

## **GANGS - PARENT AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS STRATEGIES**

- ***Raise Your Gang Awareness Level***
- ***Supervise Your Children - Know your children's friends***
- ***Get Involved with Your Children, Your Neighborhood and Your Community***

### **WHAT IS A GANG?**

A gang is an organized group with leadership that commits criminal acts in the community. Florida Statute 874.03 defines a criminal street gang as a formal or informal ongoing organization, association or group of three or more persons who have the following:

- ❖ A common name or common identifying signs, colors or symbols;
- ❖ Members or associates who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of youth and street gang activity such as fighting, vandalism, murder and drug sales.

### **SIGNS OF GANG INVOLVEMENT**

Gangs leave signs of their presence and your child may adopt some of those signs a gang member or imitator:

- ❖ Specific colors or emblems;
- ❖ Special hand signals;
- ❖ Gang symbols on walls as graffiti or on books or clothing; and
- ❖ Major and negative behavioral changes.
  - Poorer grades;
  - Staying out without a good reason;
  - "Hanging" with known or suspected gang members; and
  - Carrying weapons.
- ❖ Wearing certain kinds and color of clothing in very specific ways; and
- ❖ Possessing unexplained and relatively large sums of money.

## ***MOST COMMON REASONS YOUTH JOIN GANGS***

- ❖ Membership in a group;
- ❖ Protection;
- ❖ Money;
  
- ❖ Boredom;
  
- ❖ Popularity; and
  
- ❖ Family tradition.

## ***PARENT RESOURCES***

- ❖ Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
  - Gang Information <http://www.pcsoweb.com/pages/gang.html>
  - Sheriff's Office Web Site <http://www.pcsoweb.com/>
  - [\*\*How Parents can Recognize and Prevent Gang Involvement\*\*](#)