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NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION CENTRE

Building the Evidence – **EVALUATION SUMMARIES**

2007-ES-14

PROGRAMME D'INTERVENTION RAPIDE ET INTENSIVE EN MILIEU FAMILIAL (PIRIMF)

The *Programme d'intervention rapide et intensive en milieu familial* [Program for rapid and intensive intervention for families] (PIRIMF) is aimed at young people referred to youth protection services on account of serious behavioural problems and their families. The program was designed and tested by the *Centre jeunesse de Lanaudière* [Lanaudière Youth Centre].

The program was designed to help keep young people in a secure environment and to keep families together. It was also combined with the psychosocial intervention usually provided in youth centres.



The PIRIMF's underlying philosophy is that behavioural problems can arise from and be perpetuated by various factors in a child's upbringing, including: erratic or abusive parental practices, dysfunction in the family, poverty or marginalization of his/her social network, as well as personal characteristics of the young person and his/her family and of their environment. The PIRIMF uses the instability created by a family in crisis as a lever of change to intervene in relation to these factors. The program's intervention focuses on the principles set out in Homebuilders, which are: intensity, flexible schedules, intervention in the family environment and systemic intervention that requires involving the young person, the parents and various stakeholders in the community. It is comprised of a number of stages, including assessing the needs of the young person and the family, developing an action plan and reviewing the action plan. The program is spread out over a period of about 12 weeks.

Project assessment

The experiment took place over 32 months and involved 574 families and children, 446 of whom were between 13 and 17 years old.

The evaluation was carried out between September 2004 and December 2006. A quasi-experimental approach was taken

using a control group consisting of young people comparable to those in the intervention group from three other youth centres. Control group members received the services usually provided in youth centres.

The total sample was comprised of 124 families and children, including 77 in the experimental group and 47 in the control group. The evaluation was restricted to young people aged 12 and up. Data was collected in two stages: at the beginning of the intervention, and six months later. The data was collected using questionnaires administered to the youth and parents, along with information from the participants' files.

A process and outcome evaluation was conducted. The main objective in evaluating the process was to determine whether the PIRIMF had been applied as initially designed. Two dimensions were studied: the characteristics of the participating families and the characteristics of the interventions. Evaluation of the outcomes sought to determine whether the PIRIMF was helping to improve educational practices, parent-children relationships, family functioning, and support networks for the young people and their families. It also sought to determine whether the program could

lead to improved behaviour by the young people and whether it was helping to prevent crime, victimization and placement. A cost-benefit analysis was also conducted looking at the program costs and the outcomes observed.

Key findings

The process evaluation revealed that:

- The case workers found there to be significant participation by the parents and young people in determining the intervention objectives;
- The PIRIMF intervention matched the parameters established at the outset: the case worker's involvement was more intensive than the customary intervention of the youth centres; contact was made rapidly with the families (less than 24 hours after the request for service), and most of the interventions took place in environments familiar to the families (home, school, etc.);
- The average length of the PIRIMF interventions was 11.2 weeks; the minimum length was 2.9 weeks; and the maximum was 31.4 weeks. The intervention was 12 weeks or less 62.4% of the time, which was the time initially expected. However, the length was more than 12 weeks for 37.7% of the families, and more than 16 weeks for 8 families (10.4%).

The outcome evaluation revealed that:

- In terms of family cohesiveness and the relationship between the young person and the mother, the situation of the PIRIMF participants improved more than the control group;
- Compared to the control group, participants in the program needed a shorter monitoring time in the protection system, and fewer placements. Data on placements during the experiment indicated that 31 young people (40.3%) who participated in the PIRIMF were placed during this period compared to 38 (81%) of the control group;
- Those who were placed underwent fewer displacements, which means that their placements were shorter and they required fewer resources. Looking at the total number of days of placement during the six-month period in question, the young people who participated in the program were found to have been placed on average 31 days, as opposed to an average of 92 days in the control group. The difference between the two groups is significant.

The cost-benefit analysis revealed that:

- Six educators and one coordinator were hired to implement the PIRIMF. Providing services to the 446 young people aged 13 to 17 can be estimated to have cost \$743,490 in salaries;
- Since the length of the follow-ups was shorter, an approximate savings of \$237,000 was made in the follow-up intervention for the 446 young people ages 13 to 17 who participated in the PIRIMF;

- The amount saved in placements for the six months of intervention for the 446 young people ages 13 to 17 who participated in the PIRIMF was equivalent to \$138,436;
- Based on expenditures and on monetary outcomes, program costs were \$368,054, or about \$825 per young person. This expenditure must be considered in light of the non-monetary outcomes observed, which include the fact that fewer young people were removed from their family environment, fewer had to be moved from one facility to another or ended up in a rehabilitation centre, and more families experienced better cohesiveness and young person-mother relationships.

Lessons learned

Lessons learned include:

- The PIRIMF is an intervention method whereby placements can be avoided in a number of situations and where the length of placements is shortened, when placement is necessary;
- It is possible to intervene with a family in a crisis situation while keeping the young person in a secure context that preserves family integrity;
- Positive outcomes in terms of a reduction of antisocial and delinquent behaviour were observed among the young people; however, these were not entirely due to the PIRIMF intervention.

Conclusion

The Program for rapid and intensive intervention in families (PIRIMF) established in the Lanaudière Youth Centre demonstrated the beneficial effects of rapid and intensive intervention in the family environment, especially among adolescents exhibiting serious behavioural problems.

The measurement of the intervention outcomes among young people and their families in the PIRIMF extended over six months; an evaluation over a longer time period would provide more information on the effectiveness of this integrated program centred on youth at risk and their families.

For more information or to receive a copy of the final evaluation report, please contact the National Crime Prevention Centre at 1-877-302-6272 or visit our website at: www.PublicSafety.gc.ca/NCPC.

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