

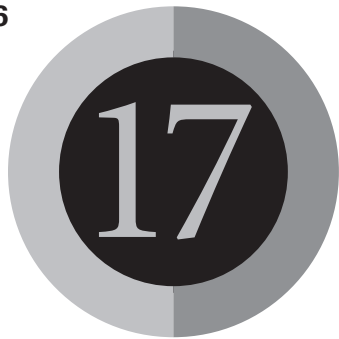
17

SESSION

Gangs

Define the Problem

Overview of Lesson	National Standards for Civics and Government	National Standards for English	National Standards for Health
<p>Students analyze the costs and benefits of membership in a gang and identify signs of gang participation among their peers and in their community.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health. (NHES 6)</p>



SESSION

GANGS

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

In this session, your group will examine why gangs appeal to teens and younger children, and what can happen to teens who join gangs. Teens will work in pairs and small groups to discuss questions about gangs and consider outside information, then put what they've learned into their own description of the problem that gangs present.

TEENS WILL LEARN

- To define gangs
- To find out why gangs appeal to some teens and some younger children
- To learn some negative aspects of joining a gang
- To learn about gangs in their community
- To discover the warning signs when a friend is becoming a gang member
- To learn the dangers of being friends with gang members

TEACHING STRATEGIES

The following teaching strategies are used in this session:

- Brainstorming
- Continuum
- Paired Discussion
- Learning Stations
- Small-group Discussion
- Poster
- Journal Writing

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Newsprint and markers
- Pencils for all group members
- *Handling Difficult Situations* poster (from the *Community Works* kit)
- Large map of your community (from Session 5: *Where Are We Safe and Unsafe?*)
- Handout 1: *How Do Gangs Meet Needs?*
- Handout 2: *How Do Gangs Get People To Join?*
- Handout 3: *Whom Do Gangs Recruit?*
- Handout 4: *Why and How Do Gangs Attract Some Young Children?*
- Handout 5: *What Do Gangs Do?*
- Handout 6: *Why Do People Leave Gangs?*
- Masking tape
- Three- by five-inch index cards
- Journal for Session 17



A good community resource person for this session would be a police officer who has the latest information about gang activity in your area. If this is not possible, consider calling the police department for an update on gang activity.

SUMMARY OF STEPS

PART 1

Step A. Warm-up

Step B. What Do You Think?

Step C. Gather Information About Gangs



55 Minutes

PART 2

Step D. Creating a Poster To Describe Gangs

Step E. Reflection



50 Minutes

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Session 17: *Gangs: Define the Problem* and Session 18: *Gangs: Consider Alternatives* work best if you use them close together. It's also wise to build on the information that teens learned in Session 5: *Where Are We Safe and Unsafe?* It's possible that some of the crime examined in that session was related to gangs.

2. Read the session plan.
3. Decide how you will involve teens in the session as helpers, leaders, readers, creators of posters, etc. For more information about facilitating teen involvement, consult the Introduction in Volume One.
4. At the top of a sheet of newsprint, write the question, “What does a family need to provide for children to be successful?”
5. Write “The Gang” at the top of another sheet of newsprint.
6. Write the four bulleted statements in the second point under Step B, #3 on the newsprint.
7. Write the six questions about gangs at the top of Handouts 1 through 6—one question on each of six pieces of newsprint—and hang the sheets around the room.
8. Write the definition of *gang* (see Step D, #3) on a three- by five-inch card or a piece of paper for a teen volunteer to read.
9. Have the community map from Session 5: *Where Are We Safe and Unsafe?* ready for teens to use.
10. Make copies of Handouts 1 through 6 for all teens.
11. Make copies of the journal for this session for all teens to use.
12. Hang the *Handling Difficult Situations* poster in the room.
13. Post the teen-created guidelines from Session 1 in the room.
14. Gather the materials you will need.

P A R T

1

STEP A

TEACHING STRATEGY

■ Icebreaker



5 MINUTES

Warm-up

1. Review previous sessions.
 - Ask teens to think for a minute about the purpose of the *Community Works* program and to tell you what they remember.
 - Ask group members to update newcomers and those who missed earlier sessions. Assign this task to teens on a rotating basis. Explain that it helps build public-speaking skills.
 - Remind teens that these sessions will help them get information and develop skills to avoid being the victims of crime, as well as help them develop skills to help others and their communities become safer.
 - Return their journals with your comments from the last session.

2. Discuss the purpose of this session.
 - Explain to teens, or have a teen volunteer explain, that in this session they will examine why gangs appeal to teens and younger children and what can happen to teens who join gangs. They will work in pairs and small groups to discuss questions about gangs and consider outside information, then put what they've learned into their own description of the problems that gangs present.
3. Remind teens of the guidelines they developed for these sessions. Be sure their list is posted on the wall.
 - One way to increase teens' involvement and give them ownership of the session is to have them volunteer to go over the group guidelines at the start and recap the last session's activities.
4. To warm up the group, choose an icebreaker (optional) from the Introduction in Volume One. (Allow additional time for this activity.)
5. Ask volunteers to recap the communication feedback skills, using the *Handling Difficult Situations* poster.

STEP B

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Brainstorming
- Continuum



15 MINUTES

What Do You Think?

1. Ask, "What does a family need to provide for children to be successful?" Have teens brainstorm answers to this question.
 - Write their ideas on the newsprint below the question.
 - Encourage all teens to participate in the brainstorming.
2. When you have a large number of answers to this question, use a marker to cross out the word "family" and replace it with "gang."
 - Point out that gangs promise to give their members all these things—and some would argue that they deliver on many of their promises.
 - What's important to know is that people who join gangs also risk a lot—in many cases, this includes their lives.
3. Use information below from the *Between Hope and Fear*¹ survey to get teens thinking about the problem of gangs.
 - Explain, "In a national survey, *Between Hope and Fear*, teens were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with four statements. What do you think of these statements?"
 - Display these four statements written on newsprint.
 - Most young kids in my neighborhood look up to gang members.
 - Belonging to a gang is like having a family that will always be there for you.
 - Gangs protect their members from people outside the neighborhood who might want to hurt them or treat them badly.
 - Gangs are violent and destructive.

¹National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)/National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law (NICEL), *Between Hope and Fear: Teens Speak Out on Crime and the Community*, (Washington, DC: NCPC/NICEL, 1996), 99.

- Read each statement aloud and ask teens to raise their hands to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each statement. Or, instead of having teens raise their hands for each statement, use a continuum strategy. Mark an imaginary line on the ground—one end of the line signifies strong agreement and the other end of the line signifies strong disagreement. For each of the statements, ask teens to decide to what degree they agree or disagree. Have them stand on the spot in the continuum line that corresponds to their feeling about each statement. This will provide an excellent visual display of their feelings.
4. Explain that this national survey found the following:
 - At least one in five teens believes that at least one of the first three statements is true, whether or not there are gangs in the neighborhood.
 - Gangs play a big part in daily neighborhood life of at least three in five teens from at-risk neighborhoods.
 - The first three statements are more likely to be true for African American and Hispanic teens, especially those who live in at-risk neighborhoods. From 57 percent to 75 percent of African American and Hispanic teens from at-risk neighborhoods agreed with the first three statements.
 - The great majority (78 percent) of teens also agreed with the fourth statement, that gangs are violent and destructive. This included African American and Hispanic teens from at-risk neighborhoods.
 5. Compare what your group said with what teens said nationally.
 - In particular, see if most members of the group agreed with one or more of the first three statements and also agreed with the fourth statement.
 - If so, this will show that teens in your group—like teens nationally—recognize that gangs present clear benefits and serious problems.
 - If teens do not find this to be the case, note how they differ. Ask what they think accounts for this difference.
 6. Tell teens that other recent surveys indicate the following:
 - About 7 percent of teens say they belong to gangs.
 - About 20 percent of all teens know someone who was killed or injured by gang members.
 - In some cities, as many as 70 percent of teens killed by guns are gang members.
 7. Ask teens if these findings are similar to or different from their experience.

STEP C**TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Paired Discussion
- Learning Stations

**35 MINUTES****Gather Information About Gangs**

1. Tell teens that they will work in pairs to explore the problem of gangs.
 - Have teens pair off, and give each teen a pencil.
 - Tell the pairs to walk around the room to read and think about the six questions about gangs.
 - Point out the location of each piece of newsprint and read aloud each question.
 - How do gangs meet needs?

- How do gangs get people to join?
 - Whom do gangs recruit?
 - Why and how do gangs attract some young children?
 - What do gangs do?
 - Why do people leave gangs?
- Explain that their task is to discuss each question as a pair, then write their answers on the newsprint. Suggest that they use what they know from their own experience and the experience of friends and family, and what they know about their own community.
2. The pairs then circulate to read and answer the six questions.
 - Check to see that they are on track and understand what to do.
 - Add extra sheets of newsprint as needed.
 3. Bring together teens as a group and collect the six (or more) pieces of newsprint with their ideas.
 - When all teens have had a chance to read and comment on each question, bring them back together as a whole group.
 - Ask a volunteer to collect the sheets for you.

Note: If you have a large group, you may want to have teens write their comments on self-adhesive notes and attach them to the sheets of newsprint.

Another strategy to use when the group can't move freely around the room is the *envelope* method. Each question is placed on the outside of a large envelope. All group members record their thoughts on a sheet of paper, then place it in the envelope (a recorder can do this for a small group).

Wrap-up for Part 1

Ask group members to develop five questions they could ask their peers in order to figure out if gangs are a problem in their school or community. Surveys are a good way to identify the issues people care about. When the group has identified the issues, discussions can focus on how an issue can evolve into a service-learning project.

Part 2 of Session 17 will continue discussions about assessing the gang problem in the community and framing a response. The group will also work together to understand the factors that make gangs attractive to young people and determine community responses to these issues.

P A R T

2

REVIEW AND PREVIEW

Begin Part 2 by reviewing Part 1. Be sure to remind teens about the objectives for these sessions and give them an overview of what they will try to accomplish during this session. (Hint: Use the objectives set out at the beginning of this session.)

STEP D

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Small-group Discussion
- Poster



40 MINUTES

Creating a Poster To Describe Gangs

1. Tell teens that they will use their own experience and knowledge, and some additional information, to define the problem of gangs in their community.
 - Divide teens into six small groups. Give each group one of the six questions on newsprint (with their comments) from the last session.
 - Tell each group to select a reporter and recorder.
 - Have each group read and discuss the comments under their question.
 - Distribute to each group copies of the handout that answers their question:
 - Handout 1: *How Do Gangs Meet Needs?*
 - Handout 2: *How Do Gangs Get People To Join?*
 - Handout 3: *Whom Do Gangs Recruit?*
 - Handout 4: *Why and How Do Gangs Attract Some Young Children?*
 - Handout 5: *What Do Gangs Do?*
 - Handout 6: *Why Do People Leave Gangs?*
 - All members of each group should learn the information on their handout.
 - Each group should then choose three key points that answer its question, using the comments on the newsprint and the information on the handout.
 - Ask each group's reporter to tell the whole group what his or her group has decided is important to know about its part of the gang problem.
 - While the reporter is saying what each group thinks is important, have that group's recorder use a marker to write these views on the newsprint titled "The Gang."
 - At the end of this process, you will have a teen-created poster that describes gangs as your group sees them.
2. Use the map from Session 5 to locate gang activity in the teens' community.
 - Hang up the map.
 - Ask, "If there were gangs in your neighborhood, where would they be?" Ask teens to include gang "turf" and open-air drug markets.
 - Ask volunteers to mark this information on the map.
3. Define the word *gang*.
 - Ask teens how they would define a gang, based on what they know.
 - Write their working definition on newsprint.
 - To give teens an idea of what some gang experts think, give them one definition of a *gang*.

- Give this definition (on a three- by five-inch card) to a teen volunteer to read. *A gang is a group of people who form an alliance for a common purpose, engage in criminal activity, and have one or more of these criteria:*
 - Have a common name
 - Have a structured dress style
 - Have a common symbol
 - Frequently congregate on and claim a geographical location—their “turf”
 - Associate on a regular or continual basis
 - Participate in a criminal activity
- Have teens compare their working definition with the one you provided, and ask if they want to modify their definition.
- The point here is to use words that teens understand and provide them with a complete definition.
- Ask a volunteer to write the group’s definition on its “The Gang” poster.
- Give teens time to read what they have written about gangs.

STEP E**TEACHING STRATEGY**

- Journal Writing



10 MINUTES

Reflection

1. Relate the session to teens’ lives.
 - Ask what groups of people they think should learn about the problem of gangs.
 - Use the survey questions you developed to do a community survey to see what people think about gangs in your community. Identify community resource groups who are already working on the issue of young people and gangs. Develop potential service-learning project ideas for group consideration.
2. Turn learning into action.
 - Ask teens what groups of people they think should learn about the problem of gangs.
 - To get teens thinking about possible action projects related to this session, ask what they think would be the most effective ways of sharing this information with these groups. Possible suggestions include holding a discussion with a panel of former gang members, writing and presenting skits, designing and exhibiting posters, and writing and distributing handouts or a newsletter about gangs.
 - If this session has sparked special interest among teens and they are interested in doing a short service-learning project (approximately two hours or less) related to this session, consult “Easy Steps to a Service-learning Project” in the Introduction in Volume One.
 - Ask for volunteers for the next session’s tasks, such as making posters, contacting community resource people, and setting up the room.
3. Distribute the journal for Session 17.
 - Explain, remind, or ask teens the purpose of the journal. Be sure they know it is to help them reflect on what they learned and for you to read and respond to what they write. Be clear that you will not be correcting what they write—just reading and responding.
 - Ask for teens who are willing to share their thoughts with the group.
 - Collect their journals to review them after the session and write short comments. Tell them you will return their journals with your comments at the next session. This gives teens something tangible and provides them with a connection to previous sessions.



HANDOUT 1

How Do Gangs Meet Needs?

Research from experts indicates that gangs exist and continue to grow because they meet basic needs of their members. Among these are needs of young people for

- Love
- Security: the need to belong and be safe
- Identity: the need to fit in and be recognized and respected
- Status: the need to be successful and accomplished
- Acceptance

Why haven't you chosen to be in a gang?



HANDOUT 2

How Do Gangs Get People To Join?

People who study gangs say that gangs use a variety of recruitment tactics, including

- Money (profit from the drug trade provides an especially strong economic incentive)
- Excitement and adventure
- Intimidation and threats
- Fear and rumor
- Peer pressure
- Family involvement
- A strict code of behavior
- Signs of belonging, such as a uniform, talk, gestures, or tattoos
- Drugs and alcohol
- Hope of becoming a neighborhood hero
- Sex or the promise of sex
- Promise of carrying a gun
- Promise that “no one will bother you”



HANDOUT 3

Whom Do Gangs Recruit?

Research shows that anyone can be recruited into a gang. This includes people

- From five to 25 years old
- Of all races and ethnic groups
- Who are poor, middle class, or rich
- Who are female and male
- Who live in cities, suburbs, or rural areas
- Who are failing students, average students, or straight A students

Gang members usually range in age from 12 to 25 years old. The average age is 17.

Gangs generally target *young people* who

- Have suffered from drug and alcohol abuse in their families
- Come from broken families
- Are doing poorly in school
- Are truant from school
- Need money
- Don't have good ways to use their leisure time
- Get in trouble with the police
- Live in neighborhoods where gangs exist
- Have low self-esteem
- Show violent tendencies especially toward adults and authority



H A N D O U T 4

Why and How Do Gangs Attract Some Young Children?

Recent experience shows that gangs involved in the drug trade, especially in the inner cities, are recruiting and using young children because of the following:

- Changes in federal and state sentencing laws require longer, harsher sentences for adults convicted of drug trafficking, particularly in crack cocaine.
- There is growing competition for “turf.”
- Children tend to be trusting and want to be liked.
- Children are less likely to be suspected than teens and adults.
- Children are often more naive and easily intimidated.

Gangs now recruit and arm children in elementary school. Gang and drug leaders figure that the children will not get harsh jail terms if they are arrested and convicted. However, recent laws are making these penalties more serious for young people.

These children are promised

- Clothes and shoes
- Drugs
- Parties
- Money to help pay off their families’ bills
- Sex

In suburban schools, children as young as fourth graders have their own gang names and are doing graffiti.



HANDOUT 5

What Do Gangs Do?

Experts who study gangs have found that gangs support themselves in a variety of illegal ways. These include

- Trading illegal weapons
- Selling drugs
- Robberies
- Stealing cars
- Extortion
- Prostitution (homosexual and heterosexual)
- Selling stolen goods

Gangs are organized in different ways.

- Ethnically
- Racially (including all-white hate groups)
- Turf-based
- With well-defined leaders or loosely structured
- Involving different generations of a family, such as fathers, sons, cousins, and uncles

**H A N D O U T 6****Why Do People Leave Gangs?**

Experts who study gangs say that people *do* leave gangs. They leave for a variety of reasons. Some former gang members say that they left because they

- Were afraid of being injured or killed
- Never wanted to be in the gang in the first place
- Were worried about hurting their families
- Were worried about their siblings getting involved
- Were tired of getting arrested and put in jail
- Fell in love
- Had kids
- Found God

If you were in a gang, why might *you* think about leaving?

**JOURNAL****Session 17**

NAME _____ DATE _____

I learned that

I was surprised by

One thing I think I could do with this information is

My biggest question about this issue is

I plan to
