

Gang Strategy of Saskatoon

safercity



In Saskatoon, as in many other parts of the country, gangs are engaged in criminal activity ranging from mischief and low-level theft to serious violence and drug trafficking. The Gang Strategy of Saskatoon is a response from the community and all levels of government to the problem of gang-related crime and other gang-associated issues in Saskatoon. An initial group of 15 departments and agencies representing all levels of government and the community came together to develop a strategic framework for addressing these gang related concerns.

The strategy is founded on the three strategic pillars of:

Prevention | Intervention | Suppression

The goals of the strategy are as follows:

- Increase community engagement in the gang prevention strategy
- Decrease gang entry by addressing personal and community factors
- Increase gang exit by addressing personal and community factors
- Decrease gang-related crime

The strategy recognizes the importance of building upon existing community and government resources such as employment programs, education, recreation, substance abuse programs, corrections-based interventions and law enforcement.

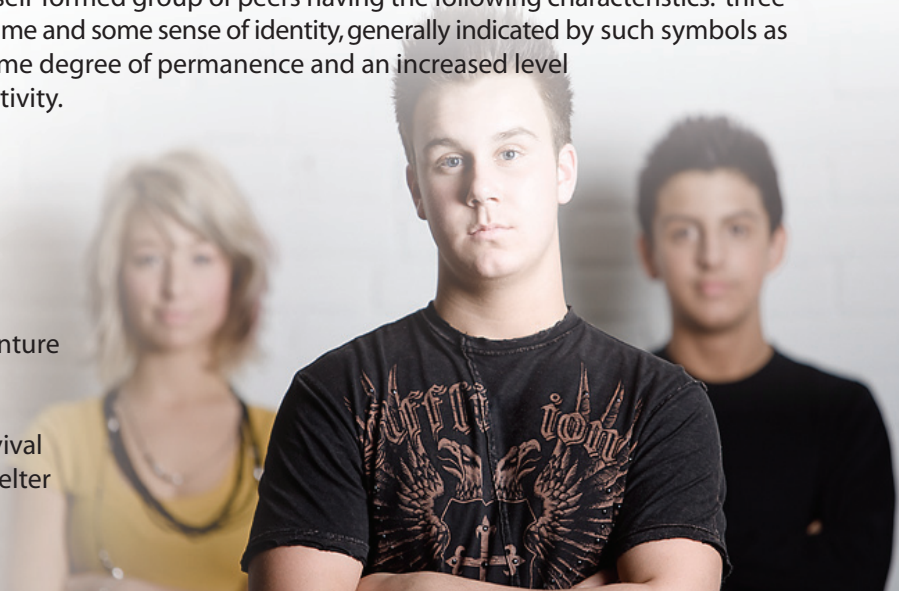
What is a gang?

Gangs come in different shapes and sizes. Some gangs are loosely affiliated, with little formal organization. These gangs are more likely to promote group belonging, social status or self-protection. At the other end of the spectrum are more sophisticated criminal organizations that have a well-defined hierarchy. These gangs are more likely to have an economic orientation. Most Saskatchewan gangs lie somewhere in between these two extremes. All gangs are associated with “issues of self-esteem and identity” (i.e. reputation, respect, retaliation).

A youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed group of peers having the following characteristics: three or more members, generally ages 12-24; a name and some sense of identity, generally indicated by such symbols as style of clothing, graffiti, and hand signs; some degree of permanence and an increased level of involvement in delinquent or criminal activity.

Why do youth join street gangs?

- To gain a sense of belonging
- To develop a sense of attachment
- To be “somebody” – to gain respect
- Surrogate family
- To experience excitement and adventure
- Identity or recognition
- Peer pressure
- Intimidation, protection and/or survival
- Money for food, drugs, clothes or shelter





What are some warning signs that your child might be involved with gangs?

- Decline in grades
- Skipping school
- Gang Identifiers such as graffiti, slang or clothing
- Unexplained injuries
- Withdrawal from family and/or friends
- Increasingly confrontational
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Unexplained money or property
- Carries a weapon

When asked, youth shared the following things that might have helped them avoid gangs:

- If parents had taken classes to improve their parenting skills
- Access to alternative school programs
- Access to employment programs
- Opportunities to play organized sports, or participate in free activities
- Availability of positive role models
- Encouragement to attend alcohol and addictions programs
- Transportation to school, work, recreation programs, etc

What can parents do?

Seek help for your child or teen

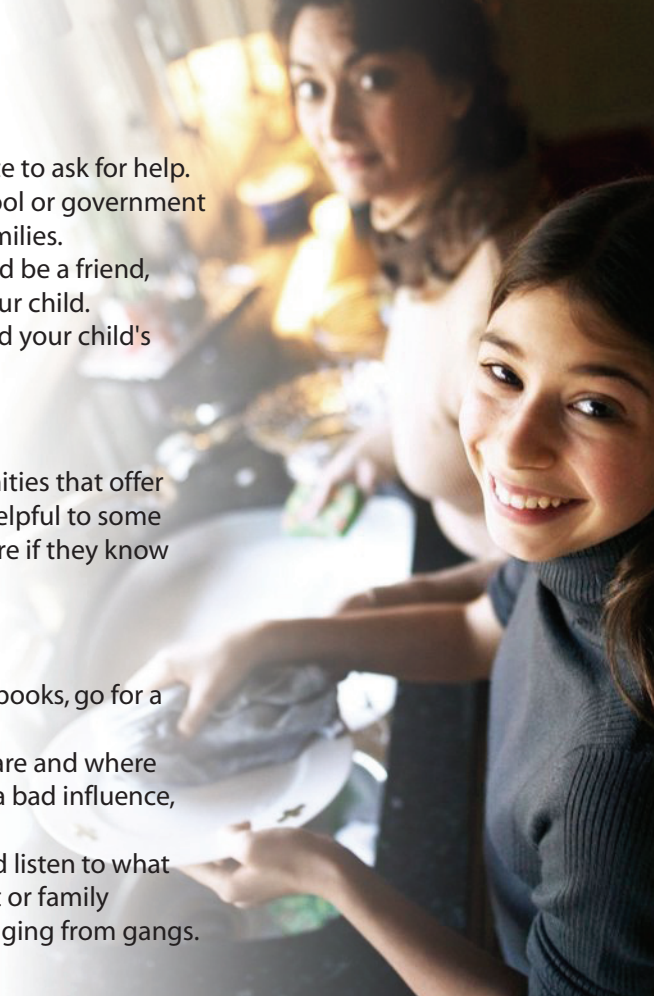
- If your child makes a bad choice and is in trouble, don't hesitate to ask for help. Contact your local community agency, Friendship Centre, school or government office to see if they offer support programs for parents and families.
- Talk to someone you trust about your child's situation – it could be a friend, spiritual advisor, elder or teacher. Ask that person to talk to your child. Developing a positive connection to a trusted person can build your child's self-esteem and help them make positive choices.

Find parenting supports

- All parents can use help. There are resources in many communities that offer parenting classes. Cultural-based programs can also be very helpful to some parents and families. Ask your local school or community centre if they know where a local parent support class is offered.

Stay connected to your child.

- Spend time with your child (i.e. play games, tell stories, look at books, go for a walk). Get to know your child's friends and their families.
- Know where your kids are at all times; know who their friends are and where they hang out. If they start hanging around with kids who are a bad influence, help them make new friends.
- Let your kids know you love them. Tell them positive things and listen to what they have to say. Children with a strong connection to a parent or family member are less likely to look for support and a sense of belonging from gangs.



Spend time at your child's school

- Children typically spend more time at school than at home. Stay connected to the school. Get to know your child's teacher and other staff members. If you can, volunteer at the school. Walk your children to school or make sure they walk with a friend. Do homework together. If your child is having trouble at school, talk to your child, teachers and the school counsellor. If the problem continues, speak to the principal.



Encourage positive activities

- Help your child get involved in activities after school and on weekends. There are many community programs, clubs and other resources throughout Saskatoon. Cultural programs are also a great support for some children. Contact your local school, community association or community organization to ask about sport, culture and recreation programs in your area.

Talk to your child about gangs

- Explain to your child how dangerous gangs are. Let your child know that gangs cannot only hurt them – they can also hurt other family members. Tell your child not to hang out with gang members, go to parties organized by gangs, use hand signals or wear gang clothing.

Be a positive role model and mentor

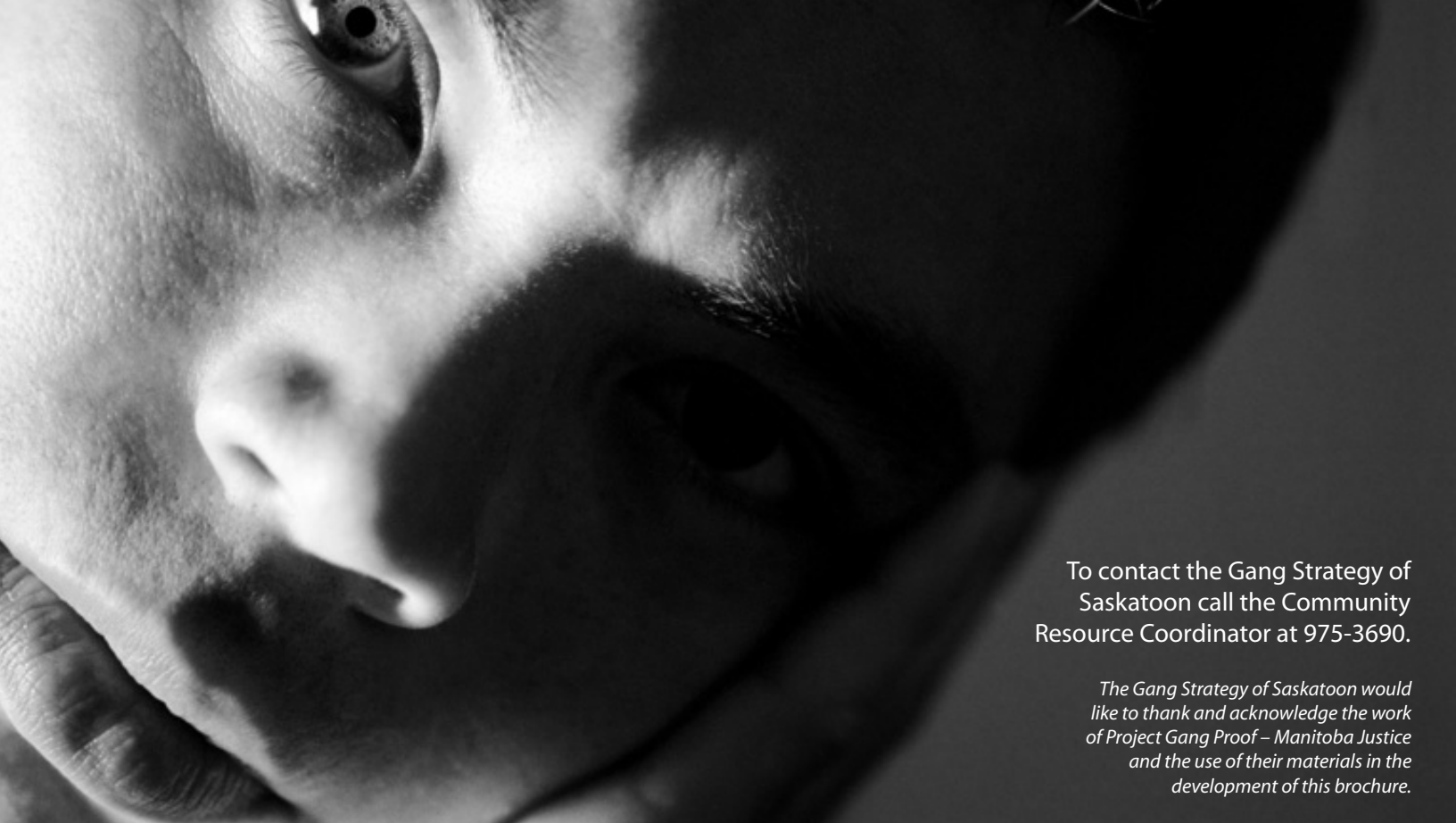
- Set a positive example for your child. Positive role models can have a major impact on what children think and how they behave. Is there a person in your neighbourhood that your child trusts and looks up to who could be a mentor? Positive role models and mentors can include parents, teachers, advisors or other trusted adults who care about your child.

Talk to your child about drug and alcohol abuse

- Talk to your child about the dangers of using alcohol and drugs. Teach them that gang members use drugs to try and lure children into their gangs. If someone is pressuring them to try drugs or alcohol, teach your child to say no. Kids whose parents talk to them about drugs are less likely to be using them.

What can the community do?

- Be aware of what is going on in your neighbourhood. Get to know your neighbours and share information, observations and concerns.
- Communicate any suspicious or suspected gang activity or persons to the police.
- Keep youth connected to and involved in the community. Offer and maintain after school art, sport, culture and recreations programs.
- Encourage all youth to avoid gang activity. Discuss the downside of gang involvement.
- Be a mentor.



To contact the Gang Strategy of
Saskatoon call the Community
Resource Coordinator at 975-3690.

*The Gang Strategy of Saskatoon would
like to thank and acknowledge the work
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For more information on resources and supports in Saskatoon for parents and caregivers check out:

www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/parent_directory/index.htm

www.getalife.ca

www.deal.org