



Youth Advocate Program

Youth Advocate Program

The Youth Advocate Program is partially funded through the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy.

 Public Safety Canada Sécurité publique Canada 

Presentation Overview

- **Background**
- **Program Description**
- **Defining Youth at Risk**
- **Evaluation**
- **Recommendation**

Background

- In 2007, HRM was awarded 1.9 million dollars by the National Crime Prevention Centre to operate a 4 year pilot program called the “Youth Advocate Program
- A condition of the Federal grant was that if the pilot program proved worthwhile, the Municipality would attempt to continue the program with sustainable funding.

Program Description

The Program Purpose

- An intervention program for at-risk youth population (9-14 years) at the 1-2% level (approximately 200)
- Ensures youth and/or family members can access the services (existing) they require
- Not a social service – focuses on improving coordination and delivery of existing services

Program Description

What We Do...

- **Identify potential issues for youth**
- **Develop strategies to address issues**
- **Access information/resources for youth/family**
- **Teach skills to self-advocate**

Program Description

What We Do...

- **Facilitate /mediate discussions when challenges arise between youth and service providers**
- **Monitor progress and case management**
- **Actively involve parents and youth in all decisions**
- **Ensure youth/parent's perspective, choices, values, culture, beliefs and preferences inform actions**

Program Description

Where we focused Our Efforts

Pilot Communities:

- Uniacke Square
- Dartmouth North (Victoria/Green Rd.)
- Woodside / Gaston Road
- Spryfield
- Bayers-Westwood / Fairview
- East Dartmouth

Defining Youth at Risk

Who Are the Youth We Serve



Defining Youth at Risk

How Is Life Characterized?

- Substandard/public housing
- No bed or room to sleep
- No food, clean clothes
- Abused/bullied
- Substance abuse
- Undiagnosed mental illness
- Disruptive presence in school & community
- Chaotic home
- Dysfunctional family
- Single parent/ guardian homes
- Under/unemployed parent
- No support network
- Involved in crime/violence
- Few positive adult role models

Program Impacts

Participants & Scope of Influence

Participants	Top 3 Referral Sources	Graduates	Gender	# of Gang members
150 Referrals 70 Assessed 57 Accepted	School Police Family	15	Boys 48 Girls 9	13

Program Impacts

Direct Benefits to Youth and Family

- **Increased parental capacity**
- **Increased youth capacity**
- **Increased confidence**
- **Improved attitudes and trust**
- **Improved view on life and future**
- **Increased opportunities/experiences**

Program Impacts

Direct Benefits to Government

- **Improved coordination**
- **Reduced pressures**
- **Improved access to services**
- **Reduced costs to service youth**
 - **YAP** = \$37,008 per youth
 - **CS Response** = \$79,935 to \$208,050
 - **Incarceration** = \$120,000 per youth per year

Program Impacts

Direct Benefits to Community

- **Sustainable impacts**
- **Improved community relations**
- **Improved conditions for local institutions**

The Program Results

What We Learned

**No single system/service
can prevent or reduce
delinquency on its own**

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of a hand holding a glass. The hand is positioned on the right side, with fingers wrapped around the stem of a glass. The glass is partially filled with a light-colored liquid, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of light blue and white.

The Program Results

What We Learned

Youth between ages 7 – 10 are 2-3 times more at risk of becoming serious, violent and chronic offenders

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of a hand holding a glass. The hand is positioned on the right side, with fingers wrapped around the stem of a glass. The glass is partially filled with a light-colored liquid, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of light blue and white.

The Program Results

What We Learned

Youth between ages 7 – 10 tend to have longer offending careers than youth who become delinquent at a later age; as a result, these children constitute a disproportionate threat to public safety and property

The Program Results

Unexpected Change

- **Unity Program**
- **Positive influence on siblings**
- **Positive impact on school culture**
- **Assistance to those outside of pilot area**
- **Youth and parent mentors**

The Evaluation

- **A very successful program in Canada**
- **Highly effective community-based intervention/response methodology**
- **9-14 is the correct target**
- **Caseload of 5 is appropriate**
- **Minimum 6-10mos for each youth**
- **Effective use of Para-professionals (staff)**
- **Program should be expanded**

Discontinuation of the Program The Potential Consequences?

- **Underserved 1-2 % of the serious, violent and chronic offenders**
- **Potential tragic societal costs**
- **Disproportionate threat to public safety and property**
- **Increased costs**
- **Continued impact on local communities**

A Case Study

File # 400 Male 11years old

- **7 of 9 Risk Factors**
- **55 police reports generated**
 - Arson, break and enter, assault, property damage, theft, and cruelty to animals
- **Police and Child Welfare involvement**
- **YAP Involvement**
 - parenting skills, coaching, structure, anger management, repairing relationships, family cohesion

Budget Implications

The Gross Direct Cost to maintain the Youth Advocate Program is \$690,000 annually.

It is proposed that this be funded by:

- Transferring \$140,000 of existing funding (2 FTE's); increasing funding by a further \$550,000. Consistent with HRM's approach to the addition of new services, this portion of the service will be funded through an increase to the tax rate.

Budget Implications

- Seeking approval in principle.
- If Council approves the recommendations staff will incorporate them into the draft 2011/12 Operating Budget.
- Continuation of the program and the additional funding proposal is not approved until the 2011/12 Operating Budget is approved.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council maintain the Youth Advocate Program as a Municipal service by:

- Allocating an additional \$550,000 to Community Development's operating budget to sustain staffing and program costs as per the Budget Implications section of this report;
- Expanding the service to include priority communities beyond the 6 pilots; and
- Pursuing funding partnership opportunities including federal and provincial governments and others.