

Safe Communities

Safe Communities is a community-based approach to injury prevention and safety promotion. It was initiated in Sweden by the World Health Organisation; World Collaborating Centre on Health at the Karolinska Institute for Social Medicine.

The main aim of Safe Communities is to establish infrastructure in local communities to support them to address injuries through building local partnerships. The model encourages local communities to take ownership of the initiatives, which results in sustainable injury prevention and safety promotion initiatives.

⇒How big is the safety problem?

Preventable injuries are a significant area of concern in the NT. The NT has the highest rate of death resulting from injury of all Australian states and territories. The NT injury death rate is twice the national rate of 41 deaths per 100,000 population.

Northern Territory

Injury death rates in NT '91-2000

- NT Indigenous death rate is 3.4x national rate
- NT Non-Indigenous death rate is 1.5 x national rate
- 17% of all deaths in NT were due to injury vs 6% nationally
- Injury is the 3rd leading cause of death in the NT (2nd in Indigenous population) after cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- The leading causes of injury death are transport accident, violence, falls and suicide.
- The leading causes of hospital admission due to injury are violence, falls and transport accidents.

⇒What is a Safe Community?

A Safe Community is one in which all groups of the community work together in a coordinated way to reduce injury and promote safety.

The key feature is the creation of a local coalition or committee of community, business and government leaders that combine their resources and talents to tackle injuries –all contexts, all causes.

Community safety is too big and too complex to manage alone.

These coalitions do not re-invent the health and safety wheel; they use resources already available in their community to work together towards the same goal of eliminating local injuries.

The strength of the Safe Communities model lies in its simple and easily understandable construction. It represents a “common sense program” based on and using existing networks in society for safety promotion.

Safe Communities programs have been started all over the world, and are parts of a growing network for the exchange of knowledge, experiences and research findings.

⇒The Australian Scene

14 designated Safe Communities in Australia, 6 communities preparing.

Networks

- Australian Safe Communities Foundation
- Injury Control Council of WA
- NSW Safe Communities Network
- Victorian Safe Communities Network
- Queensland Safe Communities Support Centre
- SA Safe Communities Network

⇒Why become a Safe Community?

(Information taken from the Injury Council of Western Australia Safe Communities pamphlet)

Safe Communities generate local solutions for local concerns about injuries, crashes and crime. Even modest improvements in community safety will produce significant economic and social benefits. Consider these state estimates if applied to your community:

- A 5% reduction in injury would save around 40 lives each year.
- A 5% reduction in fatal motor vehicle crashes would prevent around 12 deaths and save around \$68 million each year.
- A 5% reduction in falls would prevent around 500 people being hospitalised each year and save around \$37 million each year.

Safe Communities:

- Promote one message with many voices
- Create a clearer picture of local risks
- Coordinate efforts, reduce duplication and integrate planning
- Provide access to other sectors, shared resources and collective expertise.

⇒Effectiveness of programs

Since its inception in Sweden the Safe Community approach has been internationally shown to be an effective means of reducing injury.

Falkoping, Sweden

The Falkoping Accident Prevention Program (FAPP), Sweden reported that the:

- total rate of injury had fallen by 23% over a 3 year period, 1979-1981,
- home injuries decreased by 27%,
- occupational injuries fell by 28%, and
- traffic injuries fell by 28%.

Illawara, NSW

Illawara has reported:

- reductions of 17% in attendance by children for injuries and a 14% fall in accident-related hospital admissions of children over the 4 year period 1987-1991.

Latrobe Valley, Vic

Latrobe Valley Better Health Injury Prevention Program, Vic has reported:

- 7.3% increase in the proportion of households purchasing home-safety items,
- Emergency department presentations for all targeted injuries fell from 6,594 in the first program year to 4,821 in 1995/6,
- Significant decreases in presentations from home injuries among all age groups except 65 years and over,
- Significant reductions were observed for assaults among 10-24 year olds,
- The direct program cost per injury prevented was \$272.

⇒How do you get started

Community based initiatives usually ignite from a 'spark' of interest. The following steps are useful for raising interest about Safe Communities and developing the concept:

- Organise an informal meeting to discuss the Safe Communities concept.
- Give a short and punchy presentation to your local council about the benefits of Safe Communities
- Convene a community consultation and planning forum to bring all service providers and community groups involved in safety together to map current investments,
- identify common program assets and areas of need. This process helps identify the right partnerships needed to form and coordinate a Safe Communities coalition.
- Establish a Safe Communities coalition.
- Appoint a designated Coordinator to develop the partnerships, integrate plans and programs, and promote Safe Communities.
- Appoint a chairperson to convene and manage the business of the coalition.

For further information

Visit the following websites

Victorian Safe Communities Network

<http://www.vscn.org.au/infokit.htm>

Healthy Cities Illawarra

www.healthycitiesill.org.au

Injury Control Council of Western Australia

www.iccwa.org.au

National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control

www.cdc.gov/ncipc

National Injury Surveillance Unit

www.nisu.flinders.edu.au

Noarlunga Healthy Cities

<http://www.softcon.com.au/nhc>

Queensland Safe Communities Web Site

www.safecommunitiesqld.org

Safe Communities Foundation – Canada

www.safecommunities.ca

WHO Collaborating Centre on Community Safety Promotion

www.ki.se/phs/wcc-csp

Acknowledgments:

This document has drawn heavily on the following publications:

- Safe Communities pamphlet – Injury Control Council of Western Australia
- Presentation by the Victorian Safe Community Network for Armadale community safety planning forum
- Reducing injuries in Mackay - <http://www.safecommunitiesqld.org/modcore/HomePage/fro ntend/index.asp>
- Safety Promotion – an introduction 2nd revised edition by Glen Welander, Leif Svanstrom and Robert Ekman. Karolinska Institute, Deptment of public health sciences, division of social medicine, Stockholm, 2004.

Thanks to Yuejen Zhao, Health Gains, Department of Health & Community Services for epidemiological data and analysis.

⇒Safe Communities

**Working together in a
coordinated way to reduce
injury and promote safety**

Centre for Disease Control

**Department of Health & Community
Services**

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