

# Risk for Violence on Social Media

Currently, harmful use of social media has led to violence. In order to prevent retaliations, fights, and shootings it is important to monitor and recognize threats on social media and work together to respond to them.

## Monitoring online activity:

- If you have a social media account, you can follow or friend program participants in order to monitor their behavior and those of their friends or rivals on social media.
- There are different types of communication that can spark conflict, but they also occur at different risk levels.

## Different types of social media activity:

Risk Level	Communication Type	Posting Behavior	Description
<b>Low Risk</b>	Self-promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting gang signs</li> <li>• Statuses representing a crew</li> <li>• Bragging and promoting violence</li> <li>• Graffiti</li> </ul>	Bragging about affiliation with gangs or violence in order to gain status, respect, and self-esteem.
<b>Medium Risk</b>	Criminal Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobbing videos</li> <li>• Pictures/videos of drug use</li> <li>• Bragging about crimes</li> <li>• Pictures of cash</li> </ul>	Any content that links the user with illegal activity.
	General Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Somebody gotta die;”</li> <li>• “I’ll give money to the next guy to clap a [rival gang member]”</li> <li>• Crew name with a “K” after it</li> <li>• Trying to meet up for violence (WYA = where you at?)</li> </ul>	Non-specific, ill-planned threats against a rival crew or unnamed person.  Also, when youth get together to fight others and loosely make plans to react.
	Arguing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threads of comments or messages that show back and forth arguing with others and bullying</li> </ul>	Having a public argument with someone that is clearly not a rational discussion or debate but involves aggressive responses, like meet me on the block/come say that to my face/ meet at a certain time, etc.
<b>High Risk</b>	Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling or purchasing guns</li> <li>• Posing with guns/weapons</li> <li>• Posting about carrying a weapon</li> </ul>	Any activity that highlights a youth’s access to weapons.
	Taunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos of beatings</li> <li>• Embarrassing pictures</li> <li>• Pictures on other gang’s turf</li> <li>• Posts of Orders of Protection</li> <li>• “Stop Snitching” posts</li> </ul>	Posting content meant to embarrass, shame, taunt, or intimidate another person.  Reposting/sharing content so that more people can see the violent post.
	Specific Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naming or tagging a person you want to shoot or harm</li> <li>• Sending a death threat to a rival</li> <li>• A specific name with a “K” at the end of it</li> <li>• Posting a picture of a person to target for violence</li> <li>• Naming a specific location for violence (certain blocks, party, housing development, etc)</li> </ul>	Targeted, well-planned, and intentional threats against a specific person.

\*All of the low and medium risk behaviors have the ability to turn into High Risk activity and should therefore be closely monitored when discovered, especially when content is reposted or shared by lots of other people.



### Risk level guidelines:

- **High-Risk:** Content that shows the participant has easy access to weapons, is life threatening, dangerous, includes specific threats against a person, location, or crew, displays violence like videos of previous fights (these often trigger retaliations when they get posted and reposted), or suggests a crime is about to happen.
- **Medium-Risk:** Content that is likely to cause a serious argument, but no one is in physical danger yet, discusses or shows drugs, cash, mobbing, brags about crime, recruits people for a fight, promotes or shows youth drinking or using drugs (especially if the teen is alone).
- **Low-Risk:** Content that is mean or offensive in a general way, is attention-seeking, or promotes crews or groups.

### What you should do once you find an online conflict:

Follow the progress of the comments and make sure they do not escalate in seriousness.

Use the risk level chart and guidelines to help determine the risk and use your best judgment when deciding if violence is possible.

Once you make a decision about the post, here are some options of how to intervene:

- Monitor the post to make sure it is not escalating.
  - For example, are people responding to the post, is it getting reposted?
- If violence is about to happen or involves a participant that is involved in an ongoing conflict, you should tell a Violence Interrupter and Outreach Worker on staff what might happen.
- Tell other people that might be near or going to a threatened location so they can avoid the area, especially participants.
  - Posts about bringing a gun to a party.
  - Posts that they are carrying a weapon and are traveling somewhere.
  - Posts that a certain block will be hot.
  - Posts about mobbing/ fights in a specific area.
- Show them that getting in a fight online or posting harmful content can mess up their plans.
- If someone is posting about involvement in the criminal justice system (court cases, arrests, etc.), remind the youth that this can affect their future (ex: employment, school admission).
- Save the posts/videos/tweets with a screen shot and keep a record of who is fighting with whom in order to fully understand the dynamics between individuals. These records may come in handy.
- Many youth use private messaging to provoke others and these threats might not be obvious, so you should tell youth not to friend rival crew members or just block them.
- If you feel the situation is beyond your abilities to intervene and think there is a strong chance of violence, call 911 for help, it might save a life.

