

YOUTH GANG INVOLVEMENT

Evidence of gang activity has spread nationwide to both urban and rural communities alike. It is important for parents, schools, and communities to educate themselves about local gang activity so we can work together to address the problem.

Local Gangs

- Local gang names and symbols are always changing
- Local gangs are often sets or cliques of nationally recognized gangs
- Many times local gang names are taken from neighborhoods and nearby areas

Signs of Possible Gang Involvement

Simply dressing a certain way or listening to a particular type of music may be a result of today's culture and not necessarily an indicator of gang involvement. However, multiple signs from the list below should raise concern and warrant further investigation.

- Showing interest in wearing clothing of one color
- Drawing gang symbols on backpacks, notebooks, art projects, walls
- Displaying gang tattoos (to include cigar burns), shaving parts of eyebrows
- Displaying gang symbols on belt buckles, belts, hats
- Using hand signs to communicate
- Carrying weapons
- Speaking in gang slang, writing in a secretive gang alphabet
- Socializing with known gang members
- Losing interest in family, school, friends, staying out later than normal

Who Joins Gangs?

Gang members generally range in age from 12–24 years and come from all ethnic groups and income levels. Most gang members are male with approximately 10% female. Risk factors include:

- Low self-esteem
- Lack of involvement in school and community activities
- Living in an area of high gang activity
- Needing a sense of belonging
- Lack of parental supervision
- Exposure to media that glorifies gang violence

Important Tips to Remember

Parents:

- Know your child's friends
- Be a positive role model
- Encourage your child to be involved in afterschool activities
- Know where your child is at night
- Set limits for your child
- Report suspected gang activity to law enforcement

Schools:

- Involve parents, counselors, school resource officers (SRO), and school safety employees (SSE)
- Follow ACPS Regulations JLDBA
- Promote gang awareness for all school staff

