



An Introduction to *Communities That Care (CTC)*

Communities That Care (CTC) is a proven approach to preventing youth violence, delinquency and drug use, and promoting positive youth development and strong families. The strength of the *CTC* model lies in its foundation in decades of research on the underlying causes of youth crime. This research has identified a number of specific “risk factors” that are associated with youth problem behaviors. *CTC* utilizes a comprehensive process that brings members of the community together to evaluate community-wide data, identify and prioritize risk factors, and implement evidence-based (i.e. proven-effective) programs aimed at reducing risk factors and ultimately improving youth outcomes.

The *CTC* model recognizes that no two communities are exactly alike, and the “risk profile” of each community may be different. *CTC* operates at the local level, using local data to identify the most common risk factors for each community, and creating synergy among all of the youth-serving agencies and organizations in that community to collectively reduce the underlying causes of youth crime and drug use.

The process begins with the identification of key community leaders who are then trained in the public health model of risk-focused prevention. A community prevention coalition is formed, representing the diverse constituent groups concerned with improving outcomes for youth and families. The coalition undertakes a structured process of assessing the community’s risks and resources, resulting in the selection of specific prevention priorities and the development of a community prevention plan. If the coalition identifies risks or needs that are not being adequately addressed, they seek to address those needs using prevention programs with clearly demonstrated evidence of effectiveness.

The benefits of the *CTC* model for community prevention planning include:

- Greater community collaboration and ownership of prevention activities;
- More strategic allocation of scarce prevention resources;
- Increased focus on quality of program delivery, and on outcomes and accountability;
- Reduced duplication and fragmentation of resources and services;
- Reduced interagency competition; and
- Improve sustainability of programs and strategies.

With funding and support from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), more than 100 communities throughout the Commonwealth have adopted the *CTC* model, and research conducted by the Prevention Research Center at Penn State University has shown that youth in those communities have significantly fewer risk factors, lower rates of delinquency and drug use, and better academic performance than youth in comparison communities.

For more information on the Communities That Care Initiative in Pennsylvania, please visit the PCCD website at www.pccd.state.pa.us, or contact the Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support Center at www.episcenter.psu.edu, or 814-863-2568.