

Parent Guide to Preventing Gang Involvement

Parents, schools, police, government, churches and the community as a whole must join together to make Kentucky a safe environment for our children. But it is primarily the family atmosphere that influences the direction our children take in their future.

THE CHILD YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN!

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



This project was supported by Grant No. 2003-GP-CX-0547 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.

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.

Tips to Preventing Youth from Joining Street Gangs

- Spend quality time with your children.
- Get involved in your child's school activities and get to know their friends and friends' families.
- Be a positive role model and set the right example.
- Encourage good study habits and academic success.
- Teach your child now to cope with peer pressure and develop good conflict resolution skills.
- Encourage participation in positive after-school activities with adult supervision, organized sports and youth groups.
- Talk about dangers and consequences of gang involvement to the entire community.
- Report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

Tips to Recognize 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.