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Crime Prevention in Action
Youth Gang Prevention Fund

CPA-13

Wraparound Surrey: A Youth Driven Comprehensive Plan for Gang Violence Prevention

The Wraparound Surrey project addresses the increasing incidence of youth gang activity in Surrey, British Columbia. The program provides pro-social alternatives for youth at-risk of gang involvement, youth displaying gang associated behaviors, and those currently involved in gangs. The project offers supports that enhance social and problem solving skills to prevent youth from joining gangs and to assist them in exiting gangs. Wraparound Surrey is supported by [Public Safety Canada](#), National Crime Prevention Centre, Youth Gang Prevention Fund and is operated by the Board of Education Surrey School District #36. The project began in April, 2008 and will be piloted and evaluated under the YGPF until March, 2011.

From 1990-1999, there was an annual average of 115 victims of homicide in British Columbia, and in 2000, Statistics Canada reported that one out of every eight homicides were gang-related.¹ Nationally, gang-related homicides have been on the rise since the early 1990's and accounted for almost one out of four homicides in 2008.² This rise in gang-related homicides was largely a result of the increasing number of incidents in Alberta and British Columbia.³ In particular, 16 of the 117 homicides in British Columbia during 2008 occurred in the Surrey area.⁴

The Surrey School District is the largest in British Columbia and one of the fastest growing school districts in Canada with over 67,000 students.⁵ The District's [Youth Diversity Liaison \(YDL\) Program](#) functions to "provide culturally sensitive, relevant support for diverse students and their families throughout the district, including a continuum of service for students and families experiencing challenging circumstances".⁶ This program provides knowledge of gang activities by documenting incidents of youth gang associated behaviour on school property that range from relatively minor confrontations involving intimidation and bullying; to "Fight Club" events organized via email and text messaging; and serious assaults with guns and machetes. Schools in Surrey are not the only places where youth gang-related activity occurs. Outreach workers from the [City of Surrey](#) and [Pacific Community Resources Society](#) report gang-related behaviour at bus loops, city parks, and community recreation centres.

In preparation for the Wraparound Surrey project, the Surrey School District collaborated with the [Surrey Community Action and Assessment Network \(CAAN\)](#) to conduct a comprehensive inventory of services offered by community agencies - education through prevention and intervention in a variety of languages and cultures - and form the foundation for the selection of supports for youth involved in the Wraparound Surrey project.

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The Evidence Base

The Wraparound Surrey project is based on the [Milwaukee Wraparound](#) program⁷ and the Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP).

Milwaukee Wraparound Program

Wraparound Milwaukee is a comprehensive program that focuses on delivering strength-based, individualized care to delinquent youth and their families. It was designed to reduce the number of youth being institutionalized by providing family-based treatment and programs within the community. The program targets youth ages 13 to 17 with serious emotional, behavioural, and mental health needs and their families.⁸

The goals of Wraparound Milwaukee are to:

- reduce anti-social behaviour;
- help families access available services;
- increase association with pro-social peers;
- increase family cohesion; and
- minimize out-of-home placements.

Evaluation has demonstrated that youth who received interventions from Wraparound Milwaukee had significant reductions in recidivism rates. They had significant decreases in felony referrals, misdemeanour referrals. They also committed fewer sex offences, property offences, assault offences, and weapons offences.⁹

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.

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.¹⁰

Program Participants

The project works with youth, aged 11 to 17, currently enrolled in a Surrey District school, who are at risk of gang involvement, display gang associated behaviours, or are currently involved in gangs. Participants come from a wide spectrum of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The project also includes the families of participants in program activities.

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Key Partners

The Wraparound Surrey project involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- City of Surrey
- Surrey Gang Task Force
- Pacific Community Resources Society
- Options Services to Community Society
- Surrey RCMP
- YMCA
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Government of British Columbia
- Surrey Youth Justice Services
- Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Program Components

Youth referred to the Wraparound Surrey Project undergo a detailed assessment to determine their needs and develop a tailored care plan. Each plan identifies the specific risks and needs of a youth and includes a listing of family and community supports and resources that will be accessed.

Other activities include the development and delivery of a training curriculum for front-line staff within the City of Surrey to help them identify and support youth currently in gangs, those displaying gang-associated behaviour, or those at risk of being recruited into gangs.

A training program has also been developed to assist parents in providing enhanced support for their children who may be at risk of involvement in gang activity.

Wraparound Surrey project staff are also responsible for the development and implementation of an education program in the Surrey School District to educate youth about the realities of gang involvement and encourage the development of skills that prevent successful recruitment into gangs.

Evaluation Design

A comprehensive evaluation of the project is being conducted by a third party evaluator. The purpose of the evaluation is to thoroughly document the Wraparound Surrey project implementation and impacts, in order to contribute to the knowledge of what project components work best to prevent or reduce gang involvement.

The project will be evaluated using a quasi experimental design. Youth who have been assessed as eligible for the program but have not yet received services will be included in the comparison group. Data is being collected pre and post program and includes regular follow up with youth once they have exited the program. Multiple lines of evidence are incorporated into the design including the collection of statistics in cooperation with the Surrey RCMP, school data, and individual level data from case files and risk assessment (YLS/CMI).¹ In addition, interviews and surveys will be administered with stakeholders and parents. The design will enable the evaluators to track changes in the attitudes of the youth involved in the program, gang membership, and gang activity in the community throughout the course of the project.

¹ Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory

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Preliminary Results

The project has completed approximately 40 assessments with 75 individuals engaged in the program activities. Preliminary data suggests that the project is targeting the appropriate youth to participate in the program and the referrals received by partnering agencies have been for youth at high-risk and eligible to participate in the project.¹¹

Implementation Observations

Referrals

As a result of high media exposure at the onset of the program, interest from participants wanting to be involved in the program activities has been greater than anticipated. Since the program began in 2008 with 40 referrals, Wraparound Surrey staff have received an additional 20 participant referrals from local partners. A waiting list for participation in the program has been created, and referral information is being tracked by project staff.

More specifically, the project is receiving a greater number of referrals from elementary schools than was originally anticipated. The team has tailored additional activities to meet the needs of younger participants. It was anticipated that the majority of participants would be older (15-17) and in fact, the majority appear to be between 11 and 14 years of age.

Time/Resource Allocation

Although the project design had initially proposed to actively engage 60 participants in program activities at any given time throughout the life of the project, the project team has gone back to revisit this number because of the time and resource intensiveness of participant risk assessments. The time needed to conduct a risk assessment for each participant is lengthy because of the amount and depth of information that must be collected from practitioners and criminal justice professionals who are knowledgeable about a participant's behavioural history. The purchase and use of specialized software has been instrumental in tracking and reporting on the progress being made at individual and collective levels.

Risk Assessment and Case Management Tools

To assess the risk of criminal involvement for project participants and facilitate the planning of care, the Wraparound Surrey staff use the Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory (YLS-CMI)¹². YLS-CMI is a risk assessment and case management tool combined into one system that allows program staff and other criminal justice practitioners and professionals to identify a youth's major needs, strengths, barriers, and incentives; select the most appropriate goals for him or her; and produce an effective case management plan for working with that youth. The YLS-CMI was developed using longitudinal data on the risk and protective factors of youth involved in criminal activity and, as a result, this tool is focused on assessing 'traditional' risk factors for delinquent behaviour among youth.

Cultural Program Adaptations

The City of Surrey represents a diverse ethnic population. The Wraparound Surrey project has been adapted to ensure it is culturally appropriate and respectful of cultural differences. This is especially important in the assessment of risk and protective factors and the development of care plans.

A limitation of the risk assessment tool in Surrey was that it did not adequately assess the 'non-traditional' risk factors for criminal involvement that are prevalent among the culturally diverse youth at risk in the Surrey community. As a result, a unique assessment tool has been developed, which includes measurement of non-traditional risk factors. Relevant normative data and the

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identification of additional risk indicators has been part of this work. The revised assessment tool will be validated as part of the project evaluation.

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

¹ Statistics Canada. 2001. *Homicide statistics*. Retrieved November 17, 2009 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/011031/dq011031b-eng.htm>

² Statistics Canada. 2008. *Homicide in Canada*. Retrieved November 17, 2009 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/091028/dq091028a-eng.htm>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Surrey District School Board. 2009. Retrieved November 17, 2009 from <http://www.sd36.bc.ca/>

⁶ Youth Diversity Liaison. 2009. Retrieved November 17, 2009 from <http://www.sd36.bc.ca/general/brochures/youthdiversityliaison.pdf>

⁷ The program was also based on two similar wraparound programs: *Wraparound in Nevada* (for more information see <http://www.dcfs.state.nv.us/Reports/WIN%20Outcome%20Report%2012-31-04.pdf>) and *Seattle Team for Youth* (for more information see <http://www.seattle.gov/police/programs/youth/STFY.htm>)

⁸ For more information visit: <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/2008-pcpp-eng.aspx>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For more information on preliminary outcomes, contact the project sponsor.

¹² For additional information on the YLS-CMI, see www.justice.gc.ca