

School Guide to Preventing Gang Involvement

Youth gangs exist in Kentucky communities and schools. Parents, schools, police, government, churches and the community as a whole must join together to make Kentucky a safe environment for our children and their future.

**TALK TO YOUR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER
OR LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT**



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Definition

According to KRS 506.140, a gang is identified as a group of at least five members with some sense of identity and permanence and involvement in illegal activities. The Department of Justice lowers that number to three members.

Gangs have been estimated to have up to 1.5 million members nation-wide. Males and females join gangs and participate in criminal activities as part of those gangs.

Gangs may justify the social structure and loyalties as beneficial, but activities are criminal and destructive.

Gang activity itself is not a criminal act, but the gang's status system and reputation-building methods are mostly based on criminal activity. Research demonstrates that a youth that becomes involved in gang activity has a far higher chance of becoming involved in criminal activity which continues to escalate to more and more serious and violent crimes.

What Schools Can Do to Help

- Build personal relationships with each student.
- Be a positive role model and set the right example.
- Encourage good study habits and academic excellence for each student.
- Develop and support programs in your school to cope with peer pressure, bullying prevention and develop good conflict resolution skills.
- Collaborate with positive after-school activities with adult supervision, organized sports and youth groups and require participation.
- Talk about dangers and consequences of gang involvement through core content activities.
- Work with local law enforcement to stay current on gang markers and identifiers.
- Develop programs that support at-risk students.

Tips to Recognizing Possible Gang Involvement

- Admits to hanging out with kids in gangs or having criminal involvement.
- Shows an unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing, a particular logo, or odd clothing feature such as wearing the belt buckle to the right or left, cuffing one pants leg, etc.
- Has an unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, videos, movies or websites or materials.
- Uses unusual hand signals to communicate with friends.
- Has specific drawings or gang symbols on school books, clothes, walls or wants a very specific tattoo.
- Comes home with unexplained physical injuries (fighting-related bruises or injuries to hands and knuckles).
- Has unexplained cash or goods, including clothing or jewelry.
- Carries or expresses a desire for weapons.
- Has been in trouble with the police.
- Exhibits negative changes in behavior: withdrawing from family, declining attendance, performance or behaviors, staying out late without solid reasons, displaying an unusual desire for secrecy, signs of drug use, breaking rules consistently or suddenly using gang-style slang.