



Programme de suivi intensif de Montréal – Gangs de rue

The Programme de suivi intensif de Montréal – Gangs de rue (Gangs de rue) project works with teenagers and young adults 15-25 years who are involved in or at high risk of becoming involved in criminal gang activity. The continuum of interventions provided includes clinical supports and the provision of opportunities for employment, education and other supports. Gangs de rue is supported by [Public Safety Canada](#), National Crime Prevention Centre's Youth Gang Prevention Fund and is delivered by [The Centre jeunesse de Montréal – Institut universitaire](#). The project started in August 2009, and will be piloted and evaluated under the YGPF until March 2011.

Montréal has a high concentration of street gang activity.¹ According to the City of Montréal Police Service, there are at least thirty street gangs operating on the Isle of Montréal with approximately 500 active members at any given time.² The City of Montréal Police Service estimates that 1400 people are associated with the criminal activities of gangs in the City including full gang members and those on the fringes.³

Over the last several years, street gang activity has extended to areas bordering the Isle of Montréal and increases in sex trade activity, drug trade activity and property damage have been reported.⁴ Youth at risk have become increasingly vulnerable to the recruitment of gangs and the Gangs de rue project focuses on those youth clearly becoming associated with gang activity to provide them with intensive support to move away from gangs and in to productive life styles.

The Gangs de rue project combines intensive monitoring with social integration activities and relies on the coordination of resources from multiple organizations. The involvement of families is crucial to the success of the project and to the goal of positive re-integration of the youth in to the community.

The Evidence Base

The Gangs de Rue project is based on evidence from the Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive (or "Spergel") Model.

Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP)

The Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership is an intervention project involving members of street gangs in police precincts where the homicide rate among young people is the highest. The project was implemented in the first precinct in 1999 and was later extended to two additional precincts; essentially, the program aims to reduce violent crime-particularly homicide-committed by or against young people.

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The YVRP is a result of the close partnership between various public agencies (police, probation) and community organizations (street workers, religious organizations) who work with the client group. Rather than working independently, the YVRP focuses on cooperation and coordination between the organizations. The joint action that results intensifies interventions with young people and further discourages them from engaging in crime. Another goal of this work is to promote social reintegration.

The evaluation data show that the homicide rate attributable to street gangs decreased overall in the precincts where YVRP was implemented and that close surveillance made it possible to detect a large number of offences that were subsequently penalized. The front-line workers were able to persuade a significant number of young people to attend assistance or rehabilitation programs.⁵

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Prevention (or "Spergel") Model

The Spergel Model is a balanced, three-pronged approach that encompasses prevention, intervention and suppression activities. The model presumes that gangs become chronic and serious problems in communities where key organizations are inadequately integrated and sufficient resources are not available to target gang-involved youth. To address these problems, the Comprehensive Gang Model calls for community institutions - including law enforcement, social welfare agencies, and grass roots organizations - to work together to achieve a more integrated, team-oriented approach. The main goal of the Spergel Model is to reduce and prevent gang crime and violence.

The model was piloted in the Little Village neighbourhood of Chicago, Illinois, starting in 1992. With some subsequent modifications, this design gave rise to the OJJDP Comprehensive Community-Wide Gang Model in 1995 which has been implemented and tested in 5 sites across the United States.

The evaluation concluded that:

- Serious gang violence among the targeted gang members was lower than among members of comparable gangs in the area. Specifically, there were fewer arrests for serious gang crimes (especially aggravated batteries and aggravated assaults) involving members of targeted gangs in comparison with a control group of youths from the same gangs and members of other gangs in Little Village;
- Using a combination of various social interventions involving youth outreach workers and suppression tactics, was more effective for more-violent youths, while the sole use of youth workers was more effective for less-violent youths;
- The project was apparently most effective in assisting older youths to significantly reduce their criminal activities (particularly violence) more quickly than would have been the case if no project services had been provided; and
- The project was particularly successful in reducing drug arrests for program youth compared to comparison and quasi-program youth, who showed increased drug arrests.⁶

Program Participants

The project focuses on youth aged 15-25 who are either already involved, or at high risk of becoming involved, in gang activity.

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Key Partners

The Gangs de Rue project involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- Quebec Ministry of Public Safety
- City of Montréal
- Teen Community Project in Street Work – street PACT
- Batshaw Youth and Family Centre
- City of Montréal Police Service
- Direction of Public Prosecution Service of Quebec
- Quebec Correctional Services

Program Components

Once youth are identified, an assessment of their risks and needs is conducted to fully understand any legal conditions they are under and their own unique combination of risk and protective factors.

Individual Action Plans

A focused, intensive plan of action is developed for each of the youth participants and their families. Three to four meetings a week between the youth, family and project staff are normal and this is augmented with other contacts in community organizations arranged through the project staff.

Participants in the program spend 20-40 hours per week involved in activities related to the project. These can include school, professional training, employment skill development, job searching, volunteer work and recreational activities.

Street Outreach

Project staff are engaged in street outreach to identify and support youth in the program.

Workshops

Group workshops are held once a week and cover topics such as communication skills, alternatives to violence, conflict resolution, empathy and problem solving.

Evaluation Design

A comprehensive process and impact evaluation of the project is planned. Pending finalization, the impact evaluation will be conducted by a third party evaluator. The purpose of the evaluation will be to thoroughly document the Gangs de Rue project implementation and impacts, in order to contribute to the knowledge of what project components work best to prevent or reduce gang involvement.

Preliminary Results

The Gangs de rue project has not been implemented long enough to gather information on preliminary results.

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Implementation Observations

Project Development

The adaptation of a comprehensive model like the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP) requires extensive planning and time to fully draw upon lessons learned from years of experience in Philadelphia relevant to how cities and other jurisdictions can plan and carry out a similar initiative.⁷

The development of the Gangs de rue project has been intensive and included:

- A site visit with various partners to be involved in the project
- Delineation of roles and training required for staff
- Detailed assessment of the costs to deliver the project
- In depth discussions with partners to identify protocols for working together and agree on roles and responsibilities

For more information on this project please contact:

Centre jeunesse de Montréal – Institut universitaire

4675, rue Bélanger
Montréal, QC H1T 1C2
Tél.: 514-896-3439

Public Safety Canada

National Crime Prevention Centre
Québec Region
800 De la Gauchetière St. W
Montréal, QC H5A 1L6
Tel.: 514-283-2018
Toll Free: 1-877-302-6272

If you wish to register to receive crime prevention information please visit the subscription page at:

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/ml/index-eng.aspx>.

¹ For more information about SPVM and gang prevention visit:
http://www.spvm.qc.ca/EN/service/1_4_3_1_phenomene.asp.

² Contact the sponsor organization for more information.

³ For more information about SPVM and gang prevention visit:
http://www.spvm.qc.ca/EN/service/1_4_3_1_phenomene.asp.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For more information visit: <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/2008-pcpp-eng.aspx>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jucovy, Linda and Wendy S. McClanahan (2008) Reaching Through the Cracks. A Guide to Implementing the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership, Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia.