

School Gangs – Gang Resource

BREAKING THE ANONYMITY

Educators, law enforcement, parents, and other youth-service providers need regular training and updates to monitor the changing nature of gang identifiers and, most importantly, gang behavior in their schools and communities. Due to the ever-evolving nature of gang identifiers, and the increasingly common trend of gang members going "lower profile" with fewer visible signs of gang membership to avoid detection by authorities, the best training on gang identifiers is often provided by local law enforcement and other gang specialists who are familiar with the latest local trends.

DENIAL VERSUS ACKNOWLEDGING GANGS

Gangs thrive on anonymity, denial, and lack of awareness by school personnel. The gang member whose notebook graffiti goes unaddressed today may be involved in initiations, assaults, and drug sales in school in the near future.

The condition that makes the school environment most ripe for gang activity is denial. The most common initial response to gangs in almost all communities and schools is denial because public officials are more focused on image concerns for their organizations while they should be focusing on dealing with the problem. The longer they deny, the more entrenched the problem becomes and in the end, the worse their image will be.

School officials can prevent such occurrences - or at least reduce the risks and impact of those which do occur - by training their staff on gang identification, behavior, prevention and intervention strategies, and related school security and emergency preparedness issues.