

If your child wants to leave a gang, seek help from experts. To locate a local agency, you can start your search with the Directory of Crime Victim Services at <http://ovc.ncjrs.org/findvictimservices>.

Contact the National Center for Victims of Crime Helpline at 800-FYI-CALL or call the Hopeline at 800-442-HOPE.



**YOUR
LOGO**

Gang Prevention

Signs Your Child May
Be Associated with
Gang Members

Sponsored by Your
Neighborhood Watch



Gang Prevention

Parents, do not lose your children to gangs. You must be vigilant to prevent your children from joining gangs. Gang membership is a life-long commitment to a life of crime! It is vital that you prevent your children from becoming gang members so you don't have to fight to rescue your children after they have been initiated.

The best strategy is to talk to your children about the dangers of gangs. Let them know they should not associate with gang members. Teach them not to give in to peer pressure. Role play situations to help them practice saying no to offers of smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, selling drugs and joining gangs. Know where they are and what they do after school. Know their friends from school and from the neighborhood. Know the parents of their friends. Keep in contact with their friends' parents to compare notes. Monitor their Internet use. Enroll them in after-school organized activities.

It's hard to know if your children are consorting with gang members. Adolescents like to dress and act like gangsters. They like to look and act like their friends. To understand whether your child is at risk, look for certain signs.

Signs Your Children May Be Associating With Gang Members

- They wear one predominant color, and their friends also wear the same color.
- They regularly wear shirts, jackets and caps with the logo of a particular sports team but they had not been sports fans. Their friends wear the same sports team logo.
- They wear items of clothing consistently to the right OR the left (always the same side): a cap, a belt buckle; one pocket is pulled inside-out; one pant leg is rolled up.
- They trade one or both of their shoelaces for laces of another color.
- They begin to wear oversized pants with pockets large enough to hold weapons or a spray paint can.

- They wear 'hoodies'—shirts and jackets with hoods big enough to hide a person's face from passersby and security cameras.
- They express an interest in getting tattoos. Tattoos are not just permanent decorations to the body. They are signs telling people who you are. For gangs, inmates and ex-convicts, they are criminal résumés.

Signs Your Child is Already a Gang Member

- They spend all of their time with the same set of friends.
- They stop going to school.
- They carry weapons.
- They carry lots of cash.
- They are in trouble with the police.
- They have gang symbol tattoos and use gang hand signs.