



# Understanding Youth Gangs in Yakima County



**A guide to help you recognize and prevent gang involvement in your family and community**

**Sponsored and Developed By  
The City of Yakima  
Gang Awareness Campaign**

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Provided by ESD 105**



## Yakima County Resources

**211** is a local resource help line that can refer you to parenting programs, counselors, mental health therapists, and substance abuse providers.

**Southeast Community Center/OIC/Building the Bridges** gang outreach workers can be reached at 509-575-6114

**Randy Town, ESD 105 Yakima County Gang Commission Coordinator** (509) 454-5313; randy.town@esd105.org

**All of the local police chiefs** (Grandview, Granger, Mabton, Moxee, Selah, Sunnyside, Tieton, Toppenish, Union Gap, Wapato, Yakama Nation Tribal Police, Yakima and Zillah) and the **Yakima County Sheriff's Office** (unincorporated areas and the cities of Naches and Harrah) are also resources.



## Is My Child At Risk For Gang Involvement?

Parents play a crucial role in keeping their children out of gangs. Unfortunately many parents lack important information about what to look for. Youth between 12-14 years of age are most likely to consider joining a gang; however children as young as first grade can be recruited.

You should know that kids who have school difficulties, a lack of parental supervision, use alcohol or other drugs, are often truant from school or very prone to "following the pack" are most at risk of gang involvement.

## Why Do Kids Join Gangs?

Adolescence is a time in life when children begin to define their own identity. Many seek out new peer groups as a means of gaining acceptance. Gangs can meet this need. Gangs can provide things children may not get at home or elsewhere — not just acceptance, but structure, money, food, activities, companionship, and even love. Kids don't run toward gangs, they are running away from something else and find gangs. You can help prevent gang involvement by ensuring all your children's needs are met in some other way.

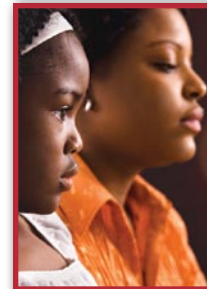
## Behaviors Associated With Gang Involvement

Youth who are involved in gangs may exhibit changes in behavior. You should watch for these behaviors and the other indicators listed in this brochure:



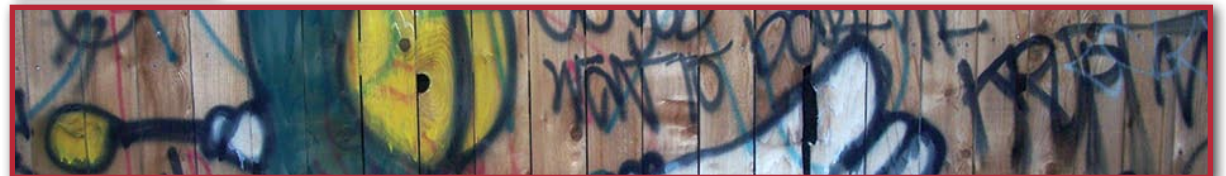
### Negative behavioral changes:

- Withdrawing from family and family activities.
- Increased truancy or school discipline.
- Declining school performance.
- Staying out late without reason.
- Unusual desire for secrecy.
- Confrontational behavior including disrespect for parental and school authority.
- Sudden negative attitudes toward police.
- Changes in attitude about usual activities including school, church, or sports.



### Additional Behavioral Warning Signs:

- Unusual interest in one or two colors of clothing or a particular brand or logo.
- Interest in gang-influenced music or movies.
- Gang-type drawings or gang symbols on schoolbooks, clothing, notebooks, or walls.
- Withdrawal from longtime friends and forming of a new peer group who wear the same colors, numbers, or symbols.
- Use of unusual hand signals to communicate with friends.
- Sudden changes in the style of dress.
- Possession of firearms or other weapons.
- Unexplained injuries, such as being beaten or injuries to hands and knuckles from fighting.
- Unexplained cash or goods such as clothing.



# Common Gang Identifiers

Gangs use colors, clothing, numbers, and symbols to identify members of their group and to communicate their membership to others. To a person with even a little gang knowledge, these signs are often obvious.

You should not make conclusions about gang membership based on only one sign or indicator. Gang-like clothing is a popular style that many youth wear, and can change continually. Please consult with a knowledgeable source such as the school if you are unsure about your student's gang involvement.

## Clothing Styles and Colors:

Gang members commonly use clothing and colors to show their membership. You should be aware of any changes in the way your child dresses, especially if he or she insists on only wearing certain colors, numbers, or brands. Another common sign is a student who refuses to wear a certain color.

Gangs members commonly wear clothing styles popularized by Hip Hop artists, such as over-sized pants worn below the waist (known as "sagging"). Colored bandanas are used as symbols, as are colored belts and colored shoes. Teamwear and team logos are sometimes used to show membership. Teamwear in non-traditional colors can be purchased to show membership.

## Graffiti and Artwork:

Gangs use graffiti to mark their territory and to communicate with or challenge other gangs. Gang graffiti usually includes the same symbols, colors, and numbers that gang members wear. Gang members will also "tag" their notebooks and papers with gang symbols, and will often have drawings that represent their membership. The Old English style of writing is commonly used by gangs in artwork.



## Symbols and Numbers:

Gangs members will wear or use certain numbers and symbols that represent their gang, set, or clique. Symbols include stars, pitchforks, Playboy bunnies, crowns, and three dots in a triangle. Common numbers used include 5, 13, 14, and 74. Numbers may represent letters of the alphabet (b=2, c=3). Local sets may use their area code to communicate their home. Gang members will tattoo these symbols and numbers, or even the name of their gang.

## Hand Signs:

Some gangs use hand signs to show loyalty to a gang and to challenge or disrespect rival gang members. You should question any hand signs your child uses that you don't recognize.

## Music:

"Gangsta" rap is a style of music that uses lyrics to glorify gang life and violence. Rap music can glorify a specific gang, and can also be derogatory to other gangs, police, and other groups.



## Local Yakima County Gangs

Most of the street gangs in Yakima County fall into two categories – the Sureños or the Norteños.

### Sureños:

A California-origin street gang associated with the Mexican Mafia prison gang. Rivals with Norteños.

- Blue bandanas and blue clothing
- Letters "S" and "M" or "eme"
- Number 13 (for "M" - may be X3 or XIII)
- May reverse the letter "N" in writing (as a sign of 'disrespect' to Norteños)



### Florencia:

A California-origin street gang associated with the Sureños. Rivals with Norteños.

- Blue bandanas and clothing
- Number 13, and letter "F"

### 18th Street

A California-origin street gang associated with the Sureños. Rivals are Norteños & Florencia.

- Black, grey, or blue bandanas/clothing
- Number 18 (may be XVIII or X8)

### In Yakima County other Sureños affiliates include:

- LVL – Little Valley Lokitos
- VSL – Varrío Sureños Locos
- PBS – Play Boy Sureños
- SSF – South Side Familia
- TLS – Tiny Locos Sureños
- ESS – East Side Sureños
- WSP – West Side Pomona
- ESL – East Side Longos



### Norteños:

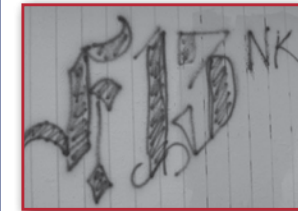
A California-origin street gang associated with the Nuestra Familia prison gang. Rivals with Sureños.

- Red bandanas and red clothing
- Letters "N" or "ene" and number 14
- Huelga bird and UNLV teamwear
- May cross out the letter "S" in writing (as a sign of disrespect to Sureños)



### In Yakima County other Norteños affiliates include:

- La Raza XIV (LR XIV)
- North Side Villins (NSV)
- Varrío Campo Vida 21st St. (VCV21)



Gang graffiti is used to claim turf and to communicate with rival gangs. This F13 tag is in the Old English lettering style, and claims territory for the Florencia gang, and the NK is a threat to the rival Norteños. (Courtesy Northwest Gangs)

### Other Gangs and Gang-Like Groups:

Some youth may join gang-like groups that differ from "traditional" street gangs. These groups usually reject the label "gang" but may engage in criminal, violent, and anti-social activity. Examples include:

- Straight Edge
- ICP - Insane Clown Posse / Juggalos
- Tagger crews
- Los Vatos Desmadrosos (claim the color green)
- CPV – Chicanos Por Vida (claim the color brown)
- W\$H – West Side Hustlers (claim the color black)
- ESC – East Side Crips (claim the color blue)
- NP – Native Pride (claim the color red)
- BPL – Brown Pride Locos (claim the color brown)

# What Can A Parent Do?

## The number one thing a parent can do is to BE INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHILD!

- **Spend time with your child** and show an interest in them. Care about their school work and their extra curricular activities.
- **LOOK in your child's room** – it is okay to be a bit nosy if you're concerned about them.
- **KNOW your child's friends** and meet the parents/guardians of your child's friends

- **SET FIRM LIMITS** and lovingly enforce them
- **EAT** meals together
- **PLAN family time** – make time to play together and keep family traditions
- **TAKE a parenting class** – children don't come with instructions - be open to learning other ways of parenting, not just repeating how you were parented (or maybe not parented)
- **BE what you want your child to be** – if you want respect and love, give it.

