

DATE

To the parent or guardian of:

NAME

NUMBER STREET

Fort Pierce, FL ZIPCODE

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are receiving this notification because your child may be associating with a criminal street gang. Please know that this notification is not intended to accuse you or your child of any illegal activity. We are concerned that your child is in danger.

This situation is serious and the consequences are grave. Children and young adults in Fort Pierce are losing their lives to gangs, either by being killed or by receiving lifelong prison sentences. We are offering help and asking for your cooperation so we can all avoid the tragedy of losing another child.

Florida State Statutes, Chapter 874 provides the following definitions:

Criminal Gang Associate means a person who:

- Admits to criminal gang association; or
- Meets any single defining criterion for criminal gang membership described (below)

Criminal Gang Member is a person who meets two or more of the following criteria:

- Admits to criminal gang membership.
- Is identified as a criminal gang member by a parent or guardian.
- Is identified as a criminal gang member by a documented reliable informant.
- Adopts the style of dress of a criminal gang.
- Adopts the use of a hand sign identified as used by a criminal gang.
- Has a tattoo identified as used by a criminal gang.
- Associates with one or more known criminal gang members.
- Is identified as a criminal gang member by an informant of previously untested reliability and such identification is corroborated by independent information.
- Is identified as a criminal gang member by physical evidence.
- Has been observed in the company of one or more known criminal gang members four or more times.
- Has authored any communication indicating responsibility for the commission of any crime by the criminal gang.

Our officers have received information that qualifies your child as either a gang member or associate according to this law. We will be happy to share this specific information with you, so that you are properly informed to address the concern with your child. If you would like this information, please contact Lieutenant Robert Ridle at 461-3820 extension 5226. He will arrange to meet with you personally, so that this information is kept confidential.

Please understand that our community is extremely concerned with gang violence. City officials, community leaders, pastors, and police have developed a community coalition against gang violence. We have declared that “**gang violence is destroying our community, and this violence will not be tolerated.**” Our plan to address gang violence is *Operation Ceasefire*.

Operation Ceasefire begins with a warning to gang members and associates: “**You have a choice to make: You will either stop the violence that is destroying our community, or you will spend your life in prison.**” The police department will enforce this warning by swiftly responding to any act of gang violence with criminal investigations aimed at holding both the offender and fellow gang members accountable. Additionally, our detectives are conducting proactive investigations aimed at putting dangerous gang members in prison for the longest available sentence.

At the same time, police officers and community leaders will be working together on intervention programs designed to turn our children away from gang activity. This notification letter is one of these efforts. Additionally, a group of local community leaders and pastors have volunteered to mentor parents and children that need help turning away from gang association. I have attached a listing of these mentors with their telephone numbers. Please contact them and ask for help. There is no charge for this service.

Do not believe the myth that it is impossible to leave a gang! There are people in our community that have turned away from gangs, and they are now very successful and well respected.

We prefer to solve this problem through intervention, without making arrests. However, if your child makes the choice to continue involvement with criminal street gangs, we will protect the community by enforcing the law.

You can get additional information about gangs and resources available for assistance on the police department’s website at www.fppd.org.

If you need help, please call one of our volunteer mentors, or call my office directly at (772) 461-3820 extension 5201. If you have information about gangs and want to remain anonymous, and possibly earn a reward, please call Crime Stoppers at (800) 273-8477.

Sincerely,



R. Sean Baldwin
Chief of Police