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**Crack Down**  
on  
**GANGS!**



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**CRIME PREVENTION CENTER**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**DANIEL E. LUNGREN**

# **Crack Down on GANGS!**



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**CRIME PREVENTION CENTER  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
DANIEL E. LUNGREN**



State of California  
Office of the Attorney General

Daniel E. Lungren  
Attorney General

Gang violence and crime have reached the crisis point in California. We can see the signs of criminal gang activity in our neighborhoods—the ugly graffiti, the blatant dope-dealing, the drive-by shootings.

Our most serious gang problem is in Los Angeles County where gang membership and related crimes are up 100 percent since 1985—this county has almost 900 gangs with 100,000 members. But this problem has spread and now affects us all, so every community must get involved. Many cities already have anti-gang programs operated by law enforcement, the schools or the neighborhoods. I applaud those who are already fighting back and I urge those who have not yet responded to get involved today.

Our best hope is to mobilize parents, teachers, community leaders and law enforcement. With that in mind, I present *Crack Down on Gangs!*

This booklet provides general information about gangs and how to identify them. It also includes newly enacted laws which allow law enforcement officers to target gangs. *Crack Down on Gangs!* can help parents and educators to intervene to prevent young people from making one of the worst decisions in their lives—joining a gang.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Lungren".

DANIEL E. LUNGREN  
Attorney General

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE  
CRIME PREVENTION CENTER

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## **Chapter 1**

### ***GANGS, CRIME and VIOLENCE***

Gangs have spread like poison throughout California's cities. Everywhere they go, they bring illegal drugs, weapons and violence.

Unfortunately, gang activity is now expanding to all corners of this state. The gang problem is no longer restricted to particular racial or ethnic groups or neighborhoods.

No one is immune to the damaging presence of drugs and violence when gangs invade communities. Drive-by shootings and other acts of violence destroy people's lives—gang members, their families and innocent bystanders.

Prevention is the key to controlling gangs. The first step in prevention is to learn about gangs and what they do. Citizens, especially parents and educators, can arm themselves with this basic knowledge to better protect their neighborhoods, their schools and their children. By reading this booklet, you can learn the signs of gang involvement in your neighborhood, school or child's life—and then do something about it.

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## WHAT IS A GANG?

A gang is a group of three or more people whose aim is to commit crime. According to Penal Code section 186.22 (a), a gang member is:

*Any person who actively participates in any criminal street gang with knowledge that its members engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity, and who willfully promotes, furthers, or assists in any felonious criminal conduct by members of that gang. . . .*

In other words, gang members are criminals whose actions range from drug dealing to drive-by shootings to murder.

Gangs thrive on intimidation and notoriety. They find violence not only glamorous but necessary in establishing their reputation as a gang to be feared.

As with most groups, gangs depend upon both individual and group participation. Sometimes they don't have a leader. The person who is the toughest, has the guns or the most money can emerge as the leader, but this status can be short-lived. In gangs that have permanent leaders, the structure can range from loose-knit and informal to highly organized.

Gangs generally identify themselves by a name derived from a street, neighborhood or housing project where they are based, or from a rock band they like, or a cult they follow. Individual gang members generally have a nickname or *moniker* that highlights their real or imagined

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special physical, personal or psychological trait. A gang member called "Slice," for example, gets his name from his skill in handling a knife.

Gangs often form along ethnic and racial lines, although there is a current trend of youths joining gangs for economic motives. Some examples of gangs that are based on ethnic ties include:

Asian (includes Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Laotian,

Filipino, Samoan, Japanese or Chinese)—*Cheap Boys, Natoma Boys, Wah Ching*

Black—*Crips, Bloods*

Hispanic—*White Fence, Los Vatos Locos, Latin Ladies (female), Midnite Pearls (female)*

White—(includes Satanic, Punk or Heavy Metal) *Stoners, Skinheads*

*Note: Females, especially Asian and Hispanic, are moving away from the traditional role of being merely girlfriends of gang members, and are forming their own gangs.*

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## HOW TO IDENTIFY GANG MEMBERS

Gangs share common characteristics such as wearing distinct clothing or using hand signs. Although details will vary, the following gives general information about gangs (check with your local law enforcement officer for current information):

- ✓ *Graffiti.* Gangs use graffiti to identify themselves and their territory. The graffiti may be the gang's name, the member's nickname, a declaration of loyalty, threats against rival gangs or a description of criminal acts in which the gang has been involved. Hispanic gang graffiti often is written in block letters and is very stylized.
  
- ✓ *Clothing.* Color and style sometimes serve to identify each gang. The color *red* stands for Blood gangs, *blue* for Crip gangs. *Green* can either mean the gang member is declaring neutrality for the moment or is a drug dealer. *Black* is worn by some Hispanic gangs and Heavy Metal white gangs. Other gang colors can be *brown* or *purple*.

*Note: Some gangs are starting to change their clothing style and some no longer wear their colors in order to deceive law enforcement.*

Gang styles can be easy to spot because of the specific way they wear their clothing. Examples are preferences for wearing baggy or "sagging" pants or having their caps turned at an angle. They also like particular brands of shoes, pants or shirts. For example, some gangs like to wear plaid Pendleton shirts in either blue, brown,

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black or red. These shirts are worn loose and untucked. Gang graffiti, symbols, messages or gang names can be written or embroidered on jackets, pants and baseball caps. Other identifying items include belt buckles with the gang's initials, key chains, starter jackets (team jackets), and red or blue bandannas called *rags*.

- ✓ *Jewelry*. May be expensive or cheap, but the gaudy type is preferred. Examples are heavy gold rope chains, earrings and large rings.
- ✓ *Weapons*. These can include shaved-down baseball bats, sections of pipe taped at the ends, spiked wrist bands, chemical mace, knives, and semi-automatic firearms such as an Uzi, AK-47 or MAC 10.

Other signs that youngsters have joined gangs are crude or elaborate tattoos, fingernails painted a certain color, certain undergarments, gang-color shoelaces in their athletic shoes and specific hairstyles (such as the Skinheads shaving their heads bald).

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## WHAT GANGES DO

Many gangs spend their time in the same activities as everyone else except for one important difference: *Gang members seek confrontation with rivals.* When gang members are at school, a restaurant, party, rock concert, or even a family picnic or neighborhood gathering, the potential for violent crime is far greater than for any other group of people. The violence, often indiscriminate, claims innocent victims; and the criminal acts range from individual assaults to drive-by shootings.

Some ethnic gangs target people whose cultural background causes them to be reluctant to seek help from law enforcement. For example, Vietnamese and Chinese gangs prey primarily on their own people. They invade homes to rob residents or they extort money from Asian-owned businesses. But some are expanding their gang activities beyond their communities and are becoming like non-Asian gangs in their crimes and indiscriminate violence.

Many gangs are involved in the sale of drugs, extortion, robberies, hate crimes, vehicle thefts or other crimes for financial gain. Also, gangs purposely vandalize and destroy public and private property in order to further their reputation, and will leave their trademark behind—graffiti. Abandoned houses are a favorite target for property damage or graffiti but even occupied houses and local businesses do not escape.

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## WHY GANG GRAFFITI IS DANGEROUS

Of greater concern than property damage is the indiscriminate violence associated with gang graffiti. Gang members use graffiti to mark their *territory* or *turf*, declare their own allegiance to the gang, advertise the gang's status or power, and to challenge rivals.



When a neighborhood is marked with a gang's graffiti indicating territorial dominance, the entire area and its inhabitants become targets for violence. A rival gang identifies everyone in the neighborhood as a potential threat. Anyone on the street or in his or her home is fair game for drive-by attacks by rival gang members. In this way, innocent residents are often subjected to gang violence by the mere presence of graffiti in their neighborhood. Also, victims of white-supremacist or hate graffiti often suffer from fear and intimidation when they are singled out by the Skinheads or other white-supremacist gangs.

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## **WHY MEMBERS HAVE BLEAK FUTURES**

Gang membership, although a temporary phase for some youths, severely hurts their future. Gang members drop out of school, limiting their chances for higher education and upward mobility. They socialize only with other members, reinforcing their limited view of life. Often, gang members are killed or seriously injured. The ones who make it into adulthood develop patterns of alcohol and drug abuse. Also, the gang members acquire extensive police records that limit their employment opportunities.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***PRE-TEENS and GANGS - TELLTALE SIGNS***

Gang involvement can begin as early as elementary school. Children as young as ages 7-8 years have been recruited to work for gangs.

Parents and educators should watch for the signs that their children and pupils may be involved with gangs. These are changes in the children's behavior or activities. Early warning signs include:

- Drug use.
- Decline in grades.
- Truancy.
- Change of friends.
- Keeping late hours.
- Having large sums of money or expensive items which cannot be explained.

Telltale signs of gang involvement are:

- Gang graffiti in their bedroom on items such as books, posters and bedroom walls.
- Wearing gang uniforms or gang colors.

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- Using hand signals to communicate with other gang members.
  - Having photos showing gang names, gang slogans, gang insignia or gang activities.
  - Gang tattoos or gang insignias.
  - Disclosure of gang membership.
  - Witnesses connecting the individual to gang activity.

Once in the gang, the child's behavior may change either suddenly or gradually, but it will follow a pattern: To be accepted by the gang, he or she must adopt a defiant attitude toward authority figures. This defiance may be expressed by violent behavior at school or home.

At school, the child lets everyone know of his or her new status. He or she wears gang clothing and becomes disrespectful toward the teacher and others. Also, the new gang member will fight others to gain a reputation for being bad. The gang member will pick a victim and constantly harass that child. Eventually he or she will beat up the victim. But, before doing so, the gang member will announce his or her intentions to friends and other students so they can be there to cheer the gang member on and spread the word about his or her "toughness."

When at home, the new gang member's defiance may or may not manifest in violence, depending on the relationship with his or her parents and other family members. However, if the family interferes with the child's gang involvement, there may be repeated confrontations.

Not all gang members are obvious in their dress or manner. Asian gangs, for example, are not immediately recognizable by their attire. Also, they may not display gang characteristics while in school—they are respectful to staff, they do not disrupt activities, they do not drop out of school and they maintain their grades. In such cases, gang affiliation is not known until an incident occurs.

*Note: Parents and teachers should not jump to hasty conclusions about their children and gangs. The warning signs of gang involvement can be similar to normal behavior during adolescence. The key is to question the behavior if it appears to go beyond the norm.*

## WHY THEY JOIN GANGS

Children or teenagers join gangs for a variety of reasons: the excitement of gang activity, peer pressure, physical protection, attention, financial gain and family tradition. Unfortunately, few youths realize the hazards associated with gang involvement. In many cases, their parents are unaware of their children's gang activity and unable to intervene until it's too late.

A vulnerable child can be compared to an unprotected vacant building. If someone breaks a window, and it goes unrepaired, soon every window will be broken and the building will become a useless shell. Likewise, without parental intervention, a child's initial involvement in gang activity can result in the child also becoming a useless shell. Once a child is lost to the gangs, it is hard to get him or her back.

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Parents and educators who suspect gang activity should take some of the following steps:

- Talk to your child or teenager. Get answers to your questions about their behavior and discuss the consequences of being in a gang.
- Talk to school officials and counselors. Ask if they are aware of campus problems and if there are school programs that will help.
- Contact government agencies such as your police or juvenile authority. They may have a crime prevention or gang specialist who can give you up-to-date information.
- Call community-based organizations. Many have experience with gang problems and can give you valuable guidance.
- Go to your religious leaders for advice. They may know of programs that help neighborhood children stay out of gangs.
- Report and immediately remove any graffiti in your neighborhood or local school grounds.
- Take action—this is the most important step you can take as an individual, a group or an organization.

*Don't ignore the signs of gang activity.*

## Chapter 3

### **PREVENTION - TAKE ACTION!**

Remember, prevention is the key to controlling gang activity. Everyone and every community can work on solutions to the gang problem.

#### **What you and your neighbors can do**

- ✓ *Call 911 immediately when there is an emergency.*
  
- ✓ *Contact your local law enforcement agency for up-to-date information.* Its crime prevention or gang specialists can help your neighborhood plan ways to fight gang activity. They can help you organize:
  - *a Neighborhood Watch Program* in your neighborhood. The gangs' power grows through their use of fear and violence to intimidate rivals and citizens alike. This tactic can be countered by citizen action groups such as *Neighborhood Watch*. A neighborhood that is united in the goal to stop gang crime and violence can be an effective force in curbing gangs.

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- *a graffiti abatement or clean-up program.* Get rid of gang graffiti, paint over it. A graffiti-free neighborhood signals to gang members that it's your neighborhood, not theirs!

When gang incidents occur in your neighborhood, cooperate with the police or sheriff. Your help may prevent others from becoming victims of gang violence. Any information about gang crimes, wanted suspects or any violent gang activity should be reported to the police. Remember—fighting crime and dealing directly with violent gang members are best left to experts trained to handle dangerous situations.

## **Community-wide solutions**

Youths loitering after school or hanging out on corners provide a breeding ground for gangs. Communities can offer young people alternatives to gang involvement. This includes organized activities for children and teenagers through recreation departments, schools, churches and youth organizations. Communities should seek support from local business and industries to employ and train youths.

## **Statewide solutions—anti-gang legislation**

To reduce gang violence and illegal drug use in California, the Attorney General, the Legislature and the Governor have worked together to enact new laws specifically aimed at gangs. These laws assist law enforcement

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agencies, schools and communities in mounting a comprehensive attack on the problem. The following gives information on these new laws:

■ LAW ENFORCEMENT

▪ *Criminal activity by street gangs.* The California Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act eradicates criminal gang activity by focusing upon patterns of criminal gang activity and the organized nature of street gangs. Penal Code section 186.22 provides that:

- Participation in a criminal street gang with knowledge that its members engage in criminal activity is punishable as a misdemeanor or felony.
  
- Conviction for a crime or public offense which was committed to promote or assist in criminal conduct by gang members is punished by an additional term in county jail or state prison.
  
- A building or place used by gang members for the purpose of the commission of specified offenses is a nuisance which shall be enjoined, abated and prevented, and for which damages may be recovered, whether it is a public or private nuisance.

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- *Firearms.* Effective January 1, 1992, any firearm, its ammunition, or any deadly or dangerous weapon owned or possessed by a member of a criminal street gang to commit specified offenses may be confiscated by any law enforcement agency or peace officer. (Penal Code, § 186.22a(e).)
  
  - *Drive-by Shootings.* An additional and consecutive punishment of five years in state prison shall be prescribed for drive-by shootings:
    - Shooting at an occupied motor vehicle. Any person who is convicted of a felony or an attempted felony, in which that person discharged a firearm which caused great bodily injury or death.
  
    - Shooting from a motor vehicle. Any person who with intent to inflict great bodily injury or death, inflicts great bodily injury or death, as a result of discharging a firearm in the commission of a felony or attempted felony and who is convicted of the felony or attempted felony.  
(Penal Code, § 12022.55 (b)(1) and (c).)
  
  - *Peace Officer Training.* The Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training is required to provide ongoing peace officer training on methods of gang and drug law enforcement. (Penal Code, § 13519.5.)

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- *Anti-Graffiti Laws.* It is a misdemeanor for any person to sell, give or in any way furnish to a minor any aerosol container of paint that can be used to deface property. It is also a misdemeanor for any person under the age of 18 years to purchase an aerosol container of paint which can be used to deface property. (Penal Code, § 594.1.)

Writing graffiti as an act of vandalism is punishable as a felony or misdemeanor. (Penal Code, § 594.) Effective January 1, 1992, it is also punishable as an infraction.

When graffiti causes less than \$250 in damage, a person may be guilty of an infraction punishable by a fine not to exceed \$250. If a minor is personally unable to pay any fine levied, the parents or legal guardian of the minor is liable for payment of the fine unless the court waives payment of the fine upon a finding of good cause.

Upon conviction for an infraction and in addition to payment of the fine, the court may order the defendant to complete community service not to exceed 48 hours for the first conviction and 96 hours for the second and subsequent convictions. Completion of community service cannot be required during hours of school attendance or employment, and for minors may be performed in the presence of, and under the direct supervision of the person's parent or legal guardian.

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The court may also, at the victim's option, order the defendant to clean up, repair, or replace the property damaged by that person, but cannot order the person to pay for any related costs incurred by performance of the order. (Penal Code, § 640.6.)

## SCHOOLS

- *In-service Training.* The State Department of Education is required to develop guidelines for in-service training in gang violence and drug and alcohol abuse prevention for school personnel; and, upon request, assist school districts and county offices of education in developing comprehensive programs. (Education Code, § 51264.)
  
- *Establish Training concerning Violent Behavior by Students.* Commission on Teacher Credentialing is required to establish appropriate standards of preparation for teachers and other certificated personnel concerning violent behavior by students. (Education Code, § 44276.5.)
  
- *Gang Violence Prevention Resource Guide.* The State Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning are required to develop a resource guide to gang violence prevention curricula and programs. (Education Code, § 51267.)

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- *Model Gang Violence Suppression Curriculum.* The State Department of Education and the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning are required to develop a model gang violence suppression and substance abuse prevention curriculum for grades 2, 4 and 6. (Education Code, § 51266.)

■ STATE FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

- *Gang Violence Suppression Program.* The Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning provides financial and technical assistance for district attorneys offices, local law enforcement agencies, county probation departments, school districts, county offices of education and community-based organizations which are primarily engaged in the suppression of gang violence. (Penal Code, § 13826 et seq.)
  
- *Gang Risk Intervention Pilot Program.* Administered by the L.A. County Office of Education, the program is funded by the State Asset Forfeiture Distribution Fund for the 1991/92 fiscal year. (Health and Safety Code, § 11489 (b)(3)(B)(i).)



# Resources

For more information, the following publications are available from the Attorney General's Office, Department of Justice.

- *Organized Crime in California, 1989: an Annual Report to the Legislature.* For information, write to:  
  
Public Inquiry  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 944255  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
  
- *Law in the School, a guide for California teachers, parents and students.* This Crime Prevention Center publication outlines the roles of educators, law enforcement officers, parents and others in dealing with campus crime or disciplinary problems at school. It cites relevant statutes and case law. For ordering information and current price, contact:  
  
Department of General Services  
Publications Section  
P.O. Box 1015  
North Highlands, CA 95660  
(916) 973-3700
  
- *Crack Down on Gangs!* For additional copies, write to:  
  
Crime Prevention Center  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 944255  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

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Anti-gang projects funded through the Gang Violence Suppression Program, Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP), are also available:

- *Project YES! . . . Yes to Education and Skills.* Through OCJP's funding, the Orange County Department of Education developed this classroom curriculum for grades 3, 5 and 7. *Project YES!* links academic subjects with anti-drug/gang violence prevention lessons. For information about *Project YES!* and others funded by OCJP, contact:

Gang Violence Suppression Branch  
Office of Criminal Justice Planning  
1130 K Street, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95814

For more information about gangs and your community, call your local law enforcement agency's gang unit.

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## Glossary of Gang Terms

### **B.G.**

Term for a very young gang member, 9-12 years old. Stands for "baby gangster."

### **Barrio**

Neighborhood.

### **Blood**

Also called "Piru," identified by the color red. Bloods are rivals of the Crip gangs.

### **Crab**

Derogatory term referring to a Crip gang member.

### **Crip**

Rivals of the Bloods, identified by the color blue.

### **Cuz, Cuzz**

Name for a Crip gang member, rivals of the Bloods.

### **Drive-by**

When a gang cruises by a target and sprays the area or people with gunfire. Gangs use drive-bys to intimidate and instill fear in rival gangs and their neighborhoods.

### **Durag (pronounced doo-rag)**

Handkerchief or bandanna wrapped around a gang member's head.

### **Ese, Eses**

Hispanic gang members.

### **Gang banging**

Gang activity.

### **Hardcore**

Longtime gang members who have been to prison.

### **Homeboy/homes**

What fellow gang members call each other.

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**Hood**

Term for neighborhood.

**Hoopty**

Car.

**O.G.**

Term for a longtime gang member. Stands for "original gangster."

**Peripheral**

Members who move in and out of the gang based on their own personal interest or gain.

**Placa**

Graffiti that identifies a gang or gang member.

**Puto**

A big "X" that crosses out another gang's graffiti. Same as a insult or a slap in the face. A puto could indicate a turf war or a pending battle between rival gangs. Also a derogatory Spanish term.

**Red eye**

Hard stare.

**Regular**

Usually younger gang members, ages 14-20, who back up the hardcore members.

**R.I.P.**

Often seen in graffiti and is a signal of pending violence. Stands for "rest in peace."

**Set**

Neighborhood.

**SRIW**

Initials stand for "Super race is white."

**Talking smack**

Aggressive talking.

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**Toss up/strawberry**

Female who is used by the male gang members for sexual favors.

**Turf**

An area, a block, neighborhood or park that a gang claims as being under its control.

**Wannabes**

Not official members but claim to be. Vary in age, but are usually 10-13 years. Hang out with gang members and dress in gang attire.

**XIII or "13"**

This means the thirteenth letter of the alphabet—M, which stands for the Mexican Mafia, a prison gang. Also means the Hispanic gang member is from south of Fresno or "Sur" (Southern California).

**"14"**

This number stands for the fourteenth letter of the alphabet—N, which means the Nuestra Familia, a prison gang. Also means the Hispanic gang member is from north of Fresno or "Norte" (Northern California).



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