

Victim Witness Services

The Merced County District Attorney's Victim Witness Assistance Program can assist you and your family in dealing with the effects associated with being a victim or witness of gang crime. Here are a few of the many services provided through the Victim Witness Assistance Program:

Emergency Assistance and Referrals:

Meeting immediate needs of victims or witnesses such as food, clothing, and lodging; and directing victims to other community resources which can offer assistance and comfort.

Orientation to Criminal Justice System:

Explaining the criminal justice system including information about individual cases.

Restitution Information: Helping to obtain court ordered restitution from offenders.

Court Support: If and when you are required to appear in court, you will be accompanied by a victim/witness advocate if desired.

Financial Assistance: Assisting the victim in submitting the necessary application forms to receive compensation for eligible costs. Losses which may be covered include:

- * **Funeral/Burial**
- * **Counseling**
- * **Medical/Dental**
- * **Wage/Income**
- * **Job Retraining**
- * **Replacement of Property**

ARE YOU A VICTIM OR WITNESS OF A GANG CRIME?

If you or a loved one have been a victim of a crime or witnessed a gang crime, the Merced County District Attorney's Victim Witness Assistance Program may be able to help you. The Program understands the complexity of gang related crimes and the effects it can have on victims or witnesses and their families. We are committed to providing you and your family with information and services.

Merced County District Attorney's
Victim Witness Assistance Unit

550 W. Main Street

Merced, CA 95340

(209) 385-7385

WE CAN HELP

There are many community resources available for Merced County youth. Such programs as the Boys and Girls Club, Law Enforcement Explorer programs and activity leagues give kids a safe haven from the streets. For a list of many programs designed especially for kids, log on to the Merced County District Attorneys website at www.co.merced.ca.us/da.

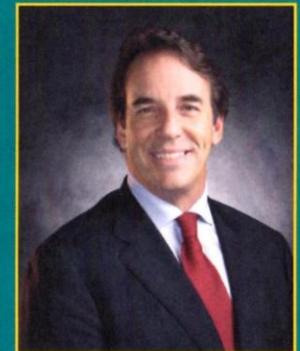


Fight Gangs Keep your Kids in School

A Message from the District Attorney

As District Attorney, I know the best crime prevention tool is still a solid education. Keeping your kids in school at least through high school is the single greatest contribution you can make to their future.

Help us help you
keep your kids
in school, off the
streets and out
of gangs.

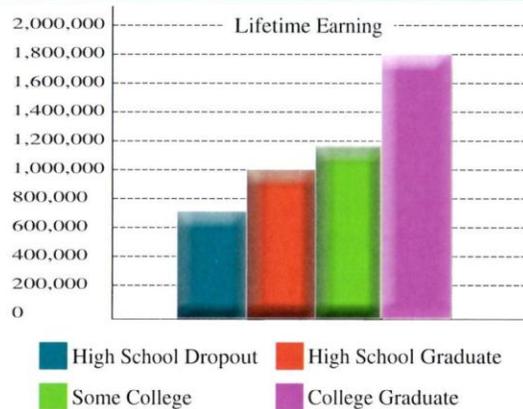


Larry D. Morse II
Merced County District Attorney
(209) 385-7381

Do you know there are more than 5,000 validated gang members and 86 gangs in Merced County? At the same time, nearly one in five Merced County high school students are dropping out before graduation. Those are alarming numbers. Here's why:

- High school **dropouts** are **three and a half times more likely** than high school graduates to be arrested and **eight times as likely to be in jail or prison.**
- Across the country, **nearly 70 percent of prison inmates** are high school dropouts.
- Statistics show high school **dropouts** are **more likely to be incarcerated, require public assistance and will earn hundreds of thousands less than graduates.**

What's An Education Worth?



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, education equals earnings. High school dropouts have the lowest expected lifetime earnings.

In cold hard cash, a high school graduate earns \$270,000 more in lifetime earnings than a high school dropout. And, on average, a college degree is worth \$1 million more in lifetime earnings than a high school diploma. Advanced degrees (Master's/Doctorate) earn \$2 million more.

⚠ Gang Prevention Tips

You are your child's most important resource. Here are some gang prevention/graduation tips for parents.

- Educate yourself about gang activity signs – clothing, photographs, friends.
- Emphasize the financial significance of graduating from high school.
- Monitor your kid's Facebook/MySpace and other social networking sites.
- Communicate with your children's teachers on a regular basis.
- Encourage and support participation in school sports and activities.
- Know your kid's friends and their hang outs.
- Enroll your kids in after school sports and recreational activities.

⚠ Warning Signs

Your child:

- **Is truant or has failing grades**
- **Stays out late**
- **Shows a particular interest in certain colors/numbers, e.g. red/blue or 13/14**
- **Uses hand signals to communicate with friends**
- **Has graffiti-type drawing on school items**
- **Has unexplained injuries or bruising**
- **Has unexplained cash or other valuables**
- **Carries a weapon or screwdriver**
- **Uses drugs or alcohol**



Victim Witness Services

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| Merced Multi Agency Gang Task Force | 385-7326 |
| Gang Task Force Anonymous Tip Line | 385-7314 |
| Toll Free | (866) 264-5251 |
| Merced Sheriff/Coroner | 385-7444 |
| Merced Probation | 381-1380 |
| Merced Parole | 726-6513 |
| Atwater Police Dept | 357-6396 |
| Merced Police Dept | 385-6912 |
| Livingston Police Dept | 394-7916 |
| Los Banos Police Dept | 827-7070 |
| Gustine Police Dept | 854-3737 |
| Dos Palos Police Dept | 392-2177 |
| Merced Adult Protective Services | 385-3105 |
| After Hour Emergency | 722-9915 |
| Merced Child Welfare After Hour Emergency | 385-3104 722-9915 |
| Valley Crisis Center Domestic Violence / Sexual Assault Hotline | 722-HELP 4357 |
| Suicide Hotline | 381-6800 |
| Crime Stoppers Toll Free | (855) 725-2420 |