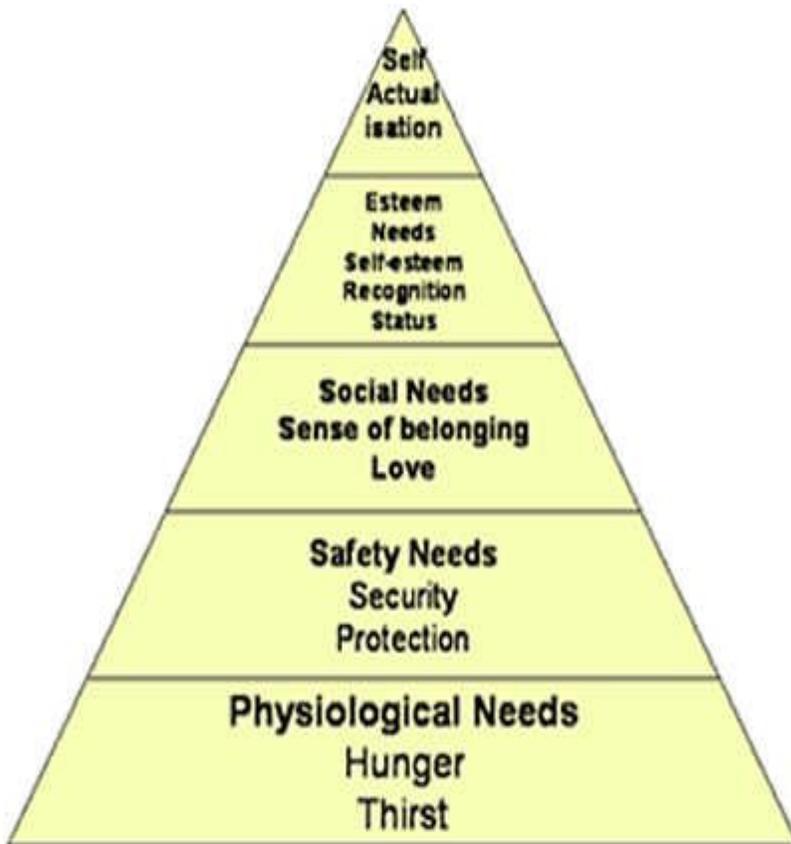


## What is a gang?

A gang is a group of three or more individuals who engage in criminal activity and identify themselves with a common name or sign.

## Why do kids join gangs?

- Gang replaces family – National Institute of Justice statistics show that most gang members come from single parent homes.
- Provides BASIC NEEDS: love, shelter, food, discipline/order, structure, and financial support.



## Why do gangs form?

- Gangs are not part of the Hispanic, Black, Asian or White culture
- Gangs are part of a criminal culture
- It is the nature of criminals to band together
- All gangs are formed in defense, and later prey on their own kind
- Gangs multiply by dividing
- Gangs develop their own code of conduct
- The gang comes before religion, family, marriage, community and law

- The breeding ground for all gangs begins with an excluded group, who feel victimized by poverty, or the establishment, or some other type of injustice, whether real or imagined.
- It is fed by an anti-establishment culture of drugs, crime, hate and racial separation.

### Why you should care

- Research
  - Link between gangs and violence
  - Gang members are both victims and perpetrators of violence
  - Gang members responsible for greater levels of crime than non-gang members
  - Education: 95% gang members will not complete high school
  - Freedom: 90% gang members will have a criminal record or have had police contact by 16
  - Life: being around gang members increases chances of death by 60 times
  - Homicide: Second leading cause of death for Americans between 15-24
  - Leading cause of death for African-Americans in same age bracket

### School Safety

- The courts have recognized that it is the school's legal duty to provide a safe environment for students and staff, failing to do so can result in:
  - Civil Liability
  - Criminal prosecution

### Gang Mentality

- This is a learned behavior
  - Culture of Violence
  - Addictive Lifestyle
  - "Pure Ego" – Power and Respect through Violence
    - The more violence the more respect

### Respect

- Respect: now based on fear
- The more you fear me the more you respect me
- Create fear through violence
- The more violence the more respect
- Doing time in Prison gives you status
- Code of silence "Snitch"
- Insults, no matter how small never go unanswered - "mad dogging"
- Payback – Always retaliate
- Loyalty – Do anything for the gang
- Attitude toward violence "Smile Now and Cry Later"

## Violence used to join

- Jump In
- Crime In
- Walk In
- Form own gang
- Sex In

## Street Gang Identifiers

- Monikers
- Hand signs
- Substance abuse
- Claiming
- Association
- Burns / Scars
- Branding
- Gang Photos
- Money
- Stylized Dress
- Haircuts
- Jewelry
- Tattoos
- Gang Slang
- Graffiti
- Drawings
- Letters
- Personal writings

## Things you should never say or do in front of a gang member

- Do not confront gang status, confront the behavior
- If you do need to confront a member of a gang, do it one-on-one, not in front of the students' peers
- Never mimic/mock gang activity (such as pretending to throw up gang signs, use gang slang). This may be perceived as disrespectful or even as a threat
- Never call a youth a "wannabe". This may be perceived as dismissive and disrespectful, and it may incite a youth (whether an actual member or someone who wishes to be a member) to attempt to prove himself/herself.
- Do not place rival gang members together unsupervised
- Do not physically confront a gang member
- Do not underestimate members or threats. Young, small, and/or female gang members can be as aggressive and violent as other members
- Do not assume or underestimate anything or anyone
- Do not ignore the behavior

### What you CAN do!

- Meet with youth individually. Establish a relationship and gain their trust. Be careful that you do not become a homeboy/girl.
- Have outside agencies that are experienced in the gang culture talk to the youth
- Get the parents involved
- Have small parent meetings to address the behavior and educate them on the gang culture
- Establish consistency in rules at home and school

### Tips to working with gang members

- Teach positive decision making skills
- Teach and reinforce that the decisions they are making today will affect their futures
- Teach them to understand and respect laws and law enforcement and to understand that the legal system is in place to protect, not just to punish
- Teach them how to recognize positive and negative social influences
- Teach them how to be advocates for themselves, how to watch out for themselves, and how to say "No"
- Offer options (where to go when they do not feel safe, what to do when friends are involved in unhealthy activities)
- Demystify gangs and talk about the media portrayal of gangs and money
- Acknowledge their life pressures and stressors

### Challenges to working with gang members

- The stereotype of mental health. "Counseling is a sign of weakness"
- Language
- Family Involvement
- Education
- Knowledge of Culture
- Legal Status

### Online Resources

- National Youth Gang Center  
<http://www.iir.com/nygc/>
- National Gang Crime Resource Center  
<http://www.ngcrc.com/>
- National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association  
<http://www.nagia.org/>
- Florida Gang Investigator Association  
<http://www.fgia.com>
- Gangs Or Us  
<http://www.gangsorus.com/>