

Progreso ISD - Gang Awareness

This guide provides common warning signs of gang involvement but may not be all-encompassing. Families should look for multiple signs to indicate possible gang involvement because some of these indicators alone are also common among youth not involved in gangs. Families are encouraged to seek help early by contacting school personnel, local law enforcement, faith leaders and community organizations for assistance.

Warning Signs That Your Child May be Involved With a Gang

- Drug/alcohol use
- Unusually low grades in school
- Changes in friends
- Keeping late hours
- Having large sums of money or expensive items that cannot be explained
- Wearing predominantly one color over another, or refusing to wear a certain color
- Wearing or displaying folded bandanas
- Admitting to being in a gang or to having gang associates
- Drawing gang symbols
- Fascination with gang lifestyle
- Loss of interest in sports or family activities
- Unexplained physical injuries (fighting-related)
- New tattoos
- Carrying a weapon

What the Law Says

Texas law is very specific in defining what constitutes evidence of gang membership. Section 61.02 of the code of criminal procedure provides a list of criteria to be considered in classifying someone as a gang member. If a person meets any two or more of the following criteria, he or she can be documented by law enforcement as a gang member (subject to change by the legislature).

- **Self Admission** The person admits gang membership. This can include photos or internet postings of the person portraying himself/herself as a gang member.
- **Identification by Reliable Person** The person is identified as a gang member by someone known to be reliable.
- **Corroborated Identification by a Person of Unknown Reliability** The person is identified as a gang member by a person whose reliability has not been established, but the identification is corroborated through other means, such as an officer's observations, or other observed criteria.

- Evidence That the Person Frequents Known Gang Areas and Associates with Known Gang Members A “known gang area” can be a neighborhood, a school, a street corner or any other place where gang activity has been documented.
- Evidence That the Person Uses (in more than an incidental manner) Criminal Street Gang Dress, Hand Signals, Tattoos or Symbols This can include the use or display of bandanas, articles of clothing or accessories of a specific color, or that are worn in a certain manner. Symbols may include letters, numbers, words, marks or other forms of expression.
- Evidence That the Person has Been Arrested or Taken Into Custody with Known Gang Members for an Offense or Conduct Consistent with Gang Activity
- Evidence That the Person has Visited a Known Gang Member (other than an immediate family member) in a Penal Institution This includes jail, prison or juvenile detention.
- Evidence that the Person has Used Technology to Recruit or Solicit Gang Membership This can include use of the internet, email, text messages, etc.

Gang membership is illegal in public schools in Texas. The Texas Education Code (Section 37.121) classifies gang membership or gang activity in schools as a Class C Misdemeanor, punishable by up to a \$500 fine. There are also serious academic consequences for gang membership and activity in school, up to and including removal to an alternative education placement or expulsion, depending on the level of gang activity or membership. The law applies to both adults (17 and older) and juveniles (those under 17 years of age).

What Families can do to Prevent Gang Involvement

- Spend quality time with your child.
- Talk to your child.
- Participate in your child’s school activities.
- Know your child’s friends and their families.
- Know what music and television shows your child likes to watch and listen to.
- Teach your child how to deal with peer pressure.
- Encourage your child to get involved with positive activities such as sports, after-school programs, volunteer work or job training.
- Discuss the consequences of being in a gang or hanging out with gang members.
- Make sure your child knows that you will not tolerate gang involvement.
- Be a good role model.

A Student’s Reference Guide

Listed below are common consequences experienced by youth involved in gangs. This is not a list of every consequence that might occur and does not mean that all youth involved in gangs will experience each of these consequences. If you have questions

about consequences, please talk to a teacher, parent, local law enforcement, faith leader or other trusted adult.

Negative Consequences of Gang Membership

- Criminal record.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- Death/serious injury.
- Jail/incarceration.
- Low grades/dropout/expulsion.
- Putting career opportunities at risk.
- Putting family in danger.
- Strained family relations.

Keys to Staying Gang-Free

- Spend quality time with your family or a trusted adult.
- Focus on school and get help with your classes if needed.
- Watch television shows and listen to music that have a positive message.
- Learn to deal with peer pressure and practice saying NO.
- Choose your friends wisely.
- Get involved with positive activities such as sports, after-school programs, volunteer work, or job training.
- Find positive role models.