

What is a street gang?

Three or more people who:

- Share a unique name or have identifiable marks (such as tattoos, graffiti, colors, etc.)
- Associated together on a regular basis and sometimes claim a specific territory
- Engage in antisocial, unlawful or criminal activity

Some common street gang crimes are:

- ✓ Murder
- ✓ Drug distribution
- ✓ Arson
- ✓ Vandalism
- ✓ Robbery
- ✓ Rape
- ✓ Assault
- ✓ Burglary/theft

Gangs & potential gang members are identified by:

Gang colors

Clothing/style of dress

Graffiti

Hand signs/symbols

Gang writing/codes

Resources

New Jersey Office of the Attorney General
<http://www.state.nj.us/lps/>

New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission
<http://www.state.nj.us/lps/jjc/jjchome.html>

New Jersey's online Gang Free Community
<http://www.njgangfree.org/home.htm>

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New Jersey PTA
<http://www.njpta.org/>

DYFS homepage
<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dyfs/>

New Jersey Department of Human Services
<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/>

National Youth Gang Center
<http://www.iir.com/nygc/>

Care Plus NJ Child and Adolescent Services
http://www.careplusnj.org/services_child_adolescent.html

Business Office: (201)-265-8200
Immediate Access for Help:
(201)-986-5000

Hotlines

New Jersey State Police Street Gang Bureau
1-877-SGU-NJSP or (609) 538-6062
email: NJSPSGB@gw.njsp.org

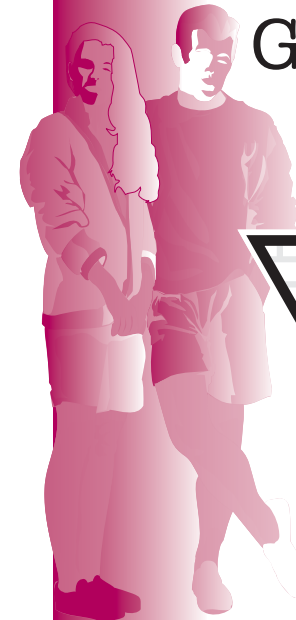
Division of Youth and Family Services
Action Line
800-331-DYFS

NJ Substance Abuse Hotline
1-800-225-0196

Family Help Line
800-THE-KIDS

Know the Signs

A Parent's Guide to Teens & Gangs



There are approximately 6,900 gang members under the age of 18 in New Jersey.*

This number represents 43% of all gang members in our State.

If you have a gang presence in your community, then you have a gang problem. The presence of gang members in a community can be a precursor to increasing levels of crime.

Gang members are from both poor and wealthy neighborhoods and from big cities and small rural towns.

In addition, gang members may be of any race, socio-economic background, gender, or age.

In the year 2004, the New Jersey State Police Gang Survey identified 148 gangs in NJ with at least 16,000 members across the state. And of the

municipalities with a gang presence, half reported incidents in their schools.

Why do teens join gangs?

Teens join gangs for a variety of reasons. Some are seeking excitement; others are just looking for prestige, protection, a chance to make money, or just a sense of belonging. Many teens that join gangs have low self esteem and are searching for acceptance. They may turn to gangs when their need for love and support is not being met at home. Gangs take advantage of this by promising to act as a new family. Their offer of support and stability appeals to many youth but the gangs are only manipulating our kids with false promises.

Recognizing the signs that a child might be involved in a street gang:

- Sudden disinterest in school/poor grades
- Obsessed with one particular color of clothing
- Withdrawal from family activities
- Sudden change in friends
- Develops an unusual desire for privacy

OR if there is evidence of:

- Physical injury (such as being beaten)
- Unexplained cash or goods (i.e., clothing, jewelry)
- Peculiar drawings or language on schoolbooks, etc.

ATTENTION PARENTS:

You must exercise caution in assuming that your child is involved in gang activity. Communication with your child is crucial in determining the level, if any, of your child's involvement in a gang.

What parents can do:

- Stress the importance of school/good grades
- Spend quality time with your children
- Encourage your child to get involved in athletics/other recreational programs
- Know whom your children are spending time with
- Help children develop self-control and deal appropriately with problems
- Listen to your children and communicate with them about their concerns and fears

Establish rules, set limits, and BE CONSISTENT!

