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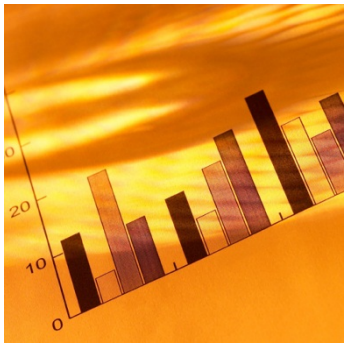
RESEARCH SUMMARY

Crime Prevention in Canada: Implementation Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them



2015–S005

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BUILDING A **SAFE** AND **RESILIENT** CANADA

This report provides real life anecdotes and concrete project information that should be used to inform the implementation of any new crime prevention project

BACKGROUND

This report presents the results of an external contract on the analysis of implementation data from crime prevention projects funded by Public Safety Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS). It documents common challenges based upon certain aspects of the project, and identifies facilitators of successful program implementation.

METHOD

A data collection form containing 200 data fields (both quantitative and qualitative fields) was developed. Implementation data was diverse and included information related to project planning and management, services provided, participant involvement, engagement and retention, data handling, and overall implementation challenges and approaches to addressing them.

The data collection form was pre-tested with 18 projects to ensure its validity. Following this pre-test, the instrument was finalized for use. The next step consisted of extracting implementation data from the 71 projects' reports included in this research project. Data was collected retrospectively mainly from existing process evaluation reports.

There was a high degree of variability on the type, completeness and consistency of data available and no secondary methods were available to verify findings. Although projects addressed implementation challenges in diverse ways, in many cases there was a lack of consensus on solutions.

FINDINGS

All of the projects included in the repository were focused on crime prevention with at-risk populations. Some projects also had other specific areas of focus including gang-related criminal issues (35%) and drug/alcohol related crimes (18%). The most common services provided by the projects included recreational activities (79%), mentoring (77%), counselling (69%), life skills training (69%), educational services (59%), referrals to services (51%) and substance abuse counselling (49%). For 45% of the projects, schools were the primary source of referrals. Twenty percent (20%) of primary referrals were from community organizations, and 17% were from families or self-referrals. Social services or treatment organizations, police and Aboriginal organizations were identified as primary referral sources for 5% or less of the projects.

The overall results from the analysis of the implementation challenges indicate that, in over a third of the projects, the most challenging implementation issues noted were:

- **Data management** (42%): too many forms, onerous, inappropriate/incomplete data instruments;
- **Recruitment and referrals of participants** (42%): unable to reach target numbers, difficulties reaching/recruiting youth – such as girls, gang-involved youth, youth not in school;
- **Partnership building and maintenance** (38%): lack of sustained meetings, low engagement of certain partners, limited understanding on how to connect effectively with certain partners, need for access to other professional groups (e.g., mental health);
- **Management and administrative issues** (37%): lack of staff, lack of administrative support, lack of case managers;
- **Program content** (35%): lack of cultural focus, lack of process for transitioning out, lack of

job/employment options for youth, lack of programming for girls, limited adherence to the program content;
- **Staff turnover** (34%): high level of staff turnover;
- **Participants' engagement** (31%): difficulty retaining, poor attendance, no participation in certain activities; and
- **Planning** (30%): lack of planning time, lack of consensus on program approach/activities, difficulties integrating with school schedules.

Although all projects encountered similar implementation challenges, there were many examples of approaches to address these challenges. Those used most frequently included: building strong relationships through sustained communication and networking (45%); offering diverse activities that were appropriate and interesting to youth (31%); incorporating cultural teachings in materials (21%); developing the project systematically (21%); and having experienced and qualified staff (21%) who are able to connect well with youth (21%).

Finally, many of the projects had information about the lessons learned or best practices in relation to successful project implementation. Results were clustered by themes and over a third of the projects reported the importance of project planning (take sufficient time to define relevant research, needs assessment, evidence-based theory; realistically set participant targets and drop-out rates, and time required for case management and effective partner engagement; and pay ongoing attention to implementation plan, definition of roles and skill sets, training needs, and alignment of activities with research objectives). The other most frequent area, also reported by 30% of projects, was the importance of increasing parents' engagement in the project (increase engagement with parents through regular outreach; explain rationale for assessment procedures; provide support services; communicate child's progress; involvement in recreation activities; try new approaches such as a community kitchen; use community partners trusted by parents; and minimize reference to criminal behaviour in community publicity so program is not seen as being only for "bad kids").

NEXT STEPS

This report is a pillar in the development of a Canadian knowledge base on effective crime prevention programs and strategies to implement them to obtain the best outcomes for youth, families and communities. Building on the information gathered through this study will assist crime prevention practitioners and policy makers in their understanding of common implementation challenges associated with implementing crime prevention in specific settings such as schools, and practical information about how they can be addressed and mitigated. It also helps to identify the gaps in information being collected about key implementation elements that can be filled through future data collection and analysis in order to provide more practical knowledge about challenges and ways to address them. Furthermore, the Implementation Guide, cited as an additional source, should be used as a companion report to develop best practices in the implementation of crime prevention programs.

SOURCE

Currie, J., & Roberts, T., (2015). *Crime Prevention in Canada: Implementation Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them*. Research report submitted to the Research Division, Public Safety Canada, Ottawa, ON.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Savignac, J., & Dunbar, L. (2014). *Guide on the implementation of evidence-based programs: What do we know so far?* Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada.

For more information on research at the Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch, Public Safety Canada, to get a copy of the full research report, or to be placed on our distribution list, please contact:

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