



Violent street gangs are responsible for a substantial amount of the crime in Maricopa County. As chief prosecutor for the county, I am dedicated to responding to gang crime with effective prosecution that will curtail the gang violence and seek justice for victims of gang-related crime.

Too many of our neighborhoods must deal with the intimidation, fear and outright force that gangs use to further their criminal enterprises. All of us are affected, because gang membership potentially affects any neighborhood or community. Putting a stop to gangs requires that families, neighbors, police and prosecutors come together to hold gangs and the individuals within them accountable for their crimes.

As a parent of four children, I know there are alternatives to gang involvement for young adults. I believe that maintaining strong family involvement and maintaining community ties are much better choices for young people than joining a violent street gang.

You can take steps to identify the warning signs of gang involvement, help prevent members of your family from becoming active in a criminal gang, and assist law enforcement in protecting your neighborhood from these offenders. By staying aware of these signs and dealing with them appropriately, you can help prevent the threat of gang involvement.

Sincerely,

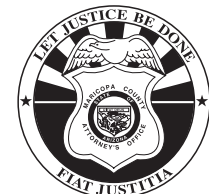
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GANG VIOLENCE



- What is a gang
- Crimes related to gang activity
- If you are a victim of gang violence
- Where can you go for help
- Warning signs of gang involvement



ANDREW THOMAS
County Attorney

What is a gang

A street gang is any group of individuals who unite for the purpose of engaging in criminal activity. Once considered an inner-city problem limited to low-income families, gangs are now found in suburban and rural communities. No race, gender, age, geographical, or socioeconomic groups are excluded. The common misconception that gang members are poor kids from severely dysfunctional families has been exposed as a myth by today's gang members from affluent two-parent homes. All gangs share one common characteristic: they use intimidation, force, and fear to control our neighborhoods and communities.

Crimes related to gang activity

Gang activity is increasingly connected with the violent crimes of murder, sexual assault, and drive-by shootings. However, gang activity can include a spectrum of crimes from simple vandalism and graffiti to burglary, thefts, armed robbery, and drug dealing.

If you are a victim of gang violence

Cooperation with the police and prosecutor is essential to bringing gang members to justice. Legal intervention may prevent friends, family and other community members from becoming victims of gang violence. If you or someone you know is a victim of gang violence:

- Get yourself to safety
- Do not confront the person who has committed the crime against you
- Notify the police immediately
- Write down or take notice of the suspect's physical appearance and clothing
- If a vehicle is involved, note the model, color, and license number of the vehicle

Where can you go for help

Victim Assistance

When a person is charged with a crime by the Maricopa County Attorney, victims are contacted by the Victim Services Division. Victim advocates provide victims' rights information, social service referrals, criminal justice system information, court escorts, transportation, and relocation assistance, if needed. For further information call (602) 506-8522.

Victim Compensation

If you are the victim of gang violence committed in Maricopa County, you may be eligible for victim compensation. The Victim Compensation Program is designed to assist you with crime related expenses. You can apply for victim compensation to cover crime related medical expenses, funeral expenses, mental health counseling, and lost wages. You may be eligible for victim compensation if you: report the crime to a police agency within 72 hours; are willing to cooperate with law enforcement agencies; and file an application with the Victim Compensation Bureau within two years of the date of the crime. To file a victim compensation claim, contact the Victim Compensation Bureau at (602) 506-4955.

Other Resources

Crime Stop (602) 262-6151: To report gang activity in your neighborhood

Graffiti Busters Hotline (602) 262-7327: Assistance with graffiti removal

Mothers Against Gangs (602) 235-9823: Support group for victims of gang violence; aid to youths leaving gangs

Most local police departments have gang hot lines and crime prevention programs.

Chandler Police: (480) 782-4130

Gilbert Police: (480) 503-6500

Glendale Police: (623) 930-3000

Mesa Police: (480) 644-GANG (4264)

Phoenix Police: (602) 262-7311

Paradise Valley: (480) 948-7418

Scottsdale Police: (480) 312-5187

Tempe Police: (480) 350-8494

Warning signs of gang involvement

Young people who become involved in gangs will often attempt to hide it from their parents. Graffiti (drawing gang names and symbols) is the most common sign of gang activity. Law enforcement agencies recommend that you check your child's room, furniture, school books, papers and notebooks for gang names, logos and nicknames. Check their clothing, inside waist bands, necklines, cuffs, and sleeves. Check inside shoes: shoe tongue, sole, and sides. If your child has gang information written in these places, then he/she is associating with gangs. Look for and deal with the warning signs.

Other warning signs:

- Withdrawal from family and normal activities
- Staying out late at night; secretive activities
- Sudden changes in personality and behavior
- Selecting or wearing the same color and style of clothes every day
- New friends that you don't approve of
- Unexplained body markings, injuries or tattoos
- Unexplained gifts of jewelry, money or expensive items or possession of weapons
- Use of body gestures and hand signs to communicate with friends