

YOUTH INTERVENTION OUTREACH PROGRAM

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES
COMMUNITY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
PEI

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In the beginning....

As the introduction of the YCJA was pending, the question was asked in PEI:

“How can we best identify youth at the highest risk for entering the formal justice system and offer help to interrupt this path?”

The answer: the police see our justice involved youth first and can often predict their trajectory, in the absence of intervention.

In February 2002, The Youth Intervention Outreach Program (YIOP) was implemented by way of funding from the Department of Justice Canada.

Initial Impacts of the YCJA:

- Significant decrease in number of youth being sentenced to custody thus in 2003 and 2005, the open custody facilities on PEI were closed
- Financial resources were re-allocated, by Community and Correctional Services, in part, to “the front door”. This ensured the sustainability of the YIOP
- Community resources within justice were re-organized into specialized Youth Justice Services Teams (east and west) offering a continuum of service ranging from prevention and early intervention to rehabilitation and enforcement. YIOP falls under the umbrella of these teams

COMPONENTS OF THE YIOP PROGRAM:

- Youth Intervention Outreach Workers are physically co-located at police stations.
- Outreach Workers are clinically and administratively supervised by the Youth Justice Services Manager.
- They are highly skilled and qualifications include at least 5 years work experience with youth at risk and possess a relevant university degree or Child and Youth Care Diploma.
- Referrals to the program, of youth age 12 – 17 years, originate solely from police officers using the power of discretion given under section 6 of the YCJA and with the consent of the youth and parents.
- Youth and family participation in the program is voluntary
- There are currently 5 Outreach Workers positioned in critical municipal police and RCMP detachments: Summerside and Charlottetown Municipal Police Services and Kings, Queens and West Prince Detachments of the RCMP.
- Success = strong working relationships with police and user friendly access to the service.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHIES:

- Critical to address the underlying issues/root causes of presenting behaviors
- Strength based approach
- Family focus
- Engagement and relationship building are key
- Connecting youth to community
- Repairing the harm done
- Engaging the community
- Collaboration and partnerships are key
- Creative problem solving is essential in the face of limited resources

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES:

❖ Each community has different needs and each Outreach Worker bring unique strengths and skills.

- Kids and Cops Guitar Program
- Survival Techniques Program (ABL)
- Graffiti Wipe-Out
- Active Parenting of Teens Support Group
- Skills Program
- 120 Program
- Gender specific programming - ie. Girls Circle

CASE EXAMPLES:

- Youth referred to YIOP present with varying needs, risks, protective factors, and strengths.
- Supporting those youth and families with mental health needs can be especially challenging because of the complexity of the issues coupled with limited resources.
- The following case examples highlight YIOP's Outreach Worker's attention to relationship building, advocacy and system navigation, strength based approach, collaboration and determination!



Sam is 13 year old male who got
caught selling drugs at school....



Building a relationship with Sam and his family revealed pertinent information:

- Addiction issues involving prescription drugs
- Problematic functioning in relationships, school, community, etc.
- Strengths/interests
- Family dynamics
- Previous trauma impacting mental health functioning

Intervention:

- Referral to Addiction Services
- Advocacy to Strength Program
- Referral to Mental Health Services
- Participation of parents in the Active Parenting of Teens Support Group
- Referral to alternative therapies ie Acupuncture, music, meditation, etc.

Outcome:

- Established long-term goals (electric welder)
- Achieving 87% average at school and attending regularly
- Using concrete strategies to manage flashbacks
- Positive relationship with a girlfriend
- Family unit strengthened
- Continuing with counseling
- Maintaining sobriety



John is 16 year old male referred to YIOP because of an assault against his mother.

Building a relationship with John and his family revealed pertinent information:

- Severe problems functioning at school
- Family dynamics
- Mom had mental health issues
- John struggling with severe anxiety and depression
- Genuine caring and concern among family members

Intervention:

- Referral for John to a private practitioner for mental health services (mother had insurance)
- Referral to family doctor - medication prescribed
- Intense support to mother
- Referral to private practitioner for mother for mental health services
- Close collaboration between private practitioners and Outreach Worker
- Facilitated re-commitment of absent father
- Organized attendance at Sylvan Learning Center to compensate for missed school time.

Outcome:

- John returned to school and is functioning well
- Relationship between mother and John has improved
- Reconnection between father and John
- Counseling and medication has improved John's functioning at school, in the community, and within the family unit
- Mother gained insight into issues impacting her relationship with John



Jane is a 15 year old girl referred to YIOP for assault against both her parents. She initiated the original call to 911.

Building a relationship with Jane and her family revealed pertinent information:

- Extreme family conflict over Jane's refusal to attend school
- Severe social anxiety presents in the form of a variety of physical symptoms to avoid school and social interactions
- Jane is withdrawn and spends a lot of time in bed
- Pediatrician involvement 2 years previous, but non-compliance by Jane to take meds and no further follow up for services
- Father struggles with mental health issues in the form of anxiety - on medication following the precipitating incident for referral
- Mother is primary in discipline and father avoids conflict in family
- Jane is willing to set goals which speaks of hope

Intervention:

- Referral to Mental Health Services in November. Jane is now refusing to go.
- Referral to Pediatrician who in turn referred to Psychiatrist (on wait list - pending)
- Referral to Family Physician who prescribed medication
- Efforts for engagement and relationship building with Jane continues although she is reluctant
- Significant support continues to be offered to mother

Outcomes:

- Services are ongoing
- Accessing services to meet Jane's needs continue to be challenging
- Relationship building continues
- Efforts to help Jane manage her anxiety and get back in school continue
- Support to family in managing relationships and conflict continue
- Stay tuned...

SUMMARY:

- The YIOP will continue to receive referrals regarding youth with mental health needs, like those outlined for Sam, John, and Jane.

Major Challenges include:

- Concurrent issues - often addiction and mental health issues are present
- Complexity of issues - all significant realms of life are impacted: relationship, community, school, health, etc.
- Limited resources - often mean wait lists or limited follow up

Program strengths in addressing needs include:

- Police officers who care and are willing to use discretion to refer to YIOP
- Holistic and family approach - not dealing with the youth in isolation
- Knowledge of community resources and services
- Beginning “where the youth is at” - this is not an office based service
- Building on strengths and interests
- Outreach Workers who are committed and determined to make a difference



Thank you!

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