

STREET GANGS – FACTS & PREVENTION



*From 2002 to 2008, the average age of a **GANG MEMBER KILLED** in Hamilton was 22.5 years.*

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT GANGS?



Gangs spend most of their time planning or engaging in criminal activity such as drug trafficking, weapons offences and other violent crimes. The potential for violent crime is high and the violence is indiscriminate, unpredictable and can claim innocent lives. Our neighbourhoods are affected negatively by gang activity and need to be kept safe.



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT GANGS ARE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

- **Gang Graffiti** – marks their “turf” and sends messages to other gangs. It’s often the full or short-form versions of the gang name written in block letters with the gang’s colours. It is different from a “tag”, which is more artistic or stylized. (May sometimes be crossed out by rival gangs.)
- **Gang “Colours”** – members may wear bandanas, “rags” or certain clothes to indicate they belong to a gang. Tattoos and hairstyles (braids or partly shaved heads) can also be indicative.
- **Evidence or drug dealing/use** – houses or places with a high volume of vehicle and/or pedestrian traffic can be indicative of this.

WHAT’S THE ATTRACTION TO SOME YOUTH?

There can be several reasons youth are attracted to gang life and they are usually associated to needs that are not found in family or school life. The following are some common reasons kids join:

- Sense of belonging
- Recognition
- Peer pressure
- Lack of positive role models
- Desire for protection or prestige
- Glamorization of gang life and promises of money

WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MAY BE INVOLVED IN A GANG

Appearance

- Gang-Style Clothing
- Odd haircuts (Shaved part or all of head)
- Looks dirty or messy
- Wears a particular colour

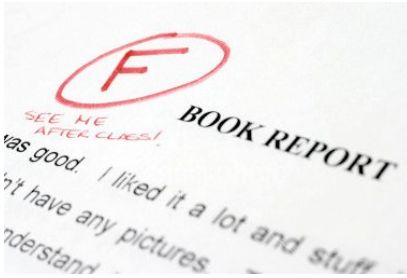


Behaviour & Personality

- Angry, breaks rules
- Bad attitude towards family/school
- Resentful of authority
- Uses gang slang or heavy swearing
- Claims a new nickname
- In trouble with the law
- Bullies or assaults others
- Drug, Alcohol abuse
- Stays out too late
- Secrecy about belonging

School

- Lower grades
- Late getting to or coming home from
- Skips school
- Gets suspended or expelled
- Quits School



Friends or Interests

- Has new friends, doesn't introduce them
- They don't come to the house
- Drops hobbies or after school activities/sports
- Spends more time in their room or away from home
- Stays away from home overnight or for days at a time
- Watches gangster movies & videos
- Music that refers to gang activities or culture

Money

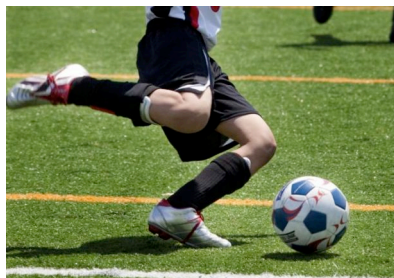
- Asks for or steals money
- Has lots of unexplained money or goods



Parents and caregivers should remember that **one or two behaviours does not necessarily indicate your child has joined a gang. Parents should be looking for a **series of behaviours or signs.****

PREVENTION TIPS FOR PARENTS

- The worst thing...is to do nothing.
- Spend quality time with your children.
- Communicate constructively with them while listening carefully to their concerns.
- Monitor friendships for negative influences.
- Help your child deal appropriately with problems and develop self control.
- Establish rules, set limits and be consistent and reasonable with discipline.
- Seek professional help if necessary.
- Encourage good study habits and demonstrate an interest in their studies.
- Register them in sports.
- Nurture positive role models.
- Monitor internet use.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION TOPICS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.HAMILTONPOLICE.ON.CA OR PLEASE CONTACT:

HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE – CRIME PREVENTION

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