

WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT GANGS COULD SAVE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE

Gangs are a major problem in California. What they do isn't kid stuff. Gang members have destroyed property and committed violent crimes, including maiming and murdering innocent people.

The following information can help parents understand why a young person joins a gang and the warning signs that indicate gang membership.

8 REASONS WHY KIDS JOINING GANGS

- Low self-esteem
- Lack of identity
- Need to feel important
- Companionship/sense of belonging
- Security
- Lack of positive alternative activities, like sports
- Lack of parental involvement
- Peer pressure

SIGNALS THAT CAN INDICATE GANG MEMBERSHIP

- Change in the style of clothing usually worn or wearing one particular color often
- Withdrawing from one's family
- Declining grades and poor school attendance
- Unexplained money or possessions
- Tattoos affiliated with a group
- Use of nicknames
- Appearance of graffiti on personal articles
- Contacts with local police

THERE ARE THINGS PARENTS CAN DO

- Establish non-negotiable family rules regarding the use of alcohol, drugs, and gang membership
- Establish clear guidelines and limits for your children's behavior and their activities
- Spend time with your children; do things with them and attend functions in which they are involved
- Respect your children's feelings and attitudes; help them develop a strong sense of self-esteem
- Seek professional help from a local agency
- Know your children's friends
- Meet regularly with school counselors and teachers
- Educate yourself about gangs and drugs

DON'T THINK THAT BECAUSE SOMEONE IS ON THE THRESHOLD OF JOINING A GANG, OR IS ALREADY A GANG MEMBER, THAT IT IS TOO LATE TO ESTABLISH POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES!

For more information, contact your local anti-gang effort, or call the Office of Criminal Justice Planning at (916) 327-3682 and ask for The Gang Violence Suppression Branch.