

Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Gangs and Gang Violence



- Admits to hanging out with gang members
- Shows an unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing or a particular logo
- Has an unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, videos, DVDs, or Web sites
- Uses unusual hand signals to communicate with friends
- Has specific drawings or gang symbols on school books, clothing, walls, or tattoos
- Comes home with unexplained physical injuries (fighting-related bruises, injuries to hand/knuckles)
- Has unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry
- Carries a weapon
- Has been in trouble with the police
- Exhibits negative changes in behavior, such as:
 - Withdrawing from the family
 - Declining school attendance, performance, and behavior
 - Staying out late without reason
 - Displaying an unusual desire for secrecy
 - Exhibiting signs of drug use
 - Breaking rules consistently
 - Speaking in gang-style slang

Seminars and Lectures

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS) Office, in collaboration with the Louisville Metro Police Department, offers presentations on a variety of topics related to street gangs. These offerings are available to all school district employees, civic/religious organizations, and parents. School personnel can contact SDFS at **(502) 485-3260**.

Parents can contact their child's school for more information.

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According to the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) *Code of Acceptable Behavior and Discipline* under "Youth Gangs"

“Gang activity will not be tolerated on school grounds or at any school activity. Students will not wear or display explicit gang symbols. Violation may result in suspension or other appropriate action.”

JCPS Staff: How to Recognize Gang Members

Below are some warning signs of gang involvement. Most students will exhibit one or two of these signs as part of their normal growth pattern. However, if students exhibit several of these signs, there may be cause for concern.

- Sudden change in behavior/appearance
- Drop in grades
- Truancy
- Questionable friends
- Defiance to all authority figures
- Wearing only certain colors
- Symbols or graffiti on books and/or personal possessions
- Flashing hand signs/Using unknown vocabulary
- Tattoos
- Freely admitting to being with gang members
- Unexplained possession of money or expensive items
- Withdrawal from family/Urgent desire for privacy

Definition of a Gang

According to the National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations, the definition of a gang is a group or association of three or more (adult/juvenile/male/female) people who may have a common identifier (sign/symbol/name/color) and who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in criminal activity.

Gangs in the metro Louisville area date back to the mid-1950s. These gangs consisted of young men "protecting" their area of turf from rival gangs. The composition of these gangs was older and less violent, and fewer drugs were involved.

A gang member today is likely to be in his or her early teens, much more violent, more likely to carry a weapon (firearms in particular), and more likely to use/deal drugs. These young "gang bangers" exhibit little or no respect for anyone outside their own "set."

Parents: Warning Signs That Your Child May Be Involved With a Gang

Listed on the next page are some warning signs that parents might observe that could indicate a child's involvement in a street gang.