Report on Five Years of Successful Child Development Policing Program

Minneapolis pilot program ends; next stage: expansion to other area communities

The Child Development Policing Program, or CDPP, is an intervention to meet the needs of invisible victims to crime—children who witnessed violence and may otherwise not receive emotional support for weeks, months or sometimes years. Research has shown exposure to violence is a risk factor for later involvement in violence—unless children receive effective preventive interventions. By identifying traumatized children in the acute aftermath of a violent incident, the chances to interrupt the cycle of violence may be significantly increased.

“The visit was very comforting. It gave me some hope.” -CDPP Client

Adapted from the Child Development–Community Policing Program developed in New Haven, CT, the CDPP program developed by Ambit Network pairs clinicians with police officers to identify violent crimes in which children are present and to provide short-term crisis intervention.

CDPP strives to

- Provide immediate clinical crisis intervention and assessment for children exposed to violence
- Support parents by providing information and education about the impact on children of the exposure to violence
- Provide follow-up services and referrals for ongoing care where needed
- Enhance the level of knowledge and skills of police officers in their work with children, and in particular, child witnesses to violence

“I didn’t realize CDPP services were available. It was very nice and reassuring to have Claudia drop by to talk with me. She answered questions I’d been thinking about and was extremely informative and reassuring about what the future might hold for us. I feel so much better after talking with her.” -CDPP Client

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ABOUT AMBIT NETWORK

Ambit Network, formerly Minnesota Child Response Center, provides insights for therapists, social service providers and frontline mental health workers who serve children and families exposed to traumatic events. The research and knowledge of Ambit Network is actively refined by feedback. Ambit Network benefits organizations through technical assistance, training, evaluation and case consultation.

Ambit Network is a community-university partnership involving 14 different private and public entities. The partnership was developed in 2002 to meet the mental health and trauma-informed service needs of children exposed to violence in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Ambit Network became a Community Treatment and Services Center of SAMHSA’s National Child and Traumatic Stress Network in 2005. This broad base of community experts includes mental health providers, culturally specific and mainstream social service providers, supportive housing agencies, schools, police, child service systems and University of Minnesota researchers.

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By creating this partnership between mental health clinicians and police officers, the CDPP team is able to increase the awareness and understanding of the various support systems available to families affected by violence. This can be extremely dramatic for underserved and underrepresented communities—such as immigrant and refugee families who do not have the same access to services because of language and cultural barriers. Further, the combined presence of an officer and a clinician increases families’ sense of safety, provides resources for ongoing police contact and teaches children that police officers can provide safety and security. Particularly in higher-crime neighborhoods, the development of trusting relationships between police officers and community members is critical for effective community crime prevention.

By pairing a trained police officer and a clinician, the CDPP team addresses two critical areas after an incident of violence: family physical and psychological safety. During the home visits, clinicians provide crisis assessment and treatment, case management, family advocacy, support and psychoeducation for parents of traumatized children; assess children’s emotional status; make recommendations for further evaluations and provide referrals for mental health and social service agencies. Police officers provide useful information and education regarding law enforcement and legal responses parents may take to protect their children as well as themselves.

“I would just like to say that I’m glad these kinds of services are available to me, letting me know what I could do and who I could talk to.” -CDPP Client

Training and Technical Assistance
Implementation of CDPP in Minneapolis was a product of collaborations between the Minneapolis Police Department, the University of Minnesota and several social service and mental health agencies throughout Minneapolis, including Centro Cultural Chicano, Tubman Family Alliance & Chrysalis and Washburn Center for Children.

During the past five years Ambit Network’s CDPP trained more than 600 police officers through the MPD in-service system, including 150 officers in local precincts and 110 new recruits. Trainings focus on how trauma affects children, how police officers can best approach children during a domestic violence call and how police can utilize the CDPP program. Officers participating in CDPP ride-alongs also receive enhanced training on the cycle of family violence. During weekly clinical debriefs, police officers and clinicians present recent CDPP home visits, including challenges encountered and successful engagements and referrals to services of clients served.

“They helped me understand how important it is [to call 911]. Now I have an Order for Protection. I have been feeling so sad and alone and didn’t know what I was going to do. I am so thankful they stopped by. I didn’t think anyone cared. It has been happening for so long. Now I have a safety plan and know where I can go to get help. Karla was so kind, and the officer really cared about me. I’m going to go to a shelter with my kids.” -CDPP Client

Tracking Outcomes
An extensive online database was developed specifically for the CDPP program. The database serves as a clinical tracking system, allowing the team of community clinicians to fluidly track previous contacts with each client, delivery of referrals and information as well as follow-up services and contacts. The database also allows for in-depth and systematic analysis of service delivery.

CDPP Facts

Age Distribution of Children Served
37% are 3 years old or younger
42% are 4 to 12 years old
21% are 13 to 18 years old

Gender
50% are male
50% are female

CDPP clinicians have made 1,948 referrals in 1,002 incidents (multiple referrals for some clients) during January 2007 to June 2008

Map of CDPP Service Areas
Feedback from a Police Officer Who Participated in CDPP

“I recall hearing about CDPP several years ago. At the time, I was reluctant to utilize the phone number given due to the many other protocols and paperwork that domestic calls generate. After going to several more domestic calls where children were involved, I thought it certainly would not hurt anything, and CDPP could possibly help the victims of domestic violence and their children. I found calling the phone number was relatively painless and spoke with several different workers who appeared engaged and genuinely concerned with the incidents I reported.

“I saw an opportunity to be involved directly in the program shortly after that and volunteered to be a part of the CDPP process, sometimes going on calls that I had initially responded to when they had first occurred. I saw many instances where the victims and their children would open up to the workers and were very grateful for the assistance and follow-up being provided. On several occasions, I observed victims of domestic violence who initially seemed to accept their condition as inevitable and inescapable begin to realize that there was help and a way out of the cycle of violence they had become enmeshed in.

“I am now a firm believer in the CDPP program and the dedicated workers that participate in the process. On one occasion I observed a victim who was initially unwilling to obtain a restraining order or to engage in the legal follow through later become committed to taking action and get on the road to breaking the cycle of violence she and her children were in. I have seen children open up to the workers and myself on many occasions often spurring the victim into action to break the cycle. On more than one occasion, I observed victims who were initially unwilling to cooperate with the police later follow through with contacting the investigators.”

Successful Contact
Out of 1,170 incidents when CDPP was involved, 80% ended in successful contact.

Navigating efficiently between research and practice in child trauma is vital. The available data in the field is used, particularly that which is the new standard of care: evidence-based practices. As a Category 3 site of The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Ambit Network integrates evidence-based interventions into community systems of care for highly diverse groups of traumatized children throughout Minnesota including homeless and formerly homeless children and refugee and immigrant families.

Ambit Network’s broad community partnership allows collaborating partners to pool resources and expand their reach beyond what any single agency or system could accomplish. The involvement of both government and private organizations enables sustainability efforts to focus on developing and accessing new and current funding streams. By bridging and sustaining collaborative efforts among and between their partner agencies, Ambit Network is able to forge new pathways of care for its communities.

Ambit Network specializes in providing technical assistance and training in the areas of assessment, evaluation, implementation and fidelity monitoring as they relate to the utilization of evidence-based practices in children’s mental health. The network has extensive experience implementing evidence-based practices in community-based social service agencies, mental health clinics across Minnesota, Minneapolis Public Schools and supportive housing sites. They have been particularly successful adapting the learning collaborative model to enhance training outcomes and ensure sustainability of evidence-based practices.

New Branding Reflects Mission
We are delighted to announce Minnesota Child Response Center is now Ambit Network. Ambit means circuit, compass and a sphere of action or influence. Network was chosen because it represents the array of resources and people at work in our organization.
Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)

Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is an evidence-based therapy model that can help children, adolescents and their parents deal with the negative impact of traumatic events such as witnessing violence, experiencing sexual or physical abuse or losing a parent. TF-CBT is disseminated throughout Minnesota in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Mental Health Division.

TF-CBT is a culturally sensitive component-based model of psychotherapy that integrates concepts from other theoretical models. The components particularly address emotional and behavioral symptoms related to post traumatic stress disorder, depression and/or anxiety.

TF-CBT teaches children and their parents how their thoughts, feelings and behavior are all connected. Understanding this connection offers children new ways to cope and helps parents support their children. Participants build knowledge and skills to process the trauma; manage distressing thoughts, feelings and behaviors; and enhance their safety, parenting skills and family communication.

Parenting through Change (PTC) and Trauma-focused Parent Coaching

Why provide parent coaching for caregivers of traumatized children? Behavior problems often co-occur with traumatic distress symptoms in children exposed to violence and other types of traumatic events. Parenting is critical to children’s resilience—studies of resilience among high-risk children have universally shown effective parenting to be a core predictor of resilience.

However, a large body of research indicates the disruptive effects of stressful and traumatic events on caregiving. PTC is a parent training intervention that has been designated a National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices “model practice.” Follow-up data from randomized trials indicated that gains associated with participation in the 14-week program were maintained over nine years following the intervention. Trauma-focused parent coaching is an adaptation of PTC that focuses on supporting emotional components of parenting—emotion coaching and parental emotion regulation—in order to support recovery after traumatic events.

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools is a group intervention for war-exposed refugee students in Minneapolis public schools.

A Minneapolis public school with a large African immigrant student population was selected to pilot the CBITS group intervention. Two school social workers and Ambit Network staff received intensive CBITS training. The program plan is being developed with the nonprofit Center for Victims of Torture.

Other Programs Ambit Network Provides

Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)

Parenting through Change (PTC) and Trauma-focused Parent Coaching

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)

Learn the latest at www.AmbitNetwork.org and sign up for news at info@ambitnetwork.org.