



# A GUIDE FOR PREVENTION OF GANG ACTIVITY

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Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills



Challenge  
TEAM

**T**he purpose of this guide is to assist parents/guardians, teachers, and citizens in our community with stopping the problems associated with gang violence. Acknowledging that our community has a gang problem is the first step. Becoming aware of the problem and the causes of the problem are the next steps. Many parents/guardians, teachers, and community members feel as though they are helpless due to their lack of knowledge and information. In our community, the Police Department, school officials, and community leaders devote a great deal of effort toward curtailing gang activity. This guide will help you become aware so that you can use your knowledge to monitor the activities of your children. With schools, community, Police, and parents working together, we can change a child's behavior by recognizing the warning signs early. You, as a parent/guardian, teacher, or community member, together with the Police, will be the greatest tool working against gang involvement.

## **WHAT IS A STREET GANG?**

A gang is a group of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern or criminal activity, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.

## **WHY ARE GANGS A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM?**

Gangs thrive on intimidation and notoriety. They find violence not only glamorous but necessary in establishing their reputation as a gang to be feared. They seek confrontation with their rivals; however, their acts of violence may be directed toward anyone they encounter.

Gangs are involved in shootings, stabbings, and violent assaults with other dangerous weapons. They are also involved in the sale of drugs, extortion, rape, robbery, hate crime, vehicle theft, and other crimes for financial gain. Gangs purposely vandalize and destroy public and private property in order to further their reputation, and they will leave their trademark behind—graffiti.

Gang membership, although a temporary phase for some youths, severely hurts their future. Gang members often drop out of school, limiting their chances for higher education and upward mobility. They socialize only with other members, reinforcing their limited view of life. Some gang members are killed or seriously injured. Many of the ones who make it to adulthood develop patterns of alcohol and drug abuse. Also, the gang members acquire extensive police records that limit their future educational and employment opportunities.

## **REASONS PEOPLE JOIN GANGS**

- The excitement of gang activity
- Peer pressure/intimidation
- Protection from other gangs or individuals
- Sense of power
- Recognition, attention, and prestige
- Mystique as gangs are glamorized by Hollywood
- Financial gain
- Family tradition
- Fellowship and brotherhood
- Sense of belonging
- Drugs and alcohol are easily available
- Lack of realization of the hazards

# CONTRIBUTORS TO YOUTH AT-RISK FOR GANG INVOLVEMENT

## PERSONAL

1. Low motivation
2. Low educational and occupational aspirations
3. Low self-esteem
4. Behavior and discipline problems
5. Chemical use and abuse
6. Poor peer relations
7. Negative involvement with police
8. Conflicting values about education
9. Poor internalization skills

## COMMUNITY-RELATED

1. Lack of community support services
2. Lack of support for schools in community
3. High incidence of criminal activity
4. Lack of knowledge or denial of gang problems
5. Lack of community and school linkages
6. Lack of recreation facilities
7. High transient population
8. Lack of youth employment opportunities
9. Presence of older gang members in community, particularly ex-convicts.

## SCHOOL-RELATED

1. Low teacher expectations
2. Poor education
3. Lack of options to improve education
4. Negative school environment
5. Poor relations between school and community
6. Non-effective attendance system
7. Lack of effective discipline system
8. Poor physical environment
9. Lack of crisis intervention

## FAMILY-RELATED

1. Stressful home life
2. Single-parent household
3. Non-English-speaking parents
4. Parental non-involvement with child's school
5. Low expectations by parents
6. Lack of proper parental discipline
7. Abuse or neglect
8. Permissive truancy (unexcused absences) attitudes
9. Chemical use at home
10. Permissive social attitudes
11. Difficulty in bridging cultural differences between country of origin and the United States

# STAGES OF GANG AFFILIATION

## STAGE 1

- Finds the idea of gangs appealing
- Associates with gang members or others who want to be
- Joins a gang in fun
- Gives oneself a gang nickname in fun
- Practices gang signs
- Writes gang graffiti on personal items

## STAGE 2

- Increasing appeal with gangs
- Derives perceived power by affiliating with gang
- Dresses like gang members, wearing specific colors or sports teams' jerseys
- Walks and talks like a gang member
- Uses gang signs (hand gestures)
- Frequently addressed by nickname
- Defensive about gangs
- Defends gang territory and members

## STAGE 3

- Accepted as a gang member
- Involved in criminal activity on behalf of gang
- Provokes confrontations with rival gangs
- Initiates violent acts to build reputation
- Defies authority figures
- Maintains late hours
- High truancy rate
- Fellow gang members become more important than family

## **GANG WARNING SIGNS**

- Poor progress or achievement in school
- Truancy from school (unexcused absences)
- Feels alienated from school, teachers, peers, society
- Low self-esteem
- Problems at home
- Lack of hobbies or something to do with leisure time
- Residence is in a neighborhood where gangs exist
- Friends belong to gangs
- Use of drugs
- Usually associates with friends in groups
- Liberal or favorable attitude toward gangs and drugs
- Early aggressive behavior
- Resentful of authority
- Frequent negative contact with police
- Prefers to dress in gang attire
- Wears only clothing of a specific color
- Numbers or names printed on clothing
- Draws gang symbols
- Puts tattoos on himself/herself
- Puts graffiti on notebooks and walls
- Uses gang terms and slogans
- Is called by nickname
- Practices and displays gang hand signs

## **TYPES OF GANGS**

Members of today's gangs are representative of all socioeconomic levels and ethnic groups. Some gangs are formed predominantly along ethnic lines while others tend to be more mixed. Some gravitate toward violence and intimidation while others seek to further their cause through illicit business dealing in relative anonymity.

### **SCAVENGER GANGS**

Scavenger gangs are the least organized and least “successful.” Members have a bond created by the type of behavior they engage in as a group, and their general need to belong to a gang for a sense of structure. They are likely to be low-achievers and drop-outs and

are prone to erratic behavior. They are “urban survivors” who tend to prey on the weak. The criminal behavior they engage in is usually senseless, impulsive, and petty. Frequently, they will engage in violence just for fun or out of a need for a high sensation. Leadership changes often, even daily. Occasionally, a scavenger gang can become more organized to form a territorial gang. Tagger Crews and Gothic Gangs are examples of scavenger gangs.

## **TERRITORIAL GANGS**

Territorial gangs are also known as fighting gangs. They are turf-loyal and highly organized with elaborate initiation rituals and other traditions and practices that set them off from non-members. Traditionally, their definition of gang territory refers to their neighborhood. Frequently, these gangs will define their territory with graffiti. They often wear clothing that identifies them as gang members—their “colors.” Members of territorial gangs have often done very poorly in school. They usually have troubled family lives. Many speak little English. Often, someone assumes a more permanent leadership role in this type of gang structure. Fighting, a major activity of territorial gangs, gives gang members a chance to prove themselves. The primary purpose of territorial gangs is social and not economic, although some territorial gangs also engage in drug sales for profit. Local norteño (red) and sureño (blue) gangs are examples of territorial gangs.

## **CORPORATE GANGS**

Corporate gangs are highly organized criminal conspiracies set up to sell drugs or other illicit items at maximum profit. They also engage in other criminal acts such as vehicle theft, burglary, fraud, and identity theft. Turf, colors, and other things that are important for other kinds of gangs are not relevant for corporate gangs. Discipline, secrecy, and a strict code of behavior are expected of every member and punishment for mistakes can be extreme. While members of corporate gangs may not be well educated, they are often highly intelligent. Leaders must be capable of strategic planning as well as personnel and money management. Rapper Gangs and Triad Gangs are examples of corporate gangs.

# GANG TERMS

Barrio	Neighborhood
Blood	Gang member aligned to the color red
Bust a Cap	Shooting bullets
Buster/Chapete	Derogatory terms for Norteño
Crab	Derogatory term for Crip gang member
Crip	Gang member aligned to the color blue
Cuz/Cuzz	Slang term for Crip gang member
Dis	Show disrespect to
Drive-by	Gang members cruise past rivals and spray area with gunfire
Five “O”	Police
Gangbanging	Gang activity
Hardcore	Long time gang members who have been to prison
Homeboy	Fellow gang member
Homes/Holmes	Slang term for Homeboy
Hood	Neighborhood
Jumped In	Ritual beating to initiate new gang member
Nine one one(911)	Code for Police
Norteño	Hispanic gang member aligned Northern California and the color red
O.G.	Original gangster, leader
Placa	Gang graffiti, Police/Badge
Puto	Derogatory Spanish term, a cross out mark over gang graffiti
Rag	Colored bandanna worn to identify gang
R.I.P.	Symbol of respect for dead gang member and signal of pending violence
Roscoe	Gun
Set	Neighborhood
Scrap	Derogatory term for Sureño Gang Member
Shot Caller	Leader
Slob	Derogatory term for Blood gang member
Sureño	Hispanic gang member aligned with Southern California and the color blue
Turf	Gang controlled area
Veterano	Older gang member, leader
Wannabes	Younger kids trying to become gang members
XIII/13	Thirteenth letter of the alphabet—M, stands for the prison gang Mexican Mafia which is aligned with Southern California
XIV/14	Fourteenth letter of the alphabet—N, stands for the prison gang Nuestra Familia which is aligned with Northern CA
415	Identifies Bay Area gang by area code



# GANG PREVENTION

## PARENTS

- Spend time with your children and be a listener
- Discuss your expectations with them and help them develop a strong sense of self-esteem
- Give them responsibilities and recognize their achievements
- Be a good role model for your children
- Set fair and consistent limitations, guidelines, standards
- Develop non-negotiable rules that prevent the use of alcohol, drugs, and gang membership
- Confront them if they break the rules
- Don't be afraid to say no to your children
- Know where your children are and who they are with
- Set times for them to be home and check to make sure they have not been drinking or using drugs when they return
- Don't be afraid to check your children's rooms
- Assist them with their school work and meet their teachers
- Involve them in positive activities such as sports and clubs
- If problems arise, seek advice or counseling from someone who can relate to you and your children
- If necessary, seek assistance from the police or probation
- Show them respect, but remember, it must be earned

## COMMUNITY

- Be aware of gang activity in your neighborhood
- Don't allow yourself to become a victim of gang violence
- Report suspicious activity to the police
- Cooperate with the police and provide information to help solve gang-related crimes
- Start and participate in a local Neighborhood Watch group
- Develop a graffiti abatement or clean-up program
- Provide activities for children through recreation departments, churches, and youth organizations
- Seek support from local businesses to employ and train youths

## SCHOOLS

- Provide honest assessment of gang activity at schools
- Develop in-service gang training for teachers, administrators, and other school staff
- Implement gang prevention and counseling programs
- Set strict rules against gang activity which restrict wearing of colors, physical or verbal violence, and defiance toward staff
- Identify “at-risk” students and work with parents to prevent gang involvement
- Challenge all students to achieve
- Be firm with students, but treat them with respect
- Develop a peer counseling program where students help each other to overcome problems
- Listen to students needs and concerns and take steps to address them
- Cooperate with police and probation and share information

# RESOURCE LIST

Police/Fire/Medical Emergency	911
Mountain View Police (Non Emergency)	(650) 903-6395
Gang Suppression Team	(650) 903-6138
School Resource Officer	(650) 903-6387/6712
	<a href="http://www.mvpd.gov">www.mvpd.gov</a>
Los Altos Police (Non Emergency)	(650) 947-2770
	<a href="http://www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/police">www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/police</a>
Santa Clara County Sheriff (Non Emergency)	(650) 808-4900
	<a href="http://www.sccsheriff.org">www.sccsheriff.org</a>
California Youth Crisis Line	(800) 843-5200
	<a href="http://www.calyouth.org">www.calyouth.org</a>
24-7 Line For Youth	(888) 247-7717
	<a href="http://www.billwilsoncenter.org">www.billwilsoncenter.org</a>
Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC)	(650) 965-2020
	<a href="http://www.chacmv.org">www.chacmv.org</a>
Casa SAY/Safe Place (call collect)	(650) 961-2622
	<a href="http://www.sayscc.org">www.sayscc.org</a>
Teen Hotline (drugs)	(650) 579-0353
	<a href="http://www.onyourmind.net">www.onyourmind.net</a>
Packard Teen Hotlnie	(888) 247-7717
	<a href="http://teen.stanford.edu">http://teen.stanford.edu</a>
Child Protective Services	(408) 299-2071
	<a href="http://www.sccgov.org/portal/site/dfcs">www.sccgov.org/portal/site/dfcs</a>
Anti-Hate Hotline	(408) 279-0111
	<a href="http://www.billwilsoncenter.org">www.billwilsoncenter.org</a>
Mesa de la Comunidad	(888) 657-6801
	<a href="http://www.mesacomunidad.org">www.mesacomunidad.org</a>
El Camino YMCA	(650) 969-9622
	<a href="http://www.ymcamidpen.org">www.ymcamidpen.org</a>
El Camino Hospital Emergency	(650) 940-7055
	<a href="http://www.elcaminohospital.org">www.elcaminohospital.org</a>
Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY)	(408) 263-2630x21
	<a href="http://www.flyprogram.org">www.flyprogram.org</a>
NOVA Youth Employment	(408) 730-7232
	<a href="http://www.novaworks.org">www.novaworks.org</a>
Mountain View Recreation	(650) 903-6331
	<a href="http://www.mountainviw.gov">www.mountainviw.gov</a>
Los Altos Recreation	(650) 947-2790
	<a href="http://www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/recreation">www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/recreation</a>
Mountain View Whisman School District	(650) 526-3500
	<a href="http://www.mvwsd.k12.ca.us">www.mvwsd.k12.ca.us</a>

# RESOURCE LIST CONTINUED

Mtn.View/ Los Altos Union High School Dist.	(650) 940-4650 <a href="http://www.mvla.net">www.mvla.net</a>
Los Altos School District	(650) 947-1150 <a href="http://www.losaltos.k12.ca.us">www.losaltos.k12.ca.us</a>
Los Altos Mtn. View PTA Council	<a href="http://www.mvwsd.org/ptac">www.mvwsd.org/ptac</a>
Community Services Agency	(650) 968-0836 <a href="http://www.csacares.org">www.csacares.org</a>
Victory Outreach	(650) 537-7395 <a href="http://www.victoryoutreach.org">www.victoryoutreach.org</a>
Partners for New Generations	(650) 949-0828x4 <a href="http://losaltosrotary.org/partners.html">losaltosrotary.org/partners.html</a>
Toughlove Cupertino Contact: Ann	(650) 780-9587 <a href="http://www.toughlove.com">www.toughlove.com</a>
Santa Clara County Probation	(408) 278-5900
Adult	(650) 327-1470
Juvenile	(408) 278-5900 <a href="http://sccgov.org/portal/site/probation">sccgov.org/portal/site/probation</a>
Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office	(408) 299-7400
Palo Alto Branch	(650) 324-6400
Juvenile	(408) 792-2772
Gang	(408) 792-2791 <a href="http://www.santaclara-da.org">www.santaclara-da.org</a>
Parents Anonymous	(909) 621-6184 <a href="http://www.parentsanonymous.org">www.parentsanonymous.org</a>
Narcotics Anonymous	(650) 802-5950 <a href="http://www.na.org">www.na.org</a>
Alcoholics Anonymous	(408) 374-8511 <a href="http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org">www.alcoholics-anonymous.org</a>
Alateen/Al-Anon	(888) 425-2666 <a href="http://www.al-anon.alateen.org">www.al-anon.alateen.org</a>