

**NORTH CAROLINA**



**GANG INVESTIGATORS  
ASSOCIATION**

**Gang Awareness  
Guide  
For The  
Community**

## **Disclaimer**

The information and graphics displayed in this pamphlet and discussed in this class is intended to assist law enforcement officers, teachers and parents in identifying gang symbols, graffiti and practices. The information was obtained from sources which to the best of our knowledge are authentic and reliable. We make no guarantee of results and assume no liability in connection with either the information contained herein or material presented by an instructor. It is not our intention to encourage persecution of any single person, group, organization or religion who are free to express themselves under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. This text should be used only as a general guide and not as an ultimate source of identification of all gang symbols and practices. Furthermore, this text contains information that may only be current up to the printing date.

Because of the nature of gang activity and practices that fluctuate over time and distance, we urge you to learn as much as possible from all other sources about gang symbols and practices for your own protection. It is not our purpose to reprint all of the information available to us regarding this subject matter. The purpose of this information is to educate and inform and we hereby disclaim responsibility or liability to any person or entity with respect to any loss of damage caused or alleged to be caused, directly or indirectly by the information contained in this text or class.

## Gang Definition

A gang is a group of people that gather together on a continuing basis for the purpose of engaging in criminal acts and or anti-social behavior.

## Categories of Gangs

**Traditional Gangs** - have existed over a long period of time to have established a system of traditional motivations that are adhered to.

- It has an exact organizational chart, identifiable colors and specific hand signals.
- They have aligned themselves with either the Folk or the People's Nations. Examples are Crips, Bloods and Black Gangster Disciples.

**Non Traditional Gangs** - This type of gang is slowly evolving into a traditional but it has not been around long enough to have adopted long standing traditions. They have no structure or organization. They tend to form and dissolve frequently.

- These gangs are still struggling with their identities.
- It is unique to a local area and has not aligned with either the Folk or People's Nation.

**Criminal Enterprise** - This type of gang is bonded together by a common criminal interest. It is made up of adults and they are mainly involved in the wholesale of narcotics, i.e. Mafia, Jamaican Posse, Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (1%ers are known to be involved in drugs, murders, thefts, prostitution, etc.).

**Tag Artist** - This group is bonded together by the common interest in Graffiti Art. They are, for the most part, a non violent group and consist mainly of anglo and/or Hispanic males.

## **Reasons Why Youths Join A Gang**

**Identity or Recognition** - Being part of a gang allows the youth gang members to achieve a level of status he feel is impossible outside the gang culture.

**Protection** - Many members may join because they live in a gang area and are, therefore, subject to violence by rival gangs.

**Fellowship and Brotherhood** - To the majority of the youth gang members, the gang functions as an extension of the family.

**Intimidation** - Some members are forced into joining by their peer group.

**Other reasons include:**

- self esteem
- love
- belonging
- respect

## **Gang Offers**

**Protection** - Pride, Ego enhancer from the membership.

**Excitement** - Non-boredom life as a gang member.

**Respect** - The need of being accepted.

\* The lack of these item listed in a youngster's life will contribute to his membership in a gang. For many young people a gang becomes a surrogate family. It provides love, companionship and nurturing that the family doesn't.

## Bonding Factors

Some correlation can be seen between the natural family and the gang family, as it pertains to factors that bond the two together.

However, the gang family is structured to provide several more bonding factors.

### The Natural Family

Vs.

### The Gang Family

Food  
Shelter  
Clothing  
Love  
Discipline  
Belonging  
Acceptance  
Identification  
Security  
Status  
Caring  
Sharing  
Activities  
Respect  
Consistency

Food  
Shelter  
Clothing  
Love  
Discipline  
Belonging  
Acceptance  
Identification  
Security  
Status  
Caring  
Sharing  
Activities  
Respect  
Consistency  
Power  
Money  
Sex  
Drugs  
Protection

## Levels of Involvement in a Gang

It is important to be able to determine the extent to which an individual is or is not involved in a gang. The Intelligence Unit employs the use of the below schedule in conjunction with Florida State Statute 874.03, during its classification process. This schedule is basic and will vary from gang to gang.

### **Level I - Fantasy**

1. Knows about gangs primarily from newspaper, newscasts and the movies.
2. May or may not know about “real” gangs.
3. May or may not know one or more gang member but does not associate.
4. May or may not like, respect or admire a gang, a gang member of the gang lifestyle.
5. Sees gang members “living out a fantasy”.

### **Level II - At Risk**

1. Knows about gangs and gang members, first hand.
2. Casually and occasionally associates with gang members.
3. Lives in or near gang areas (turf).
4. May like or admire gangs, or gang members as individuals.
5. May like and/or admire the gang lifestyle but not participate fully.

### **Level III - Wannabe, Associate**

1. Knows and likes gang members, first hand.
2. Regularly associates with gang members.
3. Considers gangs and related activity as normal, acceptable or admirable.
4. Finds many things in common with gang members
5. Is seriously thinking about joining a gang.

#### **Level IV - Gang Member**

1. Is officially a gang member.
2. Associates almost exclusively with gang members to the exclusion of family and former friends.
3. Participates in gang crimes and most other related activities.
4. Is not considered hard core by fellow gang members or others.
5. Has substantially rejected the authority or value system of family and society.

#### **Level V - Hard-core gang member**

1. Totally committed to the gang and gang lifestyle.
2. Totally rejects anyone or any value system, other than the gang.
3. Is considered hard core by self, other gang members and authorities.
4. Will commit any act with the approval of a demand from the gang.
5. Does not accept any authority other than the gang.

Right of passage into a particular gang may vary from gang to gang, but usually require the prospective gang member(s) to commit a criminal act(s) which may range from a drive-by shooting to spray painting graffiti on a police vehicle. The final right of passage usually consist of the subject standing in the center of a circle; the subject is then beaten by circling members for a period of one to three minutes.

## Gang Statistics

The following is in accordance with U.S. Department Office of Juvenile and Delinquency 2002:

- 28,7000 gangs are active in the United States
- 780,000 gang members are active in the United States
- 92% gang members arrested are male
- 8% gang members arrested are female
- 1.5% gangs are female dominated (more than 50% female)

The 1998 age distribution of gang members was as follows:

- Age 15 (11 percent)
- Age 15 to 17 (29 percent)
- Age 18 to 24 (46 percent)
- Over 24 (14 percent)

The distribution of gang members by race/ethnicity in 1998 was as follows: Hispanic/Latino (46 percent), African American (34 percent), Caucasian (12 percent), Asian (6 percent), and other races (2 percent). About 33 percent of gangs were reported to have a significant mixture of two or more racial/ethnic groups.

### **Others to consider:**

Most gang members are victims of abuse or neglect and/or parental brutality.

They are very street wise.

They are exposed to negative role models via television, movies, music and street level criminals **(the best possible role model is the parent).**

A gang member's activity is usually confined within close proximity of his residence or gang's turf.

The main behavior displayed is anti-social, aggressive and hostile.

## Gang Identifiers

A gang member uses graffiti, hand signs, tattoos and color to signify their membership in a gang and to communicate their gang affiliation to others.

Each gang has its own unique symbol, sign, colors, jewelry and dress.

These serve not only to identify gang members, but also to promote gang solidarity.



## Colors

Matching clothing such as shoes, shirts, caps and bandannas are common group identifiers.

Colors are of paramount importance to the gang. They serve not only to identify gang members, but also to promote group solidarity. Degrading one's colors or symbols is the ultimate humiliation.

## Hand Signals

**The use of hand signals is multipurpose:**

- It's a means of communicating gang affiliation to both rival and allied gang members
- Hand signals are also used to challenge and/or put down a rival gang member
- Can be used to provide silent/covert orders and/or instruction from leaders to members



**Six Point Star**



**Blood**



**Crip**



**Folk  
Pitchfork**



**Eight Trey Gangster  
East Coast Crip**



**Crip Killer**



**Blood Killer**



**212 Crip Pitchforks**

## Tattoos and Brands

The tattoo can be used to identify the gang member's gang, set and moniker.

The tattoo may appear on any place of the member's body, such as his neck, arms, wrists, hands, chest and legs.



# Graffiti

Graffiti is known as the newspaper of the streets.

To most members of society, graffiti is just vandalism and childish pranks and means nothing more than that. However, to gang members and trained observers, it is clear what can be obtained from these messages and symbols.

## **Gang Graffiti accomplished the following:**

- It identifies the gang, its members and its territory
- It issues warnings and challenges to rival gangs.
- And most importantly it glorifies the gang and make their existence well known



**\* One of the first indicators that gang activity is present in a community is the surfacing of graffiti in that community.**



## **Early Indications of Gang Membership**

Teens in trouble call out for help in different ways. Some of these cries, if not recognized or acted on in a timely manner, can lead a youngster into the gang life.

A teen's plea for help may come in the form of running away, drug use, promiscuous behavior and acting tough. Crisis don't just happen, it develops gradually. Recognizing the warning signs may prevent crisis and gang involvement.

### **Pre-gang behavior:**

- Poor school progress and achievement
- Truancy
- Lack of hobbies/constructive activities
- Frequent negative contact with police
- Sudden change in personality/behavior
- Problems at home
- Draws gang signs/graffiti
- Use of hand signs
- Tattoos or branding on the body
- Dresses in gang type attire

## **Tips for Identification of Gang Activity**

Following is a list of “tips” for school personnel to utilize in the recognition of possible gang activity. Obviously, this list is not all inclusive and the existence of these behaviors or other does not positively guarantee that gang activity is occurring.

### **Communication:**

- a. Use of gestures and hand signs to distinguish affiliation to a gang.
- b. Notes and messages written on school lockers, notebooks, etc.
- c. Graffiti on notebooks, desks, walls and other school property.
- d. Use of gang language such as “homeboy”, “homegirl”, “homie”, “slob (Bloods) and “crab or cuz (Crips)”.
- e. Whistling at each other.
- f. Use of gang nicknames.

### **Dress and Appearance:**

- a. Hairstyles such as crew-cuts for skinheads
- b. Slogans on clothing.
- c. Ball caps such as L.A. Raiders and New York Yankees with white lettering on the back of the hat.
- d. Red or blue shoe laces.
- e. Red or blue rags (colors).
- f. British Knight shoes.
- g. Shoes painted red or blue.
- h. Work boots and suspenders.
- i. Bomber type jackets.
- j. Wearing of gold jewelry.
- k. Carrying pagers (used for drug business).
- l. Wearing of medallions.
- m. Wearing of athletic jackets (black or red).
- n. Wearing large finger rings with block letters.
- o. Tattoos or marks on the skin.

### **Disruptive Behavior/Criminal Activity**

- a. Student involved in fights and altercations.
- b. Students complaining of harassment.
- c. Extortion attempts.
- d. Vandalism.
- e. Reports of problems with weapons or weapons on campus.
- f. Drug activity on campus.
- g. Non-student presence on or near campus.
- h. Grouping or “cliques” on campus.

# Recognizing Gang Influences

Where did my kid learn about this stuff?

Gang knowledge is learned from several different sources.

## **Actual Gang Member**

While being recruited into a gang, the prospect may be introduced to gang's tradition, symbols and hand signs.

## **Television**

Prime time TV shows gang activity on a regular basis. Nightly news reports gang related crimes and gang members in their gang attire.

## **Movies**

Menace II Society, Boyz in the Hood, Colors, Clockers and Sugar Hill are just a few movies that glamorize the gang lifestyle, its graffiti, traditions and behavior.

## **Music**

Gangsta-Rap music promotes the degradation of women, the glorification of violence, gangster lifestyle and the total disregard of human life.

## **Literature**

Current trends in Gangsta-Rap music and the gang sub-culture can be seen in magazines. Both parents and teachers are encouraged to monitor and examine magazines that their child/student reads in an effort to identify and be cognizant of the literature they read.

## **Internet**

Gangs often post their own Web sites and communicate via the Internet. Gang knowledge is often copied and converted by local non-traditional gangs that are forming and wanting to emulate the more experienced gangs. Parents and Teachers are encouraged to monitor Internet access at home or school.

## **Community Involvement**

Communication with your community watch representatives.

Obtain gang awareness training.

Look for changes in your community.

An increase of young people hanging out on the street corners, playgrounds or parks.

Report graffiti to the police.

Remove graffiti after police have recorded and photographed it.

## **Social Intervention**

Parents and family awareness on the gang sub-culture.

Seek out effective youth service agencies in your community and volunteer to help.

Communicate with your children's teachers.

Spend quality time with your children, convince them that they are an important part of the family.

Supervise your children's activities. Make sure a reliable adult is present at all functions.

Talk to your children about gangs, their recruitment and activities.

Explain why gangs are dangerous, mention the following:

- A constant threat of violence by other gang members to you, your family and innocent bystanders.
- Hatred of other groups for no reason.
- Introduction and use of drugs.
- Chance of getting arrested or killed.

## Advice for Children

Best response is to walk away if approached by a gang member.

Do not allow children to use hand signs or gestures mimicking gang signs. This could lead to violence.

Do not allow your child to write or practice writing gang names, symbols on their notebooks, clothes, bodies or walls.

Don't try to be an instant expert on gangs, no one has all the answers.

### **DO NOT:**

- a. Associate with gang members.
- b. Associate with Wannabe gang members.
- c. Identify with community gang.
- d. Hang out or gather on street corners in groups where gangs are active.
- e. Approach individuals in cars who seemly want information (this could be a drive by shooting set-up).
- f. Wear any color or clothing gang related (keep neutral in dress).
- g. Wear designer clothing that exposes initials of designer (many gangs have assigned their own definitions to certain initials, such as: B.K. - Blood Killers, C.K. - Crip Killer, C.M.- Crip Murderer).
- h. Use or say the word Crab or Slob in public. Both of these words are insults to either the Crips or Bloods.
- i. Attend parties or social events of known or Wannabe gang members.
- j. Take part in Graffiti writing.
- k. Hang around graffiti marked walls.

Your most important source of information is your child, listen and talk to them.

## **Role of Schools**

Teachers, and Support Staff are the EYES and EARS of the school. Therefore, employees need to know what information to channel and who to channel it to. Always gather as much information as possible before presenting it to the administration. Documentation is very important. Also, be as low keyed as possible. Drawing attention to the gathering of documentation could cause more harm than good.

### **Notify Administration of:**

- a. Vandalism
- b. Graffiti - both on premises or on students' personal belongings: books, papers, etc.
- c. Defiance
- d. Fights
- e. Threats, Harassment or Extortion
- f. Possession of weapons, drugs, or large sums of money
- g. Truancy
- h. Non student presence on or near campus
- i. Keep administrators informed of rumors of gang activities, nicknames, types of graffiti, hand signs or gestures

### **Notify Counselor of:**

- a. Change in personality
- b. Change of dress
- c. Poor attendance
- d. Tattoos
- e. Signs of abuse
- f. Change in academic performance

## **Pre-Crisis Indicators**

- Sudden self segregation.
- Clustering of rival groups.
- Unusual movements of a group from its normal ‘territory’.
- Students attending school events that they normally do not attend.
- Isolated racial fights.
- Incident or disorder in the community at large.
- Discovery of weapons in or around school.
- Increased incidents on buses and along bus routes.
- Increase in conflicts.
- Warnings of custodial, cafeteria and transportation personnel.
- Parents coming to school to withdraw their children in fear of what might happen.
- Students protecting siblings.
- Increase in graffiti on walls, textbooks and papers.
- Excessive change in clothing color and styles and use of numerals. How they are worn and who they wear it with.
- Use of hand signals.
- Appearance of tattoos or brands.
- Use of nicknames. Matching nicknames with graffiti lists.
- Possess large amounts of money without parent awareness.

## Gang Prevention Suggestions

- Parent watch on the way home
- Parent at bus stops
- Invite parents of disruptive students to observe their child on campus
- Written clear rules and regulations
- Develop an attitude of strict enforcement of rules and regulations
- Do not allow graffiti
- Remove graffiti first thing in the morning
- No writing places in bathrooms or classrooms for graffiti
- Examine neighborhood graffiti
- Develop a graffiti file
- High visibility of administrative staff, counselors and teachers
- High level of security visible in the lunchroom
- Clean campus
- Short period of time between classes
- Locker bays secured
- Keep staff informed
- Deal with rumors as if they were true
- Isolate combatants
- Collect student profiles: take pictures!
- Make written statements
- Develop support groups for those who want out
- Set up a security committee for school and community to adopt security strategies

**Always deal with an individual - don't deal with them in front of their peers - that will validate "Gang" which is what they want!**

## **Educational Involvement**

Teachers and staff should obtain gang awareness training.

Develop and promote an anti-gang atmosphere in school.

Listen to what students have to say about gangs.

Ensure that communication lines are open and accessible to students at all times.

Establish a dress code that supports school spirit.

Establish linkage with parents and police agencies

Help with graffiti clean-up efforts and remember the three “R’s”:

- Report
- Record
- Remove Graffiti

Investigate any rumors from students about any anticipated gang activity.

Use music, drama and sports to promote positive alternatives to gang involvement.

## **Parenting Tips**

Prevention is the key to controlling gang activity. Many parents are unaware that their children are involved in gang activity. Many of the younger gang members are not aware of the realities of the violence associated with gang membership or the finality of death. Parents should look for changes in the behavior patterns of their children. Such changes include truancy, a decline in grades, changing of friends, late hours, graffiti in their bedrooms and other indications of gang involvement.

- Suggestions:**
1. Hold steadfast to home rules
  2. Spend quality time with your child - just for them.
  3. Require kids to call if they are going to be late.
  4. Listen to your child and their friends.
  5. Communicate with parents of children's friends.
  6. Know where your child is at **all** times.

### **Start Neighborhood Watch or Block Watch Programs**

- Activities:**
1. Take elementary students to college/high school games to promote interests in sports.
  2. Host gang free parties (kids can't go outside until ready to leave).
  3. Promote Neighborhood Nite Out (block parties).
  4. Promote family activities.
  5. Promote Community Cookouts