



WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT GANG VIOLENCE?

- According to the National Youth Gang Center, the number of gangs increased between 2002-2007 greatest in rural areas (64%) and smaller cities (41%).
- The most recent estimate of more than 27,000 gangs is the highest since 1998 (National Youth Gang Center, 2008).
- Following a yearly decline of gangs from 1996 to a low in 2003, annual estimates have been steadily increasing in recent years.
- The most recent estimate of more than 788,000 gang members represents a statistically significant increase over the 12-year low in 2001.
- According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (DOJ, June 2005), victims perceived perpetrators to be gang members in about 6% of violent victimizations. On average for each year, gang members committed about 373,000 of the 6.6 million violent victimizations including: 12% of aggravated assaults, 4% of rapes, 10% of robberies and 6% of simple assaults.
- Male victims identify gang members offenders at higher rates than females.
- Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanics to be victims.
- In larger cities the gang membership is reported to be 18 years and older, in the smaller cities and rural counties the reported age is 18 and younger.

Program of

Lutheran Community Services

210 W. Sprague Ave.
Spokane, WA 99201
Tel: 866.751.7119 (24 Hours)
Fax: 509.747.0690

Your Resource for Information and Assistance

Spokane Crime Victim Service Center
1.866.751.7119

National Youth Gang Center
1.850.385.0600
www.iir.com/nygc/

Washington State School Safety Centers
1.360.725.6044
www.k12.wa.us/safetycenter/gangs



SPOKANE CRIME VICTIM SERVICE CENTER

Your Resource for Information and Assistance

Call to Get Help
1.866.751.7119



GANG VIOLENCE

Why Do Kids Join Gangs?

Adolescence is a time in life when children begin to define their own identity. Many seek out new peer groups as a means of gaining acceptance. Gangs can meet this need. Gangs can provide things children may not get at home or elsewhere—not just acceptance, but structure, money, food, activities, companionship, and even love. Kids don't run toward gangs, they are running away from something else and find gangs.

Is Your Child at Risk for Gang Involvement?

Children in the early adolescent years (12-14 years old) are in a vulnerable period when they are more likely to join a gang, however *children as young as third grade are recruited*. There are many identified risk factors for gang involvement—including school difficulties, lack of parental supervision, alcohol/drug use, truancy, and peer influence. Experts agree that parents can play an important role in keeping children out of gangs. Positive actions to prevent gang involvement include monitoring your children's activities, using positive discipline strategies, talking with your children about the risks of gangs, and meeting your children's friends.

What Can a Parent Do?

If you believe your child is involved with gangs, contact your school and inquire about counseling or intervention programs. Some schools have gang intervention services, or may be able to help with referrals. Local police departments may also have information on intervention programs. Talk to your children at an early age about the dangers of gang involvement, and watch for any changes in behavior which may indicate interest in gangs. You should also talk with other parents and school officials about any signs of gang activity in your neighborhood or community. (Neighborhood Watch—Spokane County)

WHAT IS GANG VIOLENCE?

The U.S. Department of Justice defines a gang as “a group involved in a pattern of criminal acts” as distinguished from the groups of “street families” of youth or adults. Gang violence encompasses a wide range of violent criminal activities such as drugs, weapons crimes, trafficking, fraud and other violent and property crimes. Washington state defines gangs

specifically in schools as: A gang is a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: A gang name and recognizable symbols, identifiable leadership, a geographic territory, a regular or recurrent meeting pattern, may be identified as a gang, and collective actions to engage in serious criminal, or violent behavior.

BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH GANG VIOLENCE

Youth who are involved in gangs may exhibit changes in behavior. You should watch for these behaviors and the other indicators listed:

Negative Behavior Changes

- Withdrawing from family and friends activities
- Increased truancy or school discipline
- Declining school performance
- Staying out late without reason
- Unusual desire for secrecy
- Confrontational behavior including disrespect for parental and school authority
- Sudden negative attitudes toward police
- Changes in attitude about usual activities including school, church, or sports.

Additional Behavioral Warning Signs

- Unusual interest in one or two colors of clothing or a particular brand or logo
- Interest in gang-influences music or movies
- Gang-type drawings or gang symbols on schoolbooks, clothing, notebooks, or walls
- Withdrawal from longtime friends and forming of a new peer group who wear the same colors, numbers, or symbols
- Use of unusual hand signals to communicate with friends
- Sudden changes in the style of clothes
- Possession of firearms or other weapons
- Unexplained injuries, such as being beaten or injuries to hands and knuckles from fighting
- Unexpected cash or goods such as clothing

Gangs use colors, clothing, numbers, and symbols to identify members of their group and to communicate their membership to others. To a person with even a little gang knowledge, these signs are often obvious. Gang members commonly use clothing and colors to show their membership.

Graffiti and Artwork: Gangs use graffiti to mark (tag) their territory and to communicate with or challenge other gangs. Gang graffiti usually includes the same symbols, colors, and numbers that gang members wear. The Old English style (*Like This*) of writing is commonly used by gangs.

Symbols and numbers: Gang members will wear or use certain numbers and symbols that represent their gang, set, or clique. Symbols include stars, pitchforks, Playboy bunnies, crowns, and three dots in a triangle. Common numbers used include 5, 13, 14 and 74. Numbers may represent letters of the alphabet (b=2, c=3). Local sets may use their area code to communicate their home. Gang members will tattoo these symbols and numbers, or even the name of their gang.

Hand signs: Some gangs use hand signs to show loyalty to a gang and to challenge or disrespect rival gang members.

Music: “Gangsta” rap is a style of music that uses lyrics to glorify gang life and violence. Rap music can glorify a specific gang, and can also be derogatory to other gangs, police, and other groups.