

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

November 14, 2017

NO.

600-38

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 600-38, dated March 27, 2008

SUBJECT: GANG CRIME

POLICY

Gang crimes shall be given high investigative and intelligence priority. This policy implements directives in accordance with Chapter 61 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Employees have a responsibility to be aware of and collect information regarding gang activity in their area and to forward that information to the Gang Division.

This General Order applies to all employees.

DEFINITIONS

Criminal Street Gang. A group of three or more persons having a common identifying sign, symbol, or leadership and who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities. This definition includes, but is not limited to, adult, juvenile, and transnational criminal street gangs, criminal motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs.

Documentation. An official record of an individual created when information regarding the individual is entered into the HPD *Gang Tracker* database, assigned a sequence number, and approved by Gang Division personnel.

Gang Card. (Also referred to as "Green Card.") An electronic entry into *Gang Tracker* that a law enforcement officer completes on an individual who is suspected of being a *gang member*. Once the Gang Card is approved by the Gang Division, the entry is given a sequence number and the individual is *documented* in *Gang Tracker*.

Gang Crime. A reported incident or crime that occurs or is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with any *criminal street gang*. It is emphasized that all of the gang types included under the definition of a *criminal street gang* should be considered when making a determination whether or not an incident or offense is a *gang crime*.

Gang Intelligence. Information related to gangs, gang membership or association, gang activity, planned or spontaneous responses to gang activity, statistical data related to gangs, and all other data related to gangs.

Gang Member. Any person belonging to or having membership status in a *criminal street gang*. For HPD purposes, an individual is considered a gang member only when that person's name is given a sequence number and *documented* in the department's *Gang Tracker* database.

Gang Tracker. The Houston Police Department multijurisdictional electronic database used to document gang members in the greater Houston area.

contains gang information such as gang names and overviews, member names, aliases, photographs, tattoos, addresses, and vehicles.

1 GANG TRACKER DATABASE USER TRAINING

All employees who enter into or retrieve information from the *Gang Tracker* database shall complete intelligence-based training at least once every two years. Employees shall take the online version of this course but shall obtain the preauthorization code and specific directives from the Gang Division. Upon completion of the intelligence-based course, all certificates shall be printed and forwarded to the Gang Division and the Training Division's Certification Office to receive credit for the course.

2 RETENTION OF GANG INTELLIGENCE

All gang intelligence is the property of the Houston Police Department. Except as authorized by this General Order, no individual or division of the department shall retain gang intelligence that has not been entered into *Gang Tracker*.

An exception to this is information relative to an active criminal investigation for which an incident report has been generated. At the conclusion of each investigation, all gang related information shall be forwarded to the Gang Division.

[REDACTED]

However, any information contained in an officer's field notes that was gathered during the course of an investigation shall be retained and made available to the prosecutor upon request. The dissemination and purging of gang data is strictly controlled by state and federal law.

3 GANG MEMBER SUBMITTAL PROCESS

When seeking to have an individual *documented* as a gang member, employees shall utilize the *Gang Tracker* by entering the information directly into *Gang Tracker* via the Gang Card entry system.

[REDACTED]

Gang Database Criteria

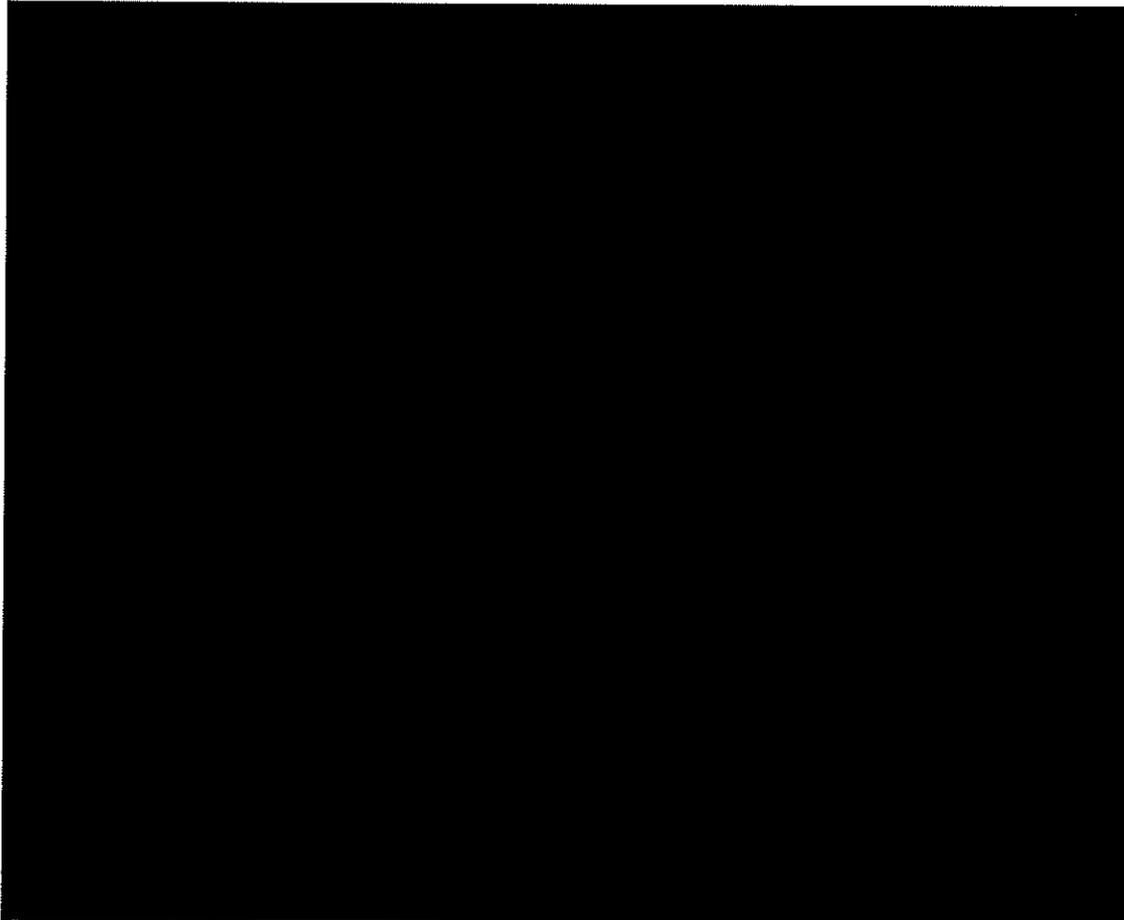
Employees shall follow state laws when *documenting* a criminal street gang member. For an individual to be *documented* as a gang member, gang intelligence must satisfy the criteria listed in either item (a) or (b) below.

- a. Information on the individual must be relevant to the identification of an organization reasonably suspected of involvement in criminal activity and consist of the following:

1. [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED]

- b. If the criterion listed in item (a) above is not met, then information on the individual must consist of at least two of the following:



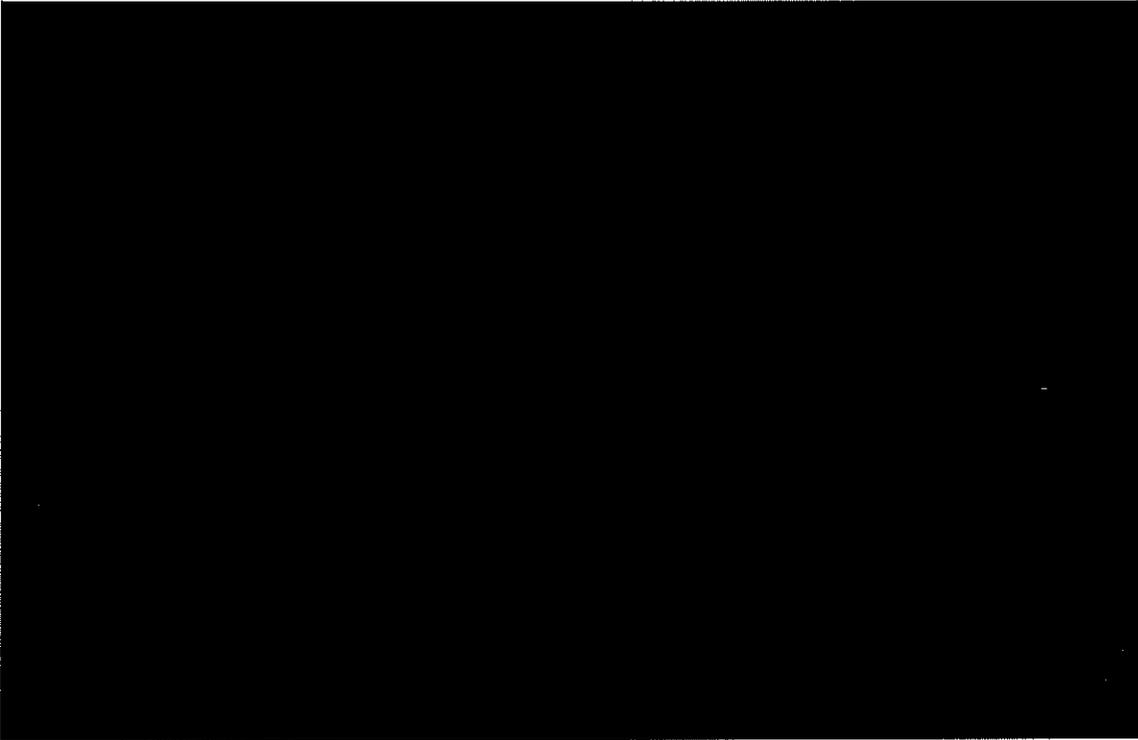
Employees shall obtain and enter into *Gang Tracker* as much information as possible regarding the identity of the individual, including aliases, telephone numbers, places of employment, current address, and photographs in order to aide in the investigation and identification of criminal street gang members and gang crimes.

Gang Card Review Process



Retention Schedule for Gang Member Information

The Gang Division is responsible for purging both adult and juvenile information from the *Gang Tracker* database.

**4 GANG INTELLIGENCE SUBMITTAL PROCESS**

Except for gang member identifications, gang intelligence gathered by employees shall be submitted to the Gang Division via an incident report titled "Investigation Gang." Upon receipt, a Gang Division intelligence officer shall review the report, and when appropriate shall contact the DGU supervisor at the affected patrol station or investigative division. The intelligence officer shall relay the information submitted to the concerned DGU or investigative division for the follow-up investigation.

Each follow-up investigation shall include contact with the submitting officer. When the investigation is complete, the investigator or DGU officer shall submit a thorough supplemental report. After review by the DGU supervisor or the investigative division's gang liaison officer, the intelligence report shall be submitted to the Gang Division.

Gang intelligence gathered by DGU officers or division investigators shall be reviewed by the DGU supervisor or the investigative division's gang liaison officer and submitted to the Gang Division.

NOTE: Time sensitive or critical gang intelligence shall be immediately submitted to the Gang Division via an incident report. In addition, the submitting officer shall notify the DGU or Gang Division supervisors who shall make any other necessary notifications.

5 GANG CRIME INCIDENT REPORTING

The incident reporting system requires employees to indicate when an incident is gang related. Objective evidence in coding an incident or offense as a gang crime includes, but is not limited to, the following:



If facts indicate the incident or offense may have been motivated, committed, or directed by a criminal street gang, the incident report shall be coded as a gang crime by indicating a "YES" response under the offense title mandatory screen. The Gang Division shall automatically receive a copy of all such coded reports. In addition, officers shall select all appropriate concerned divisions to receive a report when completing incident reports and supplements.

When in doubt about whether or not an incident shall be coded as a gang crime, officers shall consult with the Gang Division. If Gang Division personnel are not available and there is reason to believe the incident may be gang related, officers shall code the report as a gang crime.

6 OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Each patrol officer shall be able to recognize or identify:

- a. Gang graffiti.
- b. Indications of gang membership (e.g., tattoos, hand signs, clothing).
- c. Signs of gang involvement at crime scenes.
- d. Individuals who may be gang members (according to established criteria).

Each patrol officer shall:

- e. Submit completed Gang Cards electronically to the *Gang Tracker*.
- f. Submit gang intelligence to the Gang Division via an incident report titled "Investigation Gang."
- g. Use the *Gang Tracker* for criminal justice purposes only. When accessing *Gang Tracker* information, employees shall NOT allow suspects or other citizens to view the information even if it is the citizen's or suspect's own information.

Patrol officers are expected to familiarize themselves with:

- h. Their DGU officers and how they can be contacted.
- i. Known neighborhood gang hangouts and gang influenced areas.
- j. How to code gang related incident reports.

All officers shall actively seek to identify and suppress gang related activities. Officers' actions shall be proactive in nature and include:

- k. Efforts to identify individuals involved in gang related activities.
- l. Observing and interviewing individuals displaying behavior common to gang members (e.g., using gang lingo, symbols, or signs, having gang tattoos, frequenting gang hangouts, or involvement in gang fights).
- m. Acting on gang intelligence and reasonable suspicion that illegal gang activities are about to occur, and intervening and suppressing those activities.

7 DIVISIONAL GANG UNIT (DGU) RESPONSIBILITIES

Because gang intelligence is a priority, each patrol division commander shall have a DGU and it shall be permanently staffed with at least one sergeant and two police officers. DGU staffing should be adjusted appropriately to address the demands of the community served. DGU personnel shall not be assigned alternate or additional duties except in justifiable staffing emergencies. Commanders shall have authority with regard to their DGU's staffing level, day-to-day enforcement strategies, and overall tactical deployment, but shall ensure that sufficient DGU personnel are performing the below listed DGU responsibilities.

DGU officers and supervisors shall:

- a. Notify a Gang Division supervisor when becoming involved in long-term investigations so that deconflictions regarding persons, vehicles, telephone numbers, etc. may be conducted in order to avoid duplication of effort by internal and external investigative personnel.
- b. Submit all gang intelligence via an incident report titled "Investigation Gang."

- c. Review all Gang Cards submitted by patrol officers and follow established procedures.
- d. Attend Gang Awareness Networking Group (G.A.N.G.) meetings held by the Gang Division.
- e. Notify a supervisor in the Gang Division (or Command Center if after hours) of all gang related significant events (e.g., drive-by shootings, planned gang fights, major investigations).
- f. Refer all media requests for gang related information to the Gang Division commander.
- g. Provide complete and current information on gangs, gang members, and gang activities to their division by addressing roll calls regularly and providing gang intelligence and wanted gang member bulletins.
- h. Assist patrol officers in gang investigations.
- i. Regularly train patrol officers assigned to their respective areas on gang criteria and how to properly enter gang member information into the *Gang Tracker*.
- j. Seek approval from the Gang Division commander for all requests for speaking engagements or attending meetings or events for which gang related incidents are an issue.
- k. Assist investigative divisions with follow-up investigations of gang crimes.
- l. Conduct follow-up investigations on gang intelligence submitted by officers and submit the resulting intelligence reports to the Gang Division.
- m. Adhere to the gang and gang member identification criteria set forth by the Gang Division.

8 OTHER INVESTIGATIVE DIVISIONS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Investigative divisions are responsible for:

- a. Follow-up investigations of gang crimes.
- b. Sharing in the responsibility of identifying gang members and associates.
- c. Submitting Gang Cards.

Any division involved in an investigation involving a criminal street gang shall notify the Gang Division and keep them informed of all available intelligence on the gang or gang members. At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator shall provide a thorough report on the results of the investigation to the Gang Division.

Investigators at the scene of a suspected gang crime and needing the assistance of a specialized gang investigator shall contact the appropriate DGU supervisor. The DGU supervisor shall contact an officer as well as a supervisor from the Gang Division. Specialized gang personnel shall be called to the scene of a possible gang crime only by the appropriate DGU supervisor or a supervisor in the Gang Division.

Homicide Division shall determine whether homicides shall be coded as gang crimes. Homicide Division shall maintain statistical data for all gang related homicides. This data shall be submitted to the Gang Division at the first of each month or as requested by the Gang Division.

9 GANG DIVISION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Gang Division Commander

The Gang Division commander shall have authority over the department's efforts against gangs. However, the commander shall comply with Office of Public Affairs' policies.

The Gang Division commander's authority includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Oversight and direction of the department's gang related policy adherence, which may include:
 1. Administrative procedures
 2. Computer programs
 3. Gang crimes offense reporting
 4. Standardization of forms
 5. Statistical reporting
- b. Participation in the development of gang related operations ensuring the:
 1. Accuracy of the gang intelligence.
 2. Coordination with other division or City operations.
 3. Compatibility with the overall citywide gang efforts.
- c. Responsibility for developing, maintaining, and coordinating the department's *Gang Tracker*.
- d. Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of all files and gang related *documentation*.
- e. Conducting periodic on-site inspections of all DGU facilities, files, records, computer databases, equipment, and personnel ensuring compliance with Gang Division standards.

- f. Conducting periodic inspections of the gang files maintained by investigative divisions. A report of the findings of such inspections shall be provided to the appropriate assistant chief.
- g. Serving as the coordinator for all local, state, and federal task force units targeting criminal street gangs.
- h. Ensuring all pertinent intelligence, intervention, and enforcement strategies being conducted by or involving HPD personnel in gang task force configurations are closely monitored.
- i. Serving as the primary liaison and spokesperson in coordination with the Office of Public Affairs to all media agencies concerning requests for any gang related statistics, statements, and general gang interest stories or information.
- j. Serving as the coordinator, director, and final approval authority of all planned gang related tactical and enforcement strategies.
- k. Coordinating and approving gang related training with the Training Division and any outside schooling for officers specifically assigned gang duties.
- l. Coordinating and reviewing all requests by officers to attend, participate, or instruct at the Academy or any outside training school, conference, workshop, or seminar involving gang issues.
- m. Coordinating with the Office of Public Affairs and Juvenile Division in the development of anti-gang education programs and ensuring the programs are offered in conjunction with other department programs.
- n. Ensuring the department's Crime Analysis and Command Center is notified and kept apprised of all major gang related incidents.
- o. Providing the Chief of Police and the Command Staff with timely reports relative to the status of gangs and gang crimes citywide.

Gang Division

The Gang Division serves as the:

- a. Final authority in determining whether an incident or offense, except homicides, shall be coded as a gang crime.
- b. Department's central repository for all gang intelligence.

10 GANG PROGRAMS

When divisions become involved in gang awareness and anti-gang school education programs or any type of public forum regarding gangs, they shall notify the Gang Division commander.

11 RELEASE OF GANG INFORMATION

The Office of Public Affairs shall ensure the public is made aware the department gives all incidents involving gang crimes high investigative priority.

Except as noted below, employees are strictly prohibited from making statements or releasing information regarding any gang information or investigation to anyone who is not a department employee without prior approval from the Gang Division commander.

The release of gang intelligence to other law enforcement agencies may be authorized only by Gang Division classified personnel.

Any release of gang information shall be closely coordinated with the Gang Division and any applicable investigative division. It is imperative that ongoing investigation information is not compromised.

12 RECORDS DIVISION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Records Division shall establish reporting procedures involving gang crimes. Records Division shall ensure all gang crime reports are forwarded to the Gang Division on a regular basis.

13 RELATED GENERAL ORDERS AND REFERENCE MATERIAL

400-22, Keys, Passwords, and Personal Identification Numbers
400-25, Acceptable Use of Computers
700-01, Property/Evidence Control Regulations
800-10, Police Records
Chapter 61, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure



Art Acevedo
Chief of Police