruit new members, threaten rival gang members, and promote or organize their activities. The use of social media is popular among gangs because of the large audiences they can reach. Some children can be especially vulnerable to gang recruitment and it is important to monitor their on-line activities.

Hand Signs

Gangs use hand signs to communicate with fellow gang members, or challenge and threaten rival gang members. Many children emulate these hand signs and this can put them in dangerous situations, even if they have no association with a gang. If a parent or teacher observes this, they should explain why it can be dangerous and encourage them to stop this behavior.



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Other Behavioral Changes to Look For

- withdrawing from family and events
- declining academic performance
- a need for secrecy
- excessive worry about safety
- changes in personal style
- use of drugs or alcohol
- unexplained physical injuries
- defiant behavior
- staying out late without reason
- excessive aggression
- negative attitude toward police
- withdrawal from longtime friends
- possession of firearms/weapons
- unexplained excess cash or goods