

Canyon County Prosecutor's Office

GANG AWARENESS

A Handbook for Parents, Teachers, and Concerned Citizens



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¹ This handbook is a compilation and interpretation of a number of different materials. It is the intent of the author to take the material and put it into an easy to read format with the intention to provide a general understanding of basic legal principles. This handbook is not intended to be published or sold for profit rather it is intended for academic use. Furthermore, this booklet should not be reproduced without express written authorization of its author.

1. WHAT IS A GANG?

A group of people who form an alliance for a common purpose and engage in violent or criminal activity.

Defined in the Idaho Code §18-8502:

“Criminal Gang” means an ongoing organization, association, or group of three (3) or more persons, whether formal or informal, that has a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity.



2. WHAT ARE THE AGES OF GANG MEMBERS?

The average age of gang members is from 14 to 21 years of age. Gang members, however, can be as young as 8 years old or as old as into their mid 30's. Recruitment into the gang usually starts in the middle school where the age group is between 10 and 13. Some recruitment has also been seen in elementary school and into the early years of high school. Most gangs target youth that are easily talked into doing work for the gang.

3. WHY DO KIDS JOIN GANGS?

The following is a list of reasons why kids join gangs:

Acceptance/Attention - Many kids feel that they are not getting the attention they feel they deserve at home. They start looking for this attention and love in other places and often find what they are looking for in a gang. The gang essentially becomes their family.

Excitement - This group of kids love the high of committing crimes and getting away with it. They often do their crimes just to be chased by the police. These individuals are adrenaline junkies and love the thrill of criminal activity.

Financial benefit - More and more, we are seeing gang members turn towards using the gang to make a profit through illegal activities. Selling narcotics, robberies, burglaries, auto thefts, and other property crimes are common in many gangs. Many gangs specialize in certain criminal activity.



Peer Pressure - If your kids are hanging around gangs and gang members you can almost guarantee that they are being pressured to join the gang. It is important to know who your children are associating with.

Protection - In poor neighborhoods and neighborhoods with high gang activity, kids often have to join a gang just to survive. It is often easier to join the gang than to be victimized on a daily basis.

To Socialize - The best parties in town are gang parties. Easy access to liquor, narcotics, and girls are attractive to potential gang recruits. Young males who have a hard time socializing and talking to girls find girls often like gang members.

Family Tradition – Children are raised in gang families. They are indoctrinated from early childhood of the gang lifestyle.

4. WHAT DO KIDS HAVE TO DO TO GET INTO THE GANG?

There are many different ways that gangs initiate recruits into the gang. The following are some examples of how gang members get initiated:

Jumped in - (Rolled in, Quoted, Lined in) This ritual usually consists of the recruit having to fight 3 or more members of the gang for a specified amount of time. The time limit is different from gang to gang, but usually last somewhere between 15 seconds and 1 minute. The reason for the beating is to see how tough the recruit is and if he is a fighter. Lined in is slightly different in that the gang has two lines of its members and the recruit has to go between the line as the gang members beat him or her. Often times officers are called to new gang members' homes at the request of the parent to take assault reports. The child is often uncooperative and unwilling to tell the officer or his parent who his assailants are because he has just joined a gang. This is the most common initiation into the gang.

Courted in - Sometimes an individual is asked to join a gang without going through any initiation. The individual usually has some type of special talent that the gang wants to learn or take advantage of. The individual may have a good connection for drugs, is good at stealing cars, or has some other criminal talent. It may also be that the individual has a car that the gang needs to commit criminal activity or just to get around town in.

Walked In - Some gangs have no formal initiation and may just be asked to join the gang.

Sexed In - Sometimes female recruits are required to roll 2 dice. Whatever number is thrown is the number of gang members that the recruit has to have sex with. There have also been stories of gang recruits required to have sex with HIV positive people. This information has never been verified and still remains only a story.

Crimed In/Commit Crimes - Some gangs require that a recruit commit a crime or a series of crimes to prove that they are good candidates for the gangs. Often times, gangs that specialize in a particular crime such as auto theft, will require the recruit to steal a car or commit the crime that they specialize in. Some gangs have point systems for the crimes and the recruit has to have so many points. The crimes required to be committed can be as violent as drive-by shootings or murder.

Respected In - If a gang member has moved to the area, they may be respected in if they are already a prominent member of an affiliated gang.

Born In - Born and raised in a respected gang family.



5. WHAT SIGNS TO LOOK FOR?

- i. Major / Negative Behavior
- ii. Gang Clothing
- iii. Hand Signs
- iv. Gang Tattoos
- v. Carrying Weapons
- vi. Unexplained / fairly large sums of money
- vii. Gang Graffiti

i. Major / Negative Behavior Changes

Typically, teenagers at some point in their life will rebel against authority. This is to be expected, but if it continues to get progressively worse this could be a sign of a child involved in gangs. The following are examples of behaviors consistent with that of gang members.

- a. Withdraws from family members. The gang becomes his/her family.
- b. Breaks parental rules consistently.
- c. Grades have dropped / trouble at school.
- d. Lack of hobbies or interests.
- e. Develops an unusual desire for privacy. Will not let you into their bedroom. Does not want you to meet their friends. Friends have nicknames like Psycho, or Shooter and they do not know the real names of their friends or won't tell you.
- f. Obsessed with Gangster rap / gangster movies and videos / guns

- g. Possible use of alcohol / drugs
- h. Hanging with known or suspected gang members
- i. Frequent negative contact with police / other authority figures
- j. Admits to gang membership.

It is suggested that these problems be dealt with immediately. Denial that there is a problem or not dealing with the problem in the hope that it will go away will only make the matter worse.

ii. Gang Clothing

It should be noted that gang members often wear clothing that is currently popular amongst juveniles in general. The wearing of the clothing that is described in this section does not automatically make that person a gang member. However, a combination of the clothing worn, along with a certain color scheme or the manner in which the clothing is worn can indicate membership in a gang. As gang members find out what clothing is becoming too noticeable to people, they may change what they wear. What is fashionable today may not be tomorrow and gang members like to be fashionable. The following are examples of gang clothing.

The individual pictured on the right has several examples of common gang clothing and gang identifiers. First he has a blue handkerchief hanging out of his pants. These are often referred to as “rags” and come in many different colors. Gangs often adopt a color that they will identify with. Many other gangs may use the same color rag and often time alliances between different gangs can be recognized by the use of the same color rag. He is also wearing a blue belt that is hanging down on his left side. He also has blue pants following the same color scheme. His pants are hanging low which is known as “sagging.” He is also throwing hand signs which will be discussed later.



The photo on the left depicts a gang member with a blue belt with the number “18.” This represents the Canyon County Sureno Set 18th Street gang. The member identifies with the color blue (Sureno) as well as his gang’s number; “18.”

Customized T-shirts and baseball caps are also popular amongst gangsters. Most often the name or initials of the gang will be used along with any symbols used by the gang in their graffiti. Often times gang members will write gang graffiti on their clothing, shoes, baseball caps, on their wallets or other articles of clothing. In the next picture you see a personalized sweatshirt. It is blue in color, the color of the East Side set, with the number this particular gang represents.



Many times a gang will adopt a popular sports team's style of apparel, especially if the colors of that team is the same as their gang color or the team logo has some significant meaning to the gang. Here is a photo of a gang member with his blue bandana along with a blue football jersey.

Currently in Canyon County, the Dallas Cowboys, Oakland Raiders, and L.A. Dodgers are identified with different Sureno gangs. Whereas the San Francisco 49ers, Nebraska Cornhuskers, and Texas Tech Red Raiders are identified with different Norteno gangs. See Table "1."

Be cognizant that baseball caps and other clothing can be an indicator. Look for Team, Color, the position of the cap Left or Right, does clothing have nicknames, symbols or unexplained initials.

Table 1: Gang affiliated Sports teams

Sureno Affiliated Sports Teams	Norteno Affiliated Sports teams
	

iii. Gang Hand signs

The use of hand signs is a popular form of communication amongst street gangs. The hand sign usually identifies what major gang affiliation the individual is a part of and the particular gang he is in. The hand sign is also a form of disrespect to rival gangs and has been the cause of gang violence around the nation. There have been cases reported where hearing impaired individuals using sign language to communicate have been mistaken for gang members and have been the victims of gang violence. Hand signs are usually unique to the gang and vary greatly. If you notice two groups of suspected gang members throwing hand signs at each other, get away from the group and notify the local authorities immediately.



iv. Gang Tattoos

Gang tattoos are the sign of a hardcore gang member. Individuals who mark themselves with gang writing have usually made a decision to stay in the gang for a long time. Besides tattooing, branding oneself with gang signs is a popular form of showing allegiance to their gang. Usually, the gang tattoo or brand are the same symbols or words used in gang graffiti.



v. Gang Weapons

In being criminal organizations, the use of weapons of all types is inherent in street gangs. The use of pistols, shotguns, and assault rifles. Knives, brass knuckles, bats, explosives, and other weapons have also been confiscated from gang members. The gang members obtain their weapons in many different ways. One method is known as a “straw purchase.” A straw purchase is where a person buys the gun legally and then gives the gun to someone who is not allowed by law to have the weapon. The person buying the gun usually receives a fee for purchasing the weapon. Gun shows, pawn shops, and flea markets are popular places to purchase weapons. Some weapons are being stolen in burglaries of residence or robberies of gun dealers.



vi. Gang Crimes (Crimes for Profit)

Current trends show that more and more street gangs are getting into narcotics trafficking. Incidents of gang members being caught in the schools with drugs is on the rise. Battles over the control of drug areas and drug money have also been noted. Besides narcotics trafficking, other crimes such as armed robbery, auto theft, burglaries, and other types of thefts are being committed by gang members. Much of the money made from these illegal activities are used to throw parties, buy guns

to protect their drug trade or to commit crimes with, and to finance the buying of narcotics to resale. Besides the crimes for profit, violent criminal activity such as murders, drive-bys, sexual assaults, and assaults are higher amongst the gang population. If your child is in possession of money he cannot explain, this may be an indicator of his being involved in illegal gang activity. It



might be a good idea to search your child's room for any narcotics, stolen items, or weapons that he may be hiding if you suspect he or she is involved in gang activity. Once you have verified that your son or daughter is involved in gang activity deal with the problem immediately. It may become necessary to seek professional counseling. Most community governments offer some type of counseling or can refer you to the proper organization.

vii. Gang Graffiti

Gang graffiti is often referred to by law enforcement as the newspaper of the street. This is because a lot can be learned about the gang from their graffiti. Graffiti usually names the gang and its members. It marks the gang's territory and is a warning to rival gangs. It can also tell us what gangs affiliate with each other. Many times, graffiti will show disrespect and warning to rival gangs and individual gang members that they have been targeted. It should be noted that gang graffiti and tagger graffiti are different. Things to look for are the color of paint, numbers (13 or 14) male/female indications, monikers/nick names.



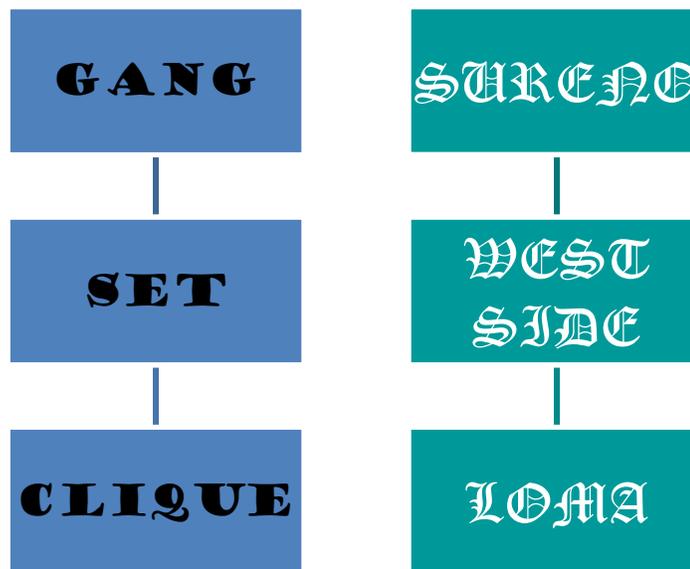
Gang graffiti is also can be found on hands, bedrooms, as well as school books. Graffiti is a good indicator that their children are either engaged in gang activity or toying with the notion of joining a gang. Parents should be observant of what their children are doing. A lot of times graffiti is deemed as the gate way crime to other illicit gang activity.

6. GANGS IN CANYON COUNTY

Gangs in Canyon County are usually influenced from the West Coast, namely Los Angeles, California. Each affiliation has its own style of dress, rules, and gang graffiti. The section will discuss these major gang affiliations. Some of these symbols and images may not be seen in your area as local gangs will change or modify the gang symbols or use their own to identify themselves.

First it is important to understand the basic structure of gangs. There typically is a three tier hierarchy for each street gang. Going from macro to micro level: first is the gang, then the set, and followed by the clique. Diagram “1” depicts how a street gang would be classified.

Diagram 1: Structure of a Gang



In Canyon County there are two primary gangs: the “Surenos” and “Nortenos”. Table “2” breaks down the basic identifying information regarding these two gangs.

Table 2: Canyon County Gangs Basic Identifiers

Nortenos	Surenos
Claim the color red	Claim the color blue
Claim the number “14”	Claim the number “13”
Associated with letter “N”	Associated with letter “M”
Largest gang in Nampa	Largest gang in Caldwell

“SURENOS”

Table 3: Break down of common Sureno sets & cliques

<u>Surenos</u>
East Side Locos
West Side Loma Locos
South Side/ SUR 13
18 th Street
MS – 13
LST/Lost Soul Trece
BMC/Brown Magic Clique

Sureno gangs stem from inmates from Southern California known as “La Eme.” Over time a number of sets and cliques have formed. Some of the local gangs in Canyon County are off shoots that have immigrated others are newly formed that have adopted the philosophy, identifiers, and/or principles of the California Sureno gangs. Each affiliation has identifying characteristics, symbols, and traits. A brief break down of each is provided.

i. EAST SIDE LOCOS

- Largest Criminal Street Gang in the City of Caldwell.
- Claim the color blue and the number “13”
- Allies: South Side Surenos/18th Street
- Enemies: West Side Loma/North Side
- Common Crimes: Burglaries, Thefts, Battery, Vandalism, Homicide, Shots Fired.



ii. WEST SIDE LOMA LOCOS

- Second largest gang in the City of Caldwell.
- Tend to be the most violent gang.
- Also claim the color blue and “13”.
- Allies: North Side
- Enemies: East Side Locos, South Side Surenos, 18th Street
- Common Crimes: Burglaries, Thefts, Vandalisms, Battery, Homicide, Shots Fired



iii. SOUTH SIDE (SUR 13)

- Closely Associates with East Side Locos
- Smaller gang but members “represent” with tattoos and graffiti.
- Allies: East Side Locos, 18th Street.
- Enemies: North Side, West Side.



iv. 18TH STREET

- Originated from California. Estimated 20,000 members in L.A. County.
- Extremely large gang that has international membership.
- Associates with East Side Locos.
- www.xv3.com



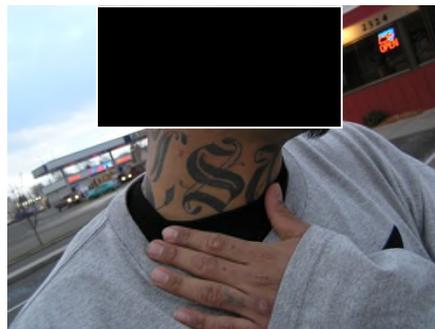
v. MS-13

- Mara Salvatrucha is El Salvadorian for Army Ants.
- Most MS-13 members in this area are here to escape the gang lifestyle.
- Common Hand sign for MS-13 is the Devils pitch fork = upside down is an “M”



vi. LST/LOST SOUL TRECE

- Began as a Sureno prison gang set
- Quickly became structured by recruiting gang members in prison
- Recently spread to the street
- Associating with East Side Locos



vii. BMC/ “BROWN MAGIC CLIQUE”

- Brown Magic Clique is an active gang in the Nyssa/Ontario, Oregon area
- BMC members commonly come into contact with local Police while traveling between Eastern Oregon and Boise, ID



“NORTENOS”



Table 4: Break down of common Norteno sets & cliques

Nortenos
North Side
VCL/Carrío Campos Locos
North Side Big Time
North Side Tiny Toons
Caldwell Norte Villians

i. VCL/VARRIO CAMPOS LOCOS

- Norteno gang set originating from the Farmway Village labor camp in Caldwell.
- Many members, and or families, are illegal aliens from Mexico.
- Most members live in or have ties to Farmway Village



OTHER GANGS

The following are gangs not affiliated with either Sureno or Norteno. They have roots elsewhere.

i. INSANE CLOWN POSSE: JUGGALOS

- Originated as fan based subculture of the “Insane Clown Posse”
- Have become increasingly violent across the country
- Use the “Hatchetman” as a common sign or symbol
- Known as societal outcasts and commonly use face paint to create a new identity.



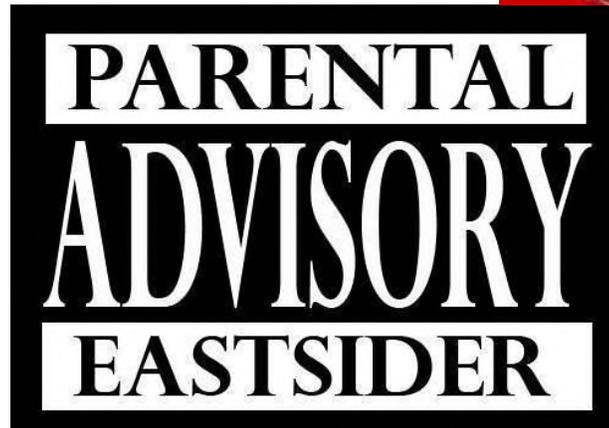
ii. LATIN KINGS

- East Coast / Midwest Style Gang
- Colors: Black & Gold
- Make use of Aztec symbols to represent affiliation
- Consider themselves as role models and productive members of the community



7. USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE GANG

More and more gang members are now using the internet to not only represent their affiliation but disrespect rivals. Gang members use flashy logos and altered cartoon characters to attract impressionable youth for recruitment. Parents should monitor not only their child's usage, but also who they are linked to by "friends lists." The rule of thumb is for every account a parent is aware of, a child may have two or three others that the parent doesn't know of.



8. PRE-CRISIS INDICATORS

These are some of the signs you may see prior to a violent confrontation:

- Clustering of rival groups (schools, parks, parking lots, movie theaters, etc.)
- Movement of groups not common in your neighborhood (carloads of kids not from your neighborhood)
- Reports of fights and arguments on school property (bus stops, on buses, lunch hours, bus routes)
- Increase in gang graffiti
- Crossing out of gang graffiti
- Violent incidents reported in your neighborhood
- Sudden / excessive change in dress (wearing the same color / flying rags)

9. WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT?

- Praise your children for doing well / encourage them to participate in positive activities
- Get to know your children’s friends and their families
- Set the example / be a positive role model
- Talk to your children about gangs / discourage participation
- Talk and listen to your children
- Spend quality time with your children
- Put a high value on education
- Identify with positive role models
- Involve your children in positive group activities

10. SUGGESTED PARENTING SKILLS

- Be a good observer
- Learn real names of your children’s friends
- Monitor living space for gang paraphernalia, weapons, and drugs
- Report all crimes
- Seek the facts - kids will tell you what you want to hear
- Set clear limits - follow through with discipline if they break the rules
- Teach your children decision making skills - help them make the right choices
- Team up with other parents

11. NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Develop positive alternatives for the children in your neighborhood (sports/mentor programs)

Talk with other parents and neighbors - keep informed

Work with police and other agencies “GET INVOLVED” join Neighborhood Watch, PTA , church groups, neighborhood associations

Report all crime and gang activity

STOP THE VIOLENCE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE!!!!!!!!!!

