

South Metro Youth Gang And Violence Prevention Project

AN INITIATIVE OF
CARVER, DAKOTA AND SCOTT COUNTIES



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Is A Gang?

Gangs are threat groups that threaten the social fabric of our society. A gang is a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, and who individually or collectively engage in criminal activity.

Gangs in our community could include:

- Caucasian gangs
- Hispanic gangs
- American Indian gangs
- African American gangs
- Multi-racial gangs
- Motor Cycle gangs
- Asian gangs
- Extremist/fringe group gangs such as skin heads, neo-nazi groups or white supremacists

Gang affiliation, once identified by the wearing of certain colors and motivated by turf, is now primarily motivated and identified by money. The FBI estimates that 60 percent of gang members are involved in criminal money making activities such as drug sales, car theft, robbery and burglary. Gangs no longer recognize traditional geographic boundaries. Many gangs have territories in multiple states.



Could Gang Activity Affect You?

- Schools—senior high, middle schools and elementary schools
- Movie theaters, arcades
- Parks and recreation centers
- Sporting events
- Shopping centers
- Apartment and multiple-dwelling complexes
- Grocery and convenience stores
- Public transportation
- Hospital emergency departments



Can Gang Activity Affect You?

- Increases Crime
- Increases costs for police and city services
- Increases costs for security services for businesses and schools
- Increases the burden on social service systems and emergency and hospital systems
- Influences business recruitment and overall city economic development
- Impacts the overall image of the city
- Causes trauma, grief, confusion and depression over the injury or death of a loved one due to gang violence
- Increases the likelihood of you becoming a victim of a crime
- Damages personal property through acts of vandalism
- Increases fear for your personal safety or the safety of your neighborhood
- May cause you to become a victim of harassment, intimidation and other, more violent acts, such as drive by shootings.



Do People Join Gangs

No one is immune to the lure of becoming a gang member. Although gang members come from every socioeconomic background, certain societal factors may increase the likelihood of gang involvement. Any one of a combination of factors may mean a child is at risk.

Youth need positive role models, recognition, love and respect from their families and their environment. If their needs aren't met in a constructive way, some young people may turn to gangs to meet these needs.



Is The Appeal Of Gangs?

- Financial benefits from drug sales, burglary, robbery and other criminal activities
- Status and excitement of gang activity
- Attention, affection, recognition, and a sense of belonging
- Protecting oneself from other gangs or hostile individuals
- Availability of sexual relations
- Gang serves as an extended family
- Maintaining family traditions

Risk Factors For Gang Involvement

- Family tradition of gang involvement
- Peer pressure
- Intimidation from other gang members
- Lack of love and respect
- Lack of adequate family relationships
- Lack of discipline
- Low income family
- Single parent households
- Lack of positive role models
- Lack of support mechanisms



Are Gang Members

Category I — Marginal/Fringe Level

These individuals are not official members but act like or claim to be from a gang. They are commonly referred to as “wannabees”. Some may have no concept of the value of life or death. These individuals are highly vulnerable and subject to easy manipulation. They often seek frequent and dangerous excitement.

Category II — Affiliate/Associate Level

These individuals generally have been initiated into gangs at a relatively young age. They wear clothing, attend functions and wear tattoos of the gang. These individuals tend to back up hard-core gang members and will themselves likely become a hard-core gang member.

Category III — Hard-core

These members generally comprise only a small portion of a gang. They are the most street wise and knowledgeable in legal matters. They may engage in violence or illegal activities, but focus on encouraging others to do so. They may frequently be in jail. Hard-core members are considered very powerful and influential in the gang. These members are isolated from mainstream culture and beyond the reach of intervention.

Types Of Criminal Activity Gangs Become Involved In

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Carrying illegal weapons | Carrying or selling drugs |
| Discharging a weapon | Burglary |
| Trespass on property | Arson |
| Shoplifting | Assault |
| Harassment | Kidnapping |
| Intimidation | Robbery |
| Vandalism | Violence against police |
| Theft | Murder |
| Auto Theft | Murder for hire |



What

They Wear

The way gang members dress changes almost daily. It is important to note that gang members have successfully set some fashion trends in America. As a result, a great deal of hysteria has been created in our communities regarding gang fashion. Many youth have adopted similar dress and are not gang members themselves.

Gang members dress for strategic and tactical reasons. They wear gang symbols on clothing, wear a certain brand or color of clothing and accessories, or wear clothing in a particular manner to indicate gang membership.

SIGNS OF YOUTH GANG INVOLVEMENT

- significant change in attitude and strong disrespect for authority
- change in style of clothing usually worn or wearing one particular color often
- withdrawing from one's family
- sudden change in friends
- declining grades and poor school attendance
- unexplained money or possessions
- tattoos affiliated with a group
- use of nicknames and hand signals
- appearance of graffiti on personal articles
- sudden negative contacts with police
- signs of tobacco, alcohol or drug use



What

Parents Can Do

- Establish non-negotiable family rules regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and gang membership
- Establish clear guidelines and limits for your children's behavior and their activities
- Spend time with your children; do things with them and attend functions in which they are involved
- Respect your children's feelings and attitudes; help them develop a strong sense of self-esteem
- Demand accountability for money and clothes
- Be observant of dress patterns and jewelry
- Know your children's friends
- Meet regularly with school counselors and teachers
- Educate yourself about gangs and drugs
- If assistance is needed, seek professional help from a local agency such as law enforcement, social services or school counselors



You Can Do

Gangs still make up only a small percentage of any community's youth but they are a dangerous percentage with the potential to destroy lives, neighborhoods and cities. Even though gang problems may begin in the family, solutions lie in the family as well as in the community and are nurtured by the concern of citizens who have accepted the responsibility of caring for the people around them.

If you have knowledge of gang members and gang activities, share your information with your local police department. If you're a parent or an adult who cares about the future, listen to today's youth, take time to understand their concerns and let them know they are important. And if you're a young person, struggling to find your way in a confusing world, reach out to those willing to help.



The Community Can Do

As a collaborative and caring community wanting to succeed in our struggle to prevent growth of gang activity, we need to take a pro-active approach by starting early before our communities begin to experience serious gang activity. Denial and apathy are allies to the proliferation of gangs. Gangs exist in areas that provide a hospitable environment. **We will not offer that environment!**

South Metro Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Project



Did It Start?

Threat groups and violence have become an area of increased concern in the Counties of Dakota, Carver and Scott, all of which have experienced significant growth over the past several years. Due to this growth, the South Metro Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Project was formed. The project initially developed an advisory committee that meets monthly to provide leadership and expertise in the area of activity planning. Since then, the project has sponsored numerous community forums across the southern metropolitan area and has provided training to law enforcement, social service providers, educators and other community leaders and members.

The mission of the South Metro Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Project is to work to prevent gang and youth violence through education, training and collaboration with other community initiatives. To accomplish this mission, the project has developed goals and activities set out in its strategic plan which include: 1) providing ongoing education; 2) providing training initiatives; 3) collaborating with other groups on activities related to promoting safe communities; and (4) supporting initiatives that focus on intervention and suppression of gangs and youth violence.

Additional activities the project has sponsored include:

- Facilitating the formation of the South Metro Gang Task Force, comprised of law enforcement officers from many jurisdictions who are working together to improve coordination and intervention in gang related crimes.

- Development of a graffiti removal poster campaign in collaboration with the Scott and Carver County Court Services and Sheriff's Offices, and Dakota County Community Corrections; and

- Presentations to schools, community groups, and professionals in the area of gangs and youth violence prevention.

Gangs need a hospitable environment in which to prosper. The South Metro Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Project is committed to insuring gangs will not find such an environment in Dakota, Carver, and Scott Counties.

If you would like more information concerning the South Metro Gang and Youth Violence Prevention Project, contact the Project Coordinator, at (612) 438-4438.

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IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Police/Fire/Medical Emergency | 911 |
| Carver County Sheriff's Department | (612) 361-1231 |
| Carver County Attorney's Office | (612) 361-1400 |
| Carver County Court Services | (612) 361-1460 |
| Carver County Community Social Services | (612) 361-1600 |
| Chaska Police Department | (612) 448-4200 |
| Carver County Mental Health | (612) 442-4437 |
| Chanhassen Public Safety | (612) 937-1900 |
| Crime Tip Line | (612) 361-1224 |
| Carver County Public Health | (612) 442-4493 |

SOUTH METRO YOUTH GANG AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROJECT

An Initiative of Carver, Dakota and Scott Counties
C/O Carver County Sheriff's Department

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