



Fellsmere Police Department Crime Watch Division
"Community, Caring, Partnership"

WHY DO GANGS USE GRAFFITI AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

As gang activity increases so does the graffiti. Graffiti has been called the "newspaper of the streets." Each gang has its unique symbols and cryptic types of writing. Graffiti is not artwork; it is sophisticated communication that publicizes the gangs power status, delineates territory, sends messages and warns intruders. Graffiti upside down or crossed out is generally a 'put down' or threat to a rival gang or person. 'Death warrants' for police officers are known to have been posted with graffiti.

WHAT DO YOU DO ABOUT GANG GRAFFITI?

Read It! Record It! And Remove It! Gang graffiti left unchecked can be dangerous. Remember it can communicate an outright threat against an opposing gang or person. First, the graffiti must be read and interpreted for danger signals. Second, it should be photographed. Then a police report should be made for tracking purposes. Finally, the graffiti should be removed to reduce the likelihood of continued violence

Contact Us

Emergency calls 911
Crime Line 772-569-6700

Email Tips To: PoliceDepartment@CityofFellsmere.org
25 South Cypress Street
Fellsmere, FL 32948



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CONSEQUENCES

Joining a gang is never a good move. At best, it puts the member and his family in danger of attacks, and at worst, can land the member in jail or the morgue. Some of the consequences of gang involvement are:

- Constant conflict with other gangs (more enemies than friends!)
- Increased probability of arrest while in the company of gang members;
- Increased probability of injury or death while associated with "targeted" gang members;
- Drug/alcohol abuse;
- Personal retribution for offenses suspected to have been committed by his/her gang;
- Intimidation/victimization of siblings/family/friends due to gang affiliation.

Female Involvement

Girls are often intricately involved with street gangs, whether on the fringe as girlfriends, or as full-fledged members of an affiliated girl gang with a similar name. The initiation into the gang sometimes includes sexual assault. Male gang members often use their female acquaintances to hold or transport drugs or weapons as well as other contraband, or to provide false alibis when arrested or accused of criminal activity. In addition, they have used vehicles belonging to female acquaintances to conduct criminal activities, or their residences as "safe houses" or "party" houses.

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GANGS

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. Know your children's friends.
2. Know about who and what influences your children.
3. Know what your children are doing at all times.
4. **Become involved** with them and occupy their time.
5. Strive for good communication between you and your child.
6. **Again, spend time** with them.
7. **Do not allow gang dress.**
8. **Do not allow hanging** in the streets or mall.
9. **Be very suspicious** of gang writing, graffiti or tattoos.
10. **Encourage anti-gang attitude** at home.
11. **Learn about gangs and drugs.**
12. **Participate in your child's education.** Find out what's happening at school.
13. **Get involved in community affairs.**
14. **Set the example for your kids.** They will do what you want.
15. **Believe in your young person.**

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PARENTAL STRATEGIES TO COMBAT GANGS

1. Spend more recreational and leisure-time activities with your children.
2. Crack-down and assist law enforcement in stopping gang activities in your community.
3. Step-up efforts to dry up the chief source of gang money. (DRUGS)
4. Increase parental supervision of your children, their activities and their friends.
5. Collaborative efforts between police, community residence and **the young** people of your community.

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Please answer the following questions and add up your score to determine whether your gang activity is developing in your neighborhood.

1. Is there graffiti on or near your neighborhood or community? (5)
2. Is the graffiti crossed out? (10)
3. Do the young people in your community wear colors, jewelry, clothing, flash hand signs, or display other behaviors that may be gang related? (10)
4. Are drugs available in or near your community? (10)
5. Was there a significant increase in the number of physical confrontations within the past 12 months in or near your community? (5)
6. Is there an increasing presence of weapons in your community? (5)
7. Are beepers, pagers, or cellular phones used by the young people in your community? (10)
8. Has there been a drive-by shooting in or around your community? (15)
9. Have you had a "show-by"(display of weapons in or around your community? (10)
10. Is the truancy rate and/or daytime burglaries in your community increasing? (5)
11. Have racial incidents increased in your community? (5)
12. Is there a history of gangs in your community? (10)
13. Is there an increasing presence of "informal social groups' with the unusual names that have words like: Kings, Disciples, Queens, Posse, Crew?

OVER

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Add up your score:

0-20 points = No Problem

25 - 45 points = Emerging Problems

50 - 65 points = You Have Problems

70 + points = There Are Serious Problems

At 50+ points a need exists to develop a gang prevention and intervention program.



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WARNING SIGNS

- A sudden drop in grades and a lack of interest in school;
- New friends (boys or girls) who are "questionable" characters in the eyes of parents;
- Changes in manner or dress and adopting gang-style clothing, jewelry, and/or tattoos;
- Gang graffiti or symbols on his/her personal property;
- Changes in vocabulary and use of gang slang;
- Changing a nickname to something more acceptable to a gang;
- Unexplained increase in his/her personal monetary income;
- Possession of commercially made or "makeshift" weapons;
- Possession of drugs or other controlled substances;
- Changes in health that may be due to drug/alcohol abuse;
- Unexplained threats/messages from callers who refuse to identify themselves to parents;
- Otherwise unexplained damage to property;
- Inability to account for time spent away from home;
- Curfew violations on a regular basis (17 years of age and younger).

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Avoiding gang involvement

Parents can do a lot of simple things to prevent their children's involvement in gangs. Some of the activities that they can conduct are to:

1. Always know where your children are, who they are with, and enforce the curfew regulations for anyone 17 and under (Sunday through Thursday, 11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 12 p.m.);
2. Support your children's involvement in extracurricular activities at school or other legitimately organized events;
3. Sit down and explain the inherent dangers of gang affiliation to your children, including intimidation and retaliation possibilities against any family member;
4. Stand firm on the prosecution of violent youth;
5. Stay current on what's going on in your children's lives at school, with friends, and outside activities. Make sure that you notice any striking changes in behavior or attitude;
6. Contact your local law enforcement agency to report gang activity, threats or rumors.
7. Use the Crimestoppers program (1-800-323-6734) for anonymity;
8. Start or become involved in neighborhood watch groups in your area.

If you suspect your child is involved with gangs, there are several things that you can do as a parent. First, search his/her belongings for weapons, drugs and gang paraphernalia. In addition, confront you child about your suspicious, or your findings. The Fellsmere Police Department and your child's teacher are also good sources to confirm or deny your suspicions. If your child's involvement in a gang is confirmed, seek counseling from local anti-gang organizations (UTAG) or form a parent's council to discuss mutual problems and help promote constructive activities for youth.

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WHAT ARE SOME TYPICAL PRE-GANG BEHAVIORS?

Gang involvement does not happen over night. It is a gradual process and if you are not alert you will see the signs.

1. **Poor** progress or achievement in school.
2. **Truancy** from school.
3. **Lack** of hobbies or too much **leisure time**.
4. **Frequent** contact with authority figures or **police**.
5. **Draws** gang insignias/symbols.
6. **Problems** at home.
7. **Lives** in neighborhood where gangs exist.
8. **Friends** are gang members or "dressing down" or "sagging and bagging" in **gang attire**.
9. **Begins** dressing in traditional gang clothes.

These items are characteristics of gang involvement. However, some people who **join** or associate with gangs do not dress in the traditional attire and do not exhibit conspicuous behavior to show gang involvement. Parents must be aware of the **behavior** and activities of their children. Continual monitoring of behavior and **positive** verbal communication between parents and young people is a must for **gang membership** prevention.

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Gangs

Street gangs are pervasive throughout the United States, including Fellsmere. The following are some frequently asked questions about gangs. This information has been provided by the Fellsmere Police Department. It is intended to dispel some of the myths that sometimes surround street gangs.

Definition of Gang

A street gang is an organized group with an identifiable leader (formal or informal) that shows unity and loyalty, especially in times of conflict. An offense against one member is frequently considered an offense against all members. The gang often exhibits disrespect for established authority of any kind, independence, and a general lack of conventional morality. Members display antisocial and criminal behavior that sometimes results in their arrest. Eventually, members will probably adopt the gang's "official" symbol and display the insignia in the form of a personal tattoo. The gang's hand signs are also used to identify the individual as a member of that specific gang.

Reasons for Involvement

Lack of success in school, sports or other conventional activities sometimes leads to poor self-esteem for the individual, particularly if the student is ostracized by peers. Personal problems in the home may add to his/her distress. As such, the individual may turn to a street gang for acceptance and recognition by others. An individual's vulnerability to a street gang can sometimes lead to a perceived need to join a gang, particularly if he/she resides in a gang-infested area. In some cases, an individual's siblings or relatives may be members of a gang, resulting in familial gang involvement.

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