

Gang in most cases
they do so to



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Gang involvement of teenagers in most states has increased to a significant level and is a constant cause of concern to parents, the authorities and the community at large. In this paper we are going to address the risks posed to teenagers by gangs, risk assessment and how best to protect the children from gangs and gang activities. The risks involved to members of a gang will vary based on the kind of activities the gang is involved in. A gang involved in violent activities poses a greater risk of physical injury as opposed to a passive group. In a gang where weapons such as guns and knives are involved a member of a gang is exposed to a threat of physical harm.

Different gangs may dispute over territories since there is the element of power and to prove superiority one gang can engage the other in a fight heightening the risk of physical injury to a gang member. Sexual assault is another risk from gangs. The number of women involved in gang activities is not as high as that of their male counterparts. The women involved are mostly girlfriends of the members of the gang.

Nonmembers are exposed to the risk of rape just as the members are. Most members of a gang will trade drugs to earn some extra income. While in the trade the risk of the teenager using drugs is higher as compared to when the individual is not in the business. There are tell tales of gang involvement and a parent can assess if a child is involved in a gang or not. Below are some signs a parent can look out for when they feel that their child is part of a gang. When your child has injuries that he or she cannot explain it may mean that they are involved in something out of the norm. The injuries may not necessarily mean that the child is involved in a gang but it should not be ignored.

A child involved in a gang will in most cases withdraw from the members of the family. This is usually a protective shield used to cover up what is really happening. A child will not only withdraw from his family but from friends who are not into the culture of being part of the gang. Most gangs have symbols or signs representing them and the members of the gang will mostly have tattoos or accessories such as necklaces or bracelets bearing their 'trademark'. The gang also uses some terms for communication without nonmembers getting the message being passed; it is some sort of coding. Hence if your child bears these tattoos or uses a different language from what he used to, then a parent should find out the reasons behind the change. Studies have shown that the children exposed to more risk factors are prone to join gangs as compared to those exposed to one or no risk factor.

Esbensen et al (2009) has discussed some of the risk factors. The following are the risk factors that can lead a child to join a gang. The fact that children are engaged in aggression and bullying at early stages of their life heightens as they grow up in most cases ending up as gang members. In most cases they do so to enjoy protection, acceptance and at times to revenge. A child from a single parent or a broken family stands a higher chance of joining a gang than the one in a stable family set up.

Children who lack the presence of their parent end up being emotionally unbalanced and end up joining gangs to make up for what they lack in their lives. Kids want to fit in with their age mates and be accepted. If the friends they associate with are in gangs and they feel at risk of losing them, the kids will end up members of gangs just to maintain the friendships. When

children grow up in a neighborhood where the gang activities are the order of the day, they can end up as gang members since it is a continued culture in their community (Ralphs & Aldridge, 2004).

There are some measures that can be taken to protect a child from a gang. They include but are not restricted to: Guidance and counseling helps in the recovery process. Due to the increased gang cases there are social programs which a child can be engaged in for guidance and counseling against gang activities. Parents ought to advocate for the support team for crisis management to prevent cases of violence as addressed by Clauss-Ehlers and Weist (2004). Gangs can be prevented by ensuring that the children are protected from the risk factors. Parents are the best at early detection of gang involvement and will be very resourceful in safeguarding their children against gang involvement and in the recovery period. It is the collective responsibility of the community to ensure the environment is safe the children and future generations.

References

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