

City of Sacramento Youth Gang Awareness

Frequently asked questions

Tips for Parents

What is a Gang?

A gang is a group of people who have a common name, sign or identifying symbol, and who engage in criminal activity.

What is considered Gang activity?

Gang activity is any unlawful act that is being perpetrated on rival gang members or members of the community. This includes all forms of physical violence, gun violence, theft, robberies, drug sales, intimidation and prostitution.

Who joins a Gang?

Males and females, from all neighborhoods, races, cultures, religious and economic levels join gangs.

How can I tell if my child is in a Gang?

All children are at risk of being recruited to join gangs, are at risk of being victimized by gang violence. Early warning signs that something is wrong include changes in a young person's behavior and attitude. Other pre-gang and gang behavior include:

- Withdrawal from participation in school, family life, church or other activities, compared to earlier behavior.
- Changes in dress and color preferences or attitudes towards certain colors.
- Habitual lying and denial of problematic behavior.
- Major attitude problems with parents, teachers or those in authority positions.
- Changes in language, including use of gang slang and profanity, and use of hand signs.
- Display of money and property beyond income, and is evasive about where the items came from.
- Use of drugs and/or alcohol.
- New friends, who possibly have a negative influence.
- School grades drop, truancies increase and discipline problems become more frequent.
- Stays out extremely late, runs away several days at a time
- Appearance of different looking graffiti and gang related writing on school books, clothing and other personal items.
- Carrying or possessing weapons, such as a gun, knife, screwdriver, bat or club. Unable to identify the owners of these weapons.
- Gang related tattoos (initials, names, numbers), burn marks in a pattern or use of markers to make temporary tattoos on hands, arms, legs, and other parts of the body.
- Avoids certain neighborhoods



Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What do Youth Gang members wear?

GANG ATTIRE *

- Clothes with one or two specific colors, and/or refusing to wear certain colors
- Wearing the same style, much like a "uniform".
- Bandannas worn on head, an arm or leg, or both.
- Hats & clothing with gang street names, nicknames, etc. (often written in stylish lettering).
- Tattoos, often handmade, showing nickname, gang affiliation, numbers/letters that indicate a particular gang.
- Hair styles; a "part" or ponytail are the latest

*None of the above are absolute proof that a youth is a gang member, but they do serve as indicators, which along with other indicators, can be used to prove gang membership.

Is it illegal to be in a Gang?

By legal definition, gangs engage in criminal activities. It is not illegal to be a member of a gang. However, it is dangerous and can lead to harm of your child and others.

There are laws in effect that target gang crimes, provide stiffer penalties for validated gang members, and allow additional charges for criminal gang activities.

Why do youth join Gangs?

Youth join gangs for a number of reasons. These include but are not limited to:

- Substitute Family
- Friendship
- Economic benefit
- Power
- Status
- Security
- Love
- Thrill and Excitement
- Parties
- Girls
- Boys
- Real or imagined problems at home



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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What does it mean to be a validated gang member?

A youth can be validated as a gang member based on a number of different factors. This includes their association with known gang members, tattoos that are gang related and at times by their own admission.

I received a letter stating that my child has been validated as a Gang Member, What should I do?

The letter you received listed a number of organizations that can provide you assistance. In addition, talk with your child about his/her affiliation with gangs. If your child is willing to distance himself/herself from the gang and are looking for help in doing so, then contact the Sacramento Police Department Gang Unit (name and number is listed on the letter). Also, set up a pre-validation meeting. As long as your child has not committed a serious offense involving gangs, serious consideration will be made to hold their validation in suspense and give them time to prove that they are willing to change and disassociate themselves with the gang. This is done on a case by case basis.

Can my child be removed from the gang validation list?

Un-validating someone is not something that is generally done. After someone has been validated, it remains on their record for five years (providing an updated validation has not been processed). During the five year period, if an updated validation is processed, then the five year clock starts over from the last validation date. For further information, please contact the Validating Agency.

Are there female gang members?

Females have traditionally been involved in gangs through boyfriends, or friends who are gang members. Females are typically not allowed to be members, but have been used to carry concealed weapons, drugs, and they can act as drivers and lookouts. They are often ordered to provide alibis for male gang members, as well as provide sexual companionship on demand. More recently, increasing numbers of females have formed their own gangs that are not affiliated with male gangs. Some of the female gangs are extremely violent.

What do graffiti and tagging have to do with gangs?

Gang related graffiti is an advertisement for gangs and is illegal. It is used to claim territory, challenge and disrespect rival gangs, show respect for fallen members and show strength by listing its total gang membership. "Taggers" (graffiti vandals) create ornate and detailed graffiti to show their talent and ability to get away with tagging.

What can I do about graffiti and tagging located in my neighborhood ?

Graffiti and tagging located in your neighborhood should be removed as soon as possible. Many times community-based organizations schedule neighborhood cleanup days and include graffiti removal as part of it. To reach the City's Graffiti Abatement Program, or to learn about your local Neighborhood Association dial 311 for more information.

What can parents do?

- Spend time with your child.
- Be cautious of the clothes that you purchase or allow your child to purchase
- Ban gang related clothing and markings from your child's wardrobe.
- Know your child's friends, and monitor their activities and interests.
- Get to know the parents of your child's friends.



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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

- Listen, really listen, to your child and to the music and friends that may influence them.
- Supervise your child's television watching, and make time to watch selected programs together. Discuss with your child the ideas and images presented to them.
- Discuss with your child proper ways to deal with conflict, hate and racism.
- Know your child's school and teachers. Find the time to get involved in your child's education.
- Direct your child to the activities that are available in your community. Many recreation centers, community based organizations, libraries and churches offer free activities for children.
- Learn additional parenting skills. Many organizations and schools have parenting classes and support groups that are fun and provide valuable tips on dealing with children.
- Share information with your local police officers. Many times, gang associations are identified by tips and questions from concerned parents.
- Help promote gang awareness through civic group and neighborhood activities. Police officers and members of the community are trained and experienced in working with youth in gangs and identifying gang activity, they are available to provide talks to your groups.
- Call 311 for additional resources



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