



## NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION CENTRE

# STRONG FAMILIES, STRONG CHILDREN PROJECT

The Strong Families, Strong Children (SFSC) project was a community-based crime prevention program that addressed the needs of families with at-risk children between the ages of 5 and 12. Sponsored by Moncton Youth Residences Inc, the SFSC project operated in Moncton, New Brunswick from 2000-2003. The project was created for families and their children who showed some of the risk factors associated with crime and victimization, including socio-economic deprivation, poor school performance and anti-social tendencies. Priority was given to children engaged in behaviour that would result in criminal charges if they were of the age of criminal responsibility.



The aim was to:

- Promote competent parenting;
- Increase positive family interactions; and
- Address children's behavioural problems.

Families could access the program directly or be referred by community agencies from the greater Moncton area. This project offered an array of supports, including in-home support and family nurturing, as well as individualized service plans designed to meet the needs of each participant family.

Other key elements linked to In-home Support included: Family Nurturing Program for Parents and Children; Parent Support Group; Social Skills for the Prevention of Aggressive Behaviours; Family Resources Lending Library; Respite Care; and Family Fun Times.

## Project assessment

Process and outcome evaluations collected pre-, post- and follow-up data to identify areas of change in the functioning of participants.

Two groups participated in the evaluation: the SFSC intervention group and families in a Headstart control group. The comparison group consisted of families who were previously involved in the Moncton Headstart early intervention program, but who were not receiving the SFSC intervention. Baseline data were available for

64 families and follow-up data were available for 39 families involved in the SFSC. Baseline data for the comparison group were available for 30 families and follow-up data were available for 27 families from the Headstart control group.

## Key findings

The process evaluation showed that:

- 97% of parents reported that staff adequately addressed their needs and priorities;
- Two major elements were altered during the implementation phase of the project: 1) formalized respite care services were omitted during the first year of implementation in order to increase emphasis on personal family support for childcare, and 2) the parent support group was renamed 'Parent Luncheons' in an effort to increase parent participation;
- Project workers require specific skills and competencies such as confidence, flexibility, empathy and resourcefulness to be effective.

The outcome evaluation showed that:

- Positive changes were seen in both child and parent participants;
- Parents showed greater confidence in addressing concerns and coping with parenting issues;



- When solving everyday problems, child participants showed decreases in anger, inattention, anxiety, impulsiveness and aggression. They showed increases in levels of happiness and daily functioning;
- The SFSC group showed a greater degree of improvement than the Headstart control group on variables such as happiness, ability to solve everyday problems, inattention, anxiety, anger, impulsiveness and aggression;
- 70–85% of parents reported that the SFSC helped their children to develop better relationships with other family members, and that it enhanced their child's personal development.

## Lessons learned

Lessons learned included:

- Identify community capacities and service gaps during the preliminary planning stage of the project;
- Respectful and optimistic attitudes help build relationships with parents and children;
- Address basic needs and concerns before implementing other family interventions;
- Informal language is the best way to secure involvement from participants;

- School advocacy helps parents potentially obtain additional services;
- Family facilitators can help to provide contact information or arrange meetings with participant families to ensure that follow-up data is gathered for evaluation.

## Conclusion

The Strong Families, Strong Children (SFSC) intervention project had a positive impact on the children and parents who participated in this project. The lessons learned can serve as a useful model for future initiatives for children and families at risk. A family-focused crime prevention project seems to provide an effective way of addressing risk factors and creating a positive impact on at-risk children and families.

*For more information or to receive a copy of the final evaluation report please contact the National Crime Prevention Centre at 1-877-302-6272, or visit our website at: [www.PublicSafety.gc.ca/NCPC](http://www.PublicSafety.gc.ca/NCPC).*

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