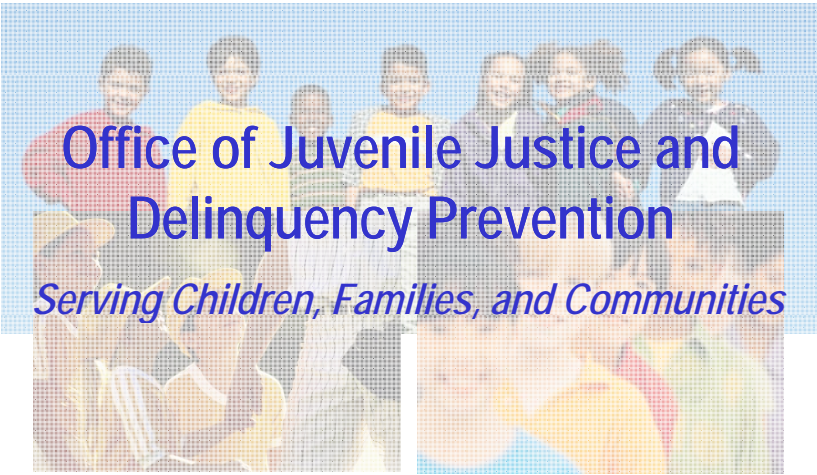



U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



# Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

*Serving Children, Families, and Communities*

U.S. Department of Justice  
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## *Addressing the Nation's Juvenile Justice Needs*

- Responding to child victimization
- Preventing and intervening in delinquency
- Strengthening the juvenile justice system



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OJJDP  
Serving Children, Families, and Communities

*The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds offenders accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of juveniles and their families.*

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

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**National Gang Center**  
[www.nationalgangcenter.gov](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov)


The screenshot shows the National Gang Center website interface. On the left is a sidebar with the following links: Home, Advisory Board, FAQ, Resources, Training and Technical Assistance, BIA Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training, OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model Training, Request Training and Technical Assistance, Surveys and Analyses, Publications, Related Web Sites, Other Training and Conferences, Funding, and Feedback Site. The main content area features a header for the '2009 National Youth Gang Survey Participants' with a 'Click Here' link. Below this is a section titled 'ABOUT THE NATIONAL GANG CENTER' which includes a paragraph of text and a photograph of a group of diverse young people.

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# FACT SHEET

Jeff Brinkowski, Acting Administrator March 2010

## Highlights of the 2008 National Youth Gang Survey

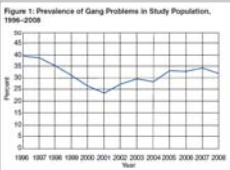
by Arlen Egley, Jr., James C. Howell, and John P. Moore

Gang activity remains a widespread problem across the United States, with prevalence rates remaining significantly elevated in 2008 compared with recorded lows in the early 2000s. Approximately one-third of the jurisdictions in the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) study population<sup>1</sup> reported gang problems in 2008. This is a significant change over the 2002 estimate, but a statistically negligible one from 2007. The 13-year trend is shown in figure 1.

The National Gang Center estimates that 32.4 percent of all cities, suburban areas, towns, and rural counties (more than 3,330 jurisdictions served by city and county law enforcement agencies) experienced gang problems in 2008. This represents a 15-percent increase from the 2002 figure. Approximately 774,000 gang members and 27,000 gangs are estimated to have been active in the United States in 2008. The number of gangs increased by 28 percent, and the number of gang members increased by 6 percent from 2002 to 2008 (see table 1).

<sup>1</sup> For a description of the NYGS study population and sample methodology see [www.nationalgangcenter.gov/nygs-study-population-and-sample-methodology](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/nygs-study-population-and-sample-methodology).

Furthermore, stable increases are most pronounced for the number of gangs across all population categories over this 7-year span.



**Figure 1: Prevalence of Gang Problems in Study Population, 1996-2008**

Year	Percent
1996	38
1997	35
1998	32
1999	28
2000	25
2001	22
2002	20
2003	25
2004	28
2005	30
2006	32
2007	35
2008	38

Figure 1: Prevalence of Gang Problems in Study Population, 1996-2008

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To request the Parents' Guide to Gangs, visit [www.nationalgangcenter.gov/parents-guide-to-gangs](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/parents-guide-to-gangs).

For more gang-related information and materials, contact the National Gang Center:  
Post Office Box 12725  
Tallahassee, Florida 32317  
Phone: (850) 386-0600, Ext. 224  
Fax: (850) 386-6396  
E-mail: [info@nationalgangcenter.gov](mailto:info@nationalgangcenter.gov)  
Web site: [www.nationalgangcenter.gov](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov)

This project was supported by Grant #2005-01-01-0000 awarded to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Community Development Office, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of the Attorney General. Identifying, Assessing, Reporting, and Treating (IART): Photo of law or police in the document was done by the authors and do not represent the official position or emblem of the U.S. Department of Justice.




## Parents' Guide to Gangs

This guide is designed to provide parents with information in order to recognize and prevent gang involvement.

### Introduction

Research indicates that parents play a pivotal role in keeping young people out of gangs. Negative influences within the family—including domestic violence, child abuse, harsh or inconsistent parenting practices, and/or drug/alcohol abuse by family members—can increase the risk that a youth will join a gang.

Parents can protect their children from gang activity through taking positive actions, such as monitoring their children's activities, fostering close relationships with them, and using positive discipline strategies. However, parents often lack factual information about gangs.

### Behaviors Associated With Joining a Gang

The early adolescent years (12-14 years of age) are a crucial time when youths are exposed to gangs and may consider joining a gang. Youths who are becoming involved in a gang may exhibit the following behaviors:

**Negative changes in behavior, such as:**

- Withdrawing from family.
- Declining school attendance, performance, or behavior.
- Staying out late without reason.
- Unusual desire for secrecy.
- Counterfactual behavior, such as talking back, verbal abuse, name calling, and disrespect for parental authority.
- Sudden negative opinions about law enforcement or adults in positions of authority (school officials or teachers).
- Change in attitude about school, church, or other normal activities or change in behavior at these activities.
- Unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing or a particular logo.

**Interest in gang-influenced music, videos, and movies.**

**Use and practice of hand signals to communicate with friends.**

**Peculiar drawings or gang symbols on schoolbooks, clothing, notebooks, or even walls.**

**Dramatic changes in hair or dress style and/or having a group of friends who have the same hair or dress style.**

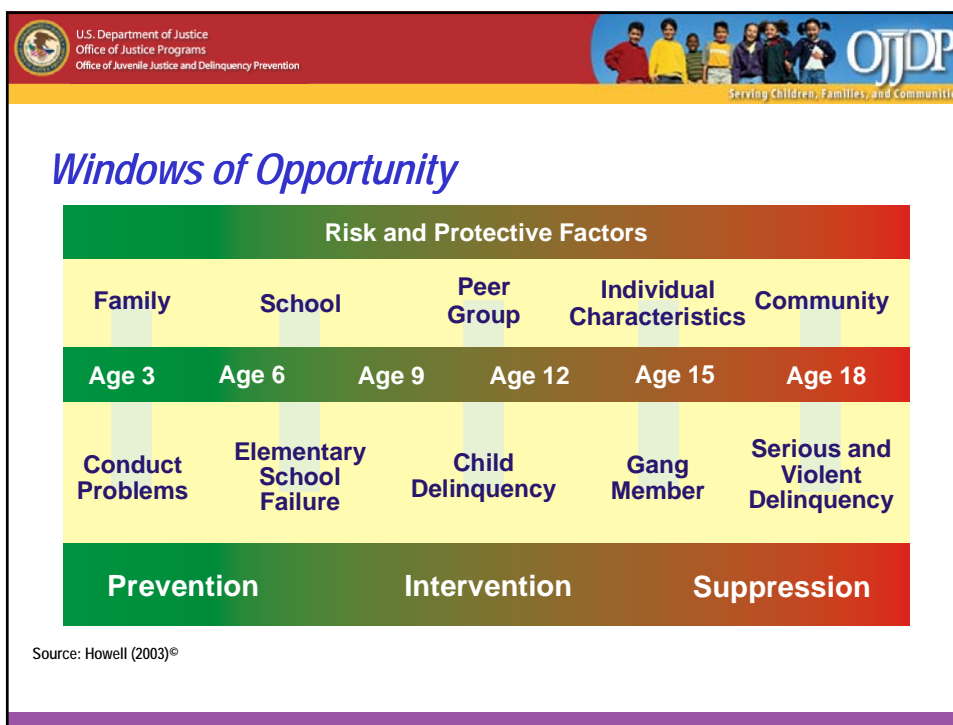
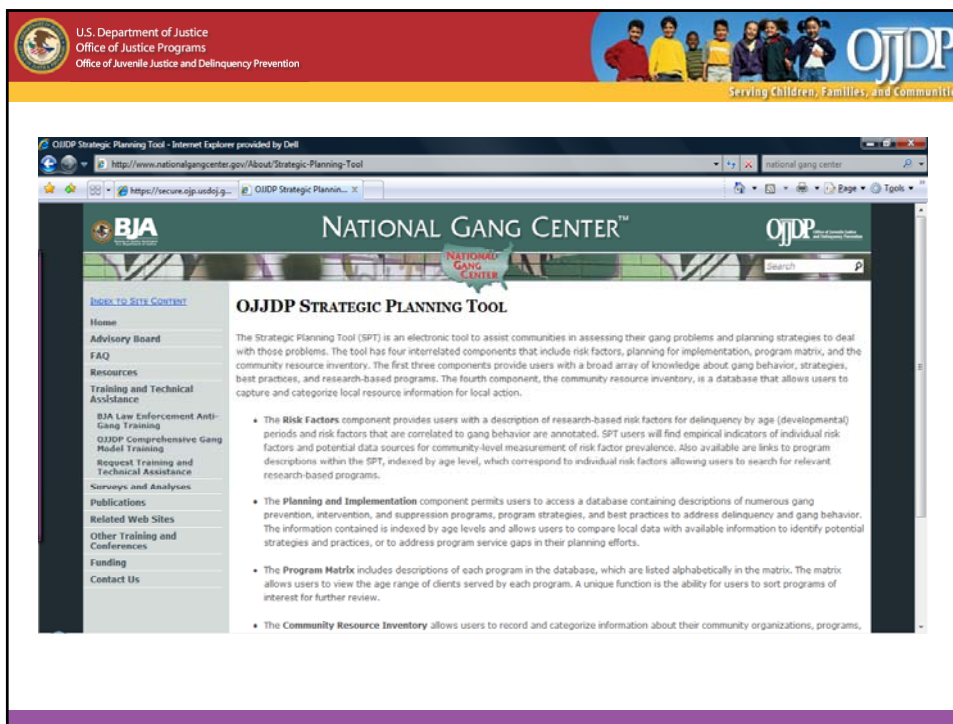
**Withdrawal from longtime friends and forming bonds with an entirely new group of friends.**

**Suspected drug use, such as alcohol, inhalants, and narcotics.**

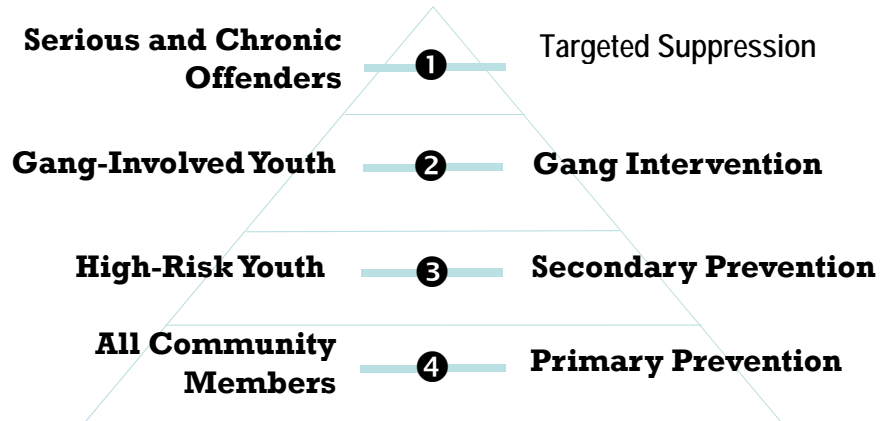
**The presence of firearms, ammunition, or other weapons.**

**Nonaccidental physical injuries, such as being beaten or injuries to hands and knuckles from fighting.**

**Unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry.**



## *Focusing Anti-Gang Strategies*



## *Factors Common to Successful Programs*

- Based upon a comprehensive needs assessment
- Address multiple areas of risk
- Consistently implemented and provide youth with sufficient dosage
- Give opportunities to develop positive, long-term relationships with prosocial adults
- Serve mainly high-risk youth



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