

CANADIAN FORCES NATIONAL YOUTH MODEL

Background

Canadian communities are faced with increasing challenges when addressing programs and services for youth. As a means to improve the availability of quality youth programs and services, many communities and service agencies have been working towards adopting a more youth-driven and youth-engaged approach, where programs and services realistically meet the needs and expectations of youth. To achieve such an integrated youth-centered approach, service providers must adopt a delivery strategy which is responsive, practical and accountable. Unfortunately, decreasing resources and increased pressure to provide compounding levels of service magnify this challenge.

Within the Canadian Forces community, however, the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA) has managed to minimize these barriers by demonstrating increasingly strong support for families and youth. Specifically, the 1998 SCONDVA report and the recommendations of the 1999 National Youth Summit, began a process of heightened awareness of the needs of youth that has culminated in the development of a National Programs and Services Model for youth from military families.

The Model was developed and designed to enhance existing youth planning and development strategies; to improve current program and service levels; and to provide a comprehensive, systematic and meaningful experience for youth from military families aged 12 to 18 years.

The Model's Developmental Methodology

MODEL DELIVERABLES

Please see www.cfpsa.com

for information on:

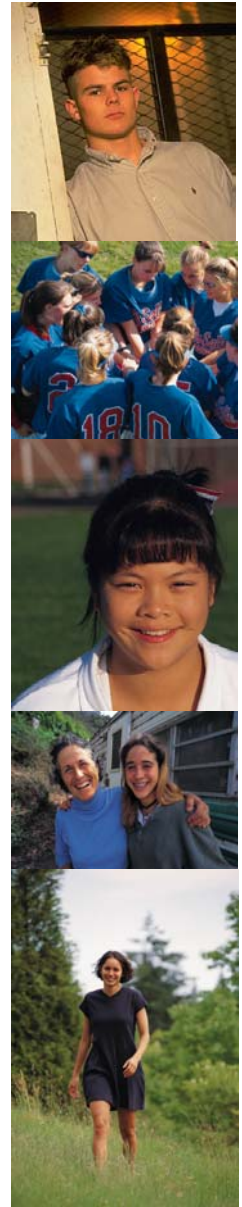
- youth trends report;
- interim report; and
- Excellence Workshop.

Also refer to the first two editions of the RECRoom for information on the Model.

The first two phases of the Model's development concentrated on conducting research and gathering pertinent information. Activities conducted as part of phase one and two included:

- a review of current trends and relevant literature;
- surveys from twenty bases/wings;
- focus groups and key informant interviews with eight base/wings;
- a benchmarking process with four bases/wings; and
- Model-planning sessions as part of the Excellence Workshop.

Activities within the third phase of the Model's development focused on formalizing the strategic design of the Model, using information collected in the first two phases of the project.



Key Research Findings Impacting the Model's Development

"The teenagers of military families face the same problems as other youth, but many of them also have to contend with the isolation of the bases they live on."
SCONDVA, 1998

Youth between the ages of 12 and 18 are going through a critical period of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Youth from military families are no different, save, they may face added stress resulting from the experiences of re-location and parental/guardian deployment. The 1998 SCONDVA report noted that the unpredictability of military life takes a toll on youth from a CF family. Furthermore, the CF community has encountered inherent challenges to the delivery of youth programs and services.

These challenges include:

- The military lifestyle creates an uncertain family dynamic. The process of deployment and frequent re-location can create stress within the family unit and make it difficult for youth to integrate within their peer-set;
- Where military families live impacts the scope of youth program development and delivery. As more military families choose to live off Base, the traditional method in which youth programs and services are delivered becomes incongruent with the needs of youth;
- There is inconsistency in the type and quality of youth programs and services across the country. When relocating, youth find it difficult to continue to access similar services at the new location, resulting in declining participation rates;
- Physical and social constraints prohibit participation in youth programs and services. Youth noted the unavailability of affordable and accessible transportation; the cost of regular or specialized programs; and the perception that the nature and design of programs are exclusionary, as precipitating factors limiting their involvement in youth program and services;
- Support and encouragement for youth programs and services by Base/Wing leadership varies across the country. In locations where there is positive backing, youth programs and services thrive, whereas, unsupportive leadership results in unsuccessful programs;
- Due to the differing mandates of PSP and C/MFRC, youth must often access both service providers to satisfy their full spectrum of needs; and
- Due to increased competition for sponsorship funds, it is difficult to establish relationships with other youth serving agencies and non-traditional partners.

While these challenges do exist, local enthusiasm, creativity and perseverance has produced a variety of enviable programs and services for youth. By building on the strengths, the Model will significantly enhance the impact and scope of youth-centred programs and services.

These strengths include:

- Local staff and volunteers who are committed to addressing the needs of youth;
- A strong program and service delivery system, with excellent leisure facilities; and
- A commitment to involving youth in the planning and evaluation processes.

Strategic Considerations Guiding the Model's Development



The consultation processes of phase one and two produced a number of key considerations, which guided the development of the Model. They are:

- Build on the strengths of current operations by enhancing efficiency and maximizing opportunity;
- Present a continuum of program and service development that supports a national plan for seamless delivery;
- Respect existing organizational and staff roles and responsibilities;
- Recognize the need for flexibility in addressing the local needs of youth;
- Address the realities of adolescence and the unique challenges faced by youth from military families;
- Ensure that there is a holistic approach to programs and services; and
- Support a continued consultation and engagement process to educate, advocate, nurture relationships, broaden expertise, and foster healthy outcomes.

The Model is a framework on which service providers may collaboratively plan, implement and evaluate youth programs and services, ensuring youth from CF families have unrestricted access to quality, responsive and meaningful programs and services wherever they are.

KEY ACTIVITIES FOR 2003

The National Project Team believes that the Model has the potential to have a significant and lasting impact on the lives of youth from military families. The true strength of the Model's approach lies in the appreciation that quality programs and services already exist at each Canadian Forces location. By recognizing this strength, and by identifying the various challenges and opportunities inherent to the provision of youth programs and services, the Model will serve as the impetus in narrowing the gap between the needs of youth and the availability of desired services.

The National Project Team is moving forward with the process of implementing the Model. Prior to launching the core program components of the Model, however, several key activities must be realized. In the upcoming months the National Project Team will be concentrating on the following:



For further information on the Model please contact:

Anne Marie Vaz,
DMFS 8 at (613) 992-2328
or
Laurie Ogilvie,
NRYSM at (613) 995-7802.



National Advisory Committee

The CFPSA is committed to the establishment of the second phase of the National Advisory Committee, whose input and feedback will link into specific Model implementation strategies. The Committee will include representatives of various stakeholder groups including youth, military leadership, youth advocates.

Funding

Over the past few months, the National Project Team has been working to secure funding to enhance the implementation of the Model. Despite all attempts, the National Project Team has been unsuccessful but continues to pursue potential funders.

SISIP Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers are a vital component of PSP and C/MFRC programs and services. Recognition of the invaluable contribution made by these volunteers is critical. As such, the National Project Team, with sponsorship support from SISIP, have developed and piloted a volunteer recognition program for adults and youth.

Communication Strategy

The National Project Team continues to develop a comprehensive communication strategy for the implementation of the Model. Some key accomplishments to date include:

- a. the production and distribution of the "On the Move – Youth from Military Families" video;
- b. the development of a visual image for the Model; and
- c. the creation of a youth specific section of the CFPSA web-site.

National Resource Materials

Lastly, the National Project Team commits to the creation and implementation of a resource development strategy, which will include a needs assessment tool, program guides and support systems.

Fostering Collaboration and Partnerships

The National Project Team will strive to establish collaborative strategies that ensure all available resources are maximized, all stakeholders have a voice, and that, where feasible, program and services are delivered in partnership. Specific examples include:

- a. the establishment of a local youth advisory committee which represents the interests of all local stakeholders;
- b. supporting a youth committee which assembles the voice of local youth;
- c. conducting a local program inventory, identifying those programs and services where partnerships would be most effective; and
- d. investigate local initiatives, which provide sponsorship and granting support.