



Communities That Care®

Communities That Care Ltd is a not for profit training and consulting company formed through a collaboration between the Royal Children's Hospital and the Rotary Club of Melbourne with the objective of implementing, evaluating and disseminating strategies for building community prevention capacity in Australia. The company vision is to promote the healthy development of children and young people through long term community planning to prevent health and social problems.

Communities That Care is a training and technical assistance resource that has been designed to enhance the healthy development of children and young people by building community capacity to plan and deliver effective developmental prevention services. The process was designed in the USA and initiated in Australia as a long term community planning process aimed at preventing a range of health and social problems including alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crime, school failure and community disengagement. The School of Psychology at Deakin University and the Centre for Adolescent Health (part of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute) located at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital have been collaborating to provide research and technical support for this best-practice initiative while significant fund raising and administrative support has been provided through the Rotary Club of Melbourne.

The Communities That Care training and technical assistance process was designed to build community capacity to plan and deliver effective child and adolescent health promotion and community prevention. The process has been designed to assist local organisational development and planning by emphasising both community development and empowerment and the building of understanding and skills relevant to effective prevention strategies. Initial activities focus on community involvement by mobilising the support of key leaders and setting up a relevant prevention organisation or committee. Once communities achieve basic organisational "readiness", the next phase seeks to identify the major risk and protective factors that are influencing local child and adolescent adjustment outcomes within the family, school, community, peers and at the individual level. Community profile information is systematically developed from youth surveys and other sources and used to establish local prevention and intervention priorities and health promotion targets. A plan is then established to select and implement evidence-based prevention programs that have been designed to address the selected priorities and targets. Finally monitoring and evaluation are implemented to assess the effectiveness of the local community plan. A series of training programs, assessment resources and consultations are provided to support communities. Through these steps the Communities That Care process assists communities to build local capacity to address the root-causes of child and adolescent problems.

Initial Trial of Communities That Care in Australia.

From 2002 the Communities That Care process was trialed in Australia in three "pioneer" communities (see below). Evaluation findings confirm the process to have been valuable with pre-post surveys of large student samples showing community reductions in targeted problems including alcohol and drug use and sexual risk taking behaviour.

Taking the first step with Communities That Care Services.

Introducing the Communities That Care planning process into your community typically begins with one person who acts as a “champion”. Communities That Care resources that can help you include a book called “Are you ready?” that can be used to explain the concept of community prevention to people in your community. Local people are often unaware that youth problems such as violence, alcohol and drug abuse and injuries can be prevented. Meeting with local people who are concerned by these problems it is possible to form a core group that can host further activities. The “Communities That Care Prevention Planning Consultation” provides expert community development advice regarding the current level of community prevention planning capacity and the next steps community members can take to advance local capacity. Once enough people are committed it is possible to start to complete the formal Communities That Care process. Initially this involves training and assistance to develop a strong and sustainable local organisation or partnership. The group complete The “Communities That Care Youth Survey” and review other relevant data sources to complete a profile of the extent of health and social problems affecting children and young people in your community and indicating local influencing factors (risk and protective factors) within the family, school, community, peer group and at the individual level that can be modified to prevent these problems. Community profile information is systematically developed from surveys and other sources and used to establish local prevention and intervention priorities and health promotion targets. This process includes the selection of a short list of risk and protection factors to be targeted through future activities. The Communities That Care “Prevention Strategies Guide” is then used to select evidence-based strategies that can reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors. A plan is then established to implement evidence-based prevention programs that have been designed to address the selected priorities and targets. Finally monitoring and evaluation are implemented to assess the effectiveness of the local community plan. A series of training programs, assessment resources and consultations are provided to support communities. Through these steps the Communities That Care process assists communities to build local capacity to address the root-causes of child and adolescent problems.

Key achievements to date.

- Australian adaptation and trial of the Communities That Care youth survey. National licensing rights to deliver the program developed in the United States. Development of new community planning survey tools. Completion of the International Youth Development Survey to prospectively test the Communities That Care youth survey.
- Three Australian “pioneer” communities have been successfully implementing the Communities That Care process since 2002. The Communities That Care planning process has been successfully completed within all three of the pioneer communities.
- In 2008 the first resurvey report was published providing evidence that the large trial of Communities That Care in the Mornington Peninsula Shire is showing indications of positive improvements in adolescent health behaviours and social environmental perceptions. Resurvey work in Bunbury is showing similar positive outcomes.

Four Pioneer Communities are successfully implementing Communities That Care in Australia

Investing In Our Youth Greater Bunbury Western Australia: The first fully operational Communities That Care site in Australia has been led by the Investing in Our Youth organisation. Their website provides access to a variety of valuable information including details of the research and planning reports that are guiding activities in their community.

<http://www.investinginouryouth.com.au/>

Communities That Care Mornington Peninsula: Communities That Care Mornington Peninsula involves a strong partnership with local government. This group have completed their ambitious objective of implementing Communities That Care Local Area Groups in all sections of this large municipality. Having completed student resurveys in 2007 the group are currently preparing their next phase of planning community improvements.

http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.asp?Page_Id=145

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Strengthening Generations Ballarat: With the completion of prevention planning reports and major activities for the Wendouree and Delacombe/ Sebastopol communities (<http://www.wendoureewest.com/Strengthening%20Generations.htm>). The Strengthening Generations team have completed a student resurvey evaluation and are entering the next phase of planning community improvements.

Contact Jodie Downey - Project Officer. P 03 5320 5593

Communities That Care Myrtleford: The most recently registered Communities That Care group. This group have formed a Key leader group and Community Board, have completed survey work and are developing a community action plan (<http://www.gvpcp.org.au/web-docs/CommunitiestheCare.pdf>).

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Our future plans

- We are extending the dissemination of the Communities That Care process into 14 local communities that have been selected to represent the diversity of socioeconomic and rural vs metropolitan geographic locations in three states of Australia. As a first step relevant auspice agencies are being sought to host consultations in these communities. These consultations are designed to better inform local communities regarding options for community prevention strategies and to establish whether the Communities That Care planning process may have local relevance.
- The future dissemination of the Communities That Care process will be evaluated within a community trial. There are 14 matched comparison communities that have been randomly selected to be monitored over time for the evaluation.
- We will continue consulting relationships with a range of municipalities and community groups

How to start accessing the Communities That Care services

- The “Communities That Care Prevention Planning Consultation” provides expert community development advice regarding the current level of community prevention planning capacity and the next steps community members can take to advance local capacity. This consultation uses the Prevention Planning Survey to assess community conditions and to structure recommendations.

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