

YOUTH, GANGS, AND DRUGS

***“Gang Crimes Are Not Prevented By The Electric Chair;
They Are Prevented In The High Chair”***
(Dr. Matthew David O’Deane, “Gang Investigator’s Handbook”)

A community service
informational brochure

from

Wyoming Valley Alcohol
and
Drug Services, Inc.

wvadsinc.com

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRUGS AND GANGS?

Street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs are the primary distributors of illegal drugs on the streets of the United States. There are 30,000 gangs in the United States with close to 1 million members. According to a recent Department of Justice survey, 20 percent of students aged 12 through 18 reported that street gangs had been present at their school during the previous 6 months. Gangs represent less than 1 percent of the total population in most communities; however, in many areas, they commit as much as half of all crime.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF GANGS?

- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- African-American
- Asian
- Prison
- Outlaw Motorcycle

Additionally, there are SUPER GANGS whose membership typically exceeds 1,000 members, and they operate in numerous states with extensive and well-organized drug networks.

Examples of Super Gangs:

- Bloods
- Crips
- Sureños
- Norteños
- Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13)
- Latin Kings
- Black Gangster Disciples
- 18th Street
- The Folk Nation
- The People Nation

WHY HAS WVADS, INC. DECIDED TO BECOME INVOLVED IN PREVENTION/EDUCATION ON GANGS?

Today, more than at any other time in our history, more youth have become disenfranchised from their individual families and the community as a whole. Dr. Matthew David O'Deane in his book, "Gang Investigator's Handbook", states, "Many gangs exploit the weaknesses of youth recruits, playing on their own fears and vulnerabilities and manipulating them into believing that the gang will be a better family when compared to their real family." Additionally, according to Dr. O'Deane, "members are being recruited between 9 and 14 years old and more females are being recruited than in the past." Our agency, as well, has become increasingly concerned that more youth are becoming fixated and enamored with the gang culture; hand signs used by various gangs, tattoos affiliated with gang names, clothing/patches specific to certain gangs, paraphernalia. Additionally, youth gangs have proliferated since 1980 and are attracting youth at earlier ages. It is imperative, we feel, to challenge our community to become pro-active through the development of educational and informative resources. After all, is there anything more important than our children?

ARE THERE SIGNS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE MAY BE INVOLVED WITH A GANG?

- Skipping school/truancy
- Using gang hand signs
- Wearing clothing of the same color
- Wearing bandanas
- Rolling up their pant legs in a certain way
- Gang related/specific tattoos
- Imitate the dress and actions of rap artists
- Drug/alcohol use
- Sudden changes in friends
- Decline in school grades
- Withdrawing from family activities
- Staying out late or all night
- Arrogant or defiant attitude
- Having money without having a job
- Using gang language
- Running away
- Becoming sexually promiscuous
- Suicide attempts
- Involvement in criminal activity

WHY DO GANGS FORM?

According to Dr. Matthew David O'Deane, author of the "Gang Investigator's Handbook", "gangs form in part because they fulfill crucial psychological needs for their members." Many experts today feel that an unstable family unit is the greatest predictor of gang membership, even more so than poverty or lack of social services. Gang research findings indicate that compared with non-gang youth, gang members are more socially inept, have lower self-esteem, and in general, have sociopathic characteristics. Additionally, according to the research, they have more delinquent views of themselves, have experienced more traumatizing events in their life, and have greater tendencies to resolve conflicts by threats and violence. One of the most consistent findings from research on gangs is the role of negative peer pressure/influence. The strongest predictors of sustained gang affiliation are a high level of interaction with delinquent, anti-social peers, and a low level of interaction with positive social peers.

WHY DO YOUTHS JOIN GANGS?

- Excitement
- To sell drugs
- To make money
- Protection from other gangs
- Want to enhance their well-being
- Social relationships that give them a sense of identity
- For acceptance

HOW DO RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS PLAY A ROLE IN GANG INTEREST?

Risk factors can negatively influence young people to engage in behaviors that are injurious to their health and safety. When risk factors are present in a child's life, they increase the likelihood that the young person will engage in anti-social behaviors, drug and alcohol experimentation, and criminal activity. Additionally, they can be more vulnerable to gang recruiting efforts in the community.

Examples of Risk Factors:

- Low self-esteem
- Poor adult role models in child's life
- Dysfunctional family unit
- Drug and alcohol abuse by adults in family
- Family management problems
- Poor communication within family
- Lack of effective socialization and recreation
- Association with unhealthy peers
- Lack of adult role models
- Low commitment to school
- Family disorganization
- Friends who use drugs or are gang members
- Interaction with delinquent peers
- Deviant attitudes
- Fatalistic view of the world
- Illegal gun ownership
- Alcohol and drug use
- Early sexual activity, especially among females
- Victimization

On the other hand, the presence of protective factors in a child's life enhances and augments the likelihood that they will not engage in behaviors that pose a risk to their health and safety. Protective factors create what is known as "resiliency" in a child; the ability to handle themselves in a positive manner, whatever situation they find themselves in. They will make good, healthy decisions that insulate them from negative consequences.

Examples of Protective Factors:

- Strong self-esteem
- Healthy socialization and recreational outlets and activities
- Positive adult role models
- Nurturing family unit
- Communication among family members is encouraged
- Healthy peer associations
- Participation in school and community clubs, organizations, and activities (volunteerism)
- Effective coping skills and problem solving skills
- Volunteerism in community
- Commitment to school
- Striving to achieve goals

- **GANG RELATED PREVENTION AND EDUCATION WEBSITES/RESOURCES**

- knowgangs.com
- gripe4rkids.org
- focusas.com/gangs.html
- operationnogangs.org
- gangfree.org
- great-online.org
- nationalgangcenter.gov
- openthegate.org
- gwcinc.com/gguide.htm
- nagia.org
- G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training Evaluation)...Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco & Firearms (school-based gang prevention curriculum)
- The Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program (Spergel et. al.)...(community mobilization program)

DOES WVADS, INC. PROVIDE PREVENTION/EDUCATION PROGRAMS ABOUT GANGS?

Yes! As stated in this informational brochure, gangs and drugs go hand in hand. Furthermore, we are in a position, through our various treatment programs developed for youth and our school and community-based prevention/education services, to deliver programs that reduce and hopefully eliminate youth involvement with gangs. As Dr. Matthew O'Deane states, "By the time some communities acknowledge that they have a gang problem, it may be too late to prevent it. Community denial of the presence of gangs continues to be a problem in places that are more concerned about the perception than the reality of gangs." Our agency has always been pro-active in its approach. As the old saying goes, if we prevent just one child from becoming entrapped in the tentacles of drug and alcohol or gang activity, then, our efforts are worth it. Call 820-8888 today to arrange a program for your group. We believe that education is the key to prevention.

Special thanks to Dr. Matthew David O’Deane, author, “Gang Investigator’s Handbook”
(Paladin Press)

For more information, please call



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