

Advanced Crime Prevention Concepts - Effective Community Education Campaigns

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There is often considerable pressure to develop and implement community education campaigns as a method of preventing crime. Barthe (2006) distinguishes between victim- and offender-oriented publicity campaigns and provides the following suggestions for developing media and community education campaigns:

Victim-Oriented Publicity	Offender-Oriented Publicity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-protection techniques. • New ways to report crime. • Locations of police facilities or resources. • Dangerous areas. • Neighbourhood crime problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police techniques or future police crackdowns. • Penalties or the risk of apprehension for certain crimes. • Results of past crackdowns or police operations. • Knowledge of an illicit market or drug trade. • Legislative changes.
Summary of Key Tips	Summary of Key Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim-oriented campaigns work best when carried out in small geographic areas. • Victim campaigns should focus on specific crime types. • General victim campaigns are rarely successful in changing prevention behaviors. • Many victim campaigns fail to reach the intended audiences with the message. • Timeliness and relevance are key to campaign success. • The campaign may have an indirect positive effect of warning offenders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise increased risks and reduced rewards. • Avoid moral appeals; instead, focus on the likelihood of immediate detection and arrest. • The message should be publicised when and where offenders can see it. • Offender-oriented campaigns work best when carried out in small geographical areas. • Timeliness and relevance are key to campaign success.
<small>(Barthe, E. (2006) Crime Prevention Publicity Campaigns, Problem-Oriented Guidelines for Police, Response Guides Series No. 5 - http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/e04062002.pdf)</small>	

Exercise

1. What different forms of media can be used to promote key messages developed for community education campaigns?
2. What might be some of the unintended consequences of running campaigns of this nature?

Anticipatory Benefits Effect

While some community education campaigns will be directed toward helping potential victims understand how they can report crime, others will focus on informing the community (and therefore would-be offenders) that a particular intervention will or has been employed in a given area. For example, a local council decides to enhance street lighting, remove shrubs that obscure sightlines and repair damaged furniture as a way of disrupting drug supply activities in a particular crime hotspot. Police have also increased patrols and covert surveillance in the area. Rather than simply undertake these tasks, they have decided to promote these initiatives in local papers. By adding a community education component, it is presumed that perceptions of would-be offenders will be positively influenced, reducing their propensity to deal drugs in the area in question.

Research reviewing the impact of crime prevention interventions has found that in some cases, crime falls before the actual crime prevention intervention commences. Smith, Clarke and Pease (2002) have termed this phenomenon 'anticipatory benefits'.¹ The falls in crime have in part been linked to the education and media campaigns accompanying the crime prevention initiatives. Consequently, by combining an educational campaign with specific crime prevention and policing strategies, it might be possible to enhance the potential crime reduction benefits of the particular crime prevention initiative.

Exercise

1. What types of crime prevention initiatives would benefit from an accompanying educational or media campaign?
2. What is the mechanism (or mechanisms) through which these types of campaigns might have a positive impact on crime?
3. How would the anticipatory benefits effect be captured in an evaluation?

Social Marketing Framework

Health promotion has long utilised social marketing principles to inform and educate individuals, to promote behavioural change and to promote access to relevant services. The principles of social marketing can equally be applied to crime prevention campaigns. The following principles have been developed by Carroll (1998)²:

1. Problem analysis – collation of data and research to help define the problem
2. External analysis – analyse the environment that a social marketing campaign will be run in to see what might positively and adversely impact upon the campaign
3. Internal analysis – quantify the existing resources and organisational arrangements
4. Identification of need and audit complementary strategies – assess the specific need and role of a social marketing campaign
5. Target audience identification and analysis – market segmentation by relevant demographic, behavioural and psychographic (lifestyle, attitudinal) variables
6. Channel analysis – understand how to reach the target audience and what forms of media will be most effective
7. Strategic planning – development of specific behavioural and communication objectives
8. Formulation of a marketing plan and management system – synthesise information and establish a blueprint for action
9. Development of strategies and materials through formative research – pre-test marketing materials with test audience
10. Implementation of strategies and process monitoring – monitor implementation by consulting with key stakeholders
11. Summative evaluation – measure beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours
12. Review and analysis for subsequent phases of activity – reflect on the success or otherwise of the campaign and identify opportunities for improvement

These steps might help in developing a social marketing campaign directed toward preventing a particular crime and they demonstrate the need for comprehensive research to ensure that the messages of any campaign resonate with the various target groups and are communicated in effective ways.

Exercise

1. What type of crime issues would benefit from a social marketing campaign?
2. Carroll's social marketing framework outlined above requires testing of materials with members of the target audience. How can this process be routinely included in crime prevention education campaigns?

¹Smith, M.; Clarke, R.V. and Pease, K. (2002) 'Anticipatory Benefits in Crime Prevention', in Tilley, N. (ed.) **Analysis for Crime Prevention**, Criminal Justice Press, Monsey, page 73.

²A fuller explanation of this social marketing framework is provided by Homel, P. and Carroll, T. (2009) 'Moving knowledge into action: applying social marketing principles to crime prevention', *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No. 381, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.