

Lakeland Police Department

GANG INTELLIGENCE UNIT

*A Parent/Teacher's Guide
to
Gang Recognition*



The information in this document was compiled to enlighten parents and teachers concerned with the growing influence of gangs among school aged children today. The signs and symbols discussed in this document have their roots in gangs, which originated outside the State of Florida. These gangs have transplanted to the Florida area by the migration of families from areas such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Additional influences have come from the glorification of the gang life style by the entertainment industry.

Using numerous informational resources and interviewing gang investigators, we have developed the specific information contained in this document.

Gangs and their Increasing Impact on Society

Gangs in one form or another have been a part of our culture for hundreds of years. However, while gang activity in earlier years was limited to the delinquent behavior of neighborhood cliques, recent gang activity has taken on a different character. Today, gangs engage in high-stakes narcotics and weapons trafficking, robberies, and other equally serious and violent crimes. In national terms, gang-related crimes are not only increasingly violent but are occurring in greater numbers. Today, there are approximately 7,400 individual gang sets in the United States, with a total of 1.5 million to 2 million members. The Federal Bureau of Prisons, currently track some 1600 different gangs.

Gangs in Jails/Prisons

Gangs in correctional facilities are cohesive and well organized systems. The hierarchy of gangs in jails and prisons are more rigid than those on the streets and the gangs tend to cooperate with each other more than they do on the outside – working together to make the best out of their situation. The gangs manipulate the correctional system, often using it as an opportunity to recruit new members. Inmates who refuse to join gangs are often forced to reverse their decision or suffer at the hands of gang members. Gangs are able to gain control of the inmates because the inmates know that the violence the gangs deliver is more severe than any punishment a correctional system can give, and that often there are very little corrections officers or officials can do to protect them. In addition, non-gang members are frequent targets for gang members. Failure to cooperate with or oblige can result in non-gang members being assaulted.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MOSTLY BY PARENTS

Q. Aren't gangs a BIG city problem?

A. NO! Gangs found out they can make more money selling drugs in the suburbs and rural areas by branching out.

Q. Aren't gangs made up of one race and sex?

A. Not anymore, gangs are crossing all ethnic and sexual boundaries, White, Black, Mexican, Hispanic, Asian, Male and Female.

Q. Aren't their only two real gangs, BLOODS and CRIPS?

A. NO! Under the categories Blood and Crip alone, there are thousands of different sets or cliques; each one has its own name.

Q. How can we stop the gangs?

A. First by stopping the recruiting of young kids, mainly at school. Showing your child the real truth about gang life, take him/her to a courtroom while a gang member is on trial; ask him/her if he sees any other gang members in the courtroom to support the one on trial.

Q. Aren't gangs just a bunch of kids having fun?

A. NO! GANGS are the kids and young adults that are carrying loaded weapons and are not afraid to use them. These kids are breaking into your home, stealing and selling drugs to other little kids and making money to support the gang.

Q. If we just ignore them, won't they just go away?

A. NO! Gangs are now at their fifth and sixth generation and are multi-billion dollar businesses that are growing at a very fast pace. Did you know that the average life span of a gang member is 23 - 25 years old? By 35 they are either in jail or dead.

Q. Why don't Parents, Teachers, and Politicians get more involved?

A. Some do, but the big problem is **DENIAL**

What is a Gang?

Gangs are usually formed according to ethnic or racial guidelines, although there seems to be a current trend to form gangs for economic reasons. Traditional youth gangs structured along ethnic lines include Hispanic, Asian, Black, Pacific Islander, and White gangs.

"Criminal Street Gang" means a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group that has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts, and that consists of three or more persons who have a common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols and have two or more members who, individually or collectively, engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal street gang activity.

These gangs are involved in violent, unlawful criminal activity and may or may not claim control over a certain territory in the community.

How Gangs Function

Gangs thrive on intimidation and notoriety. They often find violence glamorous and a necessity in order to maintain individual and gang status. Like most groups, street gangs depend upon both individual and group participation. Unlike legitimate groups or organizations, local street gangs generally do not have an identified leader. The person that is the toughest, has the guns, or has the most money may emerge as the leader, but this status is generally short-lived. In most nation-wide organized street gangs, there is an organized structure with a leader.

Effects of Gang Involvement

Gang membership extracts a terrible toll from the lives of all that are in contact with the member. Families of gang members must be concerned for their own safety as well as that of their son or daughter who is a gang member. Friends who are not involved with gangs are cast aside and soon the youth's only friends are gang members.

Gang Activity – What Gangs Do

Many gang activities are consistent with those engaged in by a large portion of society. But, when a gang member is involved in a weekend party, fund-raising car wash, or even a family or neighborhood picnic, the potential for violence and criminal activity is far greater than any other group of people. Gang members seek confrontation from rivals. The resulting violence often claims innocent victims. Gang violence varies from individual assaults to drive-by shootings. Some gangs are involved in the sale of drugs, extortion, robberies, motor vehicle thefts, or other criminal activity for monetary gain.

Of greater concern is the inherent violence associated with graffiti. Graffiti is an ever-present form of communication between gangs, their members, and the community. Graffiti is used as a means to communicate the presence of a gang in a particular area, territory, rivalries, and also marks boundaries. It is also used to communicate taunts and threats to rival gangs.



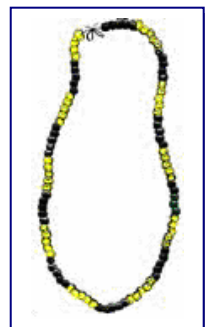
Graffiti can be called a “newspaper” of the street. For instance, when a gang’s name has been crossed out on a graffiti-marked area, there is a good indication there may be strife between at least two gangs. If this were so, this would be a challenge that must not go unanswered. It is also used to advertise the gang’s status or power and to declare his or her own allegiance to the gang. When a neighborhood is marked with graffiti indicating territorial dominance, the entire area and its inhabitants become targets for violence. Anyone on the street or in their home is fair game for drive-by attacks by rival gang members. A rival gang identifies everyone in the neighborhood as a potential threat. Consequently, innocent residents are often subjected to gang violence by the mere presence of graffiti in their neighborhood.

Not all graffiti indicates the presence of gangs. In Central Florida, a large number of vandals known as “taggers” make their presence known by scrawling their code names and crew affiliations on walls, street signs, bridges and buildings with spray paint and markers.

Clothing, Colors, and Other Gang Identifiers



Gangs frequently adopt a particular type or style of dress in order to promote solidarity among their membership and set them apart from their rivals. This may include a specific hat or colored bandanna or jacket of a particular sports team if the colors are significant to the gang.



In schools where information is confirmed that a gang may have adopted an item of clothing, hat or colored bandanna, the school authorities must take steps to discourage the wearing of those items. To ignore the presence of those items is to invite the growth of the gang, as it is a recruiting tool for the gang.

What Gangs Want Gang Members To Believe

- Gang members will provide love and attention to those who don't get it at home.
- Gangs offer protection for its members.
- Gangs provide money to members who cannot get it from home.
- The gang will provide shelter for members that run away from home.
- Gangs keep members from dealing with family problems.
- Members gain respect based on how well and how many criminal acts they perform.
- Members gain additional respect and popularity based on the power of the gang in the community.
- Member's social lives are planned around gang activity.
- Peer pressure forces members to participate in criminal activities in order for members to maintain the reputation as being part of the gang.

Why Do Young People Join Gangs?

People join gangs for a variety of reasons, some of which are the same reasons people join other social groups such as the Boy and Girl Scouts.

- A search for love, structure, and discipline.
- A sense of belonging and commitment.
- The need for recognition and power.
- Companionship, training, excitement, and activities.
- A sense of self worth and status.
- A place of acceptance.
- The need for physical safety and protection.
- A family tradition.

Signs and Indicators of Gang Membership

- Admits to gang involvement.
- Is obsessed with one particular color of clothing or shows a desire for a particular logo over and over.
- Initiation Marks – scratches or marks on the arms and/or hands – usually in a pattern.
- Haircuts – long or short hair with strips or patterns cut into the style.
- Wears excessive jewelry with distinctive designs and may wear it only on either the right or left side of the body.
- Develops an unusual desire for privacy and secrecy and may completely rearrange living quarters to create more privacy.
- A change in the normal language patterns of the youth.
- Use of hand signs to communicate with other youths.
- Sudden possession of large amounts of money and/or material possessions they cannot account for.
- Breaking curfew – coming home late due to meetings or fights.
- Never home – gangs always have activities planned. The youth will usually lie about their activity or where they have been.
- New friends – not introduced to the parents. Friends referring to the youth by an unusual nickname the youth will not explain.
- Failing school grades – lack of interest in school – skipping classes or not attending school regularly.
- Disobeys or challenges authority figures (parents, teachers, law enforcement, etc.).
- Peculiar drawings or language on schoolbooks, folders, walls, doors, etc. Usually graffiti like, hard to decipher, and characterized by crossed out, and upside-down letters and symbols. (May later appear as tattoos or brands)



NOTE: These signs do not necessarily confirm your child or your child's friends as gang members. These are merely the most common signs of gang involvement.

Risk Factors For Joining A Gang

It should be noted that no one circumstance or single event is the cause for someone to join a gang. But each risk factor vanquished does enhance the odds of averting later serious damage.

At-risk youth entering into a gang may have encountered the following risk factors:

1. Racism

When young people encounter both personal and institutional racism, the risks are increased. When groups of people are denied access to power, privileges, and resources, they will often form their own anti-establishment group.

2. Poverty

A sense of hopelessness can result from being unable to purchase wanted goods and services. Young people living in poverty may find it difficult to meet basic physical and psychological needs, which can lead to lack of self-worth and pride. One way to earn cash is to join a gang involved in a drug trade.

3. Lack of a support network

Gang members often come from homes where they feel alienated or neglected and may turn to gangs when their needs for love are not being met at home. Risks increase when the community fails to provide sufficient programs or alternatives to violence.

4. Media Influence

Television, movies, music, and radio all have a profound effect on a youth's development. Before youth have established their own value systems and are able to make moral judgements, the media promotes drugs, sex, and violence as an acceptable lifestyle.

What Can Parents Do To Protect Children From The Influence Of Drugs And Gangs?

Parents need to realize that while there is nothing that can *guarantee* a child will not be lured into gangs or drug use, there are things that can be done to reduce the likelihood of that occurring. Also, if the child gets involved, chances are improved of retrieving the child. Many of the tactics that gangs use to entice youth are the same that parents should use to keep the child safe from these influences. Strong bonds are difficult to break. A strong, parent-bonded relationship with the child greatly decreases the probability of that child turning toward gangs or drugs. **The following are family bonding strategies:**

- **IDENTITY** – Give them a sense of who they are in the family, what values your family represents, and a sense of self-esteem.
- **PROTECTION** – Food, shelter, clothing and a feeling that the family is a refuge from outside negative forces. A place where there is love and when hurt happens, a place where “wounds get licked.”
- **SENSE OF BELONGING** – Acceptance is probably one of the strongest emotionally drawing forces. Families do not need to condone negative behavior, but it is important to still be loved and be an important part of the family – even when we make mistakes.
- **BOUNDARIES AND LIMITS** – Children do not feel loved or protected if there are no limits or boundaries. Boundaries should be set with thought and reasons for the purpose of teaching the child to make good choices. Often parents are afraid to set boundaries. They are afraid of hurting the child or afraid of rejection by the child. This is especially true of divorced parents. Gangs, on the other hand, have no problem setting limits – you cross the line, you’re **DEAD!**

OTHER TIPS:

- Impress upon your child the importance of school and good grades
- Encourage good study habits.
- Respect your child’s feelings and attitudes and help them develop self-esteem.
- Watch closely for negative influences.
- Supervise the child’s activities.
- Monitor what they see and hear (Music, reading materials, television and movies).
- Be active in the P.T.A. and assist schools in rules, planning, student activities and student attendance.
- Spend *quality* time with your child and *listen* to him/her.
- Give your child a life philosophy or belief system that fills spiritual needs.
- Set good examples so your children can model themselves after the most important “role model” ...**YOU!**

Advise your children they should not:

1. Associate with gang members or “wannabe/gonnabe” gang members;
2. Identify or communicate with gangs;
3. Hang out near or where gangs congregate;
4. Approach strangers in cars who appear to want information or directions;
5. Wear gang-related clothing where gangs are known to gather;
6. Wear initialed clothing such as BK – British Knights – a/k/a “Blood Killer” or CK – Calvin Klein – a/k/a “Crip Killer” in high crime areas;
7. Use words like “Crab” or “Slob” anywhere gangs may be; i.e., malls, sporting events, etc.
8. Attend any party or social event sponsored by gangs or their associates;
9. Take part in any graffiti activity or hang around where graffiti is present; or
10. Use any kind of finger or sign language in a public place.

REMEMBER: Gangs thrive on angry youth that lacks parental respect and have loose family ties. They feed on children without an identity and whose value system is faulty or compromised. They can give your child a good feeling by giving them drugs and promoting high self-esteem. This high self-esteem can come from belonging to the gang and committing crimes, such as stealing and selling drugs, which can put money in their pocket.

Who is needed to combat this problem?

It will take a combined effort of everyone in the community, including you, to accomplish this task. You can assist law enforcement by taking an active role in your community and report any suspicious behavior, suspicious individuals and graffiti to you local law enforcement agency.

**GANGS ARE NOT JUST A POLICE PROBLEM
THEY ARE A COMMUNITY PROBLEM!**

Lakeland Gangs

LAKELAND GANGS



SUR 13

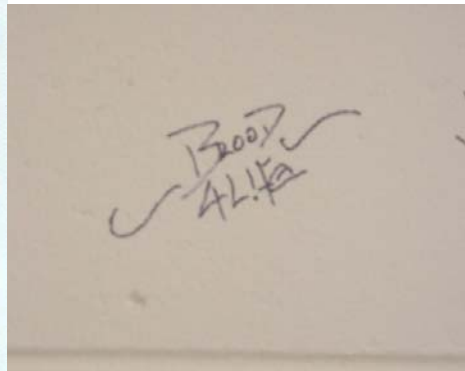


EAST SIDE CRIPS
CRIPS

LAKELAND GANGS



GANGSTER DISCIPLES



BLOODS

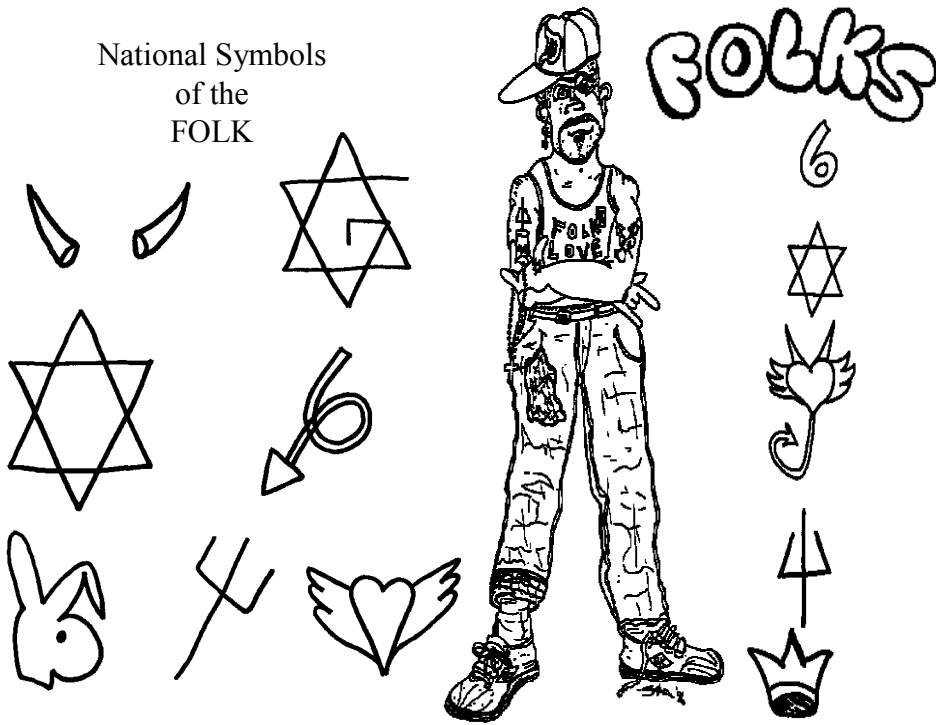
NORTE 14



LAKELAND GANGS

- CRENSHAW BOYZ
- IOWA BOYZ
- LINCOLN COURT BOYZ
- K-LEEN BOYZ
- DIRTY OAK GANGSTERS

National Symbols
of the
FOLK

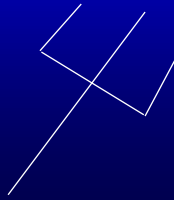


Signs and Symbols of the Folk Nation

- Identifies with the right side of the body
- Primary colors: Blue, Black, White and Grey
- Primary Symbols:
 - Six Point Star -



- Pitch Fork

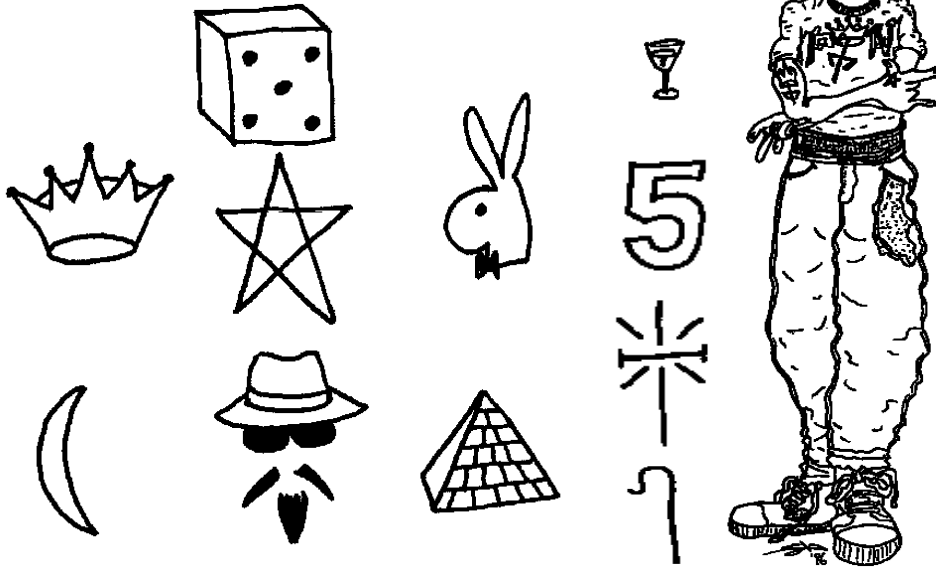


Signs and Symbols of the Folk Nation

- Identifies with the number 6
- 6 point crown
- Crip gangs usually identify with number 3 and sometimes use a 3 point crown



National Symbols
of the
PEOPLE



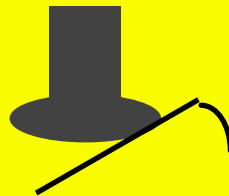
Signs and Symbols of the People Nation

- Identifies with the left side of the body
- Most common symbols

– Five Point Crown -



– Top Hat and Cane -



Signs and Symbols of the People Nation

- Primary colors are Black and Yellow for Latin Kings
- Primary colors are Red for the Bloods
- Primary colors are Red and Black for the Vice Lords
- Identify with the number 5
- 5 point star





National Symbols
of the
BLOODS

BLOODS



550®



BLOODS

- **Early 1970's**
- **Compton**
 - Centennial High School
- **Originally known as Piru**
 - Formed in Piru Street area
 - Still refer to this name
- **No organized street leadership**
 - Whoever has the “juice” for the day

CRIPS

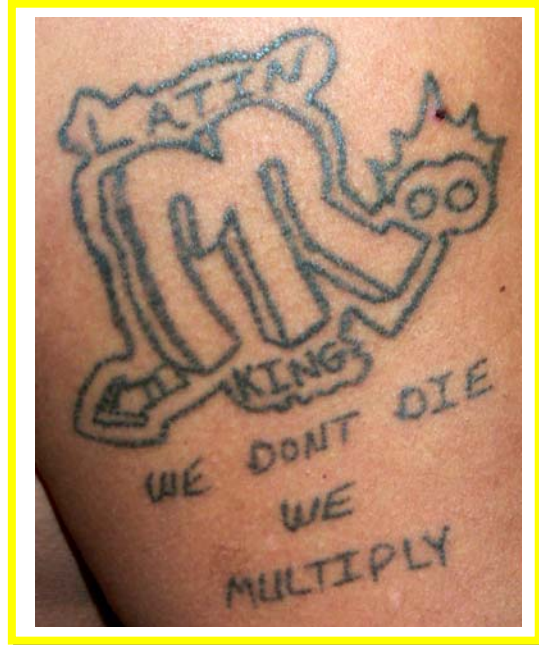
- 1969
- South Central LA
 - Washington High School
- No organized street leadership
 - Whoever has juice for the day
- Narcotics trafficking
 - Crack cocaine



Tattoo Examples



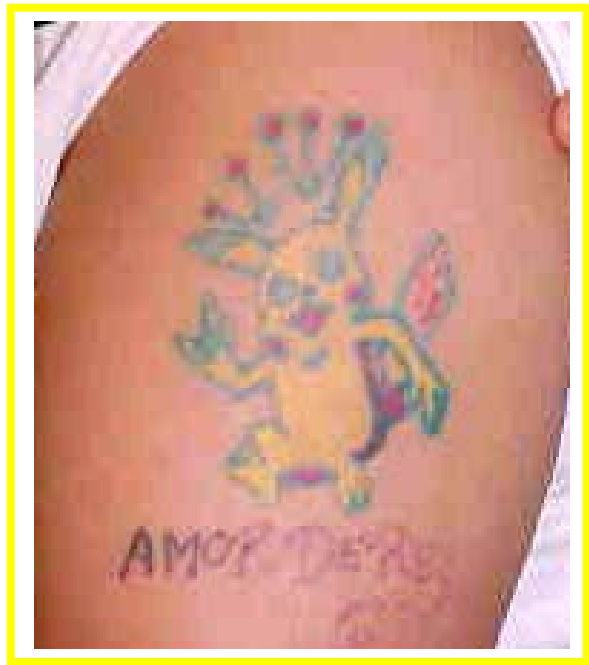
Folk Nation



Latin Kings



Norte 14



Latin Kings

This Latin King tattoo was on a juvenile and is utilizing one of the Poke Mon characters.

Examples of Handsigns



**Folk Nation
Pitchfork**



**Folk Nation
3-Point Crown**



**Crip
Letter "C"**



**Folk Nation/Crip
Blood Killer**

**Translation – They are the
killers of Blood gang members**

Handsign Examples



ÑETA
Puerto Rican
Prison Gang



Latin Kings
OR
Almighty Latin King
Queen Nation

ZERO TOLERANCE



The Lakeland Police Department Gang Intelligence Unit provides free of charge training for community groups, parents and teachers on gang awareness and education.

For further information and questions contact:

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