

KIDS AND STREET GANGS

Worried about your kids being involved with street gangs? Who isn't? Street gangs rely on the impressionable youth to maintain their numbers. Quite frankly, street gangs wouldn't exist without a constant recruitment including your child! Whether your child is 6 or 16, the time is now to invest in our youth. More than ever, you as a parent or role model need to invest quality time to help your child build a positive outlook. Here are some proven strategies that can prevent street gang involvement.

- ◆ *Be a good listener.* (Children must believe it is okay to express the feelings such as love, anger, joy and fear. Believe in your child!)
- ◆ *Demand Personal Responsibility* (Teach your children to be responsible for their actions. Start small by giving your child household responsibilities. The lesson here is for the child to learn from experience- whether the task is done correctly or not. As your child grows, set firm limits and consequences for acting otherwise. Do not rescue your child from the consequences of their decisions. Teach them right from wrong. Demand accountability.)
- ◆ *Teach Problem Solving* (Teach your children to solve problems by thinking about multiple solutions and the consequences for each.)
- ◆ *See through their eyes* (Children need to have some decision making powers within the household. Talking about which TV program to watch or internet site to access is a good start. This builds their confidence when you acknowledge correct decisions.)
- ◆ *Say NO* (Children are never too young to learn that negative behavior has consequences. In time, your child will be able to make appropriate choices that meet with your approval.)
- ◆ *Express your Love* (Children need to sense that they 'belong'. Show your children they are valued. Part of belonging includes family time together. Never talk down to your children.)
- ◆ *Be Involved* (In their education, their dress, their music, know their friends and friends' parents, teach them how to avoid peer pressure.)
- ◆ *Instill Values* (Moral, ethical, the respect for property, the value of life, and conflict resolution without violence. Provide a positive structure to your child's life.)
- ◆ *Educate yourself* (Learn the telltales signs-change in wardrobe, late nights, hand signs, poor school grades, tattoos, possessing unexplained money, different vocabulary, etc.)