

# California Youth Outreach



## Parent Gang Awareness Training *A Community Response*

California Youth Outreach  
[www.cyoutreach.org](http://www.cyoutreach.org)  
(408) 272-7664

# Recognizing Denial

One of the most difficult issues to deal with in identifying gang members is DENIAL.

## WARNING

The following documentary contains graphic images of gang violence.

Viewer discretion is advised.



# Recognizing Denial



Overcoming denial begins with becoming informed about gang culture activity and membership in your community.

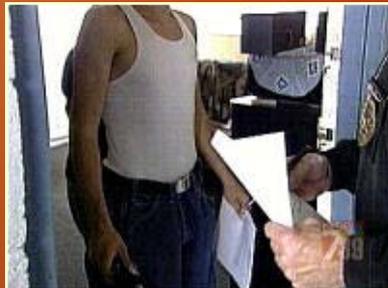
# California Penal Code 186.22

Any ongoing, organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more (specified) criminal acts, having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity.



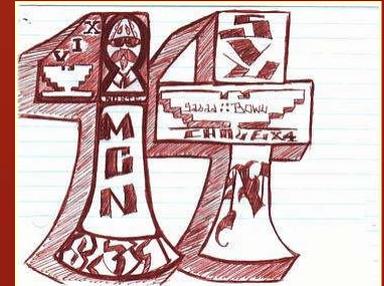
# Cal Gangs

In the state of California there is a 10 point criteria used by law-enforcement to validate a youth as a criminal street gang member.



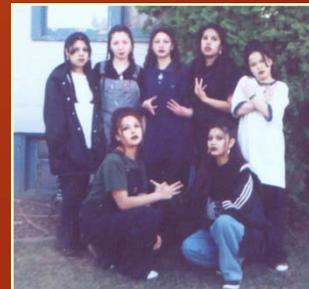
# How youth define gangs and its members

- Colors
- Tattoos/Symbols
- Youth they associate with
- Where they live



# Why Youth Join Gangs

Young people join gangs for a variety of reasons, which can be influenced by conditions in their families, school and neighborhood.



# Five Major Reasons

## ■ Protection

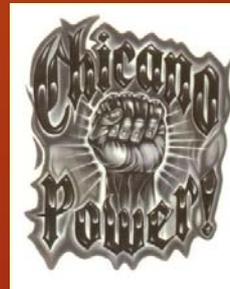
Many early street gangs started for nothing more than protection.



# Five Major Reasons

## ■ Excitement

Many youth join gangs merely for the excitement. Youth say the reason they gang-bang is that it gives them a rush.



# Five Major Reasons

## ■ Identity / Recognition

Every body has a need to be recognized for who they are. Today's society lives in a very competitive way. Many youth are not accepted into certain social circles because they are not smart enough (educated) do not have enough money (poor) or live on the wrong side of town (Social Status).



# Five Major Reasons

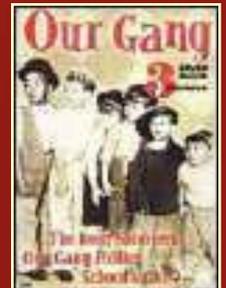
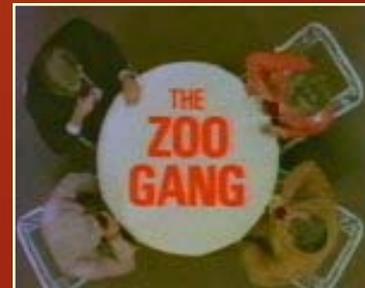
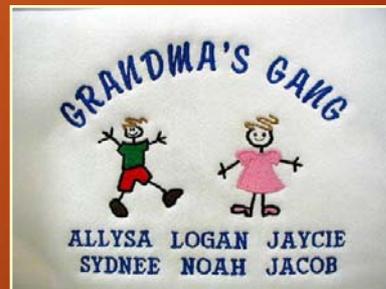
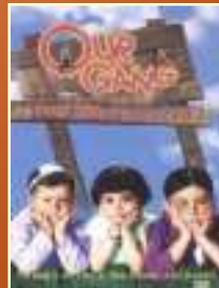
## ■ Opportunity

The connection between economic, poverty, and gangs is not straight-forward. Many economically deprived people are not in gangs and many gang youth are not economically disadvantaged. The risk factors for gang membership are however, tied to economic hardship.



# What is a Gang?

The ability to properly identify a gang is an essential part of any community collaborative approach.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Monikers

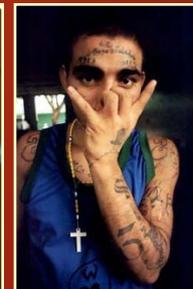
Gang members commonly, but not always, have a nickname or moniker. The name may highlight a real or imagined special physical, personal or psychological trait.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Hand Signs

Hand signs are used in greeting other peer gang members, a way of challenging a rival gang or a form of intimidation to non-gang members. Hand signs vary, depending on what type of gang is using them. Commonly, letters of the alphabet or numbers are formed by using the fingers and hands.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Graffiti

Gang use graffiti to identify themselves and their territory. With graffiti, they mark their territory or turf, declare their allegiance to the gang, advertise the gang status or power, announce their presence, challenge rivals and announce working relationships between gangs. Graffiti is also used to intimidate the residents who live in a gang controlled area.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Tattoos

Tattoos can indicate gang affiliation or geographic origin. These symbols normally means nothing to a non-gang member. However, to gang members they are a code that identifies their gang, their gang affiliation, and is a way to affirm their membership. Some gang member's bodies have become just another canvass for gang graffiti.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Body Modifications

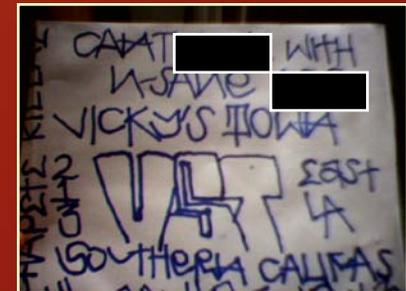
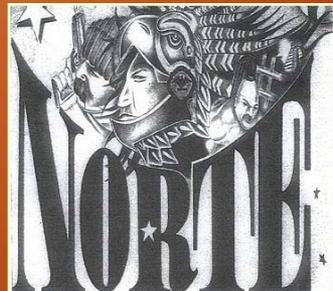
Some gang members purposely scar their bodies instead of applying tattoos. Some burn themselves with cigarettes on their hands, arms and legs to show that they are a member of a gang. Sometimes a gang member may brand the gang's symbol somewhere on his back or arm.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Gang Slang

Many gang members have adopted a verbal code that applies to their gang. Using a specific gang term does not by itself determine gang membership. Literally hundreds of words are associated with the gang culture. While the use of gang slang can be an indicator of gang membership, some gang slang has become popular and is used by the general population.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Photographs

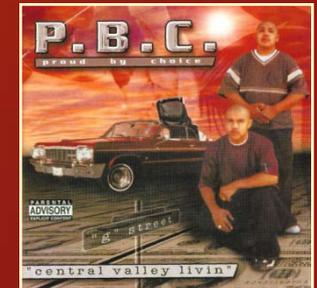
Many gang members keep photo albums with pictures of themselves and their fellow members. These pictures may show individual members of the gang, the style of clothes that are acceptable and the gang's hand sign or graffiti, and may also show gang members posing with weapons or committing crimes.



# Identifying Gang Presence.

## ■ Music

The gang culture is often spread through the music and entertainment industry, which can facilitate the influence of the gang culture on the general population. The characteristics and the lyrics of this type of music refer to gang philosophies and activities and can influence behavior.

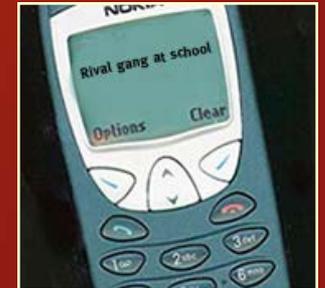
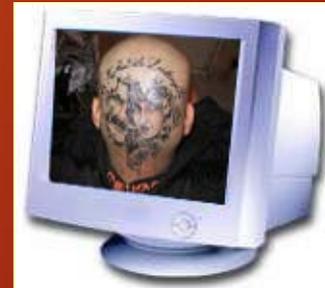


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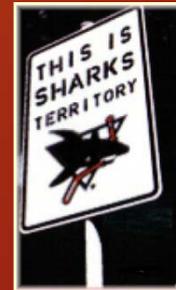
## ■ Technology

Even the advancement of technology has an impact on the gang culture. The use of e-mail has become a common way to communicate. The World Wide Web brings people together who are thousands of miles apart. Now gangs have the opportunity to have a world-wide impact by using the internet.



# Signs of Gang Involvement

Gang involvement can begin as early as elementary school. Children as young as seven or eight years old have been recruited to work for gangs and have become gang members.



# Signs of Gang Involvement

- Decline in grades
- Change of friends
- Truancy
- Keeping late hours
- Alcohol and drug use
- Having large sums of money or expensive items which cannot be explained.



# Signs of Gang Involvement

- Developing major attitude problems with parents, teachers or others in authority.
- Glamorizing Gangs.
- Withdrawing from family.
- Abrupt changes in music, clothing styles.
- The presence of body modifications, including Tattoos, scarring, burns and Brands.



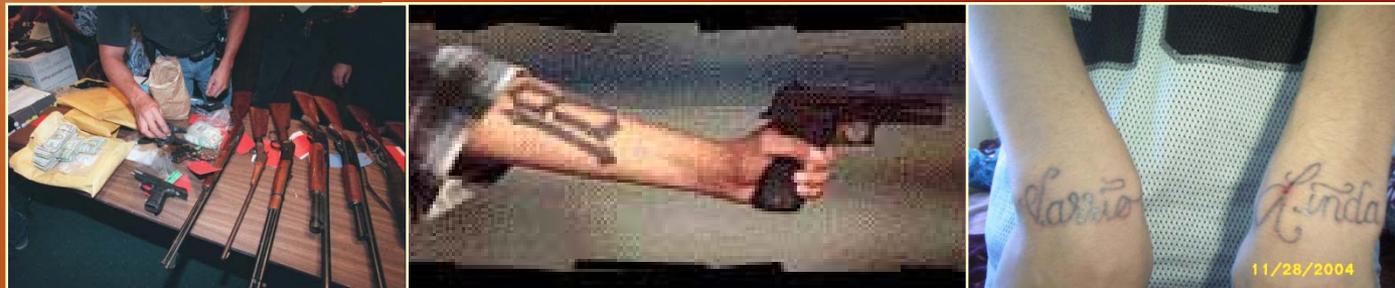
# Signs of Gang Membership

- The presence of gang graffiti in the bedroom or on books, clothing, athletic shoes, posters, and bedroom walls.
- Wearing gang clothing or importance placed on certain color (s).
- The use of hand signs to communicate with other gang members or siblings.



# Signs of Gang Membership

Once in a gang, the child's behavior can change either gradually or suddenly, but it generally follows a pattern. To be accepted by the gang, the new member must adopt a defiant attitude toward authority figures. This defiance may be expressed by disruptive or violent behavior at school or at home.



# Take Action!



# Get Involved!!

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# Alternative Ideas for Parents

- Known your children's friends – ask to meet them and their parents.
- Increase your awareness of your child's belongings, clothes and room. It's OK to look what's in your Childs room.
- Set clear boundaries and standards and stick to them.

# Alternative Ideas for Parents

- Talk with school officials and counselors. Understand what is required of your child at school.
- Stay involved in your child's education and always pay attention to school grades.
- Communicate honestly – understand their feelings. Let them know you love them and care for them. Give them a sense that together you can work things out.

For more information contact

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Visit us at: [www.cyoutreach.org](http://www.cyoutreach.org)