

A person wearing a dark jacket is shown from the chest down, holding a handgun in their right hand. The background is a snowy, industrial environment with a large, arched structure and a bright light source. The overall tone is dark and gritty.

UNDERSTANDING

Youth & Gangs



Ministry of
Education



SAFER
SCHOOLS
TOGETHER

Understanding Youth and Gangs

Introduction

British Columbia is committed to ensuring that each child in our province feels safe and educated about gangs and the dangers of becoming involved in gang-associated behaviour. Gangs have a negative impact on communities throughout the province. The violence associated with gangs goes beyond where you live, your family background and financial means. The safety and well-being of citizens are compromised and even threatened by the presence of gangs that often involve youth. It is important to raise awareness with youth, educators and families to prevent young people from becoming involved in a gang lifestyle.

This resource provides five lesson plans that culminate in a final project. The lessons help youth:

- Gain a better understanding of gangs
- Differentiate between the myths and realities associated with the gang lifestyle
- Understand the dangers of becoming involved in drug lines (dial-a- doping)
- Gain an understanding of the role of girls in gangs
- Recognize warning signs of gang involvement as well as positive coping strategies

The lessons complement the End Gang Life resources developed by the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit BC (CFSEU). These resources address how to prevent youth gang involvement and how to get help. Additional valuable information is provided about gangs, drugs, and crime prevention for youth, families and members of the broader community. <https://www.cfseu.bc.ca/end-gang-life/>

The lessons in this resource are aligned to the BC's Physical and Health Education Curriculum as well as the Core Competencies.

Note: The depth and complexity of the approach in dealing with topics and the ages of the audience need to be considered by the teacher. Some of the lessons may trigger students who have experienced trauma. It is important to monitor your students' behaviour throughout the lesson.

LESSON ONE: WHAT IS A GANG?

Time Allotment: 80 minutes

Introduction: Youth gangs consist of anti-social youth coming together to engage in criminal behaviour to enhance their reputations, claim territory or seek financial gain. Two or more individuals must be involved to meet the definition of a gang. There is a hierarchy with leaders at the core who are deeply committed along with peripheral players.

Small-Group Activity: In groups of 3-4, students will brainstorm the definitions for the following questions and draw a brain map with the definition of gang in the center. Once completed, go over the answers.

Q. How would you define a gang?	<i>A gang is defined as being a group of three or more persons that plan and carry out crime for profit (money).</i>
Q. How do gangs identify themselves?	<i>Gang members may identify through a common name, symbols, colours, hand signs, clothing brands or tattoos.</i>
Q. What do gang members look like?	<i>Gang members are from any race, culture or social-economic group.</i>
Q. Why would someone join a gang?	<i>The goal of joining a gang is to make money through illegal activities using violence and intimidation</i>
Q. What do you think the average age is of a gang member?	<i>In BC, half of the gang members are under the age of 33, and some as young as 15.</i>
Q. If you know someone being pressured / recruited who could go to for help and support?	<i>Tell a trusted adult; teacher, principal, vice-principal, counsellor, coach etc.</i>

Journal Reflection: Students write a one-page journal reflection based on the following questions.

What is your takeaway from this activity, what stood out for you, were you surprised by anything?

Think of a trusted adult you would go to inside the school and an adult outside the school that you would go to for assistance.

Why do you think youth may want to be a part of gang activity?

Exit Ticket:

Have students write down one thing they would like to learn about gangs in the next module.

LESSON TWO: MYTHS AND REALITIES OF GANGS

Time allotment: 80 minutes

Activity: Create a T-chart with Myths and Realities. Pose the question to student “What are some common myths and realities of gangs” write down their answers accordingly.

Large Group Activity: Delegate one side of the room for Myths and the other side for Realities. Read the following statements and have students move to the side of the room they believe represents the statement (either myth or reality).

MYTH	REALITY
You'll make lots of money, have expensive cars, cool gadgets and be powerful.	Most gang members don't "own" anything. You'll either be arrested, injured, or killed. Your cars, property, drugs, and money will be taken by other gang members or seized by the police.
Someone will always have your back and you'll be protected.	Gang members are driven by greed. Members within groups often kill each other over trivial things. Gang leaders always take the biggest cut, with junior members left to fight for the scraps.
You'll be able to protect your family from a gang.	Other gangsters don't care where you are or who you are with when they decide to shoot you. It could be in a public place, while you're with your friends or at home when you're with your family. Gang violence puts everyone at risk.
You'll be free to do whatever you want.	You'll have no freedom at all, and you have to do whatever your gang leader wants.
Once kids join a gang there's no hope for them.	With early family, school, and police intervention, a youth can leave the gang without serious consequences. The key is coordinated and collaborative intervention as soon as warning signs appear.

Small-Group Activity: In groups of 3-4, students will create a poster depicting one of the above myths/realities as previously discussed. Students are encouraged to be creative with drawings etc. [This could also be an independent activity as well].

Exit Ticket:

Have students write down one myth and reality that surprised them.

LESSON THREE: DRUG LINES (DIAL-A-DOPER)

Time allotment: 80 minutes

Introduction: Have CFSEU's definition of a dial-a-doper on the screen. "A dial-a-doper (dialer) is an individual who delivers drugs to specific locations day or night. A dialer is typically a teenager or young adult who has access to a vehicle". This is typically the first step into criminal gang activity.

Small-Group Activity: In groups of 3-4, students will brainstorm the answers for the following questions. Once completed, go over their responses to ensure understanding.

Question: What could be signs that someone is involved in a drug line (dial-a-doping operation)?

- Unexplained cash (large sums of cash, usually small bills)
- Digital scales (for weighing drugs)
- Multiple phones
- Small baggies (used for packaging the drugs)
- Claims to have a legitimate job but cannot produce a paystub
- Associates with negative peers/known dial-a-dopers
- May have a vehicle that may belong to them, their parents, another gang member or a rental company.

Question: How do you think someone gets recruited to a drug line (dial-a-doping operation)?

- Recruiting may be done through friends, family members, social media or occasionally by force.

Question: How does a drug line (dial-a-doping operation) work?

- DRUG PRODUCTION
 - Manufacturing – illegal drugs are usually produced, grown or manufactured mainly for recreational purposes
 - Cutting – how illicit drugs are diluted
 - Packaging – typically in small baggies for distribution
- DRUG TRAFFICKING
 - Drug user calls to order drugs
 - Some drug line (dial-a-doper) drivers receive orders directly, most work 10-12-hour shifts. Other calls go through a line boss, if this occurs, they relay orders to a designated vehicle to deliver drugs.
- DRUG DELIVERY
 - Drugs are delivered to a location for payment
 - Drug money is delivered to a stash house where weapons, drugs and money are hidden

Question: Who might you seek support to help someone who is becoming involved in a drug line (dial-a-doping operation)?

- School principal, vice-principal, counsellor, coach, youth care worker or another trusted adult.
- Anonymous online reporting tool for students. *erase* | report it "If you see something, say something, we will do something" <https://erasereportit.gov.bc.ca/>

Journal Reflection: Students write a one-page journal reflection based on the following question.

Write about a real or hypothetical friend you care about who is involved in a drug line (dial-a-doping operation). Write about how you feel and how you would try to prevent that person from participating in dial-a-doping.

Exit Ticket:

On a post-it note, have students individually write down the name of one positive role model they have in their life and stick it to the door on their way out of class.



RCMP

LESSON FOUR: GIRLS IN GANGS

Time allotment: 80 minutes

Introduction: Females have a role in gang-associated activity and aren't immune to the violence that accompanies the lifestyle. The reasons females become involved in gang-associated behaviour does not differ significantly from why males become involved in gangs.

Small-Group Activity: *Know – Wonder – Learn (KWL)*

In this lesson we will start with a KWL assignment. Have groups of 3 - 4 students create a three-column KWL chart on poster paper.

Groups will spend approximately 15 minutes writing down what they know about females in gangs in column one. In the second column, have students write down what they wonder about female involvement in gang activity, leaving the third column for later.

Engage the students in a discussion about what they know and want to know.

Show the video - End Gang Life Module 2 Myths: as a gangster's girlfriend/wife you'll have everything you want & girls and women aren't allowed to join gangs.

<https://www.gangprevention.ca/youth/resources/myths-gangster%E2%80%99s-girlfriend-wife-you%E2%80%99ll-have-everything-you-want-girls-and-women-are>

After viewing the video, the students complete the third column on their KWL chart and share their perspectives with the class.

The teacher will share the following information to ensure students have a clear understanding of female involvement in gang activity:

- Females are involved in gang-affiliated activity in the following ways:
 - May be used to pass information and messages along to other individuals affiliated with the gang
 - Get used as 'Mules' transporting drugs and weapons from one area to another
 - Showered with high-end materials such as jewelry, handbags and expensive vacations to keep them involved in the lifestyle
 - Receive other incentives such as expensive hair salon sessions, cosmetics enhancements and tattoos

- Females involved in gang violence are also more likely to have sex-related health issues than non-gang members.

Journal Reflection: Students write a one-page journal reflection based on the following questions.

Describe how Brianna became involved in the gang lifestyle?

What was the impact of Brianna's lifestyle on her mom?

What stood out to you in the video?

What are some positive activities one can do at school or in the community that would make them less likely to join a gang?

Exit Ticket:

What is one thing that you learned about females involved in gangs? OR what is something you still wonder about females in gangs?



LESSON FIVE: WARNING SIGNS OF GANGS

Time allotment: 80 minutes

Introduction: A warning sign is anything that increases the chance that a person will become involved with a gang. Generally, the greater the number of warning signs present, the higher the chance of gang involvement.

Large Group Activity: *Four Corners*

The teacher posts four charts in each corner of the room. Each chart will have one of the following titles:

1. Key Positive Characteristics
2. Positive Connections and Activities
3. Key Warning Signs Related to Gang Involvement
4. Other Warning Signs

Divide the students into four groups. Each group is initially assigned to one of the four corners to brainstorm ideas related to the specific topic. After five minutes, groups rotate to the next corner of the room and add anything they think is missing. Once students are back to their original starting point, they present the findings to the class.

The teacher will add anything that may be missing or needs clarification as part of the broader class discussion.

1. Key Positive Characteristics
 - High parental support/ involvement
 - Consistent parenting
 - Spending time with friends who are not involved in aggressive or criminal behaviour
 - Highly involved and committed to school – high expectations from teachers
 - Healthy relationships with peers
2. Positive Connections and Activities
 - Displaying empathy and understanding for others
 - Positive coping strategies
 - Involved in activities such as sports, volunteering, community groups etc.
3. Key Warning Signs Related to Gang Involvement
 - Spending time with negative peer groups or gang-involved peers
 - Rule-breaking, impulsive or aggressive behaviour leading to police involvement
 - Attitudes and beliefs that align with anti-social, criminal, or violent behaviour
 - Poor parental involvement, supervision and discipline
 - Multiple phones, especially disposable phones or burner phones
 - Unexplained cash
 - Being away from home for long hours without reasonable explanations
 - Similar jewelry or tattoos amongst friends
 - Weapon possession or use

4. Other Warning Signs

- Poor school performance
- Low commitment to school
- Presence of neighbourhood gang activity
- High crime neighbourhoods/environments
- Mental or emotional difficulties (e.g. anxiety, depression, trauma)

Journal Reflection: Students write a one-page journal reflection based on the following question:

If you were a parent, how would you make sure your child stayed away from gang associated behaviour?

What strategies would you utilize to ensure they lived a positive and healthy lifestyle?

Exit Ticket:

What is one thing you learned about gangs and warning signs?



END OF THE UNIT PROJECT

Gang Life Storyboard Assignment

Have the students create a storyboard that tells a tale about a person or group of people that have endured the pressures of gang life. This story must be based on lessons learned regarding the gang lifestyle.

Questions to consider:

- What is a gang?
- What are the myths and realities of gang life?
- What are some signs of dial-a-doping?
- How are females involved in gangs?
- What are the warning signs of gangs?

Based on the questions above, students will need to plan how they are going to tell the story with a series of pictures and short segments of writing that demonstrate their knowledge about gang life. Encourage the students to be as creative as possible while still incorporating information from all of the five lessons.

