

# Crime prevention through social development

Crime Prevention Through Social Development (CPSD) is a methodology that acknowledges the underlying complex social, economic and cultural processes that contribute to crime and victimisation. CPSD endeavours to bridge the gap between criminal justice policies and programs and social support for individuals, families, and communities. It does this by tackling the factors, that contribute to crime and victimisation, and are amendable to change.



CPSD concentrates on secondary prevention measures. This involves focusing on many risk factors that contribute to involvement with crime. Some key examples include:

- inadequate living conditions, such as poor housing and unstable situations
- family factors, such as family poverty, poor or inadequate parenting, parental criminality, and parental substance abuse
- individual personality and behaviour factors, such as ‘cognitive deficits’ including a lack of problem-solving skills, self-control, critical reasoning, judgement and failure to consider the consequences of behaviour, as well as the early onset of aggressive behaviour
- peer association, such as relationships with friends who follow a delinquent/criminal lifestyle
- school-related factors, such as poor educational achievement and truancy, and exclusionary policies
- community connections, such as sense of place and identity
- lack of employment opportunities, such as a lack of training and employment.

CPSD seeks to foster ‘protective factors’, such as positive family support that may mitigate situations of risk or disadvantage that contribute to crime and victimisation. These protective factors also tend to reduce the risk of harm.

CPSD is heavily reliant on policies and programs linked with housing, education, health, employment and other social services that play an important role in preventing crime.

CPSD focuses on the social development end of the crime prevention equation, so it can take time for the crime prevention benefits to accrue. Some of the best-known CPSD programs involve early intervention with 'at-risk children' and their parents. Therefore, short-term programs with non-recurrent funding are not likely to achieve a measurable outcome.

CPSD is informed by the results of rigorous, longitudinal research studies in various parts of the world. Longitudinal studies have provided solid evidence on the ways in which social development programs target 'at-risk' individuals, families, and communities to assist in reducing crime. In Canada, studies such as the Montreal Longitudinal Experimental Study, conducted in the mid-1980s and the Early Years Study, published in 1999 in Ontario have brought insight into the ways social, economic, and home environments affect family life and the lives of children. These studies underscore the importance of early intervention where risk factors are present.

There are many kinds of strategies under the CPSD banner:

**Individual-level strategies** focus on addressing existing deficits that may place individuals at risk of involvement in crime. Many of these programs target children and youth.

**Family-oriented strategies** provide parenting support and training to the parents of young, at-risk children, strengthen family capacity and create healthy environments where children are nurtured.

**Community-level strategies** seek to strengthen local capacity to prevent crime. They frequently involve partnerships, and help to build connections among individuals. Other kinds of community level strategies involve community outreach programs. Examples include programs that provide socially and culturally appropriate opportunities for recreation and cultural expression, as well as programs that build pro-social skills among at-risk youth.

Critics argue that because CPSD is so 'elastic', it runs the risk of becoming either too diffused or too dominant within social policy. This concern highlights the need to define its scope of influence and clarify the boundaries, bridges, and relationships between crime prevention and social policies and programs.

To operate with integrity, CPSD programs need to have adequate means to do what they set out to do, including policies to guide program delivery and to ensure that there is accountability for results.

Given the above considerations of CPSD, State Government is best placed, of all tiers of Government, to impact on crime reduction through this methodology. Due to the capacity to affect change at a strategic and policy level and the direct provision of family and other social services, State government can best address the complex underlying social causes of crime and have a sustained/long term impact on crime at this level.

## Further information

For more information on crime prevention theories and methodologies, please visit [www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au](http://www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au)