

Why Some Kids JOIN GANGS

Kids become members of gangs for many reasons. Studies show these are the key ones:

- **Identity, Attention, & Status.**
Gangs may offer kids a powerful group identity and a kind of recognition they cannot get at home or elsewhere.
- **Protection.**
If there are many gangs in an area, joining one of them may offer protection from rival gangs.
- **Feeling of Belonging.**
Gang activity may offer a feeling of being part of a “family” that is missing in the child’s home. The child becomes loyal to the gang’s values, rather than those of the home, school, or society.
- **Intimidation.**
Threats and violent beatings may be used to force youth to join.
- **Excitement.**
Gang activity may seem attractive to kids who are bored, lack interests and direction, or do not feel good about themselves. The media has glamorized gangs in music, movies, and video games. This adds to the excitement associated with them.
- **Peer Pressure.**
Pressure to join a gang comes from others around them.
- **Financial Benefit.**
Kids see being in a gang as an easy way to gain money and new possessions.
- **Lack of Knowledge.**
Kids do not realize the true dangers of being in a gang.