

CHANGING COURSE

Preventing Gang Membership

Public health and public safety share a mission when it comes to stopping youth gang violence before it starts. To help **change the course** of the future for our kids, the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published *Changing Course: Preventing Gang Membership* to address the challenge of youth gangs in America:

- **35%** increase in the number of youth gangs in the U.S. 2002-2010.
- **1/3** of communities reported youth gang problems in 2010.
- **45%** of high schoolers and **35%** of middle schoolers said there were gangs (or self-identified gang members) in their school in 2010.

- **13 to 15 years old** is the most common age for gang-joining.
- Kids join gangs for money, belonging, peer status and perceived protection.
- Contrary to some stereotypes, girls join gangs in large numbers.



"Ask any emergency department doctor who treats a gang-related gunshot wound or police officer who must tell a mother that her son has been killed in a drive-by shooting what should be done about kids in gangs—and they're likely to stress the need for prevention."

(Introduction, *Changing Course*)

Community partnerships that offer tutoring, mentoring, life-skills training, case management and supervised recreation can reinforce the strength of families and communities.

Public safety is key to early prevention, based on police officer knowledge of who's in trouble (or on the brink).

Public Health ensures that evidence-based strategies are well-implemented, effective, coordinated across sectors and responsive to the community's needs.

A **safe, fear-free school** is crucial.

Strong families are important. Early prevention programs with children and their families show lasting benefits.

Substance abuse, delinquency and violence prevention programs can reduce the risks of gang-joining.



NIJ

E-versions and print copies of *Changing Course* —the book and the executive summary— are available at www.nij.gov/changing-course.



CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION