

TYPICAL PRE-GANG BEHAVIOR

Identification or affiliation with gangs usually does not occur overnight, rather pre-gang behavior most typically begins at an elementary school age.

Children join gangs for a variety of reasons. Some indications that a youth maybe headed towards a gang lifestyle are:

- Poor progress or achievement in school, behavioral problems at school, and/or truancy from school.
- A lack of hobbies or constructive free-time activities.
- Negative contact with and/or perception of the police.
- Problems at home.
- The drawing of gang symbols or graffiti.
- The drawing of gang symbols or graffiti on body parts.
- Associates with or are friends with gang members.
- Wants to or dresses in traditional gang clothes (i.e. baggy pants, oversized tee-shirts, bandanas, dark sunglasses, bald or short hair)
- Resides in a neighborhood where gangs exist.

While the above, maybe characteristics of gang involvement, not all gang members or associates will exhibit noticeable behavior that indicates gang involvement. Parents must continually be aware of the behavior and activities of their children in order to prevent gang membership.

GANG RELATED CLOTHING

Children and teenagers who dress in clothing that resembles gang attire maybe demonstrating an interest in gangs. Their gang attire may attract the attention of other gang members, thereby putting themselves in danger. Nationally, in recent years, children have been shot or killed by gangs simply for wearing gang related clothing. For the safety of your children, it is very important that you do not buy or allow your children to wear any item that gang members use to identify with the gang. Some of the current and traditional gang clothing and styles are listed below:

Gang Related Clothing and Styles – Boys

- Shaved (bald) head or extremely short hair.
- White oversized tee-shirts, creased in the middle and/or white athletic type undershirts.
- Polo type knit shirts (oversized), usually worn buttoned to the collar and/or tucked in.
- Extremely oversized or Solos (Painter) pants.

- Pants worn low, or “sagging”, which are cuffed inside at the bottom or dragging on the ground.
- Baseball caps with the initials of the gang, or other drawings/insignias that represent gang activity.
- Long legged short pants, worn with knee-high socks.
- A predominance of dark or dull clothing, or clothing of one particular color, such as black oversized jackets, sweatshirts, jerseys, etc.
- Black stretch belt with chrome or silver gang initials on the belt buckle.
- Clothing with a mixture of gang colors, such as black and silver, black and white, etc.

Gang Related Clothing and Styles – Girls

- Black or dark clothing and shoes.
- Black oversized jackets, sweatshirts, athletic football jerseys, etc.
- Oversized shirts worn outside of the pants and oversized white tee-shirts.
- Dark jackets with cursive or Old English style lettering and baggy, long pants dragging on the ground.
- Heavy make-up, excessively dark eye shadow, shaved eyebrows, dark lipstick, and dark fingernail polish.
- Tank tops or revealing blouses.
- Stretch belts with gang initials on the belt buckle.

GANGS AND TATTOOS

One of the rituals associated with gang membership is the imprinting of tattoos on the body. The desire for obvious gang identification influences gang involved individuals to place tattoos on their head, face, neck, arms, hands, chest, back, stomach, and other visible body parts. Gang members use tattoos to identify that they are gang involved; to advertise their gang; to glorify their gang, and to receive recognition from other gang members. The tattoo will usually include the name, initials, or symbols of the gang, and the nickname or moniker of the gang member. Adolescents, who are beginning to claim gang affiliation, often draw gang insignias such as dots, x's, or the initials of the gang on their hands or arms with a pen or another writing instrument.

Gang tattoos can wreak havoc on a person's life. They make it difficult to get a job and they attract the attention of other gang members, as well as the police. Tattoos are permanent and require the services of a plastic surgeon for removal.

Even if a tattoo is surgically removed, it is usually replaced with a scar of the same size, as the removed tattoo. Not all tattoos can be removed.

GRAFFITI

Writing on public or private property is an act of vandalism and is against the law (Kansas Statute 21-3720). A person who is arrested and convicted for writing graffiti can be jailed and/or fined. Additionally, they can be held financially liable for the removal of and/or the damage caused by the graffiti.

Often times, gang youth or "taggers" utilize graffiti, such as the name or initials of the gang and its members to mark an area they believe is their territory. This graffiti serves to not only notify another gang and the community, of the presence of the gang, but may also falsely provide the gang members a sense of pride in themselves and their neighborhood. Although gang and tagging graffiti may or may not result in violence, it does contribute to the deterioration of a neighborhood.

Gang graffiti and tagging are a costly, destructive and selfish form of expression. The writers of graffiti give no thought to the person or community, whose property is being damaged and destroyed by the graffiti. There is no consideration, as to how the graffiti affects the property owners, those who have to clean it up or those who must pay for the clean up. Youth who write graffiti need to first ask themselves, how would they feel if someone else wrote upon, or marked up their or their parent's property or belongings.

A very small percentage of people are impressed by, or view graffiti, as a positive form of self-expression. Those who choose to deface property with graffiti, paint an unfavorable picture of themselves, their cultural group, their city and their neighborhood.

Landscaping graffiti-prone areas or easily accessible block or building walls with thick shrubbery, vines and thorny bushes will help to deter graffiti.

To report gang activity or graffiti call:

Olathe Police Department 913-971-7500

For more information about this and other subjects, check out the Office of Juvenile Justice website at:

www.ojjdp.com

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IS YOUR CHILD IN A GANG?



**Provided by the
Olathe Police Department**

