



**GANGS
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**DON'T LET THEM
TAKE OVER !**

CITY OF CHICAGO
CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT



WHAT IS A GANG ?

A gang is an organized group with a recognized leader whose activities are either criminal or, at the very least, threatening to the community.

Unity, identity, loyalty and reward are normal characteristics that are admired but when associated with gangs they become distorted. They are traits each gang shares in order to survive.

Gangs display their identity and unity in obvious ways such as the use of jewelry, selected colored clothing, jargon and signals. Members remain together in quiet times as well as in conflict. In response to this twisted loyalty, the *reward* is being accepted and recognized as a gang member.

The main source of income for most gangs is narcotics. Members of all ages are used by the gang in the illegal sale of narcotics and other unlawful activities. It is a mistaken belief that gangs only operate in less affluent neighborhoods. Gangs exist in virtually every community.

WHO ARE GANG MEMBERS ?

Simply put, the hard core gang member is a loser. Lacking recognition in the family, school, athletics or employment, the member seeks the acceptance, support and protection of other losers and cowards. Students, working youths and other young adults trying to become successful in life want **NOTHING TO DO WITH GANGS.**

Gangs are usually a product of the area in which they are active. The individuals who belong to gangs are members of the community which they intimidate. Gangs rarely invade a community, rather, they develop within the community.

Street gangs are comprised of three components: the leaders, hard-core members and marginal members (often referred to as *wanna-bees*).

The leadership is directly related to the character and number of members in the gang. The core members, whose entire ego is involved in the gang's identification, are generally the most violent criminal members of the gang. These two groups influence and encourage others to become involved in criminal activities.

The marginal or fringe members drift in and out of the gang according to their needs. These members lack direction and, unlike the hard-core members and leaders, can be positively influenced to a constructive role in society. The marginal members join gangs for a variety of reasons. For some it offers a level of status they do not believe they can otherwise achieve. Others join for protection. They submit to a gang so they may travel in their neighborhoods without fear. Intimidation often plays a part with techniques ranging from extorting lunch money to physical violence. To protect themselves, youths give in to the demands of the gang.

Often these *wanna-bees* or potential gang members are young people finding themselves in confusing, uncomfortable situations. Here are some examples.

- A well-meaning youth is approached, intimidated and coerced into joining a street gang. The youth is uncomfortable with the situation and does not want to get involved, but is confused as to where to turn.
- A young woman, a dedicated student during the school months, finds herself with nothing to do during the summer. She spends more and more time hanging around with gang members for the excitement and acceptance.
- Yet another youth, the oldest of several children, desperately looks for employment to assist the mother in supporting the family. The leader of the street gang tells the frustrated youth that there is money to be made as a gang member.

A GANG IS ONLY AS STRONG AS A COMMUNITY ALLOWS IT TO BE

The more aware your community is, the better prepared it is to deal with gang problems. The Chicago Police Department continually holds workshops in your neighborhood. These workshops, slide presentations and discussions will assist you in learning how to recognize gang behavior in your children, how to cope and how to fight back.

REMOVE GRAFFITI FROM YOUR PROPERTY as soon as possible and as often as necessary. Graffiti indicates that gang activity is in your community. Once the community allows graffiti to remain, it is seen as giving in to the gang. Your wall becomes their wall. Graffiti is NOT a juvenile prank; it puts forth the message from the gang that they control **YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**. For a community to rid itself of gangs, the community must remove the graffiti.

PARENTS . . . NEED ADVICE ?

THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST GANGS BEGINS IN THE HOME ! Parents should be aware of the identifiers gangs use and be observant that they do not appear on the personal articles of their children. Book bags, posters and gang colors are used to convey the gang message. Parents should be alert that their homes are not being used by the gang to hide contraband. By directing their sons or daughters into constructive activities and by knowing their friends, parents are not only protecting their offspring but are also helping society combat gangs.

DO NOT BE INTIMIDATED. YOU ARE NOT ALONE ! If you need advice or wish to get together with your neighbors to team up against gangs, call your local police district Neighborhood Relations office. All it takes is a phone call. **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE !**

- To report an emergency or crime in progress.....911
- Gang Crime Hotline.....773-533-GANG
- TDD for hearing Impaired.....773-533-3228
- Gang Investigation Section..... 312-746-7901
- Graffiti Blasters (Aid in Removal).....311
- Narcotics Information Hotline.....1-800-CRACK-44