



NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION CENTRE

PROJET DE QUALIFICATION DES JEUNES (PQJ)

The intensive intervention project (PQJ) to prepare young people for the transition to independent living and ensure that those attending youth centres are qualified is an initiative of the Association des centres jeunesse du Québec. The project was implemented in four regions around Quebec: Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Laval, Outaouais and Montreal. It reached 80 young people 16 or younger at the time they joined who had significant placement histories and who presented a number of risk factors.



The objective of the project is to prevent the marginalization of the young people who come to the youth centres on the cusp of their age of majority—18, when services are no longer offered—to reduce their chances of being marginalized and slipping progressively into the criminal world. The intervention project focuses on young people’s personal and social development and changes in their living environment to help them integrate into society and the workplace, leading to independent adult life.

As part of the project, an assessment protocol was put in place for each of the young participants to guide the intervention. Two tools, the Profile of Youths and Their Families and the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA), were used. Following a discussion on the results of the analysis with these tools, social workers and young people develop an action plan specifically for obtaining qualifications and preparing for independent living. The frequency and intensity of the meetings depend on the young people’s needs. The meetings continue for one year after the young people have left the youth centres.

Project Assessment

A quasi-experimental evaluation (by an independent third party) was conducted to analyze the program’s implementation and results. The implementation analysis aims to describe the program’s components and mechanisms and to obtain more information on the characteristics of the young people being observed.

The evaluation also aims to describe the program’s results and effects. To do this, the development of 75 of the 80 young participants was measured seven times during the project. The analysis of the young people’s development was compared to the social

workers’ analysis and the documentation (young people’s social records). The participants’ situation was compared to that of a control group made up of 26 young people, who had never taken part in the PQJ, at the time they left the youth centres. A comparative analysis with 96 young people from the general population (recruited in CEGEPs) was also conducted.

Main Findings

The implementation assessment findings show that:

- The intervention must be based on building strong relationships with young people so that PQJ social workers become important people to them. However, these relationships alone cannot replace all of the significant actors in young people’s lives.
- In their environment most of the social workers experienced clashes between the intervention philosophies of youth centres and those of the PQJ, which are more focused on dealing with issues of social relationships and transitions to adulthood.
- In most cases the PQJ contributed to youth centres’ paradigms evolving, and to opening the door to eventual partnership works in the field. PQJ interventions alone are limited if they do not also involve interventions on structural factors. One can work on young people’s personal abilities, but we must also work on their relationship with their networks and on their networks’ resources.

Findings from the results evaluation

- Overall, young participants have a positive view of the PQJ intervention and its psychological component.
- Following the intervention, PQJ youths are better equipped interpersonally. They were more likely to surround themselves with supportive people.
- Following the PQJ, more of the young people are following a constructive path (56%) than one that increases their vulnerability (44%). Generally, young people's autonomy improved considerably over the course of the PQJ intervention and this improvement carried over past the end of regular youth centre services. During the young people's time in the PQJ there was also a considerable and generalized improvement in their personal inclinations and the severity of their problems.
- The impact of the social network is directly and strongly related to young people's integration paths. While 33% of young PQJ participants succeeded in making positive changes to their social networks, 45% kept their networks the same. Improving social networks leads young people to a constructive path every time.
- Although the limited number of participants in the control group requires us to be very careful in drawing conclusions from the analysis, it seems that PQJ social workers play a major role in the young people's integration into homes through the support they provide for them.
- In comparison to young people from the general population, PQJ participants are more marked by instability. For many of them, the PQJ intervention brought a minimum amount of stability required for a successful integration into society.

Lessons Learned

- Interventions such as the PQJ work on both young people's personal abilities and their relationships with their networks and their networks' resources. When social opportunities are not available, young people's integration may be impeded, particularly if they are vulnerable.
- This demonstration project led to the development of expertise on what interventions to promote in order to prepare young people receiving youth centre services for independent living and support their integration into society as adults.

Conclusion

The **Projet de qualification des jeunes (PQJ)** intervention definitely and significantly helped build a space for acquiring qualifying knowledge and skills, and assisted the young people taking part in the project in gaining some work experience.

The innovative aspect of the project is recognized beyond the youth centres network. The Government of Quebec has confirmed funding for gradual implementation of the PQJ to all youth centres as part of the unveiling of the Youth Action Strategy 2006-2009.

For more information on this project or to obtain a copy of the final evaluation report, please contact the National Crime Prevention Centre at 1-877-302-6272 or go to our Web site at www.publicsafety.gc.ca/ncpc.

If you wish to register for the NCPC mailing list to receive information from the Centre please visit the subscription page at: www.PublicSafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/maillinglist/subscribe-en.aspx.

You can also go to the Association des centres jeunesse du Québec Web site (in French only) at <http://www.acjq.qc.ca/>.