

# NATIONAL GANG CENTER

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## Talking to Youth About Gangs

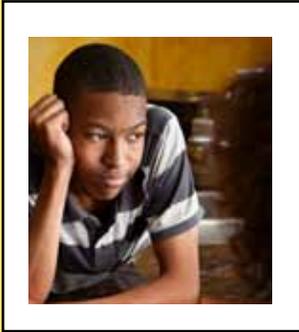
In communities with gang issues, youth receive many complex messages every day in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Gangs should be avoided, and yet they seem to offer power, support, prestige, and economic incentives to their members. Some adults give conflicting messages about gangs and may even accept money from the illicit activities of gangs, while expressing dismay at youth gang involvement.

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The National Gang Center (NGC) is jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. NGC conducts research on street gangs and serves as a clearinghouse for individuals and agencies seeking information, technical assistance, and training in the areas of gang prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry.

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### NGC Trainer SPOTLIGHT

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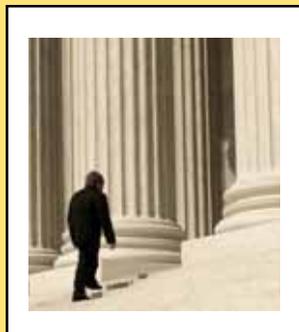
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### Get to Know NAGIA

The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations is a cooperative organization of 20 state and regional gang associations.

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### Gang Legislation Update

The NGC Gang-Related Legislation page was recently updated to include updates and changes as of December 2012.

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# Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs

The latest National Gang Center Bulletin, titled "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," was published in February 2013. Coauthored by Victor Gonzalez (Mayor's Anti-Gang Office, Houston, Texas) and Michelle Arciaga Young (National Gang Center), this publication explains how and why gang members reduce their gang involvement. The bulletin provides an overview of current gang desistance research; describes intervention strategies for supporting the gang desistance process; and presents sample case studies of individuals who successfully transitioned out of gangs. You can access this bulletin online at:

<http://s.iir.com/tfZp9RjE>



## Gang Legislation Update



The NGC Gang-Related Legislation page was recently updated to include updates and changes as of December 2012. Visit <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Legislation/> for a comprehensive listing by state, subject, and municipal codes.

Some highlights from this update include the following:

- All 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) have enacted some form of legislation relating to gangs or gang-related activity.
- 42 states and DC have legislation that defines "gang."
- 14 states have legislation that defines "gang member."
- 31 states define "gang crime/activity."
- 29 states have passed gang prevention laws.
- 30 states have laws that provide for enhanced penalties for gang-related criminal acts.

## NGC Trainer **SPOTLIGHT**

### **Officer Bruce Ferrell**

Valley, Nebraska,  
Police Department  
and President, NAGIA



Officer Bruce Ferrell retired from the Omaha, Nebraska, Police Department (OPD) after more than 22 years of service, the last 8.5 years of which were spent in the Gang Intelligence Squad. He gathered intelligence information on criminal street gang members for investigations, identification, and documentation. Officer Ferrell also was assigned to the Narcotics and Homicide Units and was a hostage negotiator during his service with OPD.

Officer Ferrell is the current president of the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA). He is also the national chairman and Nebraska State Chapter president for the Midwest Gang Investigators Association (MGIA). Officer Ferrell is currently employed as a police officer with the Valley, Nebraska, Police Department.

#### **1. What are some National Gang Center (NGC) resources that help street gang investigators in their line of work?**

Resources that I would encourage investigators to use from the NGC are its Web site resources page, gang-related news, publications, surveys, and GANGINFO. They have allowed me to access enormous amounts of information and develop contacts for expertise in gang issues across the country. NAGIA and MGIA have welcomed the partnership with NGC, especially with their no-cost law enforcement training initiatives on a variety of gang topics and assistance they provide to our conferences and memberships.

#### **2. What are some emerging gang trends in the Midwest?**

We continue to see migration of Sureño gang members from California, the Southwest, and south of the border, in conjunction with the Mexican drug cartels that are flooding our communities with drugs sold by gang members in our cities. We have also seen a growth of African street gangs, specifically the Sudanese and Somali groups, who include sex and human trafficking in the list of crimes they commit.

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## Talking to Youth About Gangs

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Adults often feel uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues like gangs and violence with young people. However, if youth are encountering gangs in the school or community, they need opportunities to talk candidly about these issues with adults. The significance of an anti-gang message increases when it comes from a person who has a caring relationship with the youth. Here are some factors that adults should keep in mind when talking about gang-related issues with youth:

1. Start at the youth's level of understanding. What is he/she aware of? What is he/she seeing at home, in the neighborhood, and at school? It is important to be sensitive to the youth's level of awareness in order to avoid alarming young people who may be less aware of gang problems, or downplaying a problem of deep concern.
2. Take a strong, no-tolerance stand against gangs and violence. Youth should not be allowed to glorify gang activity, dress in gang-style clothing, or use gang-related slang or insults during school hours or during program activities.
3. Talk about the negative effects of gang membership on youth, their families, friends, schools, and communities. These may include the following: increased risk of injury to oneself or family members/friends, difficulties in school, pressure to commit criminal acts, and consequences of committing criminal acts (incarceration, lack of future job opportunities, causing harm to others).
4. Emphasize to youth that their choices matter because their happiness and well-being are important not only to themselves but to the people who care about them. Emphasize to youth that they are responsible for their own choices, and make them aware of the consequences that they may face.
5. Try to incorporate discussions about positive life choices into everyday conversations.
6. Help youth to think through conflicting messages about gangs and violence. Youth who have been exposed to violence in movies, music, television, and video games may have detached and unrealistic perceptions about violence. Adults should confront these false ideas and help youth understand that acts of violence have long-lasting effects on individuals, families, and communities.
7. Emphasize the youth's good qualities. Many youth who are already involved in gangs or delinquency receive negative feedback every day. Try to emphasize the youth's special attributes, skills, and efforts to make good decisions. Be specific in your praise, rather than general, and point out good choices: "It is very impressive how you handled that conflict so maturely. You could have become angry, but you were able to maintain your control and walk away."
8. Consistency is key. Youth need to hear consistent messages about gangs delivered by the adults they know well: parents, teachers, coaches, neighbors, and religious leaders.
9. Remain accessible and involved with youth. Long-term, caring relationships with adults provide youth with an incentive and a support network to stay out of gangs.

# Get to Know NAGIA



The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA), formed in 1998, is a cooperative organization representing 20 state and regional gang investigators' associations with more than 20,000 members. It provides for leadership in developing and recommending strategies

to prevent and control gang crime; to administer professional training; and to assist criminal justice professionals and the public in identifying and tracking gangs, gang members, and gang crime around the world. For more information, please visit the NAGIA Web site at <http://www.nagia.org/>.

## SPOTLIGHT

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### 3. What is important for law enforcement to consider when encountering gang members?

The safety of you and your partners is paramount. No matter how many times you have encountered this person, you need to exercise extreme caution. Gang members live in a culture of violence where issues are taken care of with violence. They see law enforcement no differently than any other problem or issue in their life and will use violence to address it.

### 4. What states are covered by MGIA?

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

For more information about NAGIA or MGIA, please visit the links below:

<http://www.nagia.org/>

<http://www.mgia.org/>



## Interested in Training?

Check out the links below for dates and locations:

### Training and Conferences

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Other-Training-and-Conferences>

### Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Training-and-Technical-Assistance/Law-Enforcement>

### To subscribe to the NGC Newsletter, visit:

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Newsletter/Subscribe>