

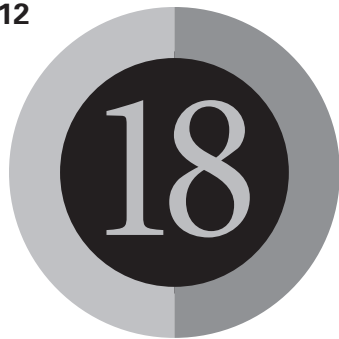
# 18

SESSION

## Gangs

### Consider Alternatives

Overview of Lesson	National Standards for Civics and Government	National Standards for English	National Standards for Health
<p>Students examine strategies for reducing gang activity in their community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization of state and local governments (NSCG III.C.2)</li> <li>• Forming and carrying out public policy (NSCG III.E.6)</li> </ul>	<p>None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health. (NHES 7)</li> </ul>



## SESSION

### GANGS

#### CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES

In this session, teens will consider a number of strategies to solve the problem of gangs as they defined the problem in Session 17. In a mock legislative hearing, they will present and discuss possible options and choose those they think would be most effective in their community.

#### TEENS WILL LEARN

- To identify strategies communities have used to solve the gang problem
- To present and examine these strategies
- To consider which strategies would work best in their community

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

These following teaching strategies are used in this session:

- Brainstorming
- Role-play
- Legislative Hearing Simulation
- Debriefing
- Journal Writing

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Newsprint and markers
- Pencils and paper for the group members
- *Handling Difficult Situations* poster (from the *Community Works* kit)
- Large map of your community (used in Sessions 5 and 17)
- *The Gang* poster (from Session 17)
- Three- by five-inch cards
- Handout 1: *Solutions to the Problem of Gangs*
- Name tags for teens to use during the legislative hearing
- Journal for Session 18

Ask a member of your city or town council to attend this session. He or she can provide practical suggestions and feedback for teens at the end of the legislative hearing. Or you might want to invite someone from your community who has worked with the state legislature or city council. Ask this person to share with your teens what he or she has learned about decision makers and how best to approach them about the issues you care about.



## SUMMARY OF STEPS

### PART 1

Step A. Warm-up

Step B. What Do You Think?

Step C. Prepare for the Legislative Hearing



65 Minutes

### PART 2

Step D. Hold the Legislative Hearing

Step E. Reflection



55 Minutes

## BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Read the session plan.
2. Decide how you will involve teens in the session as helpers, leaders, readers, etc. For more information about facilitating teen involvement, consult the Introduction in Volume One.
3. Make seven copies of Handout 1: *Solutions to the Problem of Gangs*.

4. Cut up one copy of Handout 1: *Solutions to the Problem of Gangs* so that each piece contains one solution.
5. Copy the quotation from Step C, #3, second square bullet (page 115) onto a three- by five-inch card.
6. Make copies of the journal for all participants.
7. Arrange to have a table for legislators, newsprint and markers or chalkboard and chalk for the recorder, and a desk or podium for the witnesses.
8. Hang the community map on the wall.
9. Hang up *The Gang* poster (from Session 17).
10. Hang up the *Handling Difficult Situations* poster.
11. Post teen-created guidelines from Session 1 in the room.
12. Gather the materials you will need.

## P A R T

## 1

## STEP A

## TEACHING STRATEGY

## ■ Icebreaker



5 MINUTES

## Warm-up

1. Review the purpose of *Community Works*.
  - Ask teens to think for a minute about the purpose of the *Community Works* program. Ask them what they remember.
  - Ask the group members to update newcomers and those who missed earlier sessions. Assign this task to teens on a rotating basis. Explain that doing so helps build public-speaking skills.
  - Remind teens that these sessions will help them develop skills and show them how 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. Explain the purpose of this session.
  - Explain to teens, or have a teen volunteer explain, that in this session they will examine a variety of solutions to the problem of gangs. They will participate in a mock legislative hearing to present, discuss, and choose solutions they think would best deal with the problem of gangs in their community.
3. Remind teens of the guidelines they developed for these sessions. Be sure their list is posted on the wall. One way to increase the 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. Choose an icebreaker (optional) from the Introduction in Volume One to warm up the group. (Allow additional time for this activity.)

## STEP B

### TEACHING STRATEGY

- Brainstorming



10 MINUTES

### What Do You Think?

1. Use *The Gang* poster that the group created in Session 17 to help them start thinking about solutions to the complex problem of gangs.
  - Ask teens to read and consider their poster for a minute or two.
  - Have them brainstorm a list of solutions to some of the problems created by gangs in their community.
  - Recap the guidelines for brainstorming, if needed.
  - Write their ideas on the chalkboard or newsprint.
2. Have teens use their ideas to connect possible solutions to their own community.
  - Ask if they know if any of these ideas have been tried—and if so, which ones.
  - Ask if someone they know (family or friends) has been involved in any of these solutions. If so, ask them to share what they know about the solutions.

## STEP C

### TEACHING STRATEGY

- Role-play



50 MINUTES

### Prepare for the Legislative Hearing

1. Have teens recap the communication skills taught in Session 8 using the *Handling Difficult Situations* poster.
2. Explain to teens the purpose of and procedure for the legislative hearing.
  - *Purpose:* The legislative hearing will give teens an understanding of how their town or city council considers important problems and chooses solutions; and to give them practice in identifying and clarifying ideas, interests, and values associated with the subject of gangs.
  - *Assign roles:* Have all the participants write their roles and names on name tags and wear them for identification during the hearing.
    - *Legislators:* Five legislators is a practical number for a committee, but this may vary depending on the size of your group. Have teens designate one legislator as chairperson.
    - *Witnesses:* Handout 1: *Solutions to the Problem of Gangs* contains ten proposals. The number of witnesses will depend on how many teens come to this session. You can decide to assign one solution to one teen; have teens work in pairs on solutions; or combine, drop, or add other solutions. To match witnesses with solutions, have teens choose their own solutions or draw solutions out of a paper bag. Have teens create a character or characters who offer the solution. For example, teens can portray a police officer, crisis center counselor, employment center director, or a parent of a victim of gang violence.
    - *Recorder:* Select one teen to take notes of proceedings on the newsprint or chalkboard and present a review of recommendations.
  - *Procedure for the hearing:*

- The chairperson will call the hearing to order, announce the purpose of the hearing, and state the order in which the witnesses will testify. (Write these tasks on paper for the teen playing this role.)
  - Each witness will be called and permitted a set amount of time to present a statement, followed by questions from the legislators.
  - The chairperson will be the first to question the witness, followed by each of the other legislators. However, a legislator may interrupt to ask a question or make a comment at any time during the hearing.
  - To stay within the time set for the hearing, the witnesses' presentations will be limited to one minute and the legislators' questions will be limited to three minutes. (You may want to assign a timekeeper.)
  - After the witnesses have been heard, the legislators will take about ten minutes to review the testimony, discuss the problem, and make recommendations on what their next steps will be.
3. Have teens prepare for the hearing.
- Tell the witnesses:
    - Read the solutions and prepare what you will say to persuade the legislators that yours is an effective way to solve the problem of gangs.
    - Use *The Gang* poster to show how your solution deals with the problem you defined. (For example, gangs target young people who are doing poorly in school, so tutoring programs can help these children and teens do better in school and be less vulnerable to the appeal of gangs.)
    - Give your name and the name of your group.
    - Tell the legislators why your solution is important and ask them for their support.
  - Tell the legislators (and the recorder) to read Handout 1: *Solutions to the Problem of Gangs*. Also give this group a three- by five-inch card with this information: "Advice to communities on solving the complex problem of gangs: Coordinate any solutions with the *whole* community. Involve people in schools, youth workers, existing community centers, parents, police, courts, religious leaders, and the business community. The goal is to help rebuild families and community."
  - If you have invited a town or city council member, have him or her explain what the community is doing about the problem of gangs and suggest questions the legislators might ask the witnesses.

### 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 an issue in their community. Surveys are a great way to figure out the issues people care about. Once the group has identified issues, discussions can focus on how an issue can evolve into a service-learning project.

Part 2 of Session 18 will involve all participants in a legislative hearing about proposed solutions to the gang problem.

## P A R T

## 2

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

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

## STEP D

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Legislative Hearing Simulation
- Debriefing



45 MINUTES

## Hold the Legislative Hearing

1. Conduct the legislative hearing using the procedures described in Step C.
2. Circulate to assist teens during the legislative hearing.
  - Remind them of their roles and responsibilities.
  - Keep the hearing on track, watch the time, and remind teens to keep to the time limits.
  - Help the recorder capture the key points being made.
3. Follow the order of events in the legislative hearing:
  - Chairperson calls hearing to order and announces the sequence of witnesses.
  - Witnesses present their solutions (each witness gets one minute to present his or her position).
  - Legislators question witnesses and witnesses answer questions (three minutes per witness).
  - When all witnesses have been heard, the legislators discuss the testimony and decide which solutions they want to choose.

**Note:** While the legislators discuss and decide, the teens who acted as witnesses sit quietly without participating in the discussion. Witnesses will have a chance to comment during the debriefing. (Legislators should have five minutes to decide.)

  - The chairperson then announces the decision to all—including the witnesses.
4. Debrief the activity.
  - Ask the teens to step out of their roles.
  - Discuss the facts and arguments presented on the topic.
  - Discuss teens' views of the activity itself.
  - Have the CRP comment on the solutions and the process.
  - Discuss any comments and questions the teens offer.

**STEP E****TEACHING STRATEGY**

## ■ Journal Writing



10 MINUTES

**Reflection**

1. Relate the session to teens' lives.
  - Ask teens which of the solutions they presented and discussed they think they could work on to help their community.
  - Are there any solutions that they feel deserve a larger audience (such as the city council, county council, etc.)? Will any of the solutions result in real change?
2. Turn learning into action.
  - Write their suggested projects on the newsprint or chalkboard.
  - To get teens thinking about possible service-learning projects related to this session, ask them what they think would be the most effective way of sharing this information with key decision makers. Examples could include writing up the ideas they think are most effective in dealing with gangs and sending them to the city or county council, drafting a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, and arranging a field trip to deliver their ideas in person.
  - Consult Sessions 9–11 for additional ideas.
  - If this session has sparked special interest among teens and they are interested in doing a short service-learning project (of approximately two hours or less) related to this session, consult the Introduction in Volume One for “Easy Steps to a Service-learning Project.”
  - 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 18.
  - 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 teens if they 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 the teens something tangible and provides them with a connection to previous sessions.



## HANDOUT 1

### Solutions to the Problem of Gangs

1. *Keep young people in school.* Find ways to help at-risk youth stay in school. These include developing curricula that are interesting and relevant to young people at risk, starting afterschool and weekend tutoring programs, and reducing truancy.
2. *Teach young people strategies for saying no to joining a gang.* These involve assertion and refusal skills, which young people can learn in schools and recreation centers as well as from adult and older teen mentors.
3. *Create useful, meaningful jobs for young people.* Young people need jobs with a future, and they need to be able to learn the skills to get and keep those jobs. Business owners should help us with this.
4. *Start community-wide prevention efforts.* We need graffiti clean-ups, Neighborhood Watch programs, and citizen/police liaison programs. It's everyone's job to be part of the solution, and we can find a way for all our citizens to help.
5. *Create more and better recreation options.* Young people need challenging and interesting things to do to replace the excitement and adventure of gang activity. Give our youth a broad range of activities including sports, art, music, and job training.
6. *Stricter laws and law enforcement are the answer.* We need to punish gang members with tougher penalties. Treat these young lawbreakers as adults: put them in adult jails and give them longer terms. Consider passing laws such as drug-free zones and curfews.



7. *Our troubled young people need mentors.* Growing up poor and without a father is tough—young men and women need time, attention, and caring from the men in our community. Families can help too; they can open their doors to young people at risk, providing healthy role models and demonstrating good work habits and other life skills.
8. *Help gangs solve their disputes without violence.* Don't let gangs continue to shoot out their differences, killing each other and innocent bystanders. Let's find mediators to help them resolve their differences. (The mediation process involves impartial third parties who help people in conflicts to discuss and resolve their problems themselves.)
9. *Gang membership is not an either-or situation.* Support ex-gang members in setting up youth-directed groups to work with at-risk kids of all ages. This will meet many of the needs now met by gangs and help draw kids away from gang membership. This can take time, however.
10. *We need to set up an emergency hotline.* We need to start and staff a hotline to report gang behavior and the location of drug houses and to control rumors.

**JOURNAL****Session 18**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I learned

---

---

The hardest thing about this session was

---

---

The best thing about this session was

---

---

One thing I observed about the group was

---

---

One thing I observed about myself was

---

---

Additional information I would need to approach a policymaker is

---

---

I'd also like to share my opinion with a policymaker about these issues:

---

---