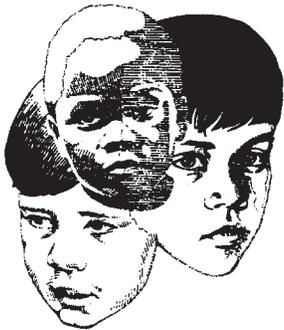


## CONSEQUENCES OF GANG MEMBERSHIP

Youth that fall prey to gang seduction pay a high price for membership. Initiation rights often involve committing serious and sometimes violent crimes.

Gang membership almost guarantees one a criminal record, not to mention the physical risks and dangers of violent activities. The physical risks and dangers include not only the gang member but family members and innocent bystanders as well.

Gangs often depend upon the youngest members to carry out the most serious offenses **because juveniles receive more lenient treatment and lesser penalties when found guilty of a crime.**



Parents and educators who suspect gang activity should take some of the following steps:

- Talk to your child or teenager. Discuss the consequences of being in a gang.
- Involve your child in family and outside activities.
- Take an active interest in your child's schooling and academic progress.
- Contact government agencies such as the police and juvenile authority. They may have a crime prevention or gang specialist who can give you information.
- Call community-based organizations. Many have experience with gang problems and can give you some valuable advice.
- Go to your religious leaders for advice. They may have programs to help neighborhood children.
- Report and remove any graffiti in your neighborhood.



Concord Police Department  
1350 Galindo Street  
Concord, CA 94520-2809

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# TELLTALE SIGNS

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Parents and educators should watch for signs that their children and students may be involved in gangs. These are changes in the children's behavior or activities.

## **Early warning signs include:**

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

## **Telltale signs of gang involvement are:**

- Gang graffiti in their bedrooms on items such as books, posters and bedroom walls
- Wearing gang clothing or colors
- Using hand signals to communicate with other gang members
- Having photographs showing gang names, gang slogans, gang insignia or gang activities
- Gang tattoos or gang insignia
- Disclosure of gang membership
- Witnesses connecting the individual to gang activity

Gang involvement can begin as early as elementary school. Children as young as 7-8 years have been recruited to work for gangs.

Once in the gang, the child's behavior may change either suddenly or gradually, but it will follow a pattern. To be accepted by the gang, he or she must adopt a **defiant attitude** toward authority figures. This defiance may be expressed by violent behavior at school or home.

At school, the child lets everyone know of his or her new status. He wears gang clothing and becomes disrespectful toward the teacher and others. The new gang member may fight others to gain a reputation for being "bad". He will pick a victim but before doing so, he will announce his intentions to friends and others so they can be there to cheer the gang member on and spread the word about his toughness.

When at home, the new gang member's defiance may or may not manifest itself in violence, depending on the relationship with his or her parents and other family members. However, if the family interferes with the child's gang involvement, there may be repeated confrontations.

## **REASONS FOR JOINING GANGS**

Every youth has basic needs for feelings of self-worth, identity, acceptance, recognition, companionship, belonging, purpose, and security. When the youth feels that the family, schools, churches, and communities are not meeting these basic needs, he or she may turn to the gangs.

**If you have any questions regarding Gang Activity...**

**Please call the Concord Police Department Special Victims Unit at (925) 671-3020.**