

## Addressing Concerns About Violence and Gangs

Many families are increasingly concerned about children becoming involved in violence and gangs.

The following are some research-based recommendations for addressing these serious issues.

- ▶ **Strong and emotionally positive relationships with parents and family members are among the best protections against children and teens becoming involved with violence or gangs.**
  - Families can help prevent problems by spending quality time with their children.
  - Letting your children know how much you love and care about them will make a tremendous difference.
- ▶ **When parents are actively involved with their children and build relationships with their children's friends, they are more aware of risks and early signs of involvement with gangs or violence.**
  - It is often helpful to encourage teens to participate in activities that will help them prepare for a positive future, such as career planning and skills development programs.
  - Young people are less likely to become involved in gangs and violence if they feel hope and see exciting opportunities ahead.
- ▶ **Sharing traditional experiences together, such as participating in land-based and community activities, is invaluable.**
  - Youth who have strong connections to their culture and the land are less likely to become involved in gangs and violence.
- ▶ **Parents should try to be aware of where their children are and what they are doing.**
  - Parents can have a meaningful influence just by asking their children questions and showing they care.
  - It is especially important to discuss any changes in behaviour, or the use of gang hand signals, symbols, language, or gang-related graffiti on notebooks or arms.

- ▶ **Get help if you are concerned.**
  - Speak with a trusted friend or family member to get advice or support.
  - Reach out to the school or a community agency to prevent problems from becoming more dangerous.
  - Do not hesitate to ask for assistance if you need it.