

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES



Safe Communities Kit

# OVERVIEW OF CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PLANNING



## Welcome to the Safe Communities Kit

This guide, *An Overview of Crime Prevention and Community Safety Planning* forms part of a series of booklets published for inclusion in British Columbia's Safe Communities Kit. The Safe Communities Kit was developed to assist communities and individuals in preventing crime and enhancing safety across British Columbia.

Other Safe Communities Kit booklets include:

- *Identifying Your Community's Crime Problem: A Guide to Needs Assessment*
- *Getting Your Crime Prevention Strategies Underway: Project Planning Guide*
- *Splash and Ripple: Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Justice Work*
- *Working With the Media*

All of these booklets are available on the Safe Communities Kit CD-ROM, and can be downloaded from the Community Programs Division Website at:  
[www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community\\_programs](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community_programs).



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# Working Together For SAFE COMMUNITIES

**B.C.'s Provincial Safe Communities Working Group provided the expertise and advice needed to prepare this kit. The working group includes representatives from:**

- B.C. Block Parent Society
- B.C. Block Watch
- B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities
- B.C. Crime Prevention Association
- B.C. Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police
- B.C. Youth Police Network
- Children of the Street Society
- Community Programs Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- B.C. Crime Stoppers
- B.C. Safe Schools and Communities Centre
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- RCMP "E" Division
- Union of B.C. Municipalities



# How To **KEEP A COMMUNITY SAFE**



**A criminal act requires two things: an available target and a motivated offender.**

**Crime prevention can either focus on property protection or it can tackle the social and economic conditions that are most likely to create offenders.**

Both achieve results, but crime prevention experts agree it is far more effective if a community is able to make the social changes needed to prevent crime. It may appear to be a daunting task, but as long as everyone understands that the change is gradual and requires a long-term commitment, the time and effort invested will reap substantial benefits.

The first, and most important, step in any crime prevention activity is to be sure you fully understand the problem being addressed so you can deliver a targeted, effective response. This kit will provide you and your team with all the information you need, from

the initial assessment of needs to a final evaluation.

You will find examples and contact names throughout so you can learn from the experiences of others.

Remember, you should proceed gradually and start with small steps, which may lead to larger projects. For example, you and your neighbours might start by organizing Block Watch on your street, and eventually find yourselves arranging after-school programs, neighbourhood clean-ups, community kitchens, lobbying activities—the list is endless.



## **Working Together For Safe Communities**

B.C. has a number of special dates set aside to deal with specific issues. Community groups can plan an event linked to a special date and a specific issue, such as responding to youth violence in schools, and then expand into a more comprehensive approach, such as responding to all forms of violence in the community. Call the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General at 604-660-2605 or toll-free at 1-866-668-2137 for more information.

**The first—and most important—step in any crime prevention activity is to be sure you fully understand the problem being addressed so you can deliver a targeted, effective response.**



# Preventing Crime

**A community will reap the greatest benefits by investing in long-term action that deals with social issues that are the root causes of crime.**

This is called crime prevention through social development, and its aim is to reduce risk factors that start people, particularly children and youth, on the road to crime. It is the best way to deal with problems that stem from broad-based social or economic issues, such as poverty or drug addiction.

Research shows that certain conditions and experiences may influence whether a person turns to crime. Poor pre-natal care (bad diet, lack of health care and alcohol abuse by the mother) can lead to low birth weight, fetal alcohol syndrome and other conditions that can affect a child's physical and mental growth. These, in turn, can lead to learning problems, inability to

function in a group, poor school performance and possible delinquency.

Additional risk factors include lack of supervision for children, lack of positive role models, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, poor education, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Keep in mind that these factors are elements of risk. If no help or positive support is offered, there is increased risk of delinquency and criminal behaviour.

Responding to social issues is not a quick fix. You need to have enough research to know you are heading in the right direction; then you need to move ahead one step at a time to achieve your goal.



## Working Together For Safe Communities

It has been estimated that a third of the people in jail suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome. By bringing together an entire community, including police, social services, employers, municipal or First Nation leaders, a safe community can advise people of the risks of women drinking alcohol when they are pregnant, and as a direct result reduce the number of FAS babies.





# Discouraging Crime

The fastest way to react to crime is to remove opportunities—install better lights and locks, build fences, encourage everyone to report suspicious activities. These things can be done by a community, a neighbourhood or an individual property owner.

Two of the techniques to discourage crime are crime prevention through environmental design, or CPTED, and community action programs.

CPTED means designing or changing community surroundings to make them less attractive to criminals. There are a number of ways to achieve this:

- Use natural or formal barriers, such as landscaping or fences, to control access and make it more difficult for potential offenders to move in or out of an area.
- Increase visibility of homes, buildings and people by installing better lighting or cutting back shrubs around a building.
- Send out a signal that you care about the area by investing time and effort in clean-up drives and beautification projects.



**Keeping a community clean and free of graffiti sends a signal to potential criminals that residents care about the area and discourages criminal activity.**



## Working Together For Safe Communities

Graffiti and litter suggest that residents do not care about their community, and this can increase the fear of crime. It can lead to criminal acts if people are reluctant to go out. A safe community can encourage youth to design and paint murals instead of graffiti and involve local businesses in clean-up campaigns.

Community action programs include Block Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Crime Stoppers and Citizens on Patrol/Citizens Crime Watch where community members watch out for each other and report suspicious activities. They also include community policing.



## Working Together For Safe Communities

Crime is more likely during times of day and in areas where criminals do not expect they will be seen. Many people—from city workers to dog walkers—are out and about throughout the community at all times of the day and night. A safe community can train more people to watch for and report suspicious activities to police.



# Making It Work

## Crime prevention through social development works best if you:

- Clearly understand the problem. If you install better lighting because youth are hanging around a local park at night, you might just move the problem. A better solution might be to provide late-night recreational activities at a local community centre or school.
- Make sure programs are age appropriate. If you offer recreational programs for youth, make sure the activities appeal to that age group.
- Ensure you have long-term community support. If you open up the community centre at night, you will need volunteers and funds to support the programs over the long term.

## Crime prevention through environmental design works best if you:

- Anticipate issues. If you put a fence around a field and block a natural, well-established pedestrian walkway, people may break the fence to get through. If the fence has a gate, it will still serve its purpose and people can continue to use the path.
- Make sure you are using the right strategy. If you remove shrubs from the front of a property to make it more visible, you may also remove a sense of property boundaries that discourages vandalism or other criminal activity.

## Community action programs work best if you:

- Consider everyone's concerns. Women often have different safety issues than men, yet a program that addresses women's concerns will usually benefit men as well.
- Encourage everyone to pitch in. You can overcome an "it's-not-my-problem" attitude by showing participants the benefits of their actions and ensuring the workload is evenly distributed.
- Make sure the area being considered is not too large. Programs such as Block Watch are specifically designed to include a certain number of houses so they are more likely to succeed.





# Defining Problems

**Crime prevention works best when Planned and delivered locally.**



After all, you and your neighbours are in the best position to understand the needs of your own community. You will need to do some thorough research before you get started so you can be sure that you are addressing the true needs of your community. There is a needs assessment guide in this kit that will help you identify relevant issues in a logical and systematic way, *Identifying Your Community's Crime Problem: A Guide to Needs Assessment*. Local police, a community policing centre or community crime prevention agencies can help you target the right issue or problem.

You will want to consider everyone's needs and involve as many community members and groups as possible. Your project is more likely to succeed if it has wide community support and participation, and if you encourage the community to share in your successes.

The more complex the project, the more crucial community action and support are. Take the time during your planning process to learn who your community is. What are its needs? Who has a stake in making sure that the project succeeds?

Remember that perceptions are often as important as reality when you are dealing with issues related to safe communities. If members of your community do not feel safe, it will affect their quality of life. Tailor your project to fit your community. At every stage, consult community members. Keep them informed. Gain their support. Mobilize them for action.



## Working Together For Safe Communities

If an issue is analyzed carefully, the solution may be simple. Local residents concerned about loud parties and vandalism in a neighbourhood park late at night may ask the city to restrict parking and provide tougher police enforcement. A safe community can find the right solution if it researches the problem carefully.

# Involving Your Community

**When people hear the word community, they generally think of a geographical area—a neighbourhood, city or small town.**

But communities also include groups of people who may not live in the same area but share something in common, such as age, culture, profession or areas of interest. A school is a community, as is a workplace. Each has its own safety issues and concerns.

Even if all members of a community share one language or one culture, there are still different outlooks, points of view, needs, values, interests, and so on. This diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity.



## Working Together For Safe Communities

Residents of an apartment or office building who share an underground garage can help prevent auto crime by ensuring that anyone entering and leaving the garage waits for the gates to close before driving off. A safe community can prevent crime if everyone works together - sometimes this is essential for project success.



# Organizing Your Project

The Safe Communities Kit includes a series of booklets to help you identify your community's crime problems, and plan, implement and evaluate projects designed to address these problems.

Here is a summary of the key steps outlined in the Safe Communities Kit to help you organize a project in your community:

## Phase 1

Identify and describe the problems faced by your community. You must grasp the problem before you can find a workable solution. Information about analyzing your community's crime problems is included in the Safe Communities Kit booklet, *Identifying Your Community's Crime Problem: A Guide to Needs Assessment*.

## Phase 2

Identify the people and groups who should be involved and organize your team. Brainstorm ways of addressing the problem. When you've decided what you want to do, prepare a plan of action. A sample planning format is included in the Safe Communities Kit booklet, *Getting Your Crime Prevention Strategies Underway: Project Planning Guide*.

## Phase 3

Complete the activities listed in your plan. Set up regular



meetings to keep track of what you have achieved and what still needs to be done.

## Phase 4

Keep track of your progress, and evaluate the outcomes and impact of your project. Information about developing an outcome measurement framework is provided in the Safe Communities Kit booklet, *Splash and Ripple: Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Justice Work*.

# Getting Things Done

- Make sure all group members know what they are supposed to do and when it needs to be done, and assign someone to make sure tasks are completed.
- Gather the resources (such as money, supplies and materials) that the group will need to do its work before they are actually needed. Link up with other groups that support your cause or are engaged in similar work.
- Use a monitoring chart to keep track of tasks that must be completed by a certain deadline. Checklists, schedules and brief reports can also help.
- Keep records. Invoices, receipts, contracts and other financial records should be properly filed and kept in a safe place. This is important even if your group is small. Good records show financial supporters that all donations were used properly.
- Encourage everyone involved to provide feedback. Make changes as needed.
- Avoid getting caught up in busy work that can take your focus off your goals.
- Celebrate successes, both large and small.

# Getting & Keeping People Involved

## Give good reason to be involved

- Highlight the benefits of the project, and how time invested can help their community.
- Give everyone a chance to contribute, and create a sense of ownership.
- Present the project in an interesting way and make events action-oriented.
- When working with children and youth, be positive and enthusiastic, and focus on fun.

## Set clear expectations

- Define the roles of all those involved, and emphasize that everyone's contribution is valuable.

## Communicate clearly, regularly, and frequently

- Keep everyone informed about developments, not just the members of your group but the community at large, local officials, organizations you may be working with, financial supporters and sponsors, and the media.
- Keep communication lines open within your group through phone calls, regular meetings, minutes of meetings.
- Keep communication lines open within your community through newsletters, event bulletins, fact sheets, media advisories, posters, flyers, street banners, reader boards, T shirts.
- Be sensitive to issues of language and use translators and interpreters if necessary.
- Respect the chain of command when dealing with other groups or organizations and make sure you are dealing with the appropriate level of leadership in different situations.

## Develop new leaders

- Avoid volunteer burnout by sharing the workload, delegating tasks, and always watch for new members who can assume leadership roles.

Keep communication lines open within your community through newsletters, event bulletins, fact sheets, media advisories, posters, flyers, street banners, reader boards, T shirts.

## Help people learn new information and skills

- Help team members master the skills they need to do the job. The training may be just an hour or two of focused learning about a specific job, such as setting up a database, publishing a newsletter or keeping financial records.
- Look for training materials or opportunities on the Internet as well as through schools, institutes and government agencies.
- Ask professionals to donate their time to train volunteers.

## Use incentives

- If the budget allows, provide food and refreshments at events and meetings. Ask group members or a local business or service club to donate refreshments for events or meetings.
- Be aware that some volunteers have childcare or other concerns that affect their available time. If possible, arrange childcare for meetings and events.

## Respect differences

- Team members may have different religious and ethical values, have different role expectations for men and women, parents and children, etc.

## Harness the skills and energy of young people

- Young people contribute creativity, enthusiasm, the desire to belong to a group, a willingness to take risks and first-hand knowledge of the safety concerns of their age group.

## Recognize everyone's contribution

- Send thank you notes or use awards, certificates, acknowledgments and even prizes to show everyone that their work is appreciated.



# Who Can Help

You should involve as many groups and individuals in your project as possible. This brings different ideas, perspectives and resources to your work and shows potential financial supporters that you have community support. It also means you do not risk loading too much on yourself or a few key people. Here are some of your potential partners, and examples of what they can do:

## Community members

- Serve on your planning committee;
- Participate in surveys, community inventories, etc.;
- Distribute flyers, handle telephones, keep books, promote the project, etc.

## Police

(RCMP, municipal police departments, B.C. Youth Police Network)

- Help identify the issue or problem;
- Help develop the program or project;
- Participate on your project team;
- Provide information about related programs and services, statistics and other data, crime prevention strategies and approaches, etc.;
- Participate in special events and promotions.

## Community crime prevention partners

(crime prevention associations and groups)

- Help identify the issue or problem;
- Help develop your program or projects;
- Participate on your project team;
- Provide information about related programs and services, statistics and other data, crime prevention strategies and approaches, etc.;
- Assist with funding;
- Promote your cause.

## Libraries

- Help with research and locate documents, books, media, reports, etc.;
- Display posters and pamphlets;
- Provide meeting space.

## Government agencies

(Federal, Provincial and Municipal; First Nations Councils)

- Provide information on programs, services and other resources;
- Provide research statistics and other data;
- Help interpret and/or change bylaws or legislation;
- Assist with funding;
- Promote your cause through special proclamations;
- Send representatives to your events and activities.

## Community organizations

- Advise on effective organization and mobilization strategies;
- Encourage members to support your project.

## Small businesses, large corporations and industry

- Donate cash, products or services;
- Encourage staff to volunteer for your project;
- Display posters and pamphlets or distribute them to employees or clients.

## Media

- Print/air your news release or public service announcement;
- Serve on your planning committee;
- Provide public relations and communications advice;
- Participate in and cover events and activities.

## Schools

- Provide space for events and activities;
- Include crime prevention materials in their curriculum;
- Allow speakers to make presentations at assemblies;
- Display posters and pamphlets;
- Encourage students and staff to support your project.



## Other resources – potential partners

- aboriginal groups
- chamber of commerce
- community development workers
- crisis intervention organizations
- employment assistance workers and officials
- ethno-cultural organizations
- fire departments
- gay and lesbian groups
- health care officials and professionals
- housing and planning officials
- immigrant-serving organizations
- informal community leaders who represent the cultural, age and economic diversity of the community
- labour council and union representatives
- lawyers
- literacy organizations
- mental health workers
- MPs and MLAs
- parents and parent advisory groups
- parks and recreation boards
- religious organizations
- representatives of the judiciary
- researchers
- school boards, educators and school staff
- seniors' groups or centres
- service clubs
- social services workers and officials
- victim rights advocates
- victim services workers
- women's groups
- youth, youth groups and youth-serving agencies

You may also wish to consult members of the Provincial Safe Communities Working Group. See page 14 for a list of member organizations including contact information.

## Involving potential partners

Before you approach potential partners, be clear why you have chosen them. Put your request in writing, with a contact name and telephone/fax number; then follow with a phone call or visit.

Help them understand your project by telling them:

- the community need it is addressing;
- its goals and objectives;
- the plan of action;
- how it will benefit the community;
- how it will benefit the person or group you are approaching.

Explain what you would like them to do, but be prepared to adjust your expectations once they indicate what they are willing to do.

It is important to keep all your partners updated on progress, especially if your project is a long-term effort. Remind them about events or activities, especially if they have agreed to participate. After your project has been evaluated, share the results with those who have helped you.

But most important, make sure you acknowledge any help you receive. Your partners need to know that you appreciate their contribution and your promotions should acknowledge them.



## Funding your project

Most projects need financial support—whether it is small donations from neighbourhood residents or a major investment for a long-term activity. Consider approaching both public and private groups and remember that organizations are more willing to help if they recognize the benefit to the community.

You may find local corporate sponsors are prepared to make a long-term commitment as a community service. These businesses may also promote your activities and provide staff support. There are also a number of government agencies and private organizations that may be able to help.

Before you approach any potential sponsor, find out what type of information they require and make sure it is provided.

More detailed information about how to approach potential sponsors and how to write proposals is included in the Safe Communities Kit booklet, *Getting Your Crime Prevention Strategies Underway: Project Planning Guide*.

## Working with the media

The media are important crime prevention partners. They can help promote your project and they can help you deliver important messages related to community safety.

Editors and reporters are always looking for positive local items that are of interest to their readers or listeners, but they are also very busy. Make sure your message is clear and to the point—they don't have time to figure out what you are trying to say.

More detailed information about how to work with the media, from writing news releases to conducting an effective media interview is provided in the Safe Communities Kit booklet, *Working With the Media*.

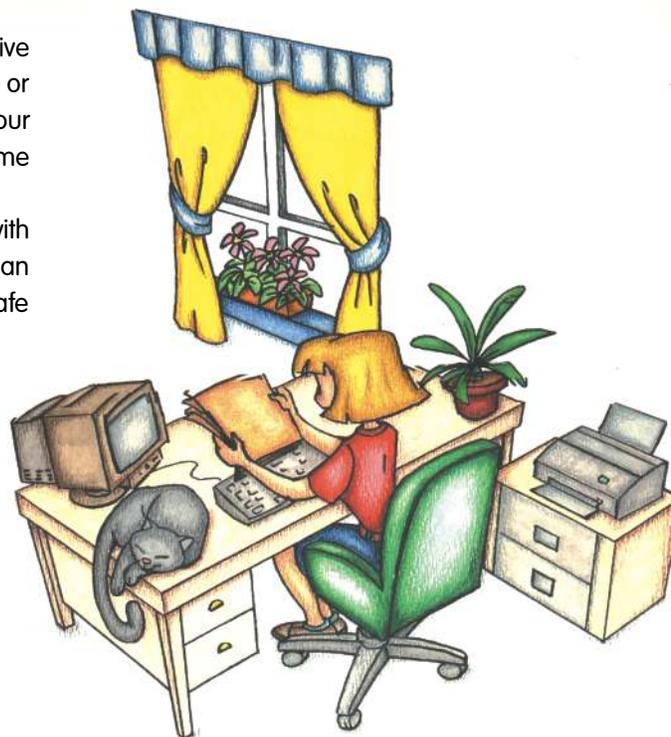
## Achieving the results intended

Although evaluation is the last phase in your project's life cycle, you should start thinking about it right from the start. The project goals and objectives are the basis for evaluation, and evaluation results can help you revamp your project or plan a new one.

A well-developed evaluation plan shows prospective sponsors that your project is well thought-out and offers potential benefits and that your group is committed to assessing the impact of the project on the community.

The time you spend evaluating your project would be wasted unless you use the information you gain from it. Evaluation results can be used to make important decisions, such as whether the project should continue as is, be revised in some way, or be terminated. Take time to review the results thoroughly.

This kit includes more detailed information about how to evaluate a project, and why this is such an important step. Refer to the Safe Communities Kit booklet, *Splash and Ripple: Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Justice Work*.





## Provincial Safe Communities Working Group

B.C. Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police  
Contact Person: Staff Sergeant Ross Poulton, Saanich  
Police Department  
Telephone: 250-475-4321

RCMP "E" Division  
Community Policing Services  
Telephone: 604-264-2230  
website: [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca)

B.C. Block Parent Society  
Telephone: 250-474-2494  
Toll-Free: 1-888-474-9577  
website: [www.blockparent.ca](http://www.blockparent.ca)

B.C. Safe Schools & Communities Centre  
Telephone: 604-660-7233  
Toll-Free: 1-888-224-7233  
website: [www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca](http://www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca)

B.C. Block Watch  
Telephone: 604-532-3213  
website: [www.blockwatch.com](http://www.blockwatch.com)

Children of the Street Society  
Telephone: 604-606-3113  
e-mail: [sowden@ican.net](mailto:sowden@ican.net)

B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities  
Telephone: 604-669-2986  
website: [www.web.net/~bccsc](http://www.web.net/~bccsc)

Union of B.C. Municipalities  
Telephone: 604-270-8226  
website: [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca)

B.C. Crime Prevention Association  
Telephone: 604-529-1552  
website: [www.bccpa.org](http://www.bccpa.org)

National Crime Prevention Centre  
Telephone: 604-666-3686  
website: [www.prevention.gc.ca](http://www.prevention.gc.ca)

British Columbia Crime Stoppers  
Telephone: 604-787-3427  
website: [www.bccrimestoppers.com](http://www.bccrimestoppers.com)

Community Programs Division  
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Telephone: 604-660-2605  
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