

# **How Gangs Affect Teens and Children**

*By Leilani Lagunes*

How do gangs affect students and teenagers? Gangs influence the young. Some kids are actually raised in a gang. It is either one or even both parents or caregivers who were or are in a gang. In my opinion, kids who are actually influenced by gangs or in a gang, should get help immediately.

For instance, gangs influence school behavior. If a teen is influenced by a gang he or she is most likely to increase his or her attention to drugs or other gang related things. In addition, gangs affect schools as well. Some gang members act violently on campus. They can and could create a fearful environment. Also, friends influence students to join gangs or hang out with people who are linked to gangs. Once someone hangs around with gangs or people who are linked, teens really do not care about their education at all. Students think smoking makes them cool or just calms them down. According to an interview on [educationcounts.govt](http://educationcounts.govt), a young boy, Sam said, "I thought smoking drugs made me feel cool and it calmed me down." My reaction to Sam's response was that I felt shocked because I never thought drugs made you look cool but feel lonely inside. Reading his response in the article made me wonder what other teens feel about taking drugs. In my opinion, I do not understand why teens take drugs, but I know these teens need help.

Do we know why people join gangs? According to [gangfree.org](http://gangfree.org) there are a few reasons why teens join gangs. First, teens and young children might just feel that they don't receive enough attention, so they try to escape that negative attention from their parents or caregivers and find people who do give the attention

they are looking for. Another reason people join gangs is because they want to fit in. They think that they do not have enough support and feel pressured to join a gang. That's peer pressure. Peer pressure can lead to the form of a dare and even harassment.

Furthermore, being raised in a family with gang members can be difficult. Kids or teens have anger, but where does it come from? According to [educationcounts.govt](http://educationcounts.govt), a young girl was interviewed and Jessica said, "I could understand where my anger was coming from." Being angry can lead to violent behavior. Additionally, being different than your family is difficult. According to Reuben this is his response on being influenced by gangs, "Sometimes hard to do things differently to family-they stick to their thing and I do my own thing." Family sticks together and they have their traditions but gangs also have their traditions or rituals. There are many rituals, like murdering and burning many things made out of wood, according to [therichest.com](http://therichest.com). Also [encyclopedia.com](http://encyclopedia.com) states that 32% of Los Angeles men said that they were in a gang and so were their children. This information is astonishing because I thought fathers would want their children to work hard on their studies.

In these situations, I would want the child or teen to be removed and be placed in a more appropriate environment. For example, every teen and child should have an appropriate place to work on their studies. This is what I dislike about a few parents and caregivers that sometimes don't give lot of attention to their child. If parents paid attention to their children, there would not be anyone being murdered or having to do something they do not want to do.

In conclusion, gangs are still in many communities. Teens are in an unsafe environment if they are around gangs. Teens should look up to the future and work hard on their studies instead of wasting their time on poor choices. Lastly, there is always help for any youth crisis. Teens can always go to California Youth Crisis Line 1-800-843-5200 or visit their website [www.youthcrisisline.org](http://www.youthcrisisline.org) to get help with gang issues. And remember teens, millions of people can believe in you, and yet none of it matters if you don't believe in yourself.