WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP POLICE FIGHT GANGS AND DRUGS

- Notify police of suspected gang and drug activity
- Help form or become involved in active neighborhood watch programs
- Organize and participate in “Citizen Patrols” of your neighborhood
- Be aware of signs of gang involvement in youth
- Provide or support alternatives for “at risk” youth (recreational, vocational, and social)
- Set a good citizenship example for youth and others
- Monitor youth activities in your neighborhood
- Know where your children are, with whom they associate, and what they are doing
- Support law enforcement gang and drug suppression efforts
- Don’t purchase or use illegal drugs
- Remove or report graffiti
- Maintain your property in good order
- Help elderly or less fortunate neighbors maintain their property
- Support appropriate community and neighborhood urban renewal projects
- Report city code violations
- Obey the law

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

- Take personal risk to prevent crime or confront offenders
- Work outside law enforcement procedures

HOW TO CONTACT POLICE

- Dial **911** in an emergency (felony crime in progress)
- Call **820-8888** to report a crime or have an officer respond
- To pass along intelligence or other information that might help police build a case, contact BPD Public Affairs at (309) 434-2355 or (309) 434-2534. You can also reach us by e-mail at police@cityblm.org.
- To report graffiti or code violations, contact the City of Bloomington Planning and Code Enforcement office at (309) 434-2226.

WHAT IS HELPFUL TO POLICE

- Names, descriptions and number of suspects
- The address in question, with a description of the property
- Vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers, even if it’s only part of the license number
- Methods and times of operation, and any other details of the activity that was witnessed
- Information regarding the presence of lookouts, weapons or vicious dogs

GANG AND DRUG SUPPRESSION

Bloomington Police Department
305 S. East Street
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

Public Affairs Unit
(309) 434-2355
(309) 434-2534
police@cityblm.org

WHAT IS A GANG?

Any ongoing organization, association or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of serious crimes, which has a common name or common identifying signs, tattoos, or symbols, AND whose members -- individually or collectively -- engage in a pattern of criminal activity.

SIGNS OF GANG / DRUG ACTIVITY IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- High volume of sporadic stop-and-go traffic (pedestrian and vehicular)
- Short stays by visitors and frequent stops by the same visitor
- Telltale signs of drug use (drug pipes, brillo pads, scales, razor blades, etc.)
- Fortification of a residence
- Strange odors (cat urine, ether, ammonia) related to methamphetamine cooking
- Use of signaling (hand signs, lights, or verbal commands)
- The presence of subjects outside a residence for long periods of time (look outs)
- Visible gang colors on multiple subjects at an address (tattoos, gang signs, slogans, graffiti)
- Appearance of organized meetings by subjects all wearing the same colors
- An increase in crimes such as robberies, vandalism and graffiti

WARNING SIGNS FOR GANG MEMBERSHIP

(Things to watch for in your children)

- A sudden change in friends
- Serious change in his or her behavior (rebellion)
- Wearing clothing of all one color
- Changing into a different set of clothes once away from the house
- Sudden asset gain (cash, clothes, car)
- Signs of tobacco, alcohol or drug use
- Use of gang graffiti, symbols or slang
- Increase in swearing or foul language
- Possession of gang literature, creed, code or by-laws
- Excessive disciplinary referrals
- Sudden negative police contact
- Disinterest and decline in school work
- Truancy
- Unwillingness to attend family gatherings or share regular meals
- Evidence of initiation activities (“rites of passage”)
- Unexplained injuries (such as those which might result from a beating)
- Discovery of hidden weapons
- Lack of motivation (no future aspirations)

Please keep in mind that even if you see any number of these signs in your children, it might **not** be an indication of gang activity. Many factors can influence young people to behave in what might appear to be abnormal ways. It’s always a good idea to communicate regularly with your children, to be familiar with their interests, and to know their friends.

REASONS FOR JOINING A GANG

Protection — Young people may have a real or perceived need for protection from bullies. However, joining means working with a group of criminals who accept violence as a way of life. The need for protection can actually increase by joining a gang.

Material gain — Gangs make money through drug trafficking, robberies, thefts and/or extortion. Although it may bring some material gain, there is a high price to pay if caught and convicted.

Acceptance — Gangs can provide a sense of family and belonging for some members. But gangs exist to make money and they rule in an atmosphere of fear and violence. Gang members are also frequent targets for other gangs.

Identity — Some youth who have low self esteem may feel they will have power or an identity by joining a gang. But the identity one obtains is often that of criminal or victim of violent death. Even if gang members are able to get out, they often find their criminal record keeps them from rejoining mainstream society.

Excitement — Some youth are attracted by the portrayal of gangs as glamorous rebels. But that excitement often leads to prison terms, physical danger to Themselves, and harm to family and friends.