

VOLUNTEERING WITH KIDS: WHY?

Unsupervised “hanging out” can breed gang membership, instilling the wrong values in our youth. Even in affluent families, many children have long blocks of free time with no planned or challenging activity. Involved adults can make sure kids don’t fall in with the wrong crowd.

If adults send the message to children that they are unimportant, it may leave them searching for excitement. This is an invitation for gang influence.

Young people need your time to instill positive values and remind them of the benefits of a good education. Provide incentives for good behavior and help guide youth into appropriate and challenging activities.

Spending time with our youth is a contribution towards the betterment of our community. If we do not take responsibility for our youth, our problems will only grow with each generation.

EFFECT OF GANG INVOLVEMENT

Gangs extract a terrible toll from everyone who comes into contact with them. Parents and relatives of gang members live with a double fear: first for their own safety and that of other non-gang family members and second, for the survival of their gang-member son or daughter. Non-gang friends are cast aside, and soon the youth’s only friends are gang members.

Gang membership, although a temporary phase for most youth, will shape the individual’s future. All formal education is discarded because it counters gang objectives.

Gang members build police records, limiting their employment opportunities. Many will be killed or seriously injured, while others will become addicted to illegal drugs and alcohol.

Gang violence damages neighborhoods through intimidation, vandalism, graffiti, burglary, robbery, and gunfire. Insurance rates climb, and residents live in fear for their well-being. But we can help create healthy futures for your youth and our communities!



MORE INFORMATION / CONTACT NUMBERS

Boise Police / Ada County Dispatch	377-6790
Boise Police Gang / Narcotics Tip Line	608-7900
Crime Stoppers	343-COPS
School Resource Officer Division	570-6440
Ada County Prosecutors Office	287-7700
Ada County Juvenile Probation	577-4800

Crime Stoppers of Southwest Idaho
343COPS.org

www.boisepolice.org

Boise Police Department
333 N. Mark Stall Place
Boise, Idaho 83704

BOISE POLICE DEPARTMENT



A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING LOCAL STREET GANGS

WHAT IS A GANG?

Law enforcement defines a gang as a group of people who form an alliance, to the exclusion of others, to engage in violent, unlawful, and antisocial or criminal activity.

Most visible are youth gangs who model styles displayed by various ethnic groups and they often emulate what they see and hear on television, music videos and the radio. They tend to “hang out” or socialize in an established public settings like nightclubs or other entertainment venues.

The image portrayed in public often does not represent the highly violent behavior that accompanies the gang life-style.

WHO JOINS A GANG?

Most new members are teenagers from all walks of life. Recruits tend to have: poor self-image, low self-esteem, little adult participation in their lives, misdirected racial pride, and/or do poorly in school. Leaders may be adults, generally no older than 25 years.

MEMBERS

Hard Core – Members need and thrive on gang activity and are the leaders. They are violent, streetwise, and knowledgeable in legal matters. They may engage in violence or illegal activities, but generally focus on getting others to commit the criminal acts.

Associates – Members wear gang clothing, often bear tattoos of the gang and attend gang functions. They are often the most active, visible and violent members as they strive to build a reputation among the hard core members.

Aspiring – members wear gang clothing, use the language, and flash the signs in an attempt to gain the status of gang membership.

HOW DOES A GANG WORK?

The gangs power is in its ability to control the group through violence, intimidation and control of resources.

WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN GANGS?

Common reasons for joining:

- promises of recognition
- feeling of power
- authority
- fit in with friends
- attention
- excitement
- protection from other gangs, or
- simply for something to do.

In some cities the primary motives are prestige, status and money that come from drug sales. Here, gangs associate for a variety of reasons, including criminal enterprise.

HOW ARE GANGS IDENTIFIED?

Gang members are proud of their gang and freely admit their membership. They openly use and display their affiliation’s signs.

Gang names – Gangs usually adopt a name that relates to their neighborhood, street, or region. Gangs identified in this area have adopted names from other cities, though some use local names.

Nicknames – Most gang members adopt a nickname or “street name.” It usually fits physical characteristics, personality or role they play. This name will often be found on the side of hats or as a tattoo.

Dress – Members often wear sports clothing in a distinctive style: buttoning the top button only on a shirt or wearing trousers too short or hung low on hips. Tattoos, belts, bandannas, and hats are also used to identify members.

Music and periodicals – Lyrics are about breaking rules, drugs, war, sex, violence, and anti-establishment and glorify the gang life-style. Youth are desensitized viewing this as normal.

Graffiti – Graffiti is vandalism. It decreases property values and speeds deterioration. The message is that citizens aren’t in control of the neighborhood. Graffiti is used to mark status, power and declare allegiance to the gang. Rival gangs may identify everyone in the marked neighborhood as a potential threat. Graffiti written by one gang and crossed out by a rival gang indicates the two gangs are violent towards one another.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Remember: the vast majority of youth and adults are not involved in gang activities. We should draw on the strength of the majority to convert troubled youth into good citizens. More attention should be given to positive role models than to gang activity.

1. **Report all crime and gang activity.** Call police and give full descriptions or call your area Police Gang Specialist. Call at the first sign of gang activities; law enforcement relies on your reports.
2. **Organize a neighborhood watch.** Coordinate efforts with neighbors to keep informed. Neighborhoods where people make their presence felt are less attractive to criminals. Contact Police for information.
3. **Paint out graffiti.** Always! This tells gang members the neighbors “own” the neighborhood and care. It interferes with gang communication. But first, report graffiti. Call your local Police or Sheriff’s Dept.
4. **Get involved with young people.** Volunteer your time. Provide alternatives to “hanging out” and gang activity. Spend time with kids to teach appropriate values. Emphasize that adults care.
5. **Parent education.** Parents can participate in parent education through the Parent Project by contacting schools or juvenile court.