

What is a gang?

A gang is a group of three or more persons who engage in criminal behaviour. They generally give themselves a common name or symbol and they often choose to wear a certain type of clothing or to display some other identifying item.



Why Do Young People Join Gangs?

Young people join gangs for a variety of reasons, some being the same reasons they join positive community or school groups.

SOME OF THE REASONS FOR JOINING A GANG MAY INCLUDE:

- A sense of belonging
- The need for recognition and power
- A sense of self-worth and status
- A place of acceptance
- The need for physical safety and protection
- A source of income
- Excitement and companionship

The **PEACE PROJECT** is a Toronto Police Service initiative and is being made possible through a grant from the Ministry of Community Safety & Correctional Services.

How do gangs recruit?

Gangs look for girls and guys who will be an "asset" to them, somebody they think has something to offer them, someone that they can get to do things for them. It's often flattering to be approached. Maybe it's because you are tough, don't back down, because you are smart, or because you will do stuff others won't. You take risks. Maybe no one has seen what they see in you. It's tough to resist. Gangs use their power and influence to tempt "wannabes" and curious young people with small favours... "could you just do this for us?" They chat you up. Each time it feels like you are passing a test, and you move closer... into the fringes of illegal activity and knowing the "real" secrets and hard core stuff. The closer you get, the harder it is to leave. The more you know, the greater the threat you are if you do leave.

What happens when you join a gang?

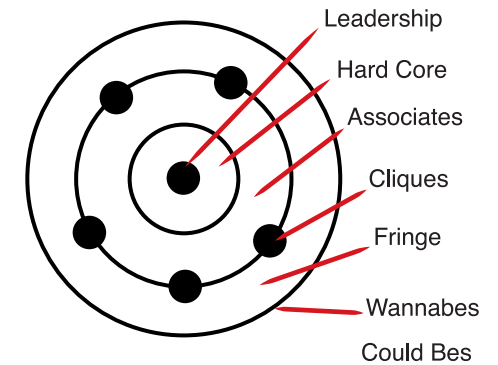
Here's one story :

"Everybody that was down on FTS (Flushing's Top Society) formed a circle around me and I had to fight my way out. They put you in a circle and everybody starts hitting you. It hurts. It hurts your heart. You re-judge things. It makes you feel bad, like you can't be totally friends, and it puts you in a spot where you can't really trust your own friends. Anybody in a gang or crew will tell you they don't trust nobody. Respect is another thing, but trust—nobody trusts nobody. Nobody."

Shank of FTS – "Crews: Gang Members Talk to Maria Hinojosa" by Maria Hinojosa



GANG STRUCTURE



1. Leadership

The leader(s) of a gang determines at what level of criminal activity the gang will function.

2. Hard Core

The hard core gang members are usually the older gang members, the individuals who are culturally and criminally enmeshed in the gang and are at risk of being so for life.

3. Associate

The associate gang member hangs out and gets involved with the gang culture and is dedicated to achieving the level of recognition needed to attain hard core status.

4. Fringe

The fringe gang member is still able to function outside of the gang structure and has not made a commitment to a life in the criminal gang culture. This type of member drifts in and out of the gang and seems to lack direction.

5. Wannabes

Wannabes are not actually gang members. They are youth who view the gang as an exciting place to be, a place where they could become "somebody".

6. Cliques

The clique is a group of associate, fringe, and often, wannabe gang members who gravitate around one or more of the hard core gang members.

Source: "Comprehensive Community Reanimation Process" published by Urban Dynamics, Inc. Website: www.lincolnnet.net/users/lrtrapp/http/block/gangs101.htm

How do you get out of a gang?

Getting out of the gang life isn't easy. It's hard to know when to leave. In some cases people are close friends, hang out at the same places, maybe even the same school, as gang members. That would mean avoiding those places and leaving friends behind. If that wasn't hard enough, once you start a new life some people in your community may still view you as a dangerous person and won't forget your gang involvement. Sometimes gangs make leaving dangerous; they may even ask you to kill someone. People wanting to leave a gang sometimes have to leave their neighbourhood, city or country to stay safe and leave gang life behind them. Even if you leave town, members of your former gang will visit your friends and family trying to find you.

Help is available from people who understand the pressures of leaving a gang. Gang Exiting Programs are available to help you get the skills to break free.

These programs also teach you how to use skills from street culture to better your life and your future. You can find a list of these programs on the back of this brochure.

What are the signs that someone you care about might be joining a gang?

- Same colour worn repeatedly and dressing differently
- Sudden change in friends
- New nickname
- Unexplained wealth without a source of income
- Drawings of gang specific symbols
- Unexplained injuries
- Secretive behaviour
- Caller ID constantly shows calls from private/unknown numbers
- Gang-specific tattoos/branding
- Change in attitude and/or display of aggression
- Skipping school/drop in grades



Three Quick Steps

1. Talk openly with your children or friends. Share your concerns; ask questions; be open to hearing theirs too.
2. Pay attention to what your children wear and who their friends are. There is help for everyone.
3. Please contact one of the organizations listed here if you have concerns or questions. You may remain anonymous and everything is confidential.

All organizations provide a variety of positive youth programs, developing skills in addition to those listed here.



1) CTI's Breaking The Cycle Youth Gang Exit and Ambassador Leadership Project

1790 Albion Rd., Suite 101 (27 & Albion), (416) 745-1829 or 4500 Sheppard Ave. E., Unit 476 (Sheppard & McCowan/Brimley), (416) 293-1287
www.cantraining.org/BTC/btc.php

2) Conflict Mediation Services of Downsview

Conflict resolution services for all types of relationships, especially parent/youth and family.
95 Eddystone Avenue, 2nd floor (Jane & Finch), (416) 740-2522,
www.cmsd.org

3) East Metro Youth Services

The Violence Intervention Project provides youth with realistic strategies and skills to prevent violence.
1200 Markham Road, Suite 200 (Ellesmere & Markham), (416) 438-3697, www.emys.on.ca

4) The Students Commission

Project PEACE is developed by youth to decrease gun and gang violence.
23 Isabella St. (Yonge & Bloor), (416) 597-8297, www.tgmag.ca

5) Operation Springboard

Programs that prevent crime and integrate at-risk people into the wider community.
2568 Lawrence Ave. E., (Lawrence & Midland), (416) 615-0788
www.operationspringboard.on.ca

6) Leave Out Violence (LOVE)

LOVE trains young people who have experienced violence to become community leaders of violence prevention.
3130 Bathurst St. Suite 212 (Bathurst & Lawrence W.) (416) 785-8411,
www.leaveoutviolence.com

7) Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS)

Programming for youth who are involved in different stages of the youth justice system.
65 Wellesley St. East, Suite 300 (Wellesley & Church) (416) 924-2100, www.ctys.org

GANGS

MEMBERS MUST FACE VIOLENCE, REVENGE, ENEMIES AND DEATH.

ALWAYS READ THE FINE PRINT



KEEP THE PEACE NOT THE HEAT