



# Factsheet



# Crime Prevention Through Social Development

## INTRODUCTION

The annual cost of crime to Canadians is estimated to range between \$35 billion and \$46 billion<sup>1</sup>. The overwhelming majority of criminal justice system expenditures in Canada are related to police, courts, and corrections—the agencies that have been traditionally responsible for crime detection and control. However, since the mid-1980s, Canada, like many other countries, has shifted more resources to addressing crime through a balanced strategy that incorporates conventional methods of crime control as well as innovative approaches to crime prevention.

The Government of Canada plays a key role in promoting crime prevention in Canada, through the National Crime Prevention Strategy. The National Strategy is administered by the Department of Justice and the Ministry of Solicitor General Canada. It is designed to promote a “balanced approach” to reducing crime and victimization by focusing primarily on crime prevention through social development. While there are many types of crime prevention strategies, most can be classified under two broad categories — situational crime prevention and crime prevention through social development:

- situational crime prevention strategies seek to reduce the availability and attractiveness of opportunities for criminal activity;
- crime prevention through social development focuses on the root causes of crime and victimization.

This fact sheet provides information about crime prevention through social development. For information about situational crime prevention, please refer to the National Crime Prevention Centre’s fact sheet on Situational Crime Prevention.

## CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT IS IT?

**Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD)** is an approach to preventing crime and victimization that recognizes the complex social, economic, and cultural processes that contribute to crime and victimization. CPSD seeks to strengthen the “bridge” between criminal justice policies and programs and the safe, secure, and pro-social development of individuals, families, and communities. It does this by tackling the factors, which contribute to crime and victimization, that are amenable to change<sup>2</sup>.

**Focuses on Risk Factors Associated with Crime and Victimization.** While recognizing that societal influences such as poverty, gender inequality, media violence, racism, and discrimination are part of the crime prevention context, CPSD tends to concentrate on secondary prevention measures. This involves focusing on the many risk factors that contribute to involvement with crime<sup>3</sup>. Some key examples include:

- inadequate living conditions, such as poor housing and unstable situations;
- family factors, such as family poverty, family size, poor or inadequate parenting, parental criminality, and parental substance abuse;
- individual personality and behavioural factors, such as “cognitive deficits” including a lack of problem-solving skills, self-control, critical reasoning, judgment and failure to consider the consequences of behaviour, hyperactivity, as well as the early onset of aggressive behaviour;
- peer association, such as relationships with friends who follow a delinquent/criminal lifestyle;





- school-related factors, such as poor educational achievement and truancy, as well as deficient school environments, and exclusionary policies;
- employment opportunities, such as a lack of training and employment.

CPSD seeks to foster “protective factors” such as positive family support that may mitigate situations of risk or disadvantage that contribute to crime and victimization. These protective factors also tend to reduce the risk of harm<sup>4</sup>.

### **Builds a Comprehensive Approach to Crime**

**Prevention.** CPSD involves implementing solutions that can comprehensively address factors associated with crime and victimization. CPSD makes connections beyond the traditional criminal justice sphere, by recognizing the important role that policies, programs, and services such as social housing, education, health, income security, and social services play in preventing crime<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, CPSD does not function in isolation from traditional crime prevention and crime control measures. For example, a comprehensive crime prevention approach for a safer community may include measures to address the immediate objective of protecting the public through the efforts of the police, courts, and corrections. At the same time, it may direct resources to social and community development strategies that will help to create an environment that will reduce the risk factors associated with criminal behaviour and victimization over the long term<sup>6</sup>. Consequently, CPSD involves a range of players from various sectors working together to prevent crime problems.

**A Long-term Investment.** Because CPSD focuses on the social development end of the crime prevention equation, it can take time for the crime prevention benefits to accrue. For example, children and youth are the focus of many CPSD strategies. Some of the best known CPSD programs involve early intervention with children at risk and their parents. Pioneering programs such as the Perry Pre-School Project in Michigan, the Hawaii Healthy Start Project, and a new generation of “Headstart” programs in Canada (such as Moncton Headstart and Aboriginal Headstart) create supportive environments for children who are at potential risk of

later life criminality. These programs demonstrate the ways in which supportive strategies can significantly improve child development, educational achievement and social adjustment, and reduce the likelihood of later involvement in crime<sup>7</sup>.

**A Research-Based Approach.** CPSD is informed by the results of longitudinal research studies conducted in various parts of the world, including New Zealand, England, the United States, Canada, and Sweden<sup>8</sup>. Longitudinal studies have provided solid evidence on the ways in which social development programs targeted to “at-risk” individuals, families, and communities “level the playing field” and help to reduce criminality. In Canada, studies such as the Montreal longitudinal experimental Study,<sup>9</sup> conducted in the mid-1980s and the *Early Years Study*<sup>10</sup>, published in 1999 in Ontario have brought insight into the ways social, economic, and home environments affect family life and the lives of children. These studies underscore the importance of early intervention where risk factors are present.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

CPSD programs draw on over 50 years of research and practical experience, primarily from western European countries, the United States, and Canada. Over the years, a range of factors that contribute to crime and victimization and undermine community safety have been identified.

Within Canada, it can be said that CPSD has been practised—but not named as such—for many years. Inspired by the work and ideas of people such as Irvin Waller and Dick Weiler,<sup>11</sup> the concept came to the fore of criminal justice policy in the early 1980s. In 1993, the Twelfth Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General<sup>12</sup> (the Horner report) was issued and the Department of Justice Canada organized a national symposium on community safety.<sup>13</sup> These events laid the foundation for a crime prevention policy in Canada that explicitly included a social development component. In the 1990s, the work of the National Crime Prevention Council, which was established by the Department of Justice Canada



and the Solicitor General of Canada (in concert with the work of provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, and community groups) built CPSD models and strategies for intervention.

Since the 1980s, CPSD has branched in many directions. At the community level, there is growing recognition that community safety is a fundamental aspect of a healthy community. CPSD contributes to community health by building local capacities to prevent crime. This may include formal and informal networks, and a particular focus on the needs of those most at risk. CPSD also encompasses various kinds of family intervention and support programs, as well as programs that target individual factors associated with crime and victimization.

## **CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

There are many kinds of strategies under the CPSD banner. The following types of CPSD strategies have been introduced in many Canadian communities:

**Individual-Level Strategies** focus on addressing existing deficits that may place individuals at risk of involvement in criminality. Many of these programs target children and youth. “Wrap-around” programs that place the client at the centre of the intervention and tailor a range of supportive services are examples of individual-level CPSD strategies.<sup>14</sup>

**Family-Oriented Strategies** are also a focus of CPSD. Programs that provide parenting support and training to the parents of young, at-risk children strengthen family capacity and create healthy environments where children are nurtured.

**Community-Level Strategies** seek to strengthen local capacity to prevent crime. They frequently involve partnerships, and help to build connections among individuals. Other kinds of community level strategies involve community outreach programs. Examples include police/youth mentoring programs, peer support programs and programs where community elders teach their values and traditions. Programs that provide socially and culturally appropriate opportunities for recreation and cultural expression, as well as programs that build pro-social skills among at-risk youth, are other examples.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF CPSD PROGRAMS<sup>15</sup>**

Many social and health programs have implications for crime and its prevention, but that does not mean that all should be regarded as CPSD programs, particularly where crime prevention is not the primary goal. CPSD programs explicitly and proactively aim to prevent crime and victimization. Although research on effective CPSD programs is in its infancy, based on preliminary findings, quality CPSD programs seem to share the following characteristics:

### **Orientation**

CPSD programs are based on crime and victimization theory and empirical research that supports what is being targeted and why. CPSD programs identify and focus on specific causal risk factors that have been shown to relate to crime and victimization. They offer an explicit model of change—a model that shows a plausible link between the identified risk factors and the actual intervention.

### **Design**

CPSD programs identify the crime problem that they seek to prevent and lay out clear goals and objectives to address the problem. Most importantly, they focus on risk factors associated with crime and identify specific ways to address them.

CPSD programs are accessible, easily obtained, and affordable for users. A participatory approach that meaningfully involves users in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program is also characteristic of CPSD. CPSD programs are about people and their communities. They coordinate and collaborate with other programs and services in the community, that have supports and linkages to other programs and services. They may involve formal and informal partnerships.

### **Integrity**

To operate with integrity, CPSD programs need to have adequate means to do what they set out to do, including policies to guide program delivery and to ensure that there is accountability for results.

## Environment

CPSD program environments are structured and organized to have a positive influence in the community. They are coordinated with other services and supports. They are acceptable to users and to the community at large. They deliver programs in an integrated manner so that it is possible to address multiple risk factors in coordinated and efficient ways.

## Resources

CPSD programs are offered by qualified, trained staff and volunteers whose values, attitudes and style of interaction are consistent with program goals. Resources (whether financial or in-kind) are required for project start-up, ongoing implementation, and research and evaluation. Material resources also come into play in crime prevention, because they enhance the social infrastructure. This includes having the places and

spaces as well as the equipment and trained staff to implement programs.

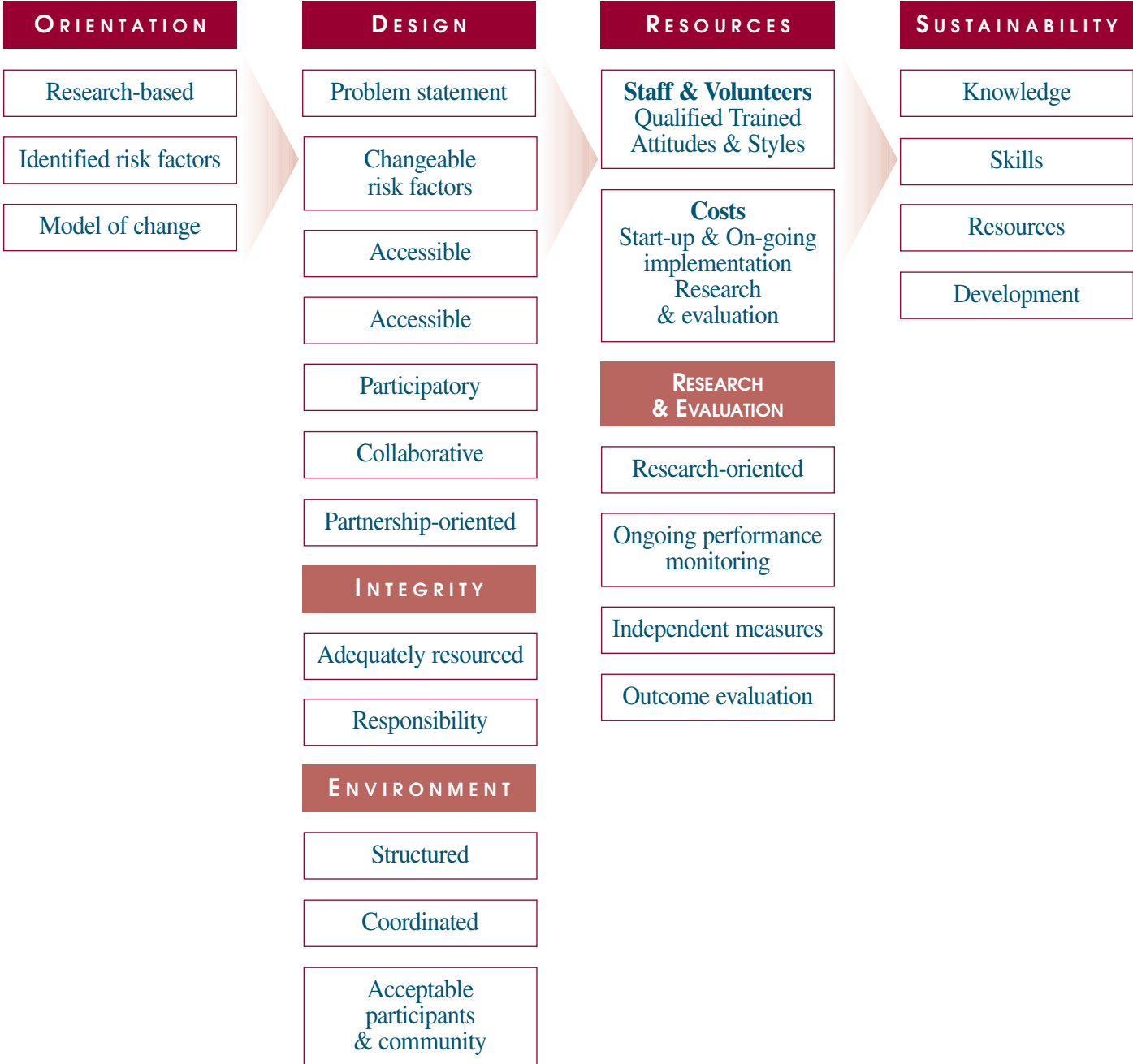
## Research and Evaluation

Research and evaluation are critical tools to design, plan, guide, and shape crime prevention through social development activities and to measure program results. Research and evaluation feeds into the ongoing process of policy and program refinement. Obtaining information on results can be challenging because crime prevention through social development is a long-term investment and many of the results are hard to quantify. It is important to obtain some short-term, independent measures of program effectiveness while keeping an eye on the long-term goals. Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques are important tools to help people understand the value and impact of CPSD.





# CHARACTERISTICS OF CPSD PROGRAMS



## Sustainability

Individuals, families, and communities need knowledge, skills, and resources to prevent crime. Crime prevention through social development aims to create sustainable

strategies that build on existing strengths. Innovative approaches that include elements like mentorship, peer support, and community networks can help to ensure sustainability.

## QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Critics argue that because CPSD is so “elastic,” it runs the danger of becoming either too diffused-or too dominant-within social policy.<sup>16</sup> This concern speaks to the need to clarify the theories behind CPSD; the need to define its scope of influence and clarify the boundaries, bridges, and relationships between crime prevention and social policies and programs.

And at a practical level, it also speaks to the need for players across disciplines and sectors to forge new ways of working together. Intersectoral or interdisciplinary partnerships, for example, can generate new ways to address crime prevention, but these partnerships can also pose challenges as new working relationships are put into place.<sup>17</sup>

It must be recognized that CPSD is a relatively young field of practice and it will take time to learn how best to implement CPSD and yield results. There are many unresolved challenges in efforts to identify effective ways to address the multiplicity of risk factors associated with crime and victimization. Ongoing research and evaluation of the effectiveness of CPSD is required.

1. National Crime Prevention Council, Economic Analysis Committee, *Money Well Spent: Investing in Preventing Crime* (Ottawa, 1996), p. 14.
2. International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, *Crime Prevention Digest II: Comparative Analysis of Successful Community Safety* (1999) Available from the ICPS Web site at <http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/english/digest/what.html>.
3. For a brief summary, see Adam Crawford, *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Politics, Policies and Practices*. (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 110-111. See also International Centre for the Prevention of Crime *Crime Prevention Digest II: Comparative Analysis of Successful Community Safety* (1999).
4. John Howard Society of Alberta (1995) *Crime Prevention Through Social Development: A Resource Guide*.
5. The Canadian Criminal Justice Association, *Safer Communities: A Social Strategy for Crime Prevention in Canada* (1989), p. 4.
6. Ibid. p. 23.

7. International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, *Crime Prevention Digest II: Comparative Analysis of Successful Community Safety* (1999), p. 27.
8. For an overview of recent studies, refer to the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime *Crime Prevention Digest II: Comparative Analysis of Successful Community Safety* (1999), pp. 20-22. See also M. Tonry, and D.P. Farrington, *Building a Safer Society: Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, vol. 19 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995).
9. For a summary, refer to the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, *Crime Prevention Digest II: Comparative Analysis of Successful Community Safety* (1999), p. 29.
10. *The Early Tears Study: Final report* (April 1999) prepared by an expert Reference Group, co-chaired by Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard.
11. Waller, Irvin and Dick Weiler, *Crime Prevention Through Social Development*. (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1985).
12. Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, *Crime Prevention in Canada: Toward a National Strategy* (Ottawa, 1993).
13. Department of Justice Canada, “Proceedings of the National Symposium on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, March 10-12, 1993, Toronto, Ontario” (Ottawa, 1993).
14. Nick Nicoloff, “Re-Connecting Youth. Integrating Welfare and Children’s Mental Health Services to Serve Adolescents and Their Families,” *Five Year Review. Ontario Associations of Children’s Aid Societies Journal*, Vol. 43, Number 13, October, 1999.
15. This section is based information contained in the John Howard Society of Alberta *Crime Prevention Through Social Development: A Resource Guide*, (1995) as well as the results of the National Crime Prevention Centre’s January 19, 2000 Crime Prevention Through Social Development Workshop, held in Ottawa, Ontario.
16. Adam Crawford, *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Policies, Policies and Practices* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 121-122.
17. For a discussion of the role of partnerships in social change and other strategies, see Sherri Torjman, *Partnerships: The Good, The Bad and The Uncertain*. (Ottawa: Caledon Institute, 1998). For a discussion and critique of partnerships in the field of crime prevention, see Adam Crawford, *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Policies, Policies and Practices* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 161-192.

### For more information

Please visit the National Crime Prevention Strategy Web site at: [www.prevention.gc.ca](http://www.prevention.gc.ca)  
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