



# GETTING OUT OF THE GANG

## An Eight Point Strategy

Wiener, V. (1999). *Winning the War Against Youth Gangs: A Guide for Families, Teens, and Communities*.

1. *Appoint a strategist.* A strategist is someone who can identify and answer the basic questions about the youth's gang involvement and come up with ideas to approach the troubled child. The social worker can fulfill this position.
2. *Establish effective communication.* The strategist must be able to build trust with the youth. This involves using effective communication skills and will help to determine future communication styles between the youth and the social worker.
3. *Examine the facts.* Once the strategist has determined the youth is involved in a gang, he or she must discover the reasons for gang membership, the payoff attributed to being in the gang, the nature of the gang activities, and the level of involvement.
4. *Develop a preliminary strategy for resolving the problem.* The plan should help reduce the danger to the youth and identify reasons for the youth to leave the gang.
5. *Implement and fine-tune a long term strategy.* This should achieve several goals including the permanent removal of the threat of harm to youth, identification and resolution of the reasons the youth felt compelled to join a gang, strengthening of healthy family relationships, identify positive alternatives to gang activity, learn effective discipline strategies when needed, and help to guide the youth in planning a long-term future.
6. *Utilize a system of checks and balances.* Get input from those who are not directly involved with the disengagement in order to assess how the intervention is going.
7. *Ask for professional help when needed.* The social worker should be willing to seek out information from other professionals regarding the youth, including mental health professionals, school counselors, or law enforcement.
8. *Employ necessary follow up.* Continue to monitor the youth even after disengagement occurs.