

The Youth Intervention and Diversion (YID) model is an evidence-based process designed to divert youth aged 12-17 away from the criminal justice system. Utilizing the scientifically validated Risk/Need/Responsivity (RNR) approach to youth crime, YID focuses on screening low risk/no risk youth out of the criminal justice system altogether while referring moderate to high risk youth to scarce community services. YID makes full use of Section 6 extrajudicial measures (EJM) and Section 19 conferences within the YCJA. The initiative employs validated screening and assessment tools to identify specific risk factors known to cause youth to become involved in crime. Young persons are referred by a police officer to specially trained Youth Intervention & Diversion Teams (YIDT) made up of civilian and uniformed members of the RCMP. The YIDT uses a short version screening tool to screen for risk factors and, as appropriate, refers the youth to a multi-disciplinary Youth Intervention & Diversion Committee (YIDC) made up of community partners such as child social workers, addictions/mental health clinicians, probation officers, educators, and other community service providers. The YIDC completes in-depth, multi-dimensional assessments using evidence-based tools like the Youth Level of Service / Case Management Inventory, the How I Think Questionnaire, and the Child Behaviour Checklist. The YIDCs conduct case planning and refer youth to appropriate community services based on their individual needs.

This pre-charge approach to intervention planning considers how the intervention should be delivered and matches the YP's individual strengths, interests, learning style, cognitive ability, and circumstances to the most appropriate services. Collaborative planning with community service providers has an added benefit of avoiding unnecessary duplication of service delivery and efficient pooling of often scarce resources.

YID is led by Civilian Members of the RCMP called Community Program Officers (CPOs) and uniformed Crime Prevention personnel who make up YIDTs. These human resources have traditionally been focused on delivering education and awareness programs to youth, predominantly in schools. While some education and awareness in schools still takes place, under the YID model, these personnel are now focused on moderate risk 12-17 year olds in conflict with the law. The end goal is to get the right youth to the right services at the right time while making the most of police and community resources.

Key Objectives

- Pre-charge criminogenic assessments and evidence-based intervention planning for young persons in conflict with the law.
- Engaging all employees, other policing and community services and citizens in crime prevention. This model seeks to make full use of community resources to address the underlying causes of crime. Police identify who needs to go where and community and government service providers apply the required intervention or treatment.

- Reinvigorating crime prevention as a core responsibility of policing as per the RCMP Act, Section 18. YID stresses crime prevention as a foundational element in an integrated, cost effective and evidence-based continuum of responses to crime.
- Strategic use of resources – The YID model ensures low risk/no risk youth are not using up scarce community resources. They are sent home with a warning or caution in the majority of cases. YID ensures only the highest risk youth (prolific offenders) are being sent into an already overburdened court and correctional system. Most importantly, moderate risk youth, amongst whom we would find the next generation of prolific offenders, are referred to services in the community based on a multi-dimensional assessment using evidence-based tools. This ensures they are receiving the appropriate intervention to assist in reducing their risk factors and enhancing their protective factors. The right youth to the right services at the right time.
- Reduced police ownership in largely ineffective and costly education and awareness programs/activities/initiatives. Parents and teachers are doing an exceptional job of educating our youth. While we have a minor role to play, evidence suggests that school-based education and awareness programs should not be a major component in police-based crime prevention strategies.
- The YID model seeks to ensure front line police officers are making the most of their discretionary powers under the YCJA. All front line police officers have been trained on the YCJA and YIDTs made up of fully trained crime prevention personnel (CPOs and uniformed officers) are available to assist them with youth files. Indeed, these teams are taking files right off the front line officer's case load, thereby allowing them more time to respond to emergencies, investigate files and conduct proactive patrols.
- The model seeks to influence decision-makers to streamline funding to those programs proven to be effective in addressing root causes of crime. The police role in this component is one of leadership - catalysts for change - without taking ownership of delivering or developing new programs/activities.
- Crime reduction and reduced incarceration rates for youth.

Responsibility Center

The Crime Reduction Unit oversees the Youth, Aboriginal Policing, Crime Prevention, Drug Prevention and Crime Reduction Strategies. Part of the reasoning here was to align all of our proactive policing strategies under one decision-maker and one vision. This demonstrates to front line personnel that Crime Prevention and Crime Reduction are, indeed, two components to the same strategy. Front line police officers had already bought in to the CR strategy which focused on prolific and priority offenders, crime hotspots, etc. – an easy sell. Aligning CR with CP effectively ended the era of 'stickers and colouring books' and started the era of evidence-based and intelligence-led policing. Front line officers

now recognize that CR and CP apply the same principles which focus the right resources on the right individuals at the right times. They see their own role in this initiative which is essential to the success of any policing strategy.

Partners Involved

Almost all youth-serving agencies are involved, including both mandated and non-mandated services (education, mental health/addictions, social development, public safety, First Nations partners, etc.). These agencies are directly involved. Most participate on the Youth Intervention & Diversion Committees; some have been approached to provide funding for youth programs, most have participated in RCMP training initiatives so that they are better trained to receive youth referrals; some assist in governance by providing strategic direction to the Officer In Charge; and, an academic institute is conducting research and evaluation of the initiative (PhD student at UNBSJ).

Economics

YID is based on the very best evidence and research available on what actually works to prevent crime and what the role of the police should be in doing so. Subsequent economic/fiscal concerns have reinforced the need for this evidence-based strategy, but we would continue down this road regardless of the fiscal environment.

Most police agencies have people assigned full time to Community Policing or Crime Prevention Units. Implementing this model was about educating employees and senior managers about what those resources should be doing in order to have an impact on crime. We re-assigned these resources. As mentioned, the civilian CPOs, who were hired to deliver education and awareness initiatives, are now coordinating the YID model in their Districts. In addition, DARE officers and provincial DARE coordinators are now coordinating the YID model both at the Divisional level and in Districts (in partnership with CPOs). This was more of a cultural shift in how we are attempting to prevent crime. The evidence is very clear in that we are more likely to prevent crime by focusing our crime prevention resources on those who are most likely to go on to become serious or habitual offenders – moderate to high risk youth. Low risk or no risk youth are far less likely to go on to become offenders, habitual or otherwise, so having officers spend the majority of their time in classrooms was more of a public relations effort than a crime prevention one. The program did receive some funding from the Federal Dept of Justice to support our training efforts (200K over two years) which definitely moved things along a little faster.

J Division (New Brunswick) was very fortunate to have civilian personnel in place already that had a crime prevention mandate. This is an innovation in and of itself. A CPO costs far less than a police officer, but they never get distracted from their crime prevention mandate – unlike uniformed officers. All J Division had to do was re-focus these personnel to where the evidence was telling us they could have an impact on crime – moderate risk youth. They are now CP/CR experts and provide regular training and assistance to front line officers as well as facilitate the training and engagement of community partners and mandated service providers.

Implementation

The Officer in Charge (OIC) first articulated a Vision, Guiding Principles and Strategic Priorities which were communicated at every opportunity to obtain buy-in amongst senior leaders and middle managers. Training was provided to CPOs who began implementing the initiative in their respective districts with the assistance of the Division unit (an OIC, a Sgt and a civilian member). CPOs were trained as trainers in the major components of this plan (i.e. the YCJA, youth screening, etc.) and subsequently trained the officers and partners in their districts. Specific objectives, initiatives and targets were included on the Commanding Officer's balanced scorecard and subsequently on the Annual Performance Plans for each District Commander. An implementation evaluation 18 months into the initiative provided some key lessons learned and gave direction to improve the model. It also helped articulate Division policy which is now in place.

Key outcomes

- In the first year, the target was to have each District initiate a “recognizable intervention and diversion process” based on the Five Year Strategy outlined by the OIC (included guiding principles and strategic priorities). All 12 Districts became engaged.
- The initiative now measures how many youth are being referred to YID (averaging 110 per month) and how many are subsequently being referred to community services (averaging 75 per month). We track how many screening tools and assessments are completed, the number of Section 19 youth conferences held, warnings, cautions, etc. We will next begin to measure how many youth follow through on referrals. These outcomes, we expect, are the lead measures in an eventual reduction in risk factors (based on follow up assessments) amongst the youth involved. This, in turn, we anticipate, will lead to a reduction in youth crime and hopefully a reduction in youth incarceration rates. This is all supported by the RNR theory.
- The number of referrals to the program helps assess the engagement level of our front line police officers. Referrals to community services at the outset were almost nil, thus an average of 75 per month is a huge step forward.
- Senior managers now use the language of crime prevention and crime reduction interchangeably. A cultural shift has occurred and crime prevention is no longer seen as the responsibility of someone “down the hall”. Youth Intervention and Diversion is now one of the major components of our Crime Reduction strategy.
- By conducting scientifically validated criminogenic screening and assessment, we can be more certain that the referrals to community services are meaningful. This ensures proper use of resources. By screening out no risk/low risk youth, we are also making better use of community resources and ensuring we are not contributing to the unnecessary criminalization of our youth.

- We have moved away from some very costly and largely ineffective school based education and awareness programs, thus making better use of police resources.
- CPOs have trained police officers to recognize the value of diversion and have contributed to reducing officers' workloads.
- Provincial Public Safety Corrections reports there has been a substantial reduction in the number of youth files being referred to Alternative Measures (Extrajudicial Sanctions). The numbers are very promising. This reduces the number of youth who have a court record. Evidence shows youth with a court record are far more likely to be charged, thus we have reduced unnecessary criminalization of youth.
- We also set out to create a pool of "crime prevention professionals" who are experts in youth crime prevention. We have done so with our CPOs and uniformed crime prevention personnel who are now fully trained on risk and protective factors, youth screening/assessment and the YCJA. In addition, the RCMP has used its influence to obtain funding to build additional skill and capacity amongst community and government service providers to better enable them to deliver evidence-based interventions for youth. The aforementioned DOJ funding was used, in part, to provide specific skills to service providers (such as motivational interviewing training, mental health training, intervention for youth who misuse drugs and alcohol, etc). All of the training we do is integrated – police, government employees and community learning side-by-side. We are using police leadership to build community capacity.
- Preliminary discussions have taken place regarding funding allocation where we have attempted to influence public spending based on evidence that shows some programs are providing a better service than others. These are not decisions we control, but we will continue to try and influence in this area.
- In the first two years from implementation, the NB youth crime rate dropped 27%, the youth Crime Severity Index dropped 30% and incidents of youth crime in RCMP jurisdiction were reduced almost 33%. Prior to implementation, incidents of youth crime in RCMP jurisdiction were trending up. Overall, youth incidents are down almost 38% from their peak in 2008.

Communications - Key Messages

For Communities and Partners:

1. The police are going to get better at referring youth to community services, so get ready.
2. If you are making evidenced-based decisions about youth (i.e. the police officer or CPO is using evidence-based tools to screen for risk factors, the YIDC is using evidence-based tools to assess and plan for youth and the community is offering evidence-based programs to deal with risk

factors) and you subsequently determine that there are gaps in services, the RCMP will use its full influence as well as that of every government partner it can bring to the table, to assist the community in obtaining the required funding to fill the noted gaps. (In other words, “get ready”, but if you are on board, we’ll help you get ready.)

For Front Line Police Officers:

1. All youth are not the same, thus the police response to all youth should not be the same.
2. The decision made by a police officer who is contemplating a charge against a young person is very likely to have an impact that will last the rest of the young person’s life – for better or for worse. We have an obligation to always try to make this decision for the better and avoid labeling youth as offenders. We must therefore consider the totality of the circumstances, including the risk factors that may have led the youth to commit a crime in the first place.
3. Crime prevention is the responsibility of all police officers and not just the crime prevention unit. The YCJA is one of the most important pieces of enabling legislation designed to assist a police officer in his/her prevention mandate.
4. Know your options under the YCJA and know that your discretion is limited in that you **MUST** first consider EJM when dealing with a youth.
5. CPOs and uniformed crime prevention personnel are now experts in youth intervention and diversion and they can assist by taking youth files off your desk.

For Senior Managers:

1. We must not separate our crime prevention mandate from our enforcement mandate. We must discuss crime prevention and crime reduction as two sides of the same coin, sharing the exact same principles – the right people to the right services at the right time. Sometimes that means court and jail (enforcement), but often it means some form of community intervention (prevention), especially for youth.
2. If we are to make the best use of scarce resources, we need to ensure that those who are responsible for implementing our crime prevention strategy are not solely focused on education and awareness. There is no evidence to suggest that our education and awareness efforts have actually led to a reduction in crime.

Evaluation

An implementation evaluation was completed about 18 months into the initiative by a PhD student hired under the Federal Student Work Experience Program. The recommendations have been implemented and the findings were instrumental in the creation of Division policy. The same student

has begun the impact evaluation research for her PhD dissertation (Jan '14). This will measure changes in risk factors amongst referred youth, recidivism/re-contact rates, compliance, etc.

Early feedback from participants has been exceptionally positive. In one district, of the first 20 youth referred to the program, only one had reoffended some 8-10 months after intervention. To date, approximately 2000 youth have gone through the YID process and over 1500 have been screened using the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory – Screening Version. The data around risk factors has been valuable in terms of assigning resources and assessing the need for additional resources and training. The data is regularly shared with provincial partners in Corrections, Public Safety and NGO service providers. This allows partners to also target resources and training to meet the needs of our youth.

Statistics are also broken down by District to allow for localized discussions on the needs of youth. Already, as a result of data from screening youth, the RCMP has provided training on an evidence-based program designed to intervene with youth who have demonstrated a propensity to misuse drugs or alcohol. Nearly 100 facilitators have been trained and are now accepting referrals from police and other sources.

Currently, the average number of youth being referred to the program is approximately 110 per month. Approximately 75 per month are being referred to community services to deal with risk factors identified through appropriate screening and assessment.

Efficiencies Within Police Services & Community Engagement

YID capitalized on the success of the J Division Crime Reduction strategy which effectively engaged front line police personnel in an evidence-based approach to prolific offenders. YID demonstrated the connection between prevention and reduction by providing a clear, compelling and evidence-based vision that focused crime prevention efforts on the “next generation” of prolific offenders. This strategy demonstrated to officers that Crime Prevention was more than an exercise of ‘stickers and coloring books’ and convinced them they have a huge role to play. It helped officers understand that their discretion is the most powerful prevention tool at their disposal. It taught them how to contribute to Crime Prevention and Crime Reduction by ensuring they make good decisions with moderate to high risk youth. Over 90% of J Division’s front line police officers were trained on the YCJA (emphasis on Extrajudicial Measures), risk and protective factors (to help understand the root causes of youth crime) and a risk screening tool (to demonstrate that all youth were not the same, thus the police response should not be the same for all youth).

The YID model also responded to the specific challenges of rural NB populations by utilizing the ‘committee’ approach to youth assessments and intervention planning in lieu of the ‘central agency’ approach seen in some urban centers (such as Ottawa). Rural NB simply does not have the resources of large cities, so a committee approach was necessary. However, the YID also operates effectively in Codiac, which is the largest municipality policed by the RCMP in NB.

The YCJA contains specific principles and mandated requirements that guide police officers to refer youthful offenders to EJM when appropriate. We are now using this provision to the fullest advantage of our communities and our youth by steering at risk youth away from an overburdened criminal justice system and into evidence-based programs that have proven to reduce their propensity to offend. By identifying a moderate risk youth for treatment early, we are capitalizing on an opportunity to get them to the appropriate services before it is too costly (i.e. incarceration).

This strategy further demonstrated innovation by realigning crime prevention resources to create a pool of intervention and diversion experts. These CPOs and uniformed crime prevention personnel are able to reduce a front line officer's workload by taking youth files off their desks. They are also the 'go to' people for advice, training and expertise on youth crime; assisting District Commanders, front-line officers and community partners. This pool of experts also ensures the sustainability of this initiative.

Most importantly, this initiative has fully engaged community service providers in contributing to the youth criminal justice system. They have taken the responsibility for providing services and support to youth in crisis as per the principles of the YCJA.

Building Community Capacity

Youth at risk are often referred to community based services, programs, initiatives or activities to address issues such as poor peer association, drug and alcohol misuse, family problems, etc. The Crime Reduction Unit obtained significant federal funding which was used to facilitate workshops for over 640 police, provincial partners and community service providers. The workshops covered topics such as mental health, addictions, motivational interviewing, restorative practices and youth diversion. Training was based on data obtained through youth screening and feedback from community partners on gaps in services and skills required to effectively treat the youth being referred. Some of the funding was used to train 120 facilitators from all over NB on the SEEING ONESELF[®] program - an evidence-based youth alcohol/drug misuse intervention program which has also demonstrated good outcomes for mental health issues. The intention of YID was to integrate the efforts of the police, the community, NGOs and government agencies to provide timely, meaningful and appropriate interventions for youth. In building community capacity to increase protective factors and decrease youth recidivism, the YID model has made an investment in the long term wellness of children, youth and families. Indeed, the fact that this model is based in very sound research and evidence is one of the major reasons J Division has been able to attract this type of financial investment from federal partners.

Culture Change

We now have all of our Crime Prevention resources focused on a strategy supported by solid research and scientific theory – evidence based policing. By focusing on moderate risk youth, we have the potential to realize medium and long term reductions in crime, thus allowing police forces the opportunity to be less reactive and more proactive. This initiative also engages front line police officers in fulfilling their responsibilities around Crime Prevention. Simply put, the policing profession has, for

many years, been largely ignoring the evidence on what works to prevent crime. Evidence shows one dollar spent preventing crime saves a minimum of seven in enforcement, prosecution and other costs. Prevention must be evidence-based to have this kind of impact. By giving police officers the best available tools, training and processes, this initiative embraces the role of the police as gate keepers to the “system”. It ensures that police are making decisions based not on personal biases, or traditional considerations like the seriousness of the offence, the attitude of the offender, the impact on the victim/community (all of which are still important considerations), but on the totality of the circumstances, including what risk factors might be at play. The reason we have a different justice system for youth is because youth are predisposed to risky behaviour. They should not be labeled as criminals for simply being teenagers.

The RNR approach ensures proportionality and avoids labeling and criminalization by screening and assessing a YP’s risks, needs and their likelihood of success. This program reduces the possibility of an over-reaction or under-reaction by basing responses on the risk level of the YP. It provides a more timely response than the court system (policy demands quick action) which is helpful so a YP can make the connection between the offense and the consequence. The program is consent-based, involves families in the screening/assessment process and has significant community involvement. It involves building community capacity and the RCMP has facilitated training for community partners on much needed skills and evidence-based programs.

CPOs and division Drug and Organized Crime Awareness personnel, who had been focused on education and awareness, are now fully engaged as part of YIDTs. They train new personnel and community partners on the YCJA, risk and protective factors, youth assessment and screening, YCJA conferences, Restorative Justice and Section 6 referrals. They have engaged community partners through YIDCs (which properly assess the risks and needs of YPs), regularly hold conferences under Section 19 and make meaningful and timely referrals to community services.