



# Street Gangs in Tulare County

A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Street Gangs

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*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in this serious community issue. We encourage you to study the information provided in this guide and then contact our office about scheduling a presentation for your organization.

The most effective way to address the gang issues we all face is to involve law enforcement, students, parents, school staff and civic leaders in discussions about the realities and the possible solutions.

We would be delighted to tailor a presentation especially for your school, parent group, church or civic organization.

Sincerely,

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*The intention of this pamphlet is to provide information on emerging and established street gangs in Tulare County. The information offered refers only to gang activities as they are occurring in Tulare County at this time.*

*Design and Production Provided by:*

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## **Gang Definition**

A gang is a group of two or more individuals who join together and engage in disrespectful, irresponsible and often criminal and violent behavior toward others.

All ethnic and racial groups have been shown to be involved in gang activity. Even though gangs often form along ethnic and racial lines, it is not unusual to see youths join gangs from ethnic groups other than their own. Females also form their own gangs, affiliate with existing male gangs, have family members that are gang-involved, or otherwise associate and “party” with gang members. If a girl is with a boy who is in a gang, she may not realize the risks involved since associating with these males makes her, her family, and neighbors a target for rival gangs as they may engage in very indiscriminate “drive by” shootings.

Over 15 years ago, there were actually some areas in our county that had experienced very limited effects from gang behavior. There were even some school districts that had little or no signs of gang activity. Today, our entire county is seriously impacted both directly and indirectly by gangs, including all of our communities, urban and rural, as well as all of our school districts and school sites. Previously it was unheard of for law enforcement agencies to have a gang unit. Today, every law enforcement agency has officers specifically trained and designated to deal with the ever-increasing prevalence of gangs. In response to the increased awareness, gang members have become more secretive and discrete in their behavior to hide their actions.

## **Gang Development and Objectives**

Street gang members tend to range in age from 12 years old to their early 20s. After that age, the older adult gang members

tend to transition to more organized gangs, especially once they have been incarcerated. It is like the street gangs are the “farm team” for the “big league” adult gangs, but without a direct association between the two.

Young people join gangs for a variety of reasons including low self-esteem, peer pressure, protection from other gangs, the excitement obtained from engaging in gang activity, fear and intimidation from gang members who pressure them to join, attention, financial benefits, family tradition, and identification with the gang lifestyle that has been glamorized. Gang members believe they can achieve a level of status within a gang which they think they cannot accomplish in mainstream society. Many factors contribute to such discouraged thinking: low academic or social skills, discrimination, poverty, lack of encouragement, abuse, neglect, family substance abuse, and unresolved family conflicts. Gang members may be trying to overcome feelings of inadequacy and fear, but they usually deny having such feelings.

Family influence, including that of extended family members, is a significant factor regarding gang participation by youths. This influence can either be direct when the family members are involved in gang activity, or indirect as a result of family members not being able or willing to fulfill their roles to ensure the supervision, care and guidance of the youths for whom they are responsible. Many people believe that the gang problem is the fault of the parents and that the parents are therefore responsible for solving it. However, when parents are either unable or unwilling to prevent or intervene in these issues, it becomes a societal problem we all must deal with.

Potential gang members do not fully understand the hazards that are involved with joining a gang, and they fail to realize

that there is a price to pay for doing so. These youths may complain about rules that are imposed on them by parents, teachers and other people in positions of authority. However, they don't realize that by joining a gang, they will be entering a world that has even more rules and restrictions on their personal freedoms. The rules for them in mainstream society are there for their benefit and that of others, while the rules that are imposed on them in the gang life are destructive for all involved. Gangs take everything away from both its members and the members of the community that they impact. They dictate to their members the people with whom they can or cannot associate, and even who may live or die.

Once a youth is involved in a gang, they no longer have control over their own destiny. It is like getting into a car, but not being in the driver's seat. They no longer have control over the car and will now go wherever the car takes them.

When most gang members were in elementary school, they could hang out with anyone they wanted. But by the time they enter middle school and become gang-affiliated, they realize that they can no longer be friends with anyone who doesn't claim the same color they do. Many of them experience a real sadness over losing the ability to keep their previous friends, whom they now must view as either an enemy or as a naïve outsider.

Once formed, gangs are maintained by factors that promote gang cohesiveness. One main factor is for the gang to have and promote a real or imaginary belief by its members that there are rivals out to take from them what is rightfully theirs such as the "turf" they have "claimed," their safety, and the freedom to do what they want, when they want. Members define rivals as other gangs, law enforcement, and schools that they label as

the “enemy” who is out to get them. Another factor is a shared perception that things are unlikely to improve, promoting a fatalistic, pessimistic view that the future is bleak, life is fleeting, and one might as well “live fast and die young.”

Many parents do not become aware their children are engaged in gang activity and therefore do not intervene until their sons and daughters are extensively involved and suffering very serious consequences.

Many youths from immigrant families get into gangs because their families come to this country with few resources and little support. They are further isolated due to the language barrier. The families often settle in lower income, higher crime rate areas because of these conditions. The immigrant youths then get targeted by the offenders who live in the area. This clearly happened with the Southeast Asian youths and continues to occur with youths coming from Central and South America. Normally, these youths enter school with positive intentions to learn, but due to the pressures stated above, they shift to becoming problem students and stop seeing school as a priority. The immigrant youths then form into a defensive group that in turn shifts to offensive behavior. They soon come to believe that “the best defense is a good offense.” They believe that if their rivals and the other people they want to control are on the defense, they can’t confront or challenge the gang.

Immigrant youths from Central and South America who have become gang members after moving here are not yet known to be connected to any gangs from their countries of origin. There are some very pervasive gangs from Central and South America that have extended their reach into this state and into other parts of the country. A relationship with those groups may exist for the older adult gang members who move here or return after incarceration.

Gang members frequently talk about the importance of “respect.” However, their definition is not based on the respect for the basic human rights of all people, but is instead based upon “fear” and “envy.” Gang members want to be feared for the harm and loss they can cause anyone who might oppose them, or be envied for what they have in order to be seen as important. Being feared and envied also helps the gang members obtain new recruits that will assist them in accomplishing their goals. Gang members therefore attempt to instill such fear and envy in others whenever possible, to build as much of a reputation as possible. They brag, boast, show off and intimidate both rivals and citizens alike. The gang’s power then grows through the use of such fear and intimidation.

### **Gang Activities**

Every city and county area has its own gang problem since all areas are impacted in some fashion. Also, gang members do not remain in only one part of a town or one part of the county. In addition to causing problems in their own communities, they want to be where the action is and may gravitate to urban areas where there are more things to do, including lawful activities. However, they are also aware that they may very well be challenged by the gangs in that area.

As far as communication methods, gang members have access to the same technology as the rest of us, including cell phones for voice and text messaging, e-mail, meetings at such places as schools or various locations in the community, graffiti and the mail, including by, and with, those who are incarcerated.

Gang affiliation varies. Many street gangs locally tend to be affiliated with other gangs in various cities within the county. When the gang members become incarcerated, they meet gang members from other parts of the county that they might

otherwise not meet. They in turn develop a network with the other gangs in other cities that continue once they are released.

The risk of being the victim of gang crime and violence is much greater today than in the past due to the number of gang members and associates that has grown significantly, and continues to do so, at an accelerated rate in all our communities. Gang violence has escalated in the degree of severity, frequency and duration. Gang members have become increasingly desensitized to the effect of their violent acts and are therefore more “cold blooded.” In the past, the gang members were apt to use violence for what they viewed as more severe behavior toward them. Today, the gang member is willing to use extreme violence for any “slight” — real or imagined — by anyone, not just other gang members.

Today, there is no such thing as a “warning” given by gang members to one of their targeted victims since the goal now is to ensure the person is seriously harmed or mortally injured. In fact, if the gang members do not carry out their mission to do so, they return from the event feeling a sense of failure.

Further, gang members do not limit themselves to harming other offender groups as they struggle for territory and power. The gangs get involved in a wide array of criminal activities. They can commit assaults, vandalism, thefts, burglaries, car theft, robberies, car jacking, and drug sales. Many citizens mistakenly believe that gang members limit their violence to other rival gangs, when in fact they often direct violence and intimidation toward mainstream people as well.

Also, when they are engaged in rivalry with another gang, any person in the area may very well get caught up in the crossfire. The gang problem has therefore never been restricted to a

particular racial or ethnic group or neighborhood. It doesn't just affect "those people," "that side of town," or "that school." In times past, the goal to do a "shooting" was to scare that person and send a message to others. It affects us all. We all pay for law enforcement, prisons, courts, medical costs, lost income, lowered property values caused by gang crime, and the lost productivity that gang members represent. Gang activity reduces the quality of life for everyone.

When a gang is involved in a weekend party or attends a public event, the potential for violence and criminal activity is far greater than for any other group of people. Gang members thrive on confrontations with rivals and sometimes with any other person or group who happens to be around. There is great danger for anyone who is either a target of gang violence or is merely present when the gang is in the area.

Gang violence creates significant damage and financial hardship to local property and business owners by way of lowered property values, interference with the sale of goods, costs of repairing damage, need for increased security systems, and the fear instilled in prospective buyers due to vandalism, graffiti, and the threat of further violence. This occurs in residential neighborhoods and affects industrial and commercial areas. Of great concern is the inherent violence associated with gang graffiti. Graffiti is used to mark the gang members' territory. It's also used to advertise gang status, declare their allegiance to the gang, or challenge or disrespect members of other gangs. Usually residents who live in a gang area, who are often elderly or poor people, are unable to move away and therefore remain living in fear.

### **Gang Involvement Effect on Its Members**

Gang membership, although a temporary phase for some youths, will usually shape the individual's future. Levels of formal education are usually discarded because they differ from the gang's objectives. Gang members often develop patterns of alcohol and substance abuse and have extensive police records that will limit their opportunity for employment.

Usually, non-gang member friends are cast aside and gang members become the youth's only friends. Gang banging is like an addiction. It is relatively easy to join a gang; however, it is very difficult to get out once a youth has entered it. It is much more difficult to reach young people once they have become entrenched in the gang lifestyle and belief system. This level of entrenchment occurs rather quickly, especially by the time the youths are moving through middle school.

### **Gang Leadership**

Street gangs have evolved to a more sophisticated level of development and organization. At one time, leadership roles in street gangs were usually not formally recognized positions. Today, gang leaders tend to be the ones that the gang members see as being bright, skilled at manipulation, daring, carry themselves with a sense of confidence, and display command presence. They have developed a reputation for appearing to be able to get things done, show no fear and for being courageous. In reality, they may be just as frightened as anyone else, but are very capable at creating a reputation and the appearance of being tough and capable. Some of the most dangerous "shot callers" are the quiet ones who carefully gauge the situations they and their group are in, process things more deliberately rather than just reacting, and plan how they may strike.

### **Cliques, Sets, Associates, and Copy Cats**

Generally, gangs are subdivided into sets or cliques (Spanish pronunciation – kleeekas). A clique or set will sometimes have its own name. Sets usually apply to African American and Asian gangs. Cliques apply to Hispanic gangs.

The number of gangs and gang members has increased substantially. Sometimes smaller gangs will merge into the larger gangs, increasing the reach of the gang to enlist others, particularly associates. Gangs vary in size. Some may have a large number of people involved with them, but may include only a small group of members who have been officially included, while many others are associates.

There is no such thing as a “wannabe” gang member, since the more accurate term is “associate.” Wannabe is a term that has been used to describe youths that people believe are on the fringe of gang involvement. The term minimizes the problem and implies that such youths are not truly involved in gang activity and not seriously impacted by it. The use of the term has assisted in the failure to identify such youths early and intervene in an assertive way.

An associate is a youth who is in the early stages of gang involvement and clearly participates with gang members in their activities. Such youths are reluctant to identify themselves as gang members because they have yet to be formally initiated into the gang. The only difference between a gang member and an associate is the latter has yet to be invited (or are hesitant) to go through the formal initiation process. They often state that their friends are gang members, but they are not, even though they “associate” with them. They dress in gang attire, display gang gestures, wear gang colors, flash gang hand signs, and involve themselves in the very same illicit

activity as the gang members. They are, therefore, technically gang members and not wannabes.

The behavior of such youths is very serious and potentially dangerous for them and others. Often they are the ones who engage in the more aggressive and violent behaviors to show the gang members that they are worthy of being included, whereas those who are already in a gang do not have as much to prove. The associates are often the ones who are enlisted to carry out the gang's directives. Further, the actual number of youths officially in gangs is rather small, but the capacity of the gangs to cause problems is compounded by the much larger number of youths who are the gang associates, or wannabes. Many associates know that getting into a gang is like getting married. Once married, it is more difficult to end the relationship since some types of divorces can get very ugly. That is certainly the case when a gang member may want to leave a gang.

“Copycats” are those youths who adopt gang related clothing, jewelry, gestures, music and vocabulary, but do so as a result of merely copying the behavior because it has been promoted as being “cool.” They have no association with gang members and no intention of violating the basic rights of others. These youths do not realize that copying such clothing and gestures places them at risk of being mistaken as gang-involved by gang members or authorities. It also further encourages other youths to believe that the gang lifestyle is an acceptable part of the mainstream culture and not serious behavior.

## **Parents**

The first and most important step toward intervening into the gang problem is for everyone, including parents, to become aware of gangs, gang members and their activities. Citizens

armed with such basic knowledge are better able to avoid becoming victims of gang attack. Usually the first indicator that a town is being affected by gang activity is graffiti, so all community members need to watch for graffiti in their neighborhoods. Also, parents need to keep an open line of communication with their child. They need to ask and get answers to questions about the child's behavior, associates, hours, activities, and grades, while also discussing with their child the consequences of being in a gang.

Parents are also responsible for keeping a close watch on their child and his/her friends for signs of gang membership and the wearing of gang colors and clothing styles. Some parents may believe that if their children are wearing oversized pants that expose their underwear and other types of large clothing and colors associated with the gang lifestyle, that it is only a phase their child is going through and they will out grow it. Such a view is not helpful since the clothing indicates either gang involvement or copycat behavior, both of which are very dangerous.

Parents need to stay in touch with school officials. They can ask if the school officials are aware of campus problems regarding gangs and if they have any gang awareness programs.

Parents can contact their local police or sheriff's department. They may have a crime prevention or gang specialist who can provide up-to-date information.

Local religious leaders may also have some advice to offer parents. They may know of programs that can help neighborhood youths stay out of gangs or get out of gangs.

All community members need to report any graffiti in their neighborhood and/or school grounds and immediately remove it. They also need to report any suspected gang activity to their local law enforcement agency. Community-based organizations may also have experience with gang issues and might be able to provide valuable information and guidance.

### **School Officials**

The way school officials respond to gang issues is critical. Teachers, coaches, administrators, secretaries, nurses, and custodians all have an opportunity to form a positive relationship with the youths in their school. Aggressive behavior by students needs to be addressed to make the school site a safe place. A safety plan that includes a very clear description of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior and attire, along with specific consequences for gang activity must be developed for every school site. Structure, rules and consequences need to be applied in a consistent, fair and firm way to all students. Again, emphasis needs to be placed on the seriousness of youths involved in any gang activity. All school personnel need to avoid the use of the term “wannabe” gang member. As stated above, that term minimizes the problem and implies that such youths are not truly involved in gang activity and not seriously impacted by it. The use of the term has contributed to the failure of early identification and intervention. All problems get worse if they are not confronted with early intensive services and appropriate consequences.

It is essential that all individuals connected to schools, including administrators, teachers, secretaries, custodians, and transportation and food service personnel, be able to recognize and identify gang-related activity on campus. Gang awareness and intervention training must be done twice yearly with all staff, including support staff.

In addition to being ever vigilant as to any of the above stated signs of gang behavior, school personnel should know how to respond to gang members so as not to escalate the problem situation. It is also important for school staff to monitor youths who are not enrolled in their school, but hang out near the school site. They may be there to recruit or intimidate the students.

Any administering of consequences to gang members needs to be done in a very fair, firm and proportional fashion. It is important not to humiliate or embarrass any gang student because that would only encourage them to fight back in order to maintain their reputation. Also do not allow gang students to write gang symbols or turn in any work that contains gang symbols. Don't allow students to use gang related words at the school site as that only allows them to further practice their gang beliefs and to encourage others to do the same. Don't trust gang members completely because they can be very manipulative, but instead be a guide or mentor to them. This includes not sharing personal information about yourself, other staff, or any other person since the gang members can be very inquisitive in order to gain information they may use against you or others to their advantage.

Gang members are very sensitive to being praised publicly because it may make them appear to be weak or in alliance with the authorities. Any complimenting of a gang member needs to be done in private and with the use of very brief terms because lavish praise is seen by gang members as weakness on the part of the person giving it, or as an attempt to manipulate them because that is what a gang member would do to gain the trust of others. Any public praising such as for academic achievement must first have their permission to see if that is all right.

Regarding immigrant students, many of them enter school being very receptive to learn. If they are not provided the necessary support, they may be drawn into the gang lifestyle and begin to reject education, falling behind in their studies as their attention is focused on the gang activities. It is unfortunate that one of the attractions of gangs is that a young person is accepted whether they can read well or not. The gang then becomes the place they can go to as they fail to develop the knowledge and skills needed in mainstream living.

Many gang members may appear very quiet and easy going in school while in fact being very capable of extremely aggressive behavior outside of school. They are essentially capable of leading a double life and creating a façade that misleads others to mistakenly trust them or underestimate their capacity for violence.

### **Neighborhood Involvement**

Take action. A neighborhood that is united and dedicated while cooperating in an effort to stop crime and violence will greatly reduce a gang's ability to intimidate and victimize. Graffiti targets a neighborhood for violence. Graffiti should be immediately removed. The longer it remains, the more it attracts local gang members and rivals. Never run out of paint.

Every law enforcement agency in the county has now taken steps to respond to gang issues by establishing specialized staff and units to identify gang activity and to provide information to the public. It is important that the public stay in touch with the law enforcement agencies in their area to report any information they may have about gang activity in their area. The same level of training is important for parents to receive as well since they need to recognize gang issues affecting their children and their neighborhoods.

Citizens armed with knowledge about gang issues are better able to avoid becoming victims of gang attack. They therefore need to continually acquire up-to-date information to identify such activity in their area and community. Doing so increases their ability to recognize gang indicators such as graffiti, modes of dress, and gang members congregating in the area.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention**

The key to controlling gang activity is to prevent it wherever possible and to intervene early and vigorously if it has already begun. Strategies to deal with gang issues include the entire spectrum of prevention, intervention, and enforcement. While accountability is essential, we need to provide the equivalent amount of time, attention, and resources for strong prevention and early intervention programs. It is easier to prevent a problem before it gets established. The gang problem is like any illness: if it is not treated it gets worse. With treatment you can slow down the progression of a disease and possibly cure it. Prevention requires early awareness as to the extreme seriousness of the problem.

We cannot afford to minimize this issue or become lax about it. California has 33 state prisons to accommodate 100,000 inmates. We now have 70 percent more prisoners in these facilities than they were constructed to contain and the numbers are only increasing. We are all impacted by the serious nature of gangs, not only regarding our safety, but also as to the economic and emotional impacts such as crowded emergency rooms, court and law enforcement, prisons, lost wages, and consequences to victims and their families. We also lose the contributions that young people who have become diverted into the stagnant pond of gang life might otherwise have made by being part of mainstream society.

Early awareness and a clear understanding as to the serious consequences of gang involvement are essential for youths, parents, educators and community members alike. We all need to look for the early warning signs as to the factors that place youths at risk of gang involvement, while also looking for any sign that they may already be engaging in such behavior. We need to look for changes in their behavior patterns such as truancy, a decline in grades, changes in friends, late hours, and changes in style of dress, graffiti in their bedrooms, and graffiti on their personal belongings. Don't ignore the signs of gang activity because denial is the reason most problems don't get solved. It's easier to prevent a fight than to stop one.

We often remain unaware as to the seriousness of the gang problem in our homes, neighborhoods, schools, and communities. Gang issues get progressively worse if coordinated effort is not actively used to deal with it. Since we know that such offending behavior comes from a variety of sources including abuse, neglect, and indulgence, immigrant families that are not adequately assisted, high crime rate and blighted areas, we need to address those issues. We also must be ever vigilant about what our kids are doing before, during, and after school to identify the factors that may be contributing to their lack of success or involvement with gang activity. Law enforcement services alone cannot solve the problem, so we must also intervene substantially with early prevention and intervention programs, along with holding offenders accountable.

A comprehensive approach, which recognizes the gang problem as a complex interaction of individual and situational factors has a firmer basis for successful prevention and intervention than do suppression approaches alone. A combination of elementary school prevention programs, such as the Feeder Stream Youths who have become involved with gangs have consistently said

that if such programs were available to them in the 4th through 6th grade in elementary schools it might have deterred them from gangs. Young people who have been interviewed have said that by the time they get into middle school and high school it is much more difficult to get out of gangs because of the fear that gang members will retaliate against them. The more they are involved with a gang they have to fear their own gang even more than other adversaries because the gang threatens them to not violate their commitment to the gang. They said that it is also difficult to simply walk away from their group of friends.

Everyone must get involved. Parents must work as partners with school officials instead of ignoring what happens at school or rescuing their child from reasonable consequences for their actions. Schools need to really listen to the kids and parents and involve them in the decision-making process, while also not merely caving in to their demands.

Mental health, social services, and law enforcement must have a substantial presence on every school campus and work together as a team. Only then will parents and others trust the system to work. Then when incidents do occur, parents, students and community members will be willing to cooperate with law enforcement authorities. Information concerning gang crimes or gang activity would then immediately be reported to the local police or sheriff's department.

Once we do have a highly effective system in place, we must be ever vigilant that we do not become complacent. There is a saying that states: "The price you pay to get somewhere is the price you pay to stay there." The price we must all pay is ongoing awareness as to the seriousness of the problem; continued research into the various solutions required;

the willingness to develop a comprehensive plan and then consistently implement it; vigilance to recognize what may be the red flags that the plan might not be fully working and make the necessary corrections; and then the diligence in maintaining our collective effort. Together we can make a difference and stop the progress of this social disease that is harming so many of our children and the quality of life for us all.

### **Gang Names**

Most gangs adopt names that have significance when related to their town or neighborhoods.

### **Nicknames**

Many gang members adopt nicknames when recruited into the group if they do not already have one. The gang usually tends to select a name that fits the individual's physical characteristics, personality or neighborhood.

### **Identifying Gang Members**

When identifying gang members, it is very important to keep in mind that many young people may appear to be gang members because they dress in the types of clothing described below, when in reality they are not. A gang member can more often be identified from the non-gang member by their more aggressive, negative, and manipulative behavior and body language they display with the intention of intimidating others. Gang members may also be spotted by the specific way they wear their clothing. Gang members identify with various colors: red, blue, purple, black, orange, yellow or green. Green is also the color of money and money represents power.

On school grounds, gang members will sometimes congregate in an area they might claim as their turf, such as outside or

inside a particular restroom, in a hallway, or along a wall, or fence, or at a particular nearby business before and after school hours or at lunch time.

Sports clothing, such as Oakland Raiders, Chicago Bulls, LA Kings, Oakland A's, Cincinnati Reds, LA Dodgers, New York Yankees, Fresno State Bulldogs, UNLV, Nebraska, Yale and Duke Devils, is also worn by gang members. This clothing is selected as it may have colors or letters corresponding to those of the gang or have symbols that are intimidating.

Gang members don't always identify themselves by displaying colors. They sometimes wear creased shirts to identify with either North or South/14 or 13. Three creases on the shirt signify South/13 (blue color); four creases signify North/14 (red color); two creases in the front and two in the back signify North/14. They may also wear shoelaces, dog collar type necklaces, or earrings with stones that correspond with their gang colors.

It is important to not assume that current gang attire today will be in fashion next year. Gangs are constantly changing their style, especially once the gang attire is identified by authorities. Therefore it is important to constantly watch for any new changes that may occur.

African American street gangs in Tulare County identify with the color blue, purple, green or red; however, most of them identify with the color blue/Crips.

Asian street gangs claiming Crips identify with the following colors: blue, purple, yellow, orange and black. Asian street gangs claiming Bloods identify with the color red. "Roman

Numeral XV,” “X5” and the number 15 represent Oriental. “O” is the 15th letter of the alphabet.

Anglo gang members claiming Peckerwoods identify with the color white. They may wear white belts, white baseball caps, white handkerchiefs, etc. The Number 23 also represents “White.” “W” is the 23rd letter in the alphabet. Anglo female gang members or associates are called Featherwoods. Their symbol (Peckerwoods, Featherwoods) relates to the woodpecker.

Hispanic gang members claiming North (referring to Northern California) display or “flash” red colors. The color red represents North, as does the “Roman Numeral XIV” being the 14th letter in the alphabet or the letter “N” for North.

“Roman Numeral XIII,” “X3” and the color blue represent South. “M” is the 13th letter of the alphabet with the “M” (E.M.E.) meaning “Mother of Street Gangs.” Hispanic gang members “flashing” blue colors identify with South (referring to Southern California). The color black is neutral and can be worn by any gang member (Hispanics, Asians, African Americans and Anglos). African American street gangs in Tulare County identify with the color blue or red. Crip gang members identify with blue colors, while Blood gang members identify with red colors. They may wear such items as national sports team jackets, 501 Levis, or gray or brown corduroys.

Body language with the use of one or both hands can sometimes signify the geographical location of the gang. A hand sign given above the chest represents North, while a hand sign given below the chest represents South.

Shirts are “over-large” and worn loose and untucked. Pants are “over large,” baggy and typically worn well below the waistline; often, they hang below the buttocks. Also, “cut-off” style pants are worn with only a thin line of skin (or no skin at all) exposed between the socks and pant hem. Red, blue, purple, black or green bandannas are called “rags.” When knit and sports caps are worn, the bandanna is displayed hanging from a pant pocket (either front or back). Gang graffiti, gang symbols, gang messages or gang names may be written or embroidered on other items of clothing such as sweatshirts, shirts, jackets and baseball caps.

Other identifying items may include belt buckles with gang initials/insignias, colored shoelaces in athletic shoes/Nike shoes in gang-related colors (red, blue, purple, black or green).

Gang members will sometimes shave their heads leaving a triangle or square of hair on the backside of their heads. The triangle ( $\triangle$ ) has three points and can signify a gang member claiming South. A square of hair can signify North (four points -  $\square$ ).

Crude or elaborate tattoos and specific hairstyles can be signs of youngsters who have joined or are contemplating joining a gang. Tattoos are sometimes required by gangs in order to show a person’s allegiance. Four dots, on the fingers or other parts of the body, can signify North. Three dots can signify South.

## Gang Terms and Symbols

Listed below are some of the numbers, letters and words used for gang purposes in Tulare County.

<b>13, XIII, X3, S, Sur</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Sureno, Trece, E.M.E.</b>	<i>Heil Hitler</i>
<i>Examples of words, numbers and letters that southern gang members use.</i>	<b>A8</b>
	<i>Adolf Hitler</i>
<b>14, X4, XIV</b>	<b>Barrio, Varrío</b>
<i>Examples of words, numbers and letters that northern gang members use</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>
	<b>Beer Run</b>
	<i>To take beer from a store without paying for it.</i>
<b>15, XV or X5</b>	<b>BG</b>
<i>Meaning the 15th letter of the alphabet (O), which stands for Oriental (Asian Gangs).</i>	<i>Stands for "Baby Gangster," 12 years of age and under.</i>
<b>123</b>	<b>Blood</b>
<i>100 percent white</i>	<i>Bloods are rivals of gang members claiming Crip. Also called "Piru," identified by the color red.</i>
<b>187</b>	
<i>Penal Code for murder</i>	
<b>24/7</b>	<b>Blunt</b>
<i>Being a gangster all day and all week long.</i>	<i>Getting high on a large marijuana cigarette</i>
<b>311</b>	<b>Bomb</b>
<i>K.K.K. (Ku Klux Klan)</i>	<i>To cross out or write over a rival gang's graffiti</i>

**Book**

*To run, leave or hurt someone*

**Bro**

*What fellow gang members call each other. Used primarily by Skinheads/White Supremacists.*

**Bucket**

*Old, raggedy car*

**Buster**

*Derogatory term referring to a Norteno, 14.*

**Chale**

*No*

**Chante**

*House*

**Chillin'**

*Relaxing*

**Chiva, Carga, La Negra**

*Heroin*

**Crank, Go Fast**

*Methamphetamine - a stimulant drug*

**Crib**

*House*

**Crip**

*Crips are rivals of gang members claiming Bloods, identified by the colors of blue, purple and green.*

**Cricket/Crab**

*Derogatory term referring to a Crip gang member.*

**Cuete**

*A firearm*

**Cuz, Cuzz**

*Partner or brother. Used by Crip and Asian gang members.*

**CVS**

*Central Valley Surenos*

**Dove**

*Rock cocaine*

**Drive-by**

*When a gang cruises by a target and sprays the area or people with gunfire. Gangs use drive-bys to murder, intimidate and instill fear in rival gangs and their neighborhoods.*

**EME**

*The "M" letter pronounced in Spanish*

**ENE**

*The “N” letter pronounced in Spanish.*

**Esé**

*A slang Hispanic term meaning dude or “Hey, man.”*

**Featherwood**

*An Anglo gang member (female). Their symbol – a woodpecker.*

**Front**

*To make yourself look obvious*

**Full Bird**

*One pound or one kilo of cocaine*

**Gang Banger, Gang**

**Banging**

*Gang activity*

**Get Down For Your Set**

*To fight for your gang*

**Gig**

*A party*

**H**

*The 8th letter of the alphabet*

**Half Bird**

*One-half pound or one-half kilo of cocaine*

**High Roller**

*Drug dealer*

**Homeboy**

*Asian youth who stays home and is straight*

**Homeboy, Homes, Homie,**

**Home Girl**

*Of the same geographical area; what fellow gang members call each other*

**Hood**

*Term for neighborhood*

**In the Car**

*Meaning you’re covered in case of troubles or something you can’t handle*

**Jale**

*Go to do a crime like robbery, burglary*

**K**

*The 11th letter of the alphabet*

**Leva**

*To exclude from the group/gang; silent treatment; to ostracize*

**Mad Dog**

*To give someone a mean, intimidating, hard or challenging stare*

**N**

*Norteno, Norte, Catorce*

**NS**

*Northside*

**NR**

*Norte Rifa*

**NFL**

*Norteno For Life*

**NLR**

*Nazi Low Rider*

**Norte, Norteno**

*Meaning North, Northerner*

**O**

*Stands for Oriental, Asian gangs*

**OG**

*Original Gangster, a longtime gang member.*

**Peckerwood**

*An Anglo gang member (male). Their symbol is a woodpecker.*

**Pimped Out**

*Well-dressed person*

**Placa**

*Spanish slang term for Peace Officer*

**Powder, Candy**

*Cocaine*

**Qu-Vo**

*What's up?*

**Rag**

*Gang symbol, bandanna*

**Ranker**

*Meaning punk, sissy*

**Rat Pack**

*When a group or gang beat up on a person; more than one person jumping another.*

**RIP**

*Rest in Peace*

**Ride**

*A vehicle such as a car or pickup*

**Rip**

*Same as Crip*

**Road Dog**

*Partner*

**Roll**

*To drive away*

**SPV**

*Sureno por Vida/Southerner  
for Life*

**SRIW**

*Super Race Is White*

**SWP**

*“W” is the 23rd letter of the  
alphabet. Supreme White Power  
members identify with the  
Number 23.*

**Scrapa**

*Punk, tramp. Derogatory term  
referring to a Sureno gang  
member.*

**Scrap Wood**

*Derogatory term referring to a  
Sureno gang member*

**Set**

*African American gang  
neighborhood*

**Sewer Rat**

*Derogatory term referring to a  
Sureno, 13'er*

**Shot Caller**

*The person who supervises,  
controls or manages the group  
or gang*

**Side Busting**

*Cutting into a conversation*

**Simon**

*Yes*

**Slobs**

*Derogatory term referring to a  
Blood gang member*

**Sur, Sureno**

*Meaning south, southerner*

**Tag**

*To write on walls, etc; graffiti.*

**Talking Smack**

*Aggressive, abusive talking*

**TC**

*Tulare County*

**TCS**

*Tulare County Surenos*

**Tish**

*Smoking a drug*

**Transformer**

*A Norteno gang member turning Sureno or vice-versa. A Blood turned Crip or vice-versa.*

*official gang members but behave like them. There is no such thing as a Wannabe since these individuals are actually considered associates of the*

**Trucha**

*Be cautious; look out; be on the look-out.*

*gang. They hang out with gang members and may even dress in gang attire.*

**Tweeking**

*On a high, under the influence, hallucinating*

**Y'Que**

*Meaning what are you going to do about it; so what/what.*

**VC**

*Varrío Claimer. Someone that claims different varrios.*

**Veterano**

*An older individual who has been around; a veteran*

**WP**

*White Power/White Supremacist*

**W**

*23rd letter of the alphabet. Supreme White Power members identify with the Number 23.*

**Wannabes**

*An inaccurate term mistakenly used by lay people to describe people they believe are not*

**Local Street Gangs (Ages 12-24)**

The following is only a partial list of street gangs in Tulare County. This list includes the gang name, abbreviation, ethnicity and the color they claim.

<b>BHS or VHS - Barrio "H"</b> <b>Street or Varrrio "H" Street</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors</i>	<b>Campo Locos</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>
<b>BMW - Boys From Magnolia Way</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors</i>	<b>Catela Norte</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors</i>
<b>BP - Barrio Pobre</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>	<b>CFM - Crazy F-----</b> <b>Mexicans</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>
<b>BPS - Brown Pride Surenos</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>	<b>CLN - Centro Locs Norte</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors</i>
<b>BST - Barrio Sur Trece</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>	<b>CP - Centro Poros</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic Young Gang Members 14 and Under; Red Colors</i>
<b>BTL - Big Time Locos</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>	<b>CSL - Court Street Locos</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors</i>
<b>CAC - Crazy A--</b> <b>Criminals</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>	<b>ESD - East Side Dina</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors</i>
	<b>ESP - East Side Pixley</b> <i>Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors</i>

**ESP - East Side Poros**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**ESP - East Side Porterville**  
*Anglo; White Colors*

**EST - East Side Thugs**  
*Anglo, Hispanic, African  
American; Green Colors*

**EST - East Side Tula**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**Evil Browns**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**HSP - Hillside Poros**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**KGB - King Gangster Boys**  
*Primarily Asian; Blue Colors*

**LP - Loco Park**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**LPC - Lahu Pride Crips**  
*Primarily Asian; Blue Colors*

**MBH - Mien Brother Hood**  
*Primarily Asian; Red Colors/  
Bloods*

**MBS - Mongolian Boys  
Society**  
*Primarily Asian; Blue Colors/  
Crips*

**MGB - Mexican Gang  
Bangers**  
*Hispanic males and females;  
Red Colors*

**MOB - My Only Brothers**  
*African American; Blue Colors*

**NSL - North Side Lindsay**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**NSVB - North Side Varrio  
Boys**  
*Hispanic and Anglo; Red  
Colors*

**NSV - North Side Visa**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**NSVY - North Side Varrio**  
*Hispanic and Anglo Youngsters;  
Red Colors*

**OBK - Original Buster  
Killers**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**OBS - Oriental Boys  
Society**

*Primarily Asian; Blue, Yellow,  
Orange Colors – Crips*

**OLB - Oriental Lao Boys**  
*Primarily Asian; Black & Blue  
Colors*

**OT - Oriental Troops**  
*Primarily Asian; Blue Colors*

**PDL - Pasadena Denver  
Lane**  
*Primarily African American;  
Red Colors - Bloods*

**POG - Poplar Original  
Gangsters**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**Rebels**  
*Anglo; White Colors  
Identify with Confederate Flag*

**RSV - Red Skin Varrrio**  
*Native American; Red Colors*

**RVT - Richgrove Varrrio  
Trece**  
*Hispanic; Blue Colors*

**SADK - Seek and Destroy  
Kin**  
*Primarily Asian; Blue Colors  
– Crips*

**SF - Sweet Fourteen**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**SLS - Sureno Life Styles**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**SSK - South Side Kings**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**SSW - South Side Winos**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**STL - Sur Town Locos**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**Sulta 14 - Sultana**  
*Hispanic; Red Colors*

**TBG - True Blue  
Gangsters**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**Tierras - Terra Bella**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**VCL - Varrío Campo  
Linnell**  
*Hispanic; Blue Colors*

**WSNG - West Side  
Norteno Gangsters**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**VCL - Varrío Chingon/  
Catorce London**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**WSP - West Side Poros**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**VCP - Varrío Centro Poros**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**WSP - West Side Pixley**  
*Hispanic; Blue Colors*

**VFC - Varrío Farmas  
Catorce**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**WST - West Side Tula**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**VPL - Varrío Plainview  
Locos**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**WSV - Wicked Side Varrío**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue Colors*

**VST - Vicky's Town**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**YAB - Young Asian Boys**  
*Primarily Asian; Blue Colors*

**YMGB - Young Mexican  
Gang Bangers**  
*Hispanic; Red Colors*

**VST - Vine Side Trece**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Blue  
Colors*

**VWL - Varrío Woodlake**  
*Primarily Hispanic; Red Colors*

**WAS - Wicked A-- Surenos**  
*Hispanic and Anglo; Blue  
Colors*

**For Further Information**

This pamphlet has been developed on behalf of the Tulare County Office of Education. For additional information on street gangs contact Mel Borbolla, Gang Consultant, at (559) 730-2708, Angel Vazquez, Community Schools Program Manager, Tulare County Office of Education at (559) 730-2531, or J.T. See and Arturo Villarreal, Truancy Intervention Officers, at (559) 651-9007.

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