

HOW YOU CAN HELP KEEP YOUR COMMUNITY GANG FREE

- Become involved in community organizations that promote positive activities for youth.
- Be positive role models.
- Become involved in your neighborhood watch or consider starting one if one doesn't exist.
- Report suspicious activity to the Police Department.
- Report graffiti to the police and remove it after it is documented by an officer.



Prince William County Police

703-792-6500

Crime Prevention Unit

703-792-7270

Resources

**Gang Response Intervention
Team (G.R.I.T)**

www.pwcgov.org/gangprevention

**Northern VA Regional Gang
Task Force**

www.preventgangsnova.org

**703-GET-HELP
(703-438-4357)**

**National Gang Center
www.nationalgangcenter.gov**

GANG AWARENESS

A Parent's Guide



**Prince William County
Police Department
www.police.pwcgov.org**

Many communities have serious problems with gangs. They cause fear, destroy property, threaten or hurt peaceable residents, and drive out businesses. There are many kinds of gangs, but whatever kind your community is dealing with, gangs spell trouble. Fortunately, while we do have gangs in Prince William County, our problem is not serious. Active community involvement, specific school procedures, and special police and judicial handling are all helping to control this issue for our county. But there is more to do to keep gang problems under control.

Parents can do a lot to prevent gang problems or to reduce gang problems already in place. Most important, there's a lot that parents like you can do to keep your own children from joining gangs

WHY DO KIDS JOIN GANGS?

Young people (as young as nine or ten) join gangs for reasons that make sense to them, but not to adults. They give reasons like these:

- To belong to a group
- For excitement
- To get protection
- To earn money
- To be with friends



SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS AS A PARENT

Many gang members say they joined because the gang offered them support, caring, belonging, and a sense of purpose - all the things that you should be providing as a parent.

The odds are that the better you are at providing these needs, the less need your children will have for gangs. Here are some parenting skills that are especially important:

- Talk with and listen to your child.
- Spend some special time with each child.
- Put a high value on education and help your child to do his or her best in school. Take an interest in their education and grades.
- Help your kids identify positive role models and heroes, especially people right in your community.
- Don't forget positive role models start at home. Don't be a "do as I say, not as I do!" kind of a parent.
- Do everything possible to involve your children in supervised, positive group activities.
- Praise them for doing well and encourage them to do their very best.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Get to know your children's friends and their parents.
- Talk to your children about ways to deal with pressure from friends.
- Set firm limits with your children and teens.
- Pay attention to behavior changes.

SIGNS OF GANG INVOLVEMENT

- ⇒ Withdrawing from family
- ⇒ Decline in school attendance, behavior or performance.
- ⇒ Staying out late without reason
- ⇒ Confrontational behavior
- ⇒ Specific colors or emblems
- ⇒ Special hand signals
- ⇒ Gang symbols on walls, books or clothing
- ⇒ Withdrawal from longtime friends
- ⇒ Suspected drug use
- ⇒ Sudden negative opinions about law enforcement or adults in positions of authority
- ⇒ Unexplained cash or goods
- ⇒ Non-accidental physical injuries
- ⇒ Becomes secretive regarding activities
- ⇒ Interest in weapons
- ⇒ Interest in gang-influence music, videos, and movies

