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## Graffiti Abatement Program (GAP)

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Graffiti can be defined as “An inscription or a drawing placed upon property without the property owner’s permission.” Graffiti is gang advertisement –“a newsletter for the streets.” Graffiti is commonly scrawled on walls of public buildings and private properties. It is used to make public announcements about the presence of gangs, their members and their agenda for future criminal activity.



### Materials Used to Apply Graffiti

Materials used to apply graffiti include spray paint, grease pencils, felt-tipped pens, water-based paint, stickers, shoe polish and even crayons.

### Why Does Graffiti Exist?

- Gangs use graffiti in an attempt to intimidate other gangs or members of the community.
- Gangs use graffiti to advertise its name, its territory, its member’s names, names of gangs it is warring against and sometimes even a proposed murder list.
- Graffiti is NOT an artistic expression. Graffiti is not only the malicious destruction of property but it contributes to violence and other crime.

### How Does Graffiti Affect a Neighborhood?

- Graffiti leads to overall psychological and physical decline of a neighborhood.
- Graffiti is vandalism and destruction of property.
- If graffiti is not removed, gang members will interpret this as a sign of low neighborhood pride and they will assume they can control the neighborhood.
- With graffiti, there will be an increase in gang crime and a corresponding decline in property values.

### Removal of Graffiti

- Graffiti should be removed as quickly as possible after its discovery. There is a direct correlation between length of time prior to removal and rate of reoccurrence.
- Before graffiti is removed, at least two color photographs should be taken of the graffiti. If a trail of photographic evidence can be tied to a vandal who has been caught, it may escalate the crime from a misdemeanor to a felony.
- It is recommended that graffiti on private property be removed during early daylight hours by at least two people.

- **Graffiti Removal Tips**

- ✓ The sooner graffiti is removed, the easier it is to clean. Smooth, hard surfaces are the easiest to clean and rough, porous surfaces are the most difficult.
- ✓ For pens on painted wood or metal surfaces, use denatured alcohol or Safety Two.
- ✓ For spray paint on painted wood, concrete or metal surfaces, use denatured alcohol or repaint.
- ✓ For pens or spray paint on unpainted concrete, stucco or aggregate, use Safety Two, then water under pressure with a wire brush.
- ✓ For pens or spray paint on glass or plastic, use a window scraper, then denatured alcohol.
- ✓ When using chemicals to remove graffiti, follow manufacturer's instructions and wear proper protective equipment. Some removers may damage some painted surfaces.
- ✓ When painting over graffiti, attempt to match the background color, if possible. An alternative is to paint a large section of the wall.

## **Graffiti Prevention Tips**

- For exposed concrete walls, consider growing vines or ivy to cover the wall.
- Use dark paint on walled surfaces; graffiti does not show up well against a dark background.
- Plant prickly or spiny shrubs adjacent to walls to discourage access.
- Use graffiti-resistant coatings and protectants on exterior surfaces.

## **Elements of Graffiti Abatement Programs (GAP)**

- Develop a 24-hour hot line to report locations that require graffiti removal.
- Make graffiti removal a priority of local government. Graffiti on public property should be removed as soon as possible upon discovery.
- Initiate a program of volunteers to remove graffiti on both public and private property. Donations of cleaning materials may be solicited from local businesses.
- Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs to become active in graffiti abatement.
- Pass local Graffiti Nuisance Ordinances that require graffiti to be removed from private property promptly. Owners who do not abate graffiti may be fined.
- Provide technical advice on the removal of graffiti.
- Provide power washers for the removal of graffiti.
- Enlist the support of local business associations on the removal of graffiti.
- Pass local legislation or ordinances that hold the parents or legal guardians of minors who are caught writing graffiti responsible for the restitution of property damage. If school property is vandalized, a student may be suspended and/or expelled from school.
- Advertise or promote a Graffiti Abatement Program via the Internet and other local print and broadcast mediums.