



A Parent's Quick Reference Card

Recognizing and Preventing Gang Involvement

This quick reference guide provides common warning signs of gang involvement but may not be all-encompassing. Parents should look for multiple signs to indicate possible gang involvement because some of these indicators alone, such as clothes or musical preferences, are also common among youth not involved in gangs. The following indicators may also point to other changes in your child's life that warrant a conversation. Parents are encouraged to get to know your child's peers and their families, keep abreast of your child's academic and extracurricular life, and seek help early from experts in education, spiritual life, community organizations and law enforcement.

Warning signs that your child may be involved with a gang

- Mentions peers with gang affiliations
- Comes home with unexplained physical injuries (fighting-related bruises or injuries to hands or knuckles)
- Carries a weapon
- Shows an unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing or a particular logo not easily explained by their hobbies or location
- Develops a strong interest in gang-related music, videos, movies, or websites
- Uses unusual hand signals in photos and videos or to communicate with friends
- Has specific drawings or gang symbols on social media accounts, school books, clothes, walls, or tattoos
- Has unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry
- Has been in trouble with the police
- Uses new slang that they are hesitant to explain

Additional changes in behavior to follow up on:

- Withdrawing from family
- Declining school attendance, performance, or behavior
- Staying out late without reason
- Exhibiting signs of drug use
- Displaying a heightened desire for secrecy
- Breaking rules consistently



What parents can do to prevent gang involvement

- Educate yourself about your local gang environment.
- Understand that there are many reasons that children join gangs.
- Spend quality time with your child.
- Be involved with your child's academic and extracurricular activities.
- Build relationships your child's friends and their families.
- Discuss potentially dangerous behaviors openly and without judgment.
- Encourage your child to participate in positive after-school activities with adult supervision (recreation centers, organized sports, and youth groups).
- Take action in your neighborhood.
- Talk with your child about the dangers and consequences of gang involvement. Let your child know that you don't want to see them hurt or arrested. Explain to your child that they should NOT
 - associate with gang members;
 - use hand signs, symbols, or language meaningful to gangs;
 - attend parties or social events sponsored by gangs;
 - wear clothing, including specific colors, that may have meaning to gangs in your area.

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