

NEWS RELEASE:



Combating Gang Recruitment in Chicago Public Schools: *Fathers Needed During 1st Week of School*

(Chicago, IL) September 9, 2009 -- The beginning of the school year is always a big event for children – and it is also a big event for street gang recruitment. Elementary and Jr. High School youths are the most vulnerable to being lured into a lifestyle of delinquency, substance abuse, school drop-out and violence. Combating gang recruitment on school grounds by creating “gang-free” zones and providing anti-gang resources are vital to academic success. The simple act of fathers showing up during the first week shields children from non-student gang members and starts the school year off with a safer learning environment.

“These children are at a life-changing cross-road. Research has shown that perhaps the most powerful ‘game changer’ in the lives of children at this age is a dependable, reliable father or father-figure. Be there to share your experiences and answer their questions - if you don’t somebody else will,” said Dr. Karl Schmitt of the Fatherhood Educational Institute (FEI) Advisory Board.

Gang awareness is critical to prevent recruitment. Gangs are fulfilling the powerful role of the father in the lives of father-absent youth. Gangs are using the first week of school to get re-acquainted with their old contacts and to recruit new members.

“Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school, they consistently score lower than average in reading and math, and they are eleven times more likely to exhibit violent behavior. The key to combating gang recruitment is involved fathers,” said attorney Jeffery Leving.

FEI encourages fathers and father-figures to volunteer at schools throughout the year and to take their children to school for the first week of school.

Media contact: Jennifer Whiteside (312) 296-3666; www.fatherhood-edu.org