- Talk about your values and why you think gangs are dangerous. Discuss the violence, drug dealing, hatred of other groups for no reason, and the likelihood of being arrested and imprisoned. And don't forget to listen as well.

WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN DO TO KEEP GANGS OUT

- Develop positive alternatives — after-school, weekend, and summer activities where children and teens can learn, expand their world, and have fun.
- Encourage parents to talk to one another through school forums, social events, networks, parenting classes, and support groups.
- Cooperate with police and other agencies. Report suspicious activity, set up a Neighborhood Watch or citizen patrol, volunteer to clean up graffiti.
- Get organized and show gangs that your neighborhood has zero tolerance for their activities. Your community has many resources who can work together against gangs, including law enforcement, civic groups, religious congregations, schools, youth agencies, Boys & Girls Clubs, YM/YWCA, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, drug treatment services, and community centers.

For Information

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
1230 West Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-815-5700

National PTA
330 North Wabash, Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
312-670-6782

National Youth Gang Information Center
PO Box 12729
Tallahassee, FL 32317
904-385-0600, ext. 226, 285, or 259

TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME®

Crime Prevention Tips from
National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20006-3817
www.weprevent.org
and

BJA

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WHAT'S a PARENT to DO about

?

Once found only in large cities, gangs have invaded communities of all sizes across the United States. Gangs bring fear and violence to neighborhoods, traffick in drugs, destroy property, and drive out businesses. Gangs draw young people away from school and home and into a life of violence.

LEARN ABOUT GANGS

- Gangs can be organized around race or ethnic group, money-making activities, or territory.
- Most gang members are male; they range in age from 8 to 22 years.
- Young people give various reasons for joining gangs. Among the most common:

  to belong to a group, for protection, to earn money, for excitement, and to be with friends. For some, it's even a family tradition.
- Gangs signal their existence and solidarity through clothing and head coverings, a special vocabulary, tattoos, hand signs, and tagging their territory with graffiti.
- "Gangsta" rap paints a realistic picture of daily gang activity. The lyrics glorify violence, abuse of women, and disrespect for authority, especially the police. Its popularity among the young has helped spread the culture of gangs, cutting across class, economic, racial, and geographic lines.

SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE IN A GANG

- Changes in type of friends
- Changes in dress habits, such as wearing the same color combination all the time
- Gang symbols on books or clothing
- Tattoos
- Secretiveness about activities
- Extra cash from unknown sources
- Carrying a weapon
- Declining interest in school and family
- Being arrested or detained by the police

If you notice these patterns, get help. Contact the school counselor or the gang crimes unit of your police department.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD DOESN'T NEED A GANG

- Show your child love with lots of hugs and reassurances. Talk with and listen to your child.
- Supervise your children's activities. Help them get involved in athletics or other activities that interest them.
- Know about your child's friends and their friends' families.
- Put a high value on education and help your child to do his or her best in school. Do everything possible to prevent dropping out.