



A CASE STUDY OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS SHARED RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Promote Social Development Strategy, Positive Youth Development
in Colorado, Broadly in the Community

Kit Jones, MSW
Kaitlynn Jones, MPH
Teresa Mescher, BS, MPH
Sophie Dila, MA



colorado school of
public health



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environmen

Introduction


In recent years, Colorado community coalitions leveraging the Communities That Care (CTC) model implemented evidence-based upstream prevention strategies to address shared risk and protective factors that impact health and behavior outcomes. In partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), researchers on the Technical Assistance and Evaluation team at the University of Colorado Anschutz's Colorado School of Public Health (the CU team) directly supported communities implementing CTC and prevention strategies. As part of this support, the CU team collected data from communities who implemented a prevention strategy to Promote Social Development Strategy, Positive Youth Development in Colorado, Broadly in the Community (PYD/SDS).

The goal of this data collection effort was to highlight best practices and challenges faced by communities implementing this prevention strategy. This case study report was produced to help any community organizing for prevention to gain a deeper understanding of how the prevention strategy works in practice. This report provides valuable information based on community lived experience by noting strategy successes and challenges.

Communities organizing for prevention can use the best practices featured in this report in the planning and implementation of prevention strategies locally. In addition, awareness of common issues and pitfalls can help set up other communities for success and streamline progress.

In January 2021, the CU team began collecting data from pre-recorded affinity group (prevention strategy) meetings and focus group interviews. Data analysis began in April 2021, and final reports were written in August 2021. Of note is that prevention strategy implementation largely occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is important context surrounding the challenges experienced by communities. Analysis of focus group interviews and prevention strategy meetings revealed best practices that encouraged the success of the strategy.

Following is a summary of the results, and major themes are discussed in more detail in this report.



Engaging local organizations, agencies, and community groups in the work; Cultivating community support from all sectors; Leveraging existing networks and structures in the community; Identifying and recruiting local champions; Examining the work being done with an equitable lens; and Allowing community members to drive the strategy efforts were all things that led to the success of the strategy. However, COVID-19; Equitable approaches take time, skill, and crucial conversations; Community member perception of youth; and PYD/SDS training being somewhat time consuming were challenges encountered by the communities implementing this work.

Methods

This project aimed to collect data from prevention strategy meetings and focus group interviews about evidence-based upstream prevention strategy implementation to focus on the experiences of Colorado community coalitions and highlight best practices and challenges. The results featured in this case study report can assist communities organizing for prevention in current or future implementation efforts.



Focus group interviews were conducted with community members involved in the PYD/SDS prevention strategy that had been implemented locally for more than six months.



Audio recordings of interviews and prevention strategy meetings were transcribed with transcription software and reviewed for accuracy.



Transcripts were examined for meaningful statements and phrases, which were noted using a defined code. All statements that embodied each code were analyzed for overarching ideas and themes.

Major themes were separated into two distinct categories highlighting the prevention strategy's

1. Best Practices
2. Challenges experienced during implementation

In addition, communities offered recommendations for success for other communities planning to implement this strategy in the future.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our extraordinary community partners for providing interviews and materials that were the basis for our findings, including GCSAPP, Mountain Youth Network in Clear Creek County, Arkansas Valley Communities that Care, Jeffco Communities that Care, and Youth PRIDE Coalition. As well as Erin Kelly with the Technical Assistance and Evaluation team at the University of Colorado Anschutz's Colorado School of Public Health, along with Ali Maffey and Marc Morgan with the Community Organizing for Prevention team at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for their guidance on the development of these case studies.

Strategy Results: PYD/SDS

Recommendations For PYD/SDS

- Spend the time to figure out what works best for your community. Learn about what language resonates with the members or what strengths exist that can be tapped into or built upon. Taking time to better understand your community will lead to more successful and sustainable outcomes.
- Removing barriers for those youth and community members that might not feel like their voices are usually heard can have positive impact.
- Youth participation and voice are crucial to the sustainability and effectiveness of prevention strategy. Compensation for youth participation increases involvement.
- Plan for “quick win” activities from the start. This long-term work, and it is important to celebrate small successes to keep members engaged.

Best Practices

Engage local organizations, agencies, and community groups in the work

Connecting local entities to the work being done by the coalition is crucial in the success of the PYD/SDS strategy. Help organizations and community groups understand how the strategy aligns to their work and identify ways that PYD/SDS can be integrated into their work plans like incorporating PYD training in staff development days. Building connections may also lead to the blending of funding streams and increase the potential for outside financial support of the strategy efforts.

Cultivate community support from all sectors

Successful PYD/SDS efforts have intentionally focused on broad outreach and community involvement. Extending efforts beyond traditional partners to include local restaurants, retail and resort establishments, sports leagues, philanthropists, home school collectives, economic development entities, families and beyond will ensure that strategy efforts will impact the community on a broader scale. Using the strategy work to bring together individuals from all sectors also increases community collaboration, common language, connectedness, and resiliency.

Leverage existing networks and structures in the community

Some of the most successful PYD/SDS strategy efforts were due in part to the coalition's ability to tap into networks and structures that already existed in the community, like using the communication platforms that exist within schools or libraries to spread awareness and the importance of their efforts. Coalitions were also able to tap into existing key leader boards to collaborate with the work already being done by those groups. Leveraging these networks and structures helps to decrease duplication of efforts in the community.

Identify and recruit local champions

Building local champions within a community is paramount to the success of the PYD/SDS strategy. Finding those who fully understand, support, and are enthusiastic about the work being done will help build excitement and momentum across the community. Further, recruiting champions who are well connected and trusted by youth is a highly effective way to recruit youth to participate in the work aligned to the coalition's strategy.

Examine the work being done with an equity lens

Ensure that the work being done includes the voices of those who are most affected by the PYD/SDS strategy. Youth participation in all aspects of the strategy is essential for sustainability and success. Many coalitions spoke to the importance of including youth who aren't the traditional leaders in their communities. These youth felt empowered by the work, supported by their community, and felt they increased their skillsets. Break down any barriers that might prevent marginalized and oppressed communities from being able to participate, like moving meetings to after-school, providing food, childcare and translation/interpretation supports. Compensation for member participation also helped to ensure a more inclusive and diverse membership.

Position community members to drive the strategy efforts

This work takes time, and while it is tempting to push efforts forward on your own, not allowing community members to help drive the PYD/SDS strategy can lead to disengagement and burnout of efforts.

Create a plan that allows for co-ownership of the work being done. Youth taking on leadership roles within the coalition and workgroups was central to success of the strategy and increased community engagement. Community members were more excited about the work when they saw youth excited about the work.

Challenges

COVID-19 impacts

Many coalitions experienced a decrease in engagement during the pandemic. The lack of in-person meetings and trainings, online burnout, and barriers to internet or device access all negatively impacted membership involvement and community participation in trainings. However, some communities saw an increase in coalition participation due to members having more flexibility of how they could utilize their worktime. Online participation also eliminated the commuting process for members, allowing them to access coalition and workgroup meetings more easily.

Equitable approaches take time, skill, and crucial conversations

Ensuring that a coalition's efforts are truly equitable requires that members understand why equity is essential to prevention efforts. Coalitions should closely examine the root causes of the social issues that their communities face and have a discussion of who and what might be perpetuating inequalities. Spend time considering whether the coalition is the appropriate backbone to address particular social issues, and which organization or group might be at a place to engage marginalized and oppressed communities safely and appropriately in the strategy work. These considerations will help ensure that coalition members and activities are not furthering harm—whether intentional or unintentional. Taking the time to build trust and relationships within the community is key to ensuring that the coalition is inclusive and representative of the broader community that it serves.

Community member perception of youth

Not all members of a community have a positive perception of youth in their community and/or understand the importance of youth voice in the strategy process. Many adults carry with them misperceptions of youth themselves; seeing them as less capable as adults and assume youth are harder to work with. Some communities have struggled in getting adults to fully believe in the validity of youth-voice surveys (i.e. Health Kids Colorado Survey) and this has led to barriers in community members utilizing reliable data to inform decision-making.

PYD/SDS trainings are time consuming

Many communities struggled to engage community members in the PYD/SDS trainings being offered due to the amount of time that a full training requires. This has led to community members being hesitant or unable to participate in a training due to work and personal life constraints. Moving to an online format limited community members' capacity and/or interest to attend a lengthy online training.