

## What You Can Do

### Parents:

Become involved with your child; know his/her friends; do not allow your child to dress in gang clothing or "colors"; get your child involved in healthy activities; and be willing to confront your child. Search his/her room, and turn in any illegal weapons, drugs, etc. Be alert to problems your child may be having with his/her peers, at school, or within the family.

### Schools:

Do not allow any gang clothing or "colors"; get the child and the family involved in counseling; get the child involved in alternative activities or groups; and report any and all gang activities on campus. Remove graffiti immediately from school property. Do not allow graffiti on school books. Provide parent education and education for youth. Example: The younger you can reach the student the more success can be obtained. Gang awareness is needed for younger children. The key is to be alert to problems at a young age. It is important to try to involve youth in viable educational programs at an early age. We have found that many gangs have had significant academic and social difficulties in school since approximately the third grade.

### Citizens:

Remove graffiti from your property immediately, report any and all criminal acts, and be willing to testify in court if necessary. Support the schools and recreational activities in your neighborhood.

Do you need Gang Awareness information?

Contact: San Diego County  
Probation Department  
Gang Suppression Unit (GSU)

(858) 694-4771

2901 Meadow Lark Drive  
San Diego, CA 92123

or visit our web site at:  
[www.sdcounty.ca.gov/probation](http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/probation)

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# Gangs



A Community Problem  
A Community Solution

## Gangs: A Community Problem

Gangs have existed for decades. We often associate gangs with fighting, graffiti, robbery, and vandalism. Gangs are now additionally involved in many forms of drug trafficking, for example, "crack" cocaine. This is a huge business for gangs because it is cheap, profitable and provides a quick high. "Crack's" popularity has caused gangs to move into many communities throughout California.

Diverse populations often associated with poverty and/or difficulty adjusting to new cultures and changing demographics also impact all of our communities by allowing gangs to flourish.

Lastly and most alarming: Gangs are popular to emulate. Some youth with few visible problems feel it is exciting to be a gang member. Again the result is often crime associated with violence.

## What is a Youth Street Gang?

A gang is usually a group of 14-25 year-old people (either males or females) who band together for the major purpose of committing crimes. They may or may not claim certain territory and often use hand signs or signals to identify themselves. Members often join a gang for a sense of belonging, for protection, or to make money from criminal acts.

## What Gangs Do

Gang members seek confrontations with others, often at public events. The potential for violence can claim innocent victims. Their criminal acts can result in damage, theft, and loss to individual and public property. The involvement with drugs, either through sales or use, also has devastating effects on society. Although these acts are committed by a small group in any particular community, they cause a lot of difficulty for the majority of the population.

## Individual Reasons for Joining

1. Identity or recognition
2. Fellowship: gang becomes family
3. Low self-esteem
4. Lonely, sad, depressed
5. Unable to achieve at home, school, work, sports
6. Protection from rival gang
7. Intimidation of other people
8. Family problems
9. Financial gain (profit from drug sales or other crimes)

## Signs of Involvement

1. Writes gang graffiti in the community, on walls of rooms, notebooks, school papers, belongings, etc.
2. Clothing and/or "colors", (baseball hat, shoes, jackets, sagging pants) associated with a particular gang (e.g. Crip is blue, Piru is red).
3. Use of hand signs to signify gang to which they belong.
4. Associates with known gang members. These are his/her friends who become all important.
5. Tattoos with gang name or initials, moniker, etc.
6. Arrest record; stopped with local gang members.
7. Lives in gang area or frequents gang areas.
8. Family background - difficulties in family; unable to relate to parents; family members are gang members.
9. States he/she is a member of a gang.
10. Has the demeanor of a gang member, especially around friends or in absence of parents.
11. Hangs out at known gang hangouts.
12. Drug involvement.
13. Drops out of acceptable activities.

## Gang Names and Graffiti

Many gangs adopt names associated with a certain neighborhood (turf) or ethnic background; e.g. West Coast Crips (32nd and Market-San Diego); East San Diego; Sherman (Sherman school area - San Diego); Mira Mesa Crips; Oriental Boys; or Skinheads.

Gang members use graffiti to mark their turf. They use it to show power, to challenge other gangs, and to show their allegiances to their own gang. Violence is often associated with graffiti when rival gangs see it as a threat. Resulting violence affects everyone in the neighborhood.

Graffiti also decreases property values and has negative effects on neighborhoods as well as industrial and commercial areas.

Gang members use nicknames or street names. Often they only know each other by these names. Usually the names denote their behavior; e.g. Killer, Mad Dog, Smiley, Loc, Trigger, China, Goofy, Midnight, or Crazy Kick Boxer.

## Gang Membership Criteria

The following criteria established by the Department of Justice are used to determine gang membership. The subject needs to meet only one of the five listed requirements to justify documentation. He/she does not need to claim membership to be documented.

1. Admits membership.
2. Has tattoos, wears or possesses clothing or other items primarily associated with a specific gang(s).
3. Arrested participating in delinquent/criminal activity with known gang members.
4. Police records and/or observations confirm the individual's close association with know gang members.
5. Reliable informant identifies him/her as a gang member.