



### Background

Research suggests that sports have the capacity to connect youth to positive adult role models and provide positive development opportunities (Mulholland, 2008), as well as promote the learning and application of life skills (Goudas & Giannoudis, 2008; Mulholland, 2008; Holt et al., 2009). Furthermore, in addition to the physical activity and positive health effects it provides, sport is a generator of social capital, helping to mobilize the community by promoting involvement, togetherness and teamwork (Ehsani et al., 2012, Mulholland, 2008), as well as supporting culture within the community (MacIntosh et al., 2016).

Because of their potential for supporting youth development, supervised sports have been used in many countries, as well as by the United Nations, as a programming strategy for addressing social issues, such as youth crime and substance abuse. Although there is wide variability in the way sports-based programs are implemented and structured, these programs generally aim to use sport, either as a means or complementary activity, to achieve youth development and prevent crime. In particular, these initiatives use a safe recreation setting to promote the lessons learned from sports (e.g., cooperation, communication, etc.), and possibly administer other social, individual development-based interventions (e.g., counselling, mentoring and life skills training), while providing youth with a pro-social way to spend their time. Unfortunately, due to research limitations and a lack of standardization in terminology within this emerging field of study, general statements and conclusions on the effectiveness of these programs are difficult to make. The purpose of this document is to provide additional information on crime prevention using sports, including summaries of promising programs and initiatives both in Canada and internationally, the difference in implementation approaches across applications, and lessons learned.

### What Is Sports-Based Crime Prevention?

Although the programs discussed here are referred to as “sports-based”, the potential physical activities that can be used in these programs are not limited to commonly team-based games such as hockey and soccer. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), sports can best be viewed as “a physical activity with an agreed upon structure or set of rules that allows for competition against oneself or another” (UNODC, 2002). This broad definition allows for the inclusion of physical activities less commonly referred to as sports, such as rock climbing, dance competitions, kayaking, etc.

Unfortunately, as mentioned previously, the field of sports-based crime prevention is lacking in terms of standardized definitions. For example, there is no clear definition in the literature of what constitutes a sports-based program, other than the fact that there is a sport-related element present. In this respect, there is no terminology to differentiate between programs where sport is the sole activity vs. those that combine sports with other social interventions (e.g., using sport as a break from the classroom setting).

Other types of physical and outdoor programs may also be included under the sports-based programming umbrella. One such case is wilderness camps<sup>1</sup> (a.k.a. challenge programs or wilderness therapy programs), which provide “a series of physically challenging outdoor activities designed to prevent or reduce delinquent behavior and recidivism” (Development Services Group, 2011). Key program components of wilderness camps include therapeutic camping, rock climbing, wagon train trips, overnight solo experiences, alternative schools, individual and group therapy sessions, and family counseling (Roberts, 2004; cited in Development Services Group, 2011). Other examples included in the broad definition of sports-based crime prevention programs are substance abuse lectures for varsity sports teams and anti-bullying media campaigns from professional sport teams, despite there being no physical activity in the program itself.

For the purposes of this short report, sports-based crime prevention (SBCP) programs will include those offering physical activities to youth in either a social development or diversion-based intervention. Any broader use of the term will be noted for the relevant studies and research being summarized.

### Typologies of Sports-Based Programs in the Literature

In the history of their implementation, two main groups of programs using sports have been identified in the literature: 1) sports as a means of diverting youth from crime; and 2) sports as a means of social development (Ehsani et al., 2012; Ekholm, 2013; McMahan & Belur, 2013).

- The *diversion-based* approach to SBCP implements sport programs to deter youth from deviancy and antisocial activities, predominantly in times or locations where youth might otherwise commit offenses (Nichols, 2007). Simply put, the idea is that youth cannot commit crime or participate in delinquent activity while being simultaneously engaged in organized sports (Ekholm, 2013). Also labelled aversion or distraction-based activities, these programs employ sports as a means to distract youth from the negative environments in which they usually live, and attempt to demonstrate to youth the potential development opportunities through sport (McMahon & Belur, 2013). Diversion-based sports initiatives are focused solely on the delivery of the sporting activity to the youth, and offer sports-related life skills (such as teamwork and communication) and the benefits of pro-social decision making in a welcoming environment (Ehsani et al., 2012; McMahon & Belur, 2013).
- The *social development* approach to SBCP uses organized physical activity as a “hook” to attract youth into a stimulating field where additional teaching or intervention can be provided (Ekholm 2013; McMahon & Belur, 2013). Within this paradigm, the focus of sports-based crime prevention programs is not as much on the sport itself as it is on the development of associated programming: these initiatives aim to deliver education, qualifications, broader life skills, and networks to the youth that are not solely available through the field of sports (Ehsani et al., 2012; Ekholm, 2013; McMahon & Belur, 2013). Social development in sports-based programs is therefore used to empower the participating youth, providing them with the opportunity to evolve both within sports (sports-related life skills) and outside of them (general competency learning) in a developmental model adhering to the risk and protective factors linked with criminality (Nichols, 2007).

These approaches to SBCP can also be seen to lie on a continuum of social development, ranging from diversion-based programs, which provide social development through only the inferred life skills used in sports, to multi-faceted crime prevention programs, which offer development avenues through sports, paired interventions, and other strategies across multiple sectors (i.e., health, education, etc.). This continuum is important, as it illustrates the

basic prosocial aspects associated with sport as an activity, but also demonstrates its limitations and the potential for programs to incorporate additional developmental interventions.

Sports-based programs can also be distinguished based on the clientele they aim to serve. The AGIS framework, a European Union program promoting and supporting criminal justice cooperation and policy development, has identified three different levels of sports-based programs: 1) *Open, low threshold activities*; 2) *Closed programs / training*; and 3) *Sport in juvenile detention centres* (Schwenzer et al., 2007).

- The *open, low threshold activities* are offered within youth clubs and sports clubs, and are open to all youth. Despite being directed toward more at-risk youth, these initiatives are focused on sports and are an opportunity for any child or adolescent to have fun, learn sports-related skills, and socialize with other youth (Schwenzer et al., 2007). This program can be seen as both a primary and secondary crime prevention initiative<sup>2</sup>.
- *Closed programs / training* are offered exclusively to marginalized, at-risk youth and are focused on the prevention of crime and violent, disruptive behaviours. These activities are closer in form to sport camps and are target-oriented. More specifically, the goals are shifted from competition and sporting achievement to the adoption of skills and abilities that will help reduce violence and crime (Schwenzer et al., 2007). The more focused intervention programming can be seen as a secondary crime prevention initiative.
- *Sport in juvenile detention centres* is generally used to educate incarcerated youth, aiming to teach them about important life skills and social competencies that will help them more efficiently solve their problems and deal with aggression. These programs can go as far as helping the youth gain qualifications through sport that will help them exit the institution (Schwenzer et al., 2007). This rehabilitation-style program can be seen as a tertiary crime prevention initiative.

## Canadian and International Program Examples

Despite limited research being done in this field, SBCP programs and initiatives in a variety of countries have produced promising results, such as reductions in certain risk factors associated with crime for targeted populations and empowerment of participants. Moreover, the programs have reported being cost-effective. Following are some examples of programs in the field of sports-based prevention.

### I. Canadian Examples funded through Public Safety Canada

Public Safety Canada<sup>3</sup> funds crime prevention programs through the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), a policy framework for implementing crime prevention initiatives in Canada (Public Safety Canada, 2009). The NCPS supports programs that promote crime prevention through social development and requires programs to have key components based on evidence-based practice, such as interventions addressing risk factors which lead to offending (Public Safety Canada, 2009). For this reason, the programs under the scope of the NCPS do not include the simple implementation of sport with diversion-based goals; rather, they must be combined with additional evidence-based interventions that address criminogenic risk factors.

#### **Velocity Adventure Program**<sup>4</sup>

**Goal:** The Velocity Adventure program is an adventure-based program aimed at reducing substance abuse and anti-social behaviour while increasing school attachment among at-risk youth (or youth already involved in criminal activities) aged 13-18. The program addresses key risk factors associated with involvement in crime, including aggressive and anti-social behaviour, substance abuse, and poor attachment to school. This project combines

evidence from effective models and practices involving structured outdoor adventure activities, life skills training and mentorship.

The program was implemented in St. John's, Newfoundland from 2009 through 2014.

**Activities:** The Velocity Adventure Program is a 12 month program that includes the following core components:

- **Group Building Process:** In order to familiarize youth with the program, they participate in a number of day outings such as kayaking, trapezing, and rock climbing. The group sessions also focus on strengthening life skills, respect, and building a team environment;
- **7-Day Adventure Camp:** During the 7-day camp, youth participate in adventure-based activities designed to challenge them physically, emotionally, and mentally. The Adventure camp immerses participants in a wilderness environment, outside of their comfort zone, providing them with new learning experiences. The camps focus on four main areas of programming: life skills and personal development; experiential learning through outdoor adventure; therapeutic and holistic components; and health and wellness.
- **Engage-Connect-Shift:** As youth continue to participate in the adventure camp, they are provided with individual support to help them deal with the challenges in their lives, as well as help them to connect with other available community services. Staff also provide mentoring and coaching to youth to address their current issues, including: guest speakers (i.e., health promotion, dealing with addictions, conflict resolution); training (i.e., life skills training, communication skills training, employment skills training, tutoring, homework clubs, cultural activities); and referrals to community services (i.e., addictions counselling, tutoring services, mental health services).

**Results:** Pre-test and post-test follow-up data at 12 months for the Velocity Adventure program revealed that participants showed improvement in their motivation to reduce and perceived ability to handle substance abuse problems, and also showed significant improvement towards education and academic goals. However, there was no significant change in the aggressive and antisocial behaviours of participating youth.

### **Leadership and Resiliency Program** <sup>5</sup>

**Goal:** The Leadership and Resiliency Program (LRP) is a school- and community-based program for at-risk students aged 14-19 that helps prevent involvement in substance abuse and violence, while helping them enhance their internal strengths and resiliency. Risk factors addressed by this program include disruptive behaviour in school, such as bullying or dropping out; aggressive and impulsive behaviour; anti-social or criminal behaviour; associations with delinquent peers; and having family members who are involved with crime.

Since 2009, LRP has been implemented in multiple provinces and territories (Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, and Quebec) and several projects are still running until 2020.

**Activities:** This program includes three interrelated components. Each component focuses on building leadership and problem-solving skills among the participants while encouraging the development of peer refusal skills, risk management, goal orientation, future-oriented thinking, optimism, empathy, internal locus of control, and conflict management:

- **Weekly resiliency groups:** 7 to 10 participants meet for approximately 1 to 1-1/2 hours per week during school hours throughout the school year. These groups, led by a qualified LRP staff member, help the youth explore and discuss inherent strengths, and present practical approaches to drawing on these strengths in the students' lives.

- **Monthly community volunteer/service learning experiences:** Participants identify opportunities to volunteer in areas such as working with abused animals, providing services for younger children or elders, and undertaking community beautification projects.
- **Monthly alternative or adventure activities:** These are scheduled outside of school hours with the activities appropriate to each location, but focus on the participants learning about healthy risk taking and personal challenges. For example, activities such as camping, white water rafting and rock climbing are used to help youth develop planning and risk management skills.

**Results:** A pre-test and post-test evaluation demonstrated that program participants showed a substantial reduction in school suspensions (75%) and juvenile arrests (47%), as well as an increase in school attendance (60-70%)<sup>6</sup>.

### **Project Venture**<sup>7</sup>

**Goal:** Project Venture (PV) is an outdoor experiential youth development program, created by the National Indian Youth Leadership Project (NIYLP) with the goal of preventing substance abuse in Indigenous youth. The program uses outdoor activities centered on traditional Indigenous values to develop positive peer relationships and group skills; engage youth in positive projects; develop leadership skills; and develop and improve social, decision making, and problem solving skills.

Since 2009, PV has been implemented in multiple provinces: British-Columbia, Manitoba, New-Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan. Several of these projects will be running until 2021.

**Activities:** The program involves four main components:

- **Classroom-Based Activities:** 20 to 25 1 hour sessions delivered throughout the course of the school year. Lessons such as leadership and spirituality are taught through a combination of socialization and team-building activities.
- **Outdoor Activities:** Weekly after-school and weekend adventure based activities, such as hiking and camping, challenge youth and help them to develop problem solving and social interaction skills as well as a sense of responsibility.
- **Adventure Camps and Treks:** During the summer, youth participate in adventure camps and wilderness treks that last from 3 to 10 days. Elders, positive role models and “cultural” experts accompany participants throughout these activities.
- **Community-Oriented Service Learning:** Youth complete 4 service learning projects a year (150 hours of community based activities). These activities include meaningful service learning opportunities, such as working with Elders or creating art projects for the community, and are designed to help youth develop leadership skills.

**Results:** At this point, there are two outcome evaluations in progress, for which results are expected in 2018-19 and beyond. Findings from pre-test and post-test follow-up data from an American study of the program demonstrated that the level of alcohol use in the intervention group remained lower over time compared to the control group. The same study revealed that the rate of illicit drug use in the intervention group remained stable, whereas that of the control group increased. In addition, program participants showed improved school attendance, as well as reductions in depression and aggressive behaviour.

## II. The Indigenous Context in Canada

In the Canadian Indigenous context, there is limited knowledge on the use of supervised sports as a crime prevention strategy. However, there have been sports-based development programs demonstrating positive outcomes for Canadian Indigenous communities<sup>8</sup>. Many programs, including the Nunavik Youth Hockey Development Program (NYHDP), Alberta's Future Leaders (AFL) program, and Right to Play's Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY)<sup>9</sup> program have been implemented across Canada, and have in different ways helped Indigenous youth avoid negative life paths (Halsall & Forneris, 2016).

An example of one such program is offered in the Innu Gym, a recreation centre in Natuashish on the Northern coast of Labrador. The First Nations community of Natuashish is 300 kilometres away from any major centres, accessible only by air or by ferry in the summer. According to Statistics Canada, the population is only 936 people, of which nearly half (440) were under 19 in 2016. Sports nights at the Innu Gym are among the few organized activities that are offered in this community, and aim to divert youth from the temptations of drug and alcohol use.

In a scoping review of the available academic literature on sports for development (SFD) programs for Indigenous people in Canada, one study identified three common themes encapsulating the challenges and successful strategies in these programs: "(1) there is value in cross-cultural mentorship between SFD mentors/staff and program participants, but having Aboriginal staff/mentors is advantageous; (2) community engagement is essential to the success of an SFD program in Aboriginal communities; and (3) SFD plays only a subsidiary role in contributing to Aboriginal communities' broader social and economic goals" (Gardam et al., 2017).

## III. International Initiatives

### **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

**Life Skills for Youth Crime and Drug Prevention through Sports – New Initiative:** In 2015, based on the Doha Declaration adopted by the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the UNODC launched a global youth crime prevention initiative that builds on the power of sports. In collaboration with several international partners, expert group meetings, and inspired by current practices in the field of sports-based programs, the LineUp LiveUp<sup>10</sup> program was developed with the aim of building resilience in youth aged 13 to 17 by enhancing their life skills, as well as increasing their knowledge of the consequences of substance abuse and crime.

This program is composed of ten sessions that have been designed to target specific sets of life skills: personal life skills (problem solving; critical thinking; decision-making; creative thinking; self-awareness; coping with stress and emotions) and social life skills (empathy; effective communication; interpersonal relationship skills; refusal skills). This program can be used in sports centers and be applied in schools and other community settings to address youth crime, violence and drug abuse. This program has been piloted in Brazil, and piloting phases will continue in the near future in other countries (such as South Africa and Kyrgyzstan).

### **Laureus Sport for Good<sup>11</sup>**

Since its inception in 2000, the Laureus Sport for Good charity has supported over 150 projects in over 35 countries, using sport to tackle violence, discrimination, and disadvantage. Below are a few examples of sports-based programs supported by Laureus. Some of these have been implemented more widely, and have their own network of partners and organizational structure (refer to the endnotes for more information).

- **KICK Im Boxing (Berlin, Germany):** The Kick Im Boxing project is a competitive boxing training program that attempts to engage at-risk youth in sport to prevent transitions into criminality. The training program engages youth in conflict hotspots that are suffering from social exclusion or lack of leisure opportunities, and provides them with physical activity in a supervised location (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012). In addition to training in competitive boxing 1-3 times per week, pedagogical advancement is offered to the more at-risk participants through coaching staff, who also act as social educators, tutors, and contacts (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012). Available evaluation findings<sup>12</sup> show reductions in crime, school truancy, and exclusion among the participants. Youth also reported reduced levels of short-term stress because of the program, as well as having learned important life skills, such as discipline and self-control (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012). With the annual cost of the project running at €72,600, this program delivers €3.43 in societal savings (e.g., reduced crime, lower unemployment rates, improved earnings and employment opportunities for youth, etc.) for every €1 invested (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012).
- **Fight for Peace<sup>13</sup> (London, United Kingdom):** The Fight for Peace initiative uses boxing and martial arts as a means to reengage and support young people with their personal development. This school-based program aims to prevent criminal, anti-social, and violent behaviour later in life, as well as guide youth into positive pathways (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012). Participants are referred through youth services and outreach workers in collaboration with police to identify young people in ‘hot spot’ areas of high crime. Available evaluation findings<sup>14</sup> show that a significant number of participants move into further education or employment, and smaller positive impacts in terms of school truancy and exclusions have been noted. With the cost of the project running at €80,000, this program delivers €4.42 in social benefits for every €1 invested (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012).
- **Midnight Basketball<sup>15</sup> (Milan, Italy):** Midnight basketball aims to keep young people with low levels of motivation (or at-risk of crime) off the streets during late-night hours. The longer-term goal is to shift youth away from gangs toward sports teams, and to reduce delinquency. Two street educators recruit youth from parks, streets, and recreation rooms during the evening and bring them to the basketball court. Trainers and educators act as role models and try to create a lasting relationship. Available evaluation findings<sup>16</sup> show that the program has helped a number of young people aged 16 years and over to move into further education or employment, and smaller positive impacts in terms of school truancy and exclusions have been observed (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012). With the cost of the project running at €6,180, this program delivers €5.64 in social benefit for every €1 invested (Laureus & Ecorys, 2012).

### **The National Alliance of Sport for the Desistance of Crime (NASDC)<sup>17</sup>**

The NASDC was launched in 2015 to support organisations that use sport to prevent offending and rehabilitate offenders. The NASDC is one of the leading practitioners and sources of evidence for using sport in the criminal justice system. This alliance is managed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Group.

- **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Project (South Gloucestershire, England):** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Project is a custodial program that aims to improve the behaviour of offenders while promoting positive life skills and attitudes (Meek, 2012). The program was delivered in a 12-15 week academy, where offenders participated in various sports (including soccer, rugby and boxing) training, coaching, and playing, which incorporated group based learning activities, such as goal setting and thinking skills. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance project also supplied the offenders with qualifications in coaching and first aid, in a complete effort to prepare the offenders for their transition back into the community (Meek, 2012). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance project managed to significantly reduce recidivism rates among participants, as the reconviction rate of those who participated in the program (18%) was much lower than the prison average (48% after one year) (Meek, 2012). Furthermore, there were statistically significant improvements in the life skills of the participants after the

program, in particular, higher levels of conflict resolution and lower levels of impulsivity and aggression (Meek, 2012).

### **Physical Education (PE) Profesorado program (El Salvador)**

The PE profesorado program is a school-based program in which life skills are taught using physical activities. This program was implemented using Hellison's Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR)<sup>18</sup> model for teaching life skills and values to youth (Mandigo et al., 2016).

Physical education classes in school are taught by PE teachers using the humanistic and student-centered approach that is the centerpiece of Hellison's TPSR model. Life skills are taught using physical activity as the vehicle.

The results of the PE Profesorado program showed beneficial effects for both boys and girls (Mandigo et al., 2016). The impact of the program was larger on the boys, as they reported lower levels of aggression, and higher levels of life skills at the end of the school year, as compared to the beginning (Mandigo et al., 2016).

### **Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility through Physical Activity (TPSR) (Hellison, 2011)**

TPSR is a framework which believes that in teaching physical education, life skills can be taught as well – it's about using physical education as a means to teach a code or a discipline to students. Physical education is used as a vehicle to teach students various life skills that they can practice in the gym and transfer to other settings such as school, community, and home life. TPSR has been field tested in school-based physical education as well as in after-school and community-based programs.

The intention of this framework is that this code becomes integrated and internalized by the students and gives them structure for their lives, values, and inner discipline.

### **Grassroot Soccer (United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe)**

Grassroot Soccer (GRS)<sup>19</sup> is an adolescent health organization that leverages soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth in developing countries to overcome their greatest health challenges; live healthier, more productive lives; and be agents for change in their communities. GRS works with Indigenous and international organizations to adapt, deliver, and evaluate programs in local communities, and provides a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to better measure outputs, outcomes and impact. Grassroot Soccer's evidence-based programs, led by trained local mentors, incorporate soccer into dynamic lessons about health and wellness that engage young people and break down cultural barriers. To date, GRS has reached over 1.9 million young people in nearly 50 countries with adolescent-friendly health education.

GRS has developed a range of programs that address youth development, tackling issues such as crime, substance abuse and violence while promoting youth leadership, employability and pro-social behaviour. These involve both single-sex and mixed-sex programs, and are delivered in schools and community settings. As an example of an evaluation study<sup>20</sup>, in 2012, GRS conducted a pre-post assessment to evaluate *Champions League*, an intensive 72-session soccer-based intervention aiming to reduce substance use and gender-based violence (GBV) among adolescent male students aged 15-20 in South Africa. Drug test results demonstrated an increase in willingness to test (from 59% to 80% of participants opting to test) and a decrease in positive test results (from 29% to 0% of participants testing positive) (Durkin, A. et al., 2015). Furthermore, a Randomized Control Trial, conducted in conjunction with the University of Stellenbosch and University of California Los Angeles, showed that male participants in a GRS program were less likely to be involved in crime, violence against women and drug use. GRS employs coaches (or peer mentors) to deliver programs to adolescents, and these coaches themselves go through a structured program that provides them with employability and leadership skills. Results from South Africa show that 75% of GRS coaches have increased Employment, Education or Training (EET) opportunities following the end of their two-year tenure.



## Implementation Challenges

Like any crime prevention initiative, there are implementation challenges in sports-based programs that need to be considered. In particular, the following challenges have been identified:

- Although the community plays an important role in facilitating participation and social inclusion for the program (Reis et al., 2016), both the social and physical environment can pose challenges to its success: a lack of space, territorial tensions between gangs leading to violence spill overs, and unstable local relations with police can all lead to negative outcomes from sports-based programs (McMahon & Belur, 2013).
- Furthermore, a lack of community resources can create restrictions on the type of sport implemented, as well as the intensity and quality of the programming (MacIntosh et al., 2016). It is therefore essential to ensure that the community has the motivation, commitment, and adequate resources to invest in a SBCP program.
- Sport is essentially competition, and the logic of competition and practice of sport can lead to the subordination of an opponent or even cheating (and possibly using drugs to do so) if taken too seriously (Ekholm, 2013; UNODC, 2002). Additionally, certain sports ritualize and legitimize violence and confrontation (such as boxing), which can be understood by youth as reinforcement for this type of behaviour (Ekholm, 2013). For this reason, it would be essential for the sports-based initiative to de-emphasize competitive elements within the activity while stressing the non-competitive aspects of the program (life skills) in a safe environment administered with rules and limitations, while still promoting independence and participation (Ekholm, 2013).
- Poor communication between partnering organizations and the community can lead to multiple goals and directions for the program, which sometimes act in opposition to each other (MacIntosh et al., 2016). In order to avoid confusion or problems, efficient and practical communication, as well as clearly stated responsibilities, should be present between all partners to ensure smooth implementation and a unified direction throughout the program.

## Lessons Learned

Although sports-based programs are implemented in different ways, there have been universal lessons learned from the experiences of multiple programs. Important lessons concerning sports-based initiatives include:

- Although some diversion-oriented sports-based programs have worked, programs are most likely to be successful as crime prevention initiatives when combined with strategies or mentoring that address issues of social and personal development (Ehsani et al., 2012; Ekholm, 2013; Gardner, 2013; Mulholland, 2008; Cameron & MacDougall, 2000; Makkai et al., 2003; McKiernan, 2016; Nichols, 2007), as the beneficial links between sports and crime prevention are more apparent in programs aimed at enhancing protective factors and mitigating risk factors (Taylor et al., 2015).
- Successful organizations provide “trained coaches, intentional programming, physical and emotional safety, strong administration and context” in their sports-based development programs (cited in Gardner, 2013; Makkai et al., 2003; UNODC, 2002).
- Coaches and mentors play an important role for the youths’ development; trainers who provide more praise, informational feedback, and engage in autonomy supportive behaviours (for example, sharing the decision making and are receptive to input) have been associated to participants who report higher self-esteem, perceived competence as well as youth who show positive behavioural outcomes (Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). Other research confirms the importance of interactions between the youth and key social agents (peers, parents and coaches) in the success of sports-based programs (Holt et al., 2009; UNODC, 2003; McKiernan, 2016; Makkai et al., 2003).

- There is some evidence indicating that the potential benefits of sport are maximized in team-focused settings (compared to individually-focused programs) (McKiernan, 2016; Carmichael, 2008).
- As with any crime prevention program, it is important that sports-based initiatives receive rigorous evaluation in order to test the program’s effectiveness and build on the body of knowledge in order to improve further initiatives (Public Safety Canada, 2009; UNODC, 2002; Cameron & MacDougall, 2000).

In the United States, the Up2Us Sports Centre<sup>21</sup> performed an analysis on several national organizations supporting sports-based youth development programs. The study outlined thirteen criteria reflecting high-quality sports-based programs, which acknowledged shared characteristics across successful sports-based youth programs:

Characteristics of Quality Sports-Based Development Programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and emotional safety</li> <li>• Appropriate structure</li> <li>• Supportive relationships</li> <li>• Opportunities to belong</li> <li>• Positive social norms</li> <li>• Support for efficacy and mattering</li> <li>• Opportunities for skill building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to foster cultural competence</li> <li>• Active Learning</li> <li>• Opportunities for recognition</li> <li>• Strength-based focus</li> <li>• Ecological/Holistic</li> <li>• Integration of family, school and community efforts</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(Gardner, 2013)</p>

### Key Principles for New Sports-Based Crime Prevention Programs

In summary, there are a number of key principles that have been identified, and which are important to consider when implementing new SBCP programs. The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) compiled a framework of principles that covers the lessons learned and implementation challenges identified in the research on SBCP. The framework is provided below:

## Good Practice Program Principles

### 1. Administrative

- Have clearly set out aims and outcomes that are monitored and, where possible, evaluated so that programs maintain their relevance to youth and resources are targeted effectively.
- Ensure that staff are interested and enthusiastic about the programs.

### 2. Environment

- Create an environment in which youth feel physically and emotionally comfortable and safe: promote voluntary participation at all levels and have minimal rules and reduced competition.
- Ensure staff are people youth can trust and develop positive relationships with.

### 3. Activities

- Offer novel and challenging activities that are engaging and relevant for youth.
- Ensure individual and team-oriented activities and program delivery are specific to the target group (for example, male/female).
- Run low-cost activities outside school hours and on weekends when youth are more likely to be unoccupied and/or bored.

### 4. Youth involvement

- Provide leadership opportunities for youth in organising and deciding activities.
- Engage youth in promoting the program.
- Consider promoting peer mentoring and support networks.

### 5. Accessibility

- Ensure the program is easily accessible to youth by providing transport after dark.

### 6. External support

- Develop links and provide information about other services and resources available to youth in the local community.
- Provide a continuing contact point for youth.

### 7. Underlying issues

- Promote fairness and equality.
- Be aware of self-esteem, family and social issues affecting youth behaviours.
- Engage with youth as individuals; don't just focus on their behaviour.
- Promote the relevance of activities for other life areas.

(Makkai et al., 2003)

## Conclusion

Overall, SPCP initiatives appear promising. The available evidence shows some encouraging results in terms of improved attitudes, behaviours, and opportunities, and appreciable returns on investment. Furthermore, a few international studies have also shown reductions in risk factors and offending. Additional experimental and rigorous quasi-experimental evaluations would be useful for confirming these positive effects. Moreover, understanding how SBCP programs reduce youth crime requires knowledge of the change pathways through which these programs produce their impacts. This can be achieved through process evaluations that attempt to pinpoint how the program inputs and activities generate the ultimate outcomes. Future work should also focus on refining the classifications of programs based on the size and nature of the sport component, as well as quantifying the unique sport-related impacts on crime prevention outcomes within multi-component, sports-based development programs. Such work would help identify the successful components of diversion-based models, and potentially help explain the mixed conclusions about their effectiveness.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the wilderness camps, see Development Services Group (2011). This report also distinguishes between wilderness and the boot camps: “wilderness camps are grounded in experiential learning that advocates “learning by doing” and facilitates opportunities for personal growth, while boot camps are informed by a military model and involve the use of physical and psychological aggression against juveniles.” In addition, the evaluation research on wilderness camps has generally shown promising or mixed results, while evaluations of boot camps have shown mixed results—in particular that they are not as effective at reducing recidivism or changing youths’ behavior (Russell, 2001 in Development Services Group, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Crime prevention programs can be arranged along a continuum of intervention which includes three broad categories (Public Safety Canada, 2015c):

- **Primary crime prevention:** Programs designed for the general population that address broad-based socio-economic factors believed to be related to increased likelihood of later offending.
- **Secondary crime prevention:** Programs or interventions designed to address the risk factors related to pathways to offending among children and youth, or to address situations that may enhance crime in neighbourhoods.
- **Tertiary crime prevention:** Directed towards the prevention of criminal re-occurrence. This includes measures such as physical modification of repeatedly victimized buildings, offender rehabilitation programs, etc.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the Canadian programs in this section have not evaluated the unique impact of the sport component on the program outcomes. The outcomes measured in the studies funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) are derived from the programs in their entirety, and not from specific internal components (such as vehicle of delivery).

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the Velocity Adventure Program, consult the following publications: Public Safety Canada 2012; 2015a; 2015b. Evaluation findings presented in these publications are from the outcome evaluation conducted by Ference Weicker & Company (2013) (unpublished report – for more information, communicate with the Research Division, Public Safety Canada).

<sup>5</sup> For more information about the Leadership and Resiliency Program, consult the following publications: Public Safety Canada, 2008; Public Safety Canada, 2015d.

<sup>6</sup> The Evaluation Summary by Public Safety Canada is in progress. For more information, communicate with the Research Division, Public Safety Canada.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the Project Venture program, consult the following publications: Public Safety Canada, 2011; SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, n.d.; Carter et al., 2007.

<sup>8</sup> The populations considered in this section are First Nations, Metis, and Inuit youth (age not specified).

<sup>9</sup> Right to Play is an international organization that uses play (which includes sport) to “educate and empower children facing adversity”. To learn more about Right to Play, visit <http://righttoplay.com/>. In Canada, the Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program “partners with more than 85 First Nations communities and urban Aboriginal organizations across Canada to deliver safe, fun and educational programming for Aboriginal children and youth. Each uniquely tailored play-based program is designed to enhance educational outcomes, improve peer-to-peer relationships, increase employability and improve physical and mental health amongst Aboriginal children and youth” (retrieved from the PLAY website). For more information about the Canadian implementation of this program, visit: <http://www.righttoplay.ca/Learn/ourstory/Pages/PLAY-Program.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017). *LineUp LiveUp – Life Skills Training in Sport Settings to Prevent Crime Violence and Drug Abuse*. Because this program is currently under testing, the Manual is not yet available for further dissemination.



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<sup>11</sup> Laureus combines Laureus Sport for Good, the Laureus World Sports Academy and Ambassadors Programme and the Laureus World Sports Awards to form a unique organisation that uses sport as a force for good. For more information about Laureus, visit: <https://www.laureus.com/>

<sup>12</sup> In August 2012, an impact survey of participants was undertaken by Ecorys and the German Sport University Cologne, supplemented by qualitative evidence gathered as part of a parallel study. 103 young people attended KICK Im Boxing over the past 12 months, with an average duration of 8 months participation each at the time of the survey. For more information, see Laureus Sport for Good Foundation & Ecorys (2012).

<sup>13</sup> Fight for Peace uses boxing and martial arts combined with education and personal development to realise the potential of young people and supports them in communities affected by crime and violence by creating new opportunities. This program has been implemented in several countries through its own global network and other global partners. For more information, visit: <http://fightforpeace.net/>

<sup>14</sup> In July 2012, an impact survey of participants was undertaken by Ecorys, supplemented by qualitative evidence. Around 800 young people attended Fight for Peace in 2011. Participants surveyed by Ecorys had been taking part in activities for an average of 22 months. For more information, see Laureus Sport for Good Foundation & Ecorys (2012).

<sup>15</sup> Midnight Basketball has been implemented in several countries. In the United States, there is the Midnight Basketball League which provides a comprehensive crime prevention program with education, employment service, and recreational activities. For more information, visit: <http://amblp.com/>

<sup>16</sup> In August 2012, an impact survey of participants was undertaken by Ecorys and the Center for Research on Sustainability and Value, Università Bocconi, supplemented by qualitative evidence gathered by university researchers. 200 young people are registered as attending Midnight Basketball. Participants surveyed by Ecorys had been taking part in activities for an average of seven months. For more information, see Laureus Sport for Good Foundation & Ecorys (2012).

<sup>17</sup> For more information about the National Alliance of Sport for the Desistance of Crime (NASDC), visit: <http://www.nasdc.org/>

<sup>18</sup> For more information about the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility framework, consult Hellison (2011), as well as visit the TPSR Alliance's website, available at: <http://www.tpsr-alliance.org/>

<sup>19</sup> For more information about the Grassroot Soccer (GRS), consult the overview brochure available at: <https://www.grassrootsoccer.org/overview/>

<sup>20</sup> For more information about the evaluation studies that have been conducted on Grassroot Soccer and their findings, consult: Grassroot Soccer (2016). *Research Report*. Available at: <https://www.grassrootsoccer.org/research/>. In collaboration with a variety of research institutions and funders, GRS has participated in 27 research studies since 2005, including three randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in over 20 countries, and has utilized a variety of research methods, including cluster-randomized trials, qualitative studies, and mixed-methods evaluations.

<sup>21</sup> The Up2Us Sports Center, located in the United States, “provides cutting-edge research, training, assessment and advice to support the effectiveness of Up2Us Sports member organizations”. This organization is a “nationwide leader in sports-based youth development, and they use the power of sports to reduce youth violence, promote health, and inspire academic success”. For more information, visit: <https://www.up2us.org/center>