



## **State of New Jersey**

### **STATE PAROLE BOARD**

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# **Media Release**

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## **Parole Officers Teach Hospital Staff to Read Patients' Gang Tattoos** ***Parole Officers Give Secrets to Recognizing Gang Membership,*** ***Preventing Violence***

CAMDEN – Nurses, emergency room staff and other medical professionals today learned aspects of violence prevention that are rarely thought about outside the medical field: How to determine if patients in a hospital may be gang members, and prevent an altercation by keeping rival gang members away from each other.

The lesson was provided by parole officers from the New Jersey State Parole Board's Street Gang Unit, to staff at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. The half-day training session is part of a statewide violence education effort, launched by the New Jersey Hospital Association and the State Parole Board, under the banner of Governor Corzine's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods.

"The NJHA and its members are stepping up to proactively address the street gang presence in New Jersey, and they should be commended," said Sergeant Herman Rinaldi, Field Coordinator for the State Parole Board's Street Gang Unit. "This gang awareness training will help medical professionals prevent violence and respond to today's realities, while continuing to provide for all patients."

"We know that no community is immune to gang violence. Our patients and staff are placed in vulnerable situations when faced with the potential for violence in our emergency departments, and it is our responsibility to provide them with the tools to help them provide safe patient care," said Mary Ditri, NJHA's director of professional practice.

The parole officers' presentation was provided by Rinaldi along with Senior Parole Officer Cheryl Annese and Senior Parole Officer John Larkin, all of the State Parole Board's Street Gang Unit. The training centered on identifiers that medical staff are most likely to see while treating an injured patient: Tattoos.

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“Tattoos can be completely innocent, and it would not be fair to be suspicious of a law-abiding citizen just because of their appearance,” Rinaldi said. “That being said, if someone has a pit bull tattoo with the number ‘232’ he is identifying himself as a member of the Brick City Brim set of the Bloods, and is placing himself in real danger from other gang members if that is not the case.”

The parole officers said one key to recognizing gang-related tattoos is not in looking for particular images, but in looking for numbers. The Sex Money Murder set of the Bloods uses the number 252, for example. Certain gangs use the number 18, and a member may have a “1” on one arm and an “8” on the other.

“Two people may be rivals even if they belong to the same gang. Right now, groups of Bloods are considered the major source of violence against other groups of Bloods,” Rinaldi said.

To avoid violence either in the hospital or after patients leave, the parole officers advised medical staff to keep any patients who may be gang members separate to the greatest extent possible. They suggested hospitals talk with their ambulance providers, to notify the hospital before the arrival of patients who may have been injured in a gang-related incident.

The State Parole Board’s Street Gang Unit supervises about 500 parolees statewide who are identified as gang members. The officers’ interaction with these parolees gives them a unique, street-level view of the ways gang membership affects individuals and communities, and the ways gangs attempt to lure young people.

The Street Gang Unit conducts gang education and recognition training for hospitals, universities, public schools and municipal police departments, based on up-to-the-minute information collected during their everyday duties. The Street Gang Unit also provides Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) programming for elementary school students.

Founded in 1918 and based in Princeton, the New Jersey Hospital Association provides its 115 members with advocacy, data, information, research and education.

The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) is New Jersey’s lead reentry agency, and works to ensure ex-prisoners return to society as law-abiding citizens. As required by law, appointed Parole Board Members and staff conduct more than 20,000 hearings per year, solicit input from victims and decide parole matters. SPB’s sworn parole officers supervise more than 15,000 offenders statewide. In addition, SPB is New Jersey’s primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. SPB officers are also active partners with multiple Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies and task forces. Finally, SPB’s Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit and private agencies to connect ex-prisoners with vocational, mental health and related services, targeted to break the cycle and risk of crime.

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