

Community

Gangs attempt to instill fear. Their power grows through intimidation of rival gangs and citizens alike, and direct confrontation is best left to law enforcement agencies.

However, everyone has the responsibility to work toward a solution. Following are some of the ways you can participate.

Prevention strategies exist that are designed to educate, inform, and assist in recognizing the hazards involved with gang activity. As increased peer and financial pressures occur, today's youth are being forced to make adult decisions with adult consequences before they have the skills to make meaningful life choices. Get involved in programs that are designed to help our youth.

As soon as a youth exhibits any gang behavior, we must take steps to prevent further association with gangs. The single most important step in intervention is prohibiting a youth's continued contact with negative influences. Once warning signs become evident, immediate intervention and counseling become necessary to prevent further participation. A list of agencies and other helpful organizations are listed under Resources in this brochure.

Provide information to the Gang Intervention Section in the Office of Special Information. Information on graffiti, gang activity, gang involvement, etc., will help our entire community successfully deter this problem. Remember, this is not a problem associated only the large metropolitan areas of our country, but impacts our state, surrounding communities and Fayetteville.

Encourage immediate graffiti removal. If you see graffiti on private property, encourage the owners to call law enforcement, take pictures and remove it as soon as possible.

Call on law enforcement to speak to your neighborhood associations, businesses, and other civic groups about what you can do to help.



The purpose of the Gang Intervention Program is to identify, collect, analyze, and disseminate information on local gang activity to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Additionally, the assigned investigators will:

- Educate the community, school officials, and law enforcement on gang activity;
- Assist in ongoing investigations which may be gang related; and
- Participate in efforts to reduce gang activity and assist in identifying alternatives to gang involvement.

This proactive approach is designed to limit the impact and influence of gangs on the quality of life in the City of Fayetteville.

Resources

Fayetteville Police Department

467 Hay Street
Fayetteville, NC 28301-5565
Gang Intervention Program 433-1524
Youth Services 433-1851
CRIMESTOPPERS 483-8477

Cumberland County Mental Health

High Risk Youth Program 323-0601
ext. 317

Cumberland County Schools

Safe School Administrator 867-3116
ext. 252



Gang Awareness

Gang Intervention Program

What they are and
what we can do

What is a gang?

Street gangs can be described as a group of persons having an informal or unusually close social relationship. They share a common collective identity, usually expressed through a gang name; typically adopt certain symbols and signs or claim control over certain "turf;" and are deliberately involved in illegal or antisocial activities.

Gang structure

Leadership roles are gained by dominance of one person over other members. Gangs are usually comprised of males ranging in age from 13 to 28 years old. However, the number of female members is rapidly increasing. Gangs are moving into middle class neighborhoods and are becoming integrated with all racial and ethnic groups.

Gang identification

Gang members are proud to identify themselves and will freely admit their membership, openly display tattoos, dress in a style identifying their gangs or sets, throw "signs" (gestures with their hands and fingers which identify their gang or set) and often adopt nicknames that become their street identity or "moniker."

Some signs of gang involvement may include:

Colors - subtle or obvious one color of clothing, particular brands of sportswear, hats, shoes, shoelaces, bandannas, jewelry, haircuts, etc. In the past gangs dressed in a basic style or color chosen by the gang, but pressure from law enforcement, school officials and parents has forced changes in dress styles making identification difficult, i.e. all youth who wear sports apparel are not gang members.

Graffiti - unusual signs, symbols, alphabets, and nicknames on notebooks, papers, clothing, walls, etc.

Language - uncommon terms, words, names, or phrases (this changes frequently).

Behavior - changes in behavior, poor grades, secretive friendships, or meetings to attend, etc. Apparent misspellings of words, changing or crossing out certain letters in words.

Dress - sagging is a fad; however, gang members and associates usually "sag" their pants about mid to below the buttocks, with underwear showing.

Gangs and graffiti

Graffiti is one of the most visible signs of gang activity. It is used to mark territories, claim responsibility for violent acts, for individuals to show association and allegiance, or "DIS" (show disrespect) rival gangs or sets. Graffiti has become a problem in many cities affecting property values where it is displayed and allowed to remain. As soon as you find graffiti, take pictures if possible, call a law enforcement agency, and remove the graffiti as soon as possible.

Gang membership

There are many reasons for youth to join gangs including the excitement of gang activity, peer pressure, economic rewards, attention, low self esteem, lack of identity, neglect, and lack of parental involvement. Membership crosses all boundaries of age, sex, race, academic achievement, and economic status.

Schools

Identify schools as neutral ground and adopt a ZERO TOLERANCE policy for gang activity or behavior such as sagging, headgear, bandannas, hand signs, etc.

Train school personnel in gang identification and handling.

Establish policies and procedures that distinguish between misbehavior and criminal acts.

Establish policies and procedures that reflect firm, fair, and consistent treatment for all students.

Create a mechanism for mediation for youth conflicts.

Establish a cooperative relationship with law enforcement and social service personnel.

Communicate suspected gang involvement and activity to administration and/or law enforcement agencies.

Remove graffiti as soon as possible after taking pictures and notifying law enforcement.

Incorporate gang issues into classroom discussions and lessons.

Include decision making, rights and responsibilities, consequences, and problems solving skills.

Parents

As a parent, it is your responsibility to help your children understand the dangers of gang involvement that can lead to a criminal record and the finality of death which is so often the result of gang violence. Encourage your children to report others who pressure them to use, deal drugs, or participate in gang activity. Intimidation and fear can preoccupy and destroy a child's ability to concentrate on school and prevent them from gaining the tools necessary for a meaningful life.

Be aware of changes in your child's behavior; truancy, declining grades, friends, late hours, isolation from the family, use of new nickname, graffiti or tattoos, sagging pants, or outer clothing that are indicators of possible gang association.

To do:

Don't say "it can't happen to me."

Talk with children early and regularly about gangs, alcohol/drugs, violence, and other at-risk behaviors. Set rules for these that are nonnegotiable.

Demand accountability for friends.

Establish clear guidelines and limits for your children's behaviors and activities.

Be aware of and do not permit gang identifiers. Eliminate youth access to weapons.

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Do not permit youth to sponsor or attend unsupervised parties. Don't let your children dupe you into believing that "everyone else does it."

Demand accountability for money and clothes. Ask frequent questions whenever you're suspicious.

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Meet and greet your children's friends.

Communicate with the parents of friends.

Listen and communicate with your children.

Check video games for indicators of fascination with violence or gangster lifestyle (Grand Theft Auto, Scarface, etc.)

Check MySpace.com page (set up your own myspace page to check)