

## **DPS Warns Parents: Mexican Cartels and Gangs Recruiting in Texas Schools**

The Texas Department of Public Safety is warning parents across the state to be aware of efforts by Mexican cartels and transnational gangs to recruit Texas youth in our schools and communities. These violent organizations are luring teens with the prospect of cars, money and notoriety, promising them if they get caught, they will receive a minimal sentence.

The Mexican cartels constantly seek new ways to smuggle drugs and humans into Texas are now using state based gangs and our youth to support their operations on both sides of the border.

For example, Laredo natives Gabriel Cardona and Rosalio Reta were recruited in their teens to be hit men for the Zetas. The Zetas, composed primarily of former Mexican military commandos, originally served as the enforcement arm of the Gulf Cartel, but have since become their own cartel. El Paso teens have been recruited to smuggle drugs across the border, many with the packs taped to their bodies.

While such recruitment is growing across Texas, juveniles along the Texas-Mexico border are particularly susceptible. In 2008, young people from the counties along the Texas-Mexico border accounted for just 9 percent of the population in Texas, but 18 percent of the felony drug charges and gang-related arrests.

“As these dangerous organizations seek to co-opt our children to support their criminal operations, it is more important than ever that parents be aware of these risks, talk to their children and pay attention to any signs that they may have become involved in illegal activities,” said Steven C. McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

To protect our communities and our children from these powerful and ruthless criminal organizations, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and the District Attorneys in Texas border counties are working together to detect, disrupt and deter Mexican cartel-related crime along the Texas-Mexico border.

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