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Tyler's Story

One young person's
interactions with the
Canadian criminal
justice system

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Tyler's Story uses a fictional character to illustrate the shared experiences of justice-involved youth and the societal costs for Canadians. This Visual Booklet offers a visually engaging summary of a longer report, enriched with pedagogical questions to spark reflection and dialogue. It's a flexible resource for educators, community leaders, and others to support workshops, university courses, and community discussions.

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : L'histoire de Tyler - Interactions d'un jeune avec le système de justice pénale canadien

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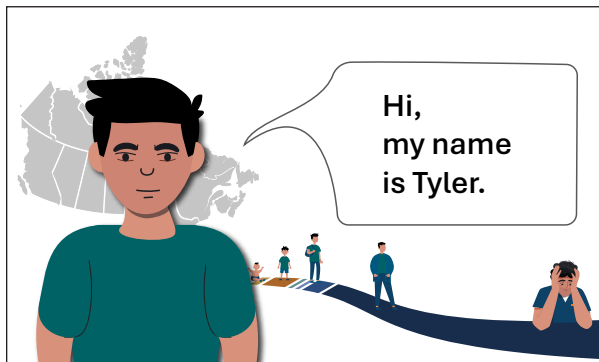
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Meet Tyler



Hi, my name is Tyler.¹ The visual booklet you are about to read shows my early life and run-ins with the law. Canadian youth face different challenges, and there is no single reason why anyone becomes involved in crime.

From what I've seen, the more challenges an individual experiences, the more likely they are to become stuck in a life of crime. There is a real weight and cost to these experiences.

My story is about trauma, neglect, abuse, and how those experiences created a ripple effect for those around me. But it is also about the programs and opportunities that make positive waves in young lives.

Every story is different, but this is mine.



¹ Tyler is a fictional character. This visual booklet does not depict any real persons or events.



Note to the reader

Risk factors are negative influences in the lives of individuals or their community that can increase one's likelihood of criminal behaviour. No single factor can fully explain why some youth become involved in the justice system, and not all individuals exposed to risk factors go on to commit crimes. However, Tyler's Story illustrates how the accumulation of multiple, compounding risk factors can lead a young person down a pathway of persistent criminal behaviour.

The risk factors identified in the earlier years of Tyler's story are based on the **Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) Theory**, which is a developmental perspective showcasing how family background, social environment, and individual-level factors may lead to Tyler's later criminal behaviours.

Tyler's criminal behaviour began in his mid-teen years. The risk factors identified during this period and beyond align with the **Central Eight** model, which highlights eight broad risk factors that are most strongly associated with recurring criminal behaviour.

Understanding the diverse factors that contribute to an increased risk of criminal behaviour is essential for developing comprehensive and effective crime prevention strategies.

Throughout this story, you will encounter reflection questions to deepen your understanding of the importance of early and sustained crime prevention.

These prompts will also guide you in exploring the broader societal impacts of crime and highlight the need for stronger support systems for justice-involved youth.

Age 0 to 2

Tyler's mother became pregnant in her early twenties while she was still living at home with her parents and studying at a nearby college. She quit school and moved in with her boyfriend—Tyler's father—who had a history of property crimes. He also wasn't always very nice to Tyler's mother. Soon after she had Tyler.

Not long after Tyler's birth, a neighbour reported suspicious activity at his house. The police discovered a large amount of

stolen electronics and arrested Tyler's father. He was sentenced to three years in a correctional facility.



Tyler's risk factors

Developmental perspective

Long-term

- Tyler's father's criminal record and incarceration
- Exposure to violence in the home
- Family disruption/instability
- Financial instability



Potential associated costs

Police Call for Service: \$176

Child and Family Services Investigation: \$7,809

Child Services Home Visits (1 year): \$57,656

Total – age period 0 to 2: \$65,641

Age 3 to 5

Tyler began displaying problematic behaviour when he was three-years-old. He didn't make friends and was physically aggressive towards other children. Even though the daycare did try to work with him, in time, his behaviours were so problematic that he was no longer welcome at daycare and he had to stay with a neighbour while his mother was at work.

When Tyler was four-years-old, his father was released from prison and returned to live with Tyler and his mother. Now Tyler stayed home with his father while his mother went to work. He was ignored by his father and often went without food. It didn't take long for Tyler's problematic behaviours to resurface.

When Tyler was five years old, his father broke his arm in an argument over a broken TV remote. An emergency room doctor suspected abuse. Following an investigation and a Civil Family Court ruling, Tyler was placed in temporary foster care.



Tyler's risk factors

Developmental perspective

Long-term

- High level of early aggression
- Trait anger
- Neglectful and abusive parenting
- Family disruption/instability (including foster care)
- Difficulty forming social attachments
- Financial instability

Short-term

- Lack of supervision



Potential associated costs

Emergency Room Visit: \$1,083

Child Services Investigation: \$7,809

Child Custody Hearing: \$72,790

Foster Care: \$12,245 in total for eight months

Total – age period 3 to 5: \$93,927



Age 6 to 10

During his time in foster care, Child and Family Services worked with Tyler's parents to address the issues that led to his foster care placement. Tyler returned to live with his family after eight months, although there was continued supervision from Child and Family Services for several years.

Although Tyler's father continued to live in the family home, he was emotionally absent for much of Tyler's childhood. Despite the support from his mother, Tyler continued to have difficulty making friends or showing empathy for other children

in his neighbourhood and at school. He experienced frequent bullying at school. By age ten, Tyler was regularly getting into fights at school.



Tyler's risk factors

Developmental perspective

Long-term

- Pattern of aggressive behaviour
- Trait anger
- Neglectful and abusive parenting
- Family disruption/instability (including foster care)
- Difficulty forming social attachments
- Financial instability
- Low school achievement

Short-term

- Lack of supervision
- Low empathy
- Impulsivity



Potential associated costs

Parenting Classes (\$3,198)

Supervised Access (twice per week for 8 weeks: \$480)

Child Services Home Visits/Ongoing Casework
(2 instances of 365 days, each at: \$57,656)

Psychoeducational Assessment (\$4,497)

Individual Education Plan (for 3 years: \$18,567)

Total – age period 6 to 10: \$142,054

Opportunity for Diversion 1

Tyler could have benefitted from a program like Stop Now and Plan (SNAP®). SNAP® teaches children how to regulate angry feelings and control impulsive and aggressive behaviours. It does this by having them stop and think about alternative ways of reacting to a situation.



Potential savings

More than \$1.3 million dollars could have been saved if Tyler had access to this program and successfully completed it. Or, \$62 dollars could have been returned for every \$1 dollar spent on SNAP®.



Reflection questions

What role might early childhood experiences have played in shaping Tyler's later behaviour?

How might systemic issues such as poverty, family instability, and lack of access to mental health services contribute to youth involvement with the criminal justice system?

Age 11 to 14

As Tyler entered adolescence he became friends with a group of troublemakers. The boys were often suspended for being disruptive in class. Then, Tyler and two of his friends were caught stealing high value auto parts and charged with property crimes and theft.

Because this was his first recorded offence, the youth court judge ordered Tyler to provide a written apology to the victims and pay for the damages he caused and property he stole. When Tyler did

not comply with the court order, he was brought before a youth court judge again. This time, Tyler was sentenced to 90 days probation, including the 50 hours of community service.



Tyler's risk factors

Developmental perspective

Long-term

- Pattern of aggressive behaviour
- Family disruption/instability
- Association with delinquent peers
- Community violence/lack of neighborhood safety

Short-term

- Peer pressure
- Lack of supervision
- Impulsivity

Central Eight theory

- **Antisocial history:**
Onset of criminal behaviour
(Criminal charges, Sentence, Violation of probation terms, additional sentence)



Potential costs

Individual Education Plan (for 4 years: \$24,757)

Police Call for Service (\$176)

Arrest of a Juvenile (\$677)

Youth Court Appearance (2 instances, each at \$1,651)

Police Attendance at Court (2 instances, each at \$443)

Theft Under \$5,000 (\$1,542)

Damage to Property (\$3,470)

Probation Supervision (90 Days: \$2,089)

Community Service Supervision (50 Hours: \$715)

Total – age period 11 to 14: \$37,614

Opportunity for Diversion 2

Tyler could have benefitted from a neighbourhood-based program designed to reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour such as the Youth Inclusion Program (YIP). YIP creates a safe place where youth can learn new skills, take part in activities, and get help with schoolwork. Youths also benefit from interactions with positive role models who can help guide young people through hard times and provide a consistent relationship when their home life gets tough.



Potential savings

More than \$1.1 million dollars could have been saved if Tyler had access to this program and successfully completed it. Or, \$118 dollars could have been returned for every \$1 dollar spent on YIP.



Reflection questions

What barriers might prevent youth like Tyler from accessing crime prevention programs?

What role can individuals (e.g., teachers, neighbours, mentors) and community organizations play in supporting early interventions and diverting at-risk youth from crime?

Age 15 to 17

Just before he turned 18, Tyler dropped out of school and spent his days drinking alcohol and getting high on cannabis at local parks. At a house party, Tyler became drunk and ended up in a fight. He was charged with assault by the police. Tyler was sentenced to six months' probation.

Soon after, Tyler violated the terms of his sentence and assaulted his mother during an argument. This time, he was sentenced to six-months in a secure youth custody facility. While in youth

custody, Tyler became close friends with an experienced drug dealer. The two 17-year-olds began dealing drugs together when they were released.



Tyler's risk factors

Central Eight theory

- **Antisocial history:** Continued criminal behaviour; Criminal charges; Sentence; Violation of probation terms
- **Attitudes/Cognitions:** Lying and deflecting blame; Justifying criminal behaviour
- **Personality:** Trait anger; Impulsivity
- **Associates/Peers:** Involvement with antisocial peers; Involvement with criminal peers; Living and working with criminal peers
- **Education/Employment:** Low levels of performance; Truancy and suspensions; Dropping out of high school
- **Substance Use:** Continued substance use



Potential costs

Individual Education Plan (3 years: \$18,567)

Police Call for Service (2 instances, each at \$176)

Social Assistance (\$766 per month; from age 17 to 30: \$36,759)

Arrest of a Juvenile (2 instances, each at \$677)

Youth Court Appearance (2 instances, each at \$1,651)

Police Attendance at Court (3 instances, each at \$443)

Probation Supervision (180 days: \$4,178)

Assault (2 instances, each at \$5,718)

Youth Custody Facility (120 days: \$30,374)

Probation Supervision (60 days: \$1,393)

Total – age period 15 to 17: \$109,044

Opportunity for Diversion 3

Tyler could have benefitted from a program that targets youth already involved in the juvenile justice system who are at risk of being imprisoned such as Multisystemic Therapy (MST). This intensive family- and community-based therapy intervention addresses antisocial behaviour and focuses on eliminating risk factors to avoid continued criminal behaviour.



Potential savings

Almost **\$1.1 million dollars** could have been saved if Tyler had access to this program and successfully completed it. Or, \$38 dollars could have been returned for every \$1 dollar spent on MST.



Reflection questions

What does Tyler's story reveal about the economic costs of crime versus the potential benefits of prevention?

How can policy- and decision-makers use stories like Tyler's to inform more effective youth justice strategies?

Age 18 and older

It didn't take long for Tyler to be arrested again for possession and intent to traffic a controlled substance at age 18. He was sentenced to 18-months in an adult facility. During a routine game of basketball, Tyler became enraged over a hard foul and assaulted a fellow inmate, causing serious injury. For his actions, a year was added to Tyler's sentence.

When he was released, Tyler returned to his old neighbourhood and continued dealing drugs and committing petty crimes to make money. Tyler struggled with reintegration due to the stigma of having a criminal record, finding it difficult to get a job or stable housing. As a result, he would move in with a girlfriend from time to time.

At age 25, Tyler attacked one girlfriend with whom he was living. He was arrested and charged with aggravated assault and other violent offences and was sentenced to another five years in federal custody.

By the time Tyler was age 30, he had spent more than 10 years of his life in custody.



Tyler's risk factors

Central Eight theory

- **Antisocial History:** Continued criminal behaviour; Criminal charges; Sentence
- **Continued Criminal Behaviour:** Criminal charges; Sentence; Institutional infractions; Additional sentence
- **Personality:** Trait anger and poor emotional regulation skills; Impulsivity
- **Attitudes/Cognitions:** Justifying criminal behaviour
- **Associates/Peers:** Association with criminal peers
- **Family:** Relationship instability; Relationship conflict; Relationship violence
- **Education/Employment:** Refusal to engage in legitimate workforce (e.g., drug dealing)
- **Substance Use:** Continued substance use



Potential costs

Police Call for Service (3 instances, each at \$176)

Arrest of an Adult (3 instances, each at \$3,206)

Adult Court Appearance (4 instances, each at \$8,987)

Police Attendance at Court (4 instances, each at \$443)

Drug Offence/Intent to traffic (2 instances, each at \$3,862)

Provincial Custody (180 days: \$61,306)

Probation Supervision (365 days: \$8,472)

Assault (2 instances, each at \$5,718)

Provincial Custody (730 days: \$248,631)

Provincial Custody (120 days: \$40,871)

Probation Supervision (245 days: \$5,686)

Aggravated Assault (\$20,097)

Assault with a Weapon or Assault Causing Bodily Harm (\$20,097)

Uttering Threats (\$5,087)

Federal Prison (28 months = about 850 days: \$380,086)

Probation Supervision (32 months = about 11,520 days: \$267,379)

Total – age period 18 and older: \$1,124,738



A final note from Tyler

These experiences cost me, my community, and Canadians about \$1.6 million dollars. And that's just the cost of my story. It's a big number—and bigger when I think of the number of kids in circumstances like mine.

Sometimes I wonder, what would've happened if I had had access to programs like SNAP, YIP, and MST?

I think my life—and the lives of people my actions affected—could've looked pretty different—and for a fraction of the cost. What do you think?

