

Once found only in large cities, gangs have invaded communities of all sizes across the United States. Gangs create fear and violence in neighborhoods, initiate drug traffic, destroy property, and drive out businesses. Gangs draw young people away from school and home and into a life of violence, guns & drugs.

Gangs constantly change--forming, disbanding, altering strategies, adopting new leaders and locations. The most recent trend in Metro area gangs involves a toning down of appearance, a less visible profile, a more secretive approach. It appears that gangs want to be less noticeable because their focus has shifted to making money from drug operations. They now structure themselves for protection and profit, joining rival gangs while "staging" conflicts with them; a higher level of criminal sophistication and enterprise.



## How does a gang work?

Gang power derives from its ability to control others using violence and intimidation. A gang bestows identity on uninformed youths. It gives them connections. Once inducted into a gang, a youth is often threatened or intimidated to stay in the gang or suffer some violent physical retaliation.

## Why do people join gangs?

- ◆ For promises of recognition
- ◆ The feeling of power & authority
- ◆ To fit in with friends or family
- ◆ To receive attention & excitement
- ◆ For protection from other gangs
- ◆ For simply something to do...
- ◆ To fill an emotional void with family
- ◆ For money from drug trafficking

## Who joins gangs???

- ◆ Both males and females
- ◆ All races, backgrounds & religions
- ◆ **Recruits generally have:**
- ◆ Low self-esteem
- ◆ Little adult participation in their lives
- ◆ Misdirected racial or ethnic pride
- ◆ A poor school record
- ◆ Family or friendship ties to other gang members

## Can you identify a gang?

**Gang Names:** Gangs usually adopt a group name that relates to their neighborhood, street, region or race. Many have adopted names from Southern California gangs/areas.

**Moniker:** Most gang members adopt a moniker or "street name." The name usually fits a physical or personality trait. This name will often be found on the side of a hat or as a body tattoo.



**Dress:** Members often wear sports clothing in a distinctive style such as buttoning the top button only of a shirt, wearing pants that hang low on the hips, or rolling up one pant leg. More recently, some gangs dress less distinctively to attract less attention from police officers.

## What can parents do?

If you notice the following signs, get help by contacting your school counselor, the gang crimes unit, or the Unified Police Department:

- ◆ Changes in types of friends
- ◆ Changes in dress habits-same colors all the time
- ◆ Gang symbols on books etc.
- ◆ Tattoo's/ symbols on clothes
- ◆ Secretiveness about activities
- ◆ Extra cash from unknown sources
- ◆ Carrying a weapon
- ◆ Declining interest in family and school
- ◆ Arrests by the police etc.

**Make sure your child doesn't need a gang!**

- ◆ Show your child love and affection. Talk with and listen to your child! Supervise their activities and help them get involved in athletics or other activities that interest them.
- ◆ Know your children's friends
- ◆ Know where they are at all times
- ◆ Put high value on education
- ◆ Talk about values and why gangs are dangerous. Discuss things like drugs, violence, hatred etc.



## What can your community do about gangs?

**A**n organized neighborhood that takes pride in their community will often deter gangs from establishing themselves in the area. When gang members determine that residents keep to themselves and do not communicate, they also assume residents will not report crime to law enforcement. Such a neighborhood is a prime target for criminal gang activity and for the recruitment of new gang members.

**Report all crime and gang activity.** Prepare to give pertinent information, such as names, places, times, and full descriptions. Unless you report crime, little can be done to apprehend suspects and prevent them from committing the same crime again.



**Organize a Neighborhood Watch.** Coordinate effort with neighbors to build strength and to keep each other informed. A crime prevention specialist can assist you in organizing your first neighborhood meeting and can also provide security checks of your property at no cost to you.



**Be visible.** Neighborhoods where people work and play in their yards, walk the dog, pick up litter, and make their presence felt is less attractive to any criminal. Keep a light on all night.



**Paint out graffiti.** This tells gang members that the residents “own” the neighborhood and care about it. It interferes with gang pride and gang communications.



**Get involved with young people.** Volunteer your time through parks, schools, churches or service organization’s for young people’s activities. Provide alternatives to “hanging out” and gang activity. Spend time with kids to teach appropriate values and to emphasize that adult’s care.



**Become aware and remain informed.** Citizens armed with basic knowledge recognize the early warning signs of gang activity and report gang-related incidents. Salt Lake Area Gang Project officers give presentations tailored for different age

UPD Dispatch	743-7000
UPD Administration	468-3900
Crime Prevention	468-3901
Graffiti Clean-Up	468-2182

Unified Police Department  
Holladay City Precinct



## GANGS: What is a Gang?



## What is a Gang?

“A group of people who form an allegiance to the exclusion of others, for a common purpose, and to engage in violent, unlawful, or criminal behavior.”

*Unified Police Department  
Sheriff James M. Winder*

[www.updsl.org](http://www.updsl.org)  
743-7000