



# WebSource

## Video Short

### **Gangs Heat Up in Summer**

By CWK Network Producer

*“A lot of kids do it because they have nothing to do. A lot of it is because they’re bored.”*

-- Luis, 18, former gang member

Gang-related homicides have jumped 50 percent since 1999, and experts say a big spike in gang membership occurs in the summer. Why? Many experts say the answer is both simple and obvious

“Luis” doesn’t want to use his real name because of his past...

“Robbing, selling drugs, stuff like that -- just anything to bring in money for the whole crew,” Luis says.

The “crew” was his gang. He joined when he was 16, in part, he says, because he was bored.

“A lot of kids do it because they have nothing to do,” says Luis. “A lot of it is because they’re bored and [other] stuff they’re going through in their life.”

Experts say that too often, bored and summertime go hand-in-hand.

“We have to provide options for our kids,” says Pierre Luigi Mancini, Ph.D., gang specialist. “One of the reasons kids are joining gangs is they want to be part of a group, they want respect, they want power. But sometimes it’s because they don’t have any other option.”

It’s up to parents, he says, to find a constructive diversion for kids. There are lots of choices: the YMCA, a sports team, a reading group at the public library, a part-time job or volunteer work.

“It’s really important that they are involved in an activity that has professionals working with them,” says Frank Sanchez, outreach director, Boys & Girls Club of America, “where they are supervised.”

William Bohannon says that gang members tried to recruit him, but he found both security and activity at his local Boys & Girls Club.

“I’m here all the time,” William says. “I get off the bus [from school] here. And I go home at night. I come over here, do my homework, and then I go home. I’m not out in the street anymore.”

Luis no longer spends his days in the street, either. He likes to write in his journal and create stories. In fact, Luis has hopes of being a writer some day.

Luis says being in a gang is a scary life. He was in one for two years, then quit.

“[You have] a lot of enemies,” says Luis, “and I didn’t want to end up dead or in jail. I wanted to use the God-given talent I was given to do something positive. So I had to slowly but surely change everything around.”

## **What Parents Need to Know**

Warning signs that indicate your child might be involved in gangs:

- Your child suddenly begins performing poorly in school.
- He/she doesn't attend school regularly.
- He/she becomes disinterested in extra-curricular activities and/or family events.
- He/she has negative contact with the police.
- He/she writes the name of a gang in graffiti, or you find gang symbols in his/her notebooks and/or in his/her room.
- He/she has problems at home.
- He/she has gang tattoos.
- He/she has friends who are in gangs.
- He/she dresses in gang clothing.

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Experts at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have developed a list of additional tips to help you reduce the chances of your child joining a gang:

- Get to know your children's friends, how they influence your children and what they do when they're together. Discourage your children from hanging out with gangs.
- Spend your free time with your children. Give them chores to do around the house, enroll them in after-school activities, sports and/or community center or faith-based programs.
- Stress the value of an education and motivate your children to do well in school.
- Develop good communication skills with your kids. Good communication means that it's open, frequent and positive. This will allow your kids to express themselves and confide in you.
- Find positive role models for your kids.
- Plan activities for the entire family, such as trips to parks, libraries, museums or the beach. Give your kids attention!
- Give your children some one-on-one time with your undivided attention.
- Don't let your kids wear clothing that resembles gang wear -- they might attract attention from the wrong people.
- Set limits and rules for your kids. From an early age, let them know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Enforce a curfew. Don't let them hang out until all hours of the night.
- Don't let your kids write or draw gang-like graffiti.
- Get involved in your children's education. Go to their schools, get to know their teachers and attend parent-teacher events.
- Learn about gangs and gang activity in your community. Get educated!

## **Resources:**

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

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