

Setting-Oriented Approach to Safety and Injury Prevention

Conditions Required to Update Activities for the Promotion of Safety in Living Environments Included in the National Public Health Program.

Summary:

The update of the 2008-2012 National Public Health Program made an important addition in the area of unintentional trauma. The Program now includes promotional activities based on the setting-oriented approach to safety. These activities are directed towards various settings such as schools, municipalities, etc. They involve taking a systematic approach to improve safety in living environments ranging from diagnosing a safety issue to an action plan and its evaluation.

In 2009, the Ministry of Health and Social Services mandated the National Public Health Institute to conduct an exploratory study to determine what preliminary steps were needed to support this activity in the public health network.

Objective:

The objective of this exploratory study was to identify general factors that facilitate the setting-oriented approach by regional public health departments. Specifically, four objectives were identified:

What is Safety?

Issues that need to be considered



1. Many safety issues are related to each other in various ways

Addressing safety measures in one area may worsen another. For example, lowering taxes on alcohol to offset smuggling may make alcohol more accessible and increase alcohol-related problems.

2. Safety means more than simply the absence of incidents

The feeling of safety is influenced by individual and collective experiences and does not necessarily relate to the incidence of crime.

3. Safety must target a range of organizations and sectors that share responsibility

This includes health, public safety, transport, justice, sports and recreation, and housing.

4. A global understanding of safety is lacking.

Safety should be understood at the level of a specific setting so that all interrelated issues can be identified and addressed systematically.

1. To determine the state of Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention in the different regional public health departments.
2. To determine how specialists perceive the setting-oriented approach.
3. To define barriers and conditions necessary to implement this approach by regional public health departments.
4. To recommend ways to implement this approach, as described in the National Public Health Program.

Methods:

The setting-oriented approach was used as a frame of reference. To fulfill the objectives of the study, two methods of confidential data collection were used. 1) Literature analysis and semi-structured interviews with team coordinators of health prevention and promotion; and 2) with injury prevention respondents. In total, 27 interviews were conducted, 14 of which were with team coordinators, and 13 with injury prevention respondents.

The setting-oriented approach for the promotion of safety

A participatory-based approach to safety and injury prevention that is comprised of four fundamental components.

- 1) **A holistic vision of safety.**
- 2) **Intersectoral partnerships.**
- 3) **A structured planning process.**
- 4) **Community engagement.**



The setting-oriented approach, as opposed to the problem-based approach, is applied not to a particular problem observed in a community, but to a particular space where the population spends time working, relaxing, or raising families. The main objective is to act on a set of environmental and behavioural factors in order to improve the setting's safety.

Results:

The results show that, in general, the importance of Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention was relatively low compared to other public health issues, indicating a lack of resources and team dedication in most regional public health departments. In addition, very few regional public health departments had applied the setting-oriented approach in any fundamental way. However, most regional public health departments have resorted to one or more elements of the setting-oriented approach.

How to Implement the Setting-Oriented Approach to Safety

1. Define the interaction of problems.
2. Find effective solutions to the problems.
3. Determine which solutions can be implemented based on their social, cultural and economic acceptability.
4. Assess possible interactions among these solutions.
5. Determine the economies of scale that can be achieved by implementing a single solution for several problems.

Mobilization		Diagnosis				Action	
Identify the Players	Ensure that a joint action mechanism exists	Paint a portrait of the setting	Paint of portrait of the setting's crime and safety problems	Assess safety in the setting	Select and validate the setting's safety problems	Prepare an action plan	Implement the action plan's preventative measures
Evaluation							

<p>Mobilization:</p> <p>Interested partners are mobilized to form a working group or committee that focuses specifically on the issue of safety or improving public safety.</p>	<p>Safety Diagnosis:</p> <p>Identify socio-economic determinants, available resources and the safety problems that affect a population (crime, incivility, feeling of insecurity, fear of crime, etc.). Produce a portrait that highlights the different interactions and prioritize by order of importance.</p>	<p>Action:</p> <p>Based on the results of the safety diagnosis, priority problems are examined in depth to gain a better grasp of their causes, interactions, and similarities and to prepare an action plan. This plan will propose, to the community concerned, a coherent set of solutions that are centered on effective interventions and take questions of feasibility into account.</p>
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Evaluation:

An assessment that looks at what activities have been carried out in relation to those originally planned. Do the results observed correspond to those anticipated? What difficulties were encountered? Were deadlines and cost targets met? Is the action plan consistent with the safety diagnosis?

According to those interviewed, the setting-oriented approach has four major advantages:

- 1) It would achieve a more realistic vision.
- 2) It would provide, through its structured approach, a systematic guide to help indicate a process often perceived as complex because of the holistic approach used.
- 3) It would enhance mobilization and empowerment of local and general partners.
- 4) It would boost the effects of a given intervention.

However, the specialists state that that the structured approach is time and energy consuming and that the participation of many partners sometimes makes cooperation difficult. It is also difficult to determine people's roles.



In regards to perceived barriers, the most important was a lack of awareness of conceptual approaches and organizational cultures by both specialists and partners. Such unawareness does not promote holistic and participatory approaches and reinforces the negative image that is sometimes associated with regional public health departments. Consequently, local shareholders with special, and sometimes divergent, interests are reluctant to collaborate.

Conversely, respondents often cited factors that facilitated the approach, including the exploitation of pre-existing channels; the designation of a case officer, a team, or dedicated resources; formalization of partnerships; opportunities for training and practice; the public health legal framework; organization support for Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention; and the flexibility given to specialists in their Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention cases.

Moreover, careful attention to communities to seize opportunities (e.g. initiating events, elaboration of public policy, establishment of a local committee, elaboration of a strategic plan, etc.) would facilitate community mobilization regarding safety issues. Finally, strategies that promote interest and communication could encourage communities to formulate intervention requests to the regional public health departments.

The advantages of the setting-oriented approach to safety

1. It more fully ensures that the main problems will be targeted.

The global understanding achieved with this approach makes it possible to better define the main problems that require attention, for it takes into account not only the opinions of the various shareholders involved, but also those of the population of interest.

2. It makes is easier to consider the interaction of problems.

Since this approach looks at safety issues as a whole, it ensures that interactions among problems can be taken into consideration more readily.

3. It makes it easier to take the possible negative impact of solutions into account

Sometimes the end result of a solution applied in isolation to resolve a particular problem compromises the level of safety of a population, For example, building a pedestrian tunnel to reduce the risk of collision may provide additional opportunities for assault in a neighbourhood. Similarly, systematically excluding a group or a category of individuals from a public place to ensure a climate of social peace may interfere with their physical, material, or psychological integrity by curtailing their rights and freedoms.

4. It fosters the creation of global intervention programs that target a set of community needs.

The setting-oriented approach fosters the emergence of global solutions designed to have an impact not only on safety problems, but other types of problems as well.

5. It breaks down the isolation of shareholders

Problems in a population are often complex, and a broad range of expertise is thus required to solve them. The setting-oriented approach favours the integration of this diverse expertise by breaking the isolation of the various shareholders concerned by safety issues. This should in turn foster more effective interventions.

Recommendations:

Data analysis of the interviews revealed certain needs that can facilitate the setting-oriented approach. For example, training of Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention specialists, strengthening communication, benefiting from the experience of certain well-established initiatives (e.g. Villes et Villages en Santé, École en Santé, Services Intégrés en Périnatalité et Pour la Petite Enfance) in order to integrate safety issues, the development of specific tools that can be used by Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention specialists in their setting-oriented approach interventions, establishing indicators of efficacy, and allocation of funding.

Based on the results, the following recommendations have been proposed:

Recommendation 1:

Promote the use of leverages and pre-existing channels based on setting-oriented approaches in order to further integrate local safety promotion strategies.

Recommendation 2:

The first recommendation can only be achieved by implementing a strategy that identifies practical conditions that first need to be put in place for the process. This can include optimal starting-off points, opportunities, necessary tools, acquired skills, and communications strategies.

Recommendation 3:

Support regions in their efforts to integrate local safety promotion strategies by implementing a number of measures that relate to increased awareness, to the development of tools and their dissemination, to training, to communication strategies, and to the establishment of indicators for setting-oriented approaches.



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An Example of a Setting-Oriented Approach to Safety



A metro station in Montréal

Location: Metropolitan area

Year: 1999-2000

Body in charge of the project: A community organization that received funding to sponsor the project

Origin of the project: Under the leadership of the municipality, a safety committee was created and a grant awarded to a local organization to conduct a pilot project aimed at testing and evaluating the approach proposed in the document *Safety in Life Settings. A Guide for Québec Municipalities*. The theme of the project was "Young people and public places."

Type of setting: The pilot project was confined to an intermodal terminal and the metro station partly because young people congregated there.

Structure and leadership: Following a commitment from the city and the police department, various sectors interested in the problem targeted by the project or in the issue of safety took part in this initiative. Local residents and actors from public transit, public health and community organizations got together and formed a committee.

Implementation: The committee met once a month for about a year, during which it made a safety diagnosis, proposed solutions and drew up an action plan. Although the main safety issue that seemed to affect the setting at the beginning of the project was the large number of young people and criminal gang members who congregated there, the committee's work (especially the diagnosis) identified other, just as serious safety issues. The diagnosis enabled the committee to move beyond a limited view of the problem in the metro station to a much broader view that took into account several aspects of safety. In addition to the gathering of young people, the diagnosis highlighted the feeling of insecurity, violence and the risk of collisions. The committee therefore sought solutions to all of these problems and proposed an action plan. After taking stock of activities in the setting, the committee defined a series of passive measures (physical layout) and active ones (patrols, regulations, surveillance, resident participation, etc.), each of which targeted more than one problem. Many of the solutions advocated had already been incorporated into plans for laying out a new terminal. Since the committee had only recommending authority, it submitted its action plan to the city. The assessment of this project focused on how the approach proposed in *Safety in Life Settings. A Guide for Québec Municipalities* was implemented.

Conclusions: The conceptual framework included in the guide enabled the committee to consider safety in the setting as a whole rather than to simply focus on the most obvious problem. Therefore, the solutions recommended covered a much broader range of issues than simply the problem of young people congregating in the setting.

The project demonstrated that it is possible to apply a setting-oriented approach and enlist the participation of such diverse partners as a transit agency and local residents. However, since the committee was only able to make recommendations, it could not implement the measures it proposed.