

Gang Squad

Description of services

The Gang Squad is a program for youth that are identified as gang affiliated or are in danger of being influenced by peer pressure to join. Youth are able to participate in discussion groups. Facilitators implement workshops, seminars, training and active street level outreach. Gang Squad workers are actively involved in the community as well as having a presence in all Dane county middle and high schools. Gang squad workers participate on several committees, conduct various trainings on gang related topics, and are available as resources to work with gang involved or at-risk youth. Gang squad workers can access resources including employment/vocational services, tattoo removal and enrichment activities. The purpose of the gang squad is to provide street level outreach and education around gang related issues to youth and the community at large.

SIGNS OF GANG INVOLVEMENT

- Look for changes in behavior and lifestyle.
- Drug and alcohol use.
- Decline in grades at school.
- Truancy.
- Change of friends.
- Keeping late hours.
- Having large sums of money or expensive items that they cannot explain.
- Gang graffiti in their bedroom.
- Wearing gang clothing or colors (e.g. Red or Blue).
- Using hand signals to communicate with other gang members.
- Gang tattoos or gang insignias.
- Disclosure of gang affiliation.

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE JOIN GANGS

- A search for love, structure, and discipline.
- A sense of belonging and commitment.
- The need for recognition and power.
- Companionship, training, excitement and activities.
- A sense of self-worth and status.
- A place of acceptance.
- The need for physical safety and protection.
- A family tradition.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GANG AFFILIATION

- History of family gang involvement.
- Evidence of parental abuse or neglect.

- Communication barriers between parent and child.
- Poor academic achievement and early anti-social behavior.
- Displays low self-esteem or experimenting with drugs and alcohol.
- Isolates themselves with others experiencing similar social and personal problems.

GANG COMMUNICATION

Street gangs communicate through their actions, language, clothes, hand signs, graffiti, and tattoos. The gang's image and reputation depend on recognition, and it is critically important to its members because such visibility enhances the reputation.

GRAFFITI – Verbal as well as non-verbal communication are ever present and take a variety of different forms. Another form of gang communication, and certainly the most observable, are wall writings called graffiti. Graffiti is an important part of gang tradition.

HAND SIGNS – Another non-verbal method of gang communication is that of flashing gang signs. Flashing or tossing gang signs is a face-to-face challenge. Confrontations frequently begin with gang signs being flashed between rivals and escalate into verbal and physical violence.

TATTOOS – Gangs use tattoos as a method of communication and identification. Most of the tattoos that gang members have on their bodies related to their gang membership.

DRESS – Another indication of gang membership is the way the individual is dressed. Many use the latest sports fashions, with their logo on the jackets and caps.

PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

1. Support efforts that prevent young people from joining gangs.
2. To provide a reason and means for young people to get out of gangs.
3. To empower individuals, families, school, and communities so that they can take action to solve problems associated with gangs, and assist them in working with law enforcement.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PARENT(S)?

- Show your children love, security and respect.
- Know your children's friends and become involved in his or her activities.
- Know where your children spend their time after school, during evenings, and on weekends. • Check with the parents of their friends about their activities.
- Become involved at school; talk with teachers and counselors.
- Become familiar with current gang symbols in the area.
- Involve your children in church and recreational activities.
- Increase your communication with your children and watch for indicators.
- Build self-esteem in your children. Provide opportunities for involvement and reinforcement.
- Model expected behavior.
- Be a positive role model.

- SPEND QUALITY TIME WITH YOUR KIDS!
- Please listen to your children.
- Participate in parent training.
- Learn about gangs and drugs.
- Get involved in community affairs.
- **Do not allow** hanging out in the streets.

AS AN EDUCATOR?

- Watch for gang affiliation indicators.
- Photograph and remove any graffiti on the premises or schoolwork.
- Provide extracurricular programs for youth to participate in.
- Keep informed about gang behavior in the Madison community.
- Communicate with police officers that regularly patrol the area.
- Provide information to school officials on gang member activities.

AS A YOUTH?

- Show your parents love and respect.
- Keep your communication lines open with parents.
- Choose your companions very carefully.
- Be open and honest with your parents. Tell them how you feel.
- Respect the rights of others.
- Stay in school, and receive a quality education.
- Appreciate family.
- Stand up for what is right.
- Believe in yourself.
- If approached by gangs or gang members don't be afraid to tell an adult.

GAIT (Gang Assessed Action Intelligence Intervention Team)

GAIT is an initiative which was developed in order to assess, gather, coordinate, and disseminate information related to youth gangs on behalf of the Children Youth and Families Division of the Dane County Department of Human Services.

Each DCDHS Delinquency Services unit (county-wide) will designate at least one social worker or social services support specialist to be part of a specialized unit on gangs. Participants in the Gang Specialist Unit (GAIT) initiative will attend monthly meetings as well as receive specialized gang related training.

The GAIT members will coordinate with the DCNIP Gang Squad workers in order to give and receive crucial information related to gangs. This information will then be filtered down to the units. The GAIT workers will be a point of contact in each of their respected offices for gathering information and will act as a resource for their units on topics related to gangs.

Staff Contact Information:

Gang Squad

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GAIT

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Related Links:

Gang Pamphlets (English)

Gang Pamphlets (Spanish)

Gang Pamphlets (Hmong)

Madison Police Department

POS Manual

George Knox Gang Research

National Assoc of Black SW

Wisconsin Clearinghouse

On Balance

OJJD

EISU/Prevention Services

<http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/police/>

<http://www.ngcrc.com/>

<http://www.socialworkers.org/>

<http://wch.uhs.wisc.edu/>

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>