



KidsFirst – SafetyFirst
Regina Fire & Protective Services and KidsFirst Regina
A Successful Community-Based Firesafety Partnership

Executive Summary

This case study summarizes a presentation at the National Symposium on Model Performance in Fire Prevention in May 2012.

In 2003 Regina Fire & Protective Services formed a partnership with KidsFirst Regina, an organization which provides support to parents of young children living within the inner-city. KidsFirst Regina is a nationally-funded program that works directly with vulnerable families. It is designed to support children and families by enhancing parenting knowledge about child care and early learning, child growth and development, housing, food security, parenting, education and employment, and now, firesafety. KidsFirst Regina targets its programming to families living within the inner-city, which is also Regina's high fire-risk area. It operates with a staff complement of 38 Home Visitors who each carry a caseload of 20 families, working directly two to three times a week for up to three years with 760 families in Regina's highest fire-risk neighborhoods.

Regina Fire & Protective Services targeted young children and their parents living in these neighborhoods as primary audiences for fire and life safety education. Young children playing with matches and lighters had consistently been the leading cause of fires in Regina during the previous nine years. Most were occurring within Regina's inner-city neighborhoods. By working together both Regina Fire & Protective Services and KidsFirst Regina could combine and maximize resources, and provide an expanded and more effective fire safety program.

This partnership has been highly successful in meeting its objectives of decreasing unintentional fires and fire-related deaths among its target audiences, and has sustained this success over the past eight years.

Overview

The program's objectives were to:

- Decrease the number of unintentional house fires within Regina's inner city
- Decrease the number of child-caused fires within Regina's inner city
- Decrease the number of fire-related fatalities within Regina's inner city
- Provide training to KidsFirst staff to increase their understanding of the city's fire problem, and their role in positively affecting this problem
- Jointly develop fire prevention and survival resources to be used by KidsFirst staff and their client families
- Empower target families to take a proactive role in their own fire safety
- Change unsafe fire behaviors within target families
- Increase fire escape knowledge and planning actions within target families
- Increase the number of homes with working smoke alarms

Formative Evaluation (qualitative or quantitative risk assessment)

Fire data analysis indicated that children were the leading cause of house fires in Regina, 1995 to 2003. Sixty percent of the city's house fires and most of the child-caused fires were occurring within the inner city. Most of the child-caused fires were caused by children age 3 to 6, who generally found an unattended lighter in the home, took the lighter to their own bedroom, and primarily lit their bedsheets on fire. These children generally lived in homes where one or more parent smoked.

Firesetting intervention strategies were designed in collaboration with KidsFirst staff whose expertise centers on developing and implementing strategies aimed at increasing life quality for their client families.

Process Evaluation (analysis of the program's development and early implementation)

Early in 2004 a working group of members from both organizations began meeting to develop the training workshop, the resources to be used by KidsFirst staff, and the tools to be used by the parents. To date, seven annual training workshops have been conducted for 73 KidsFirst staff, who then incorporate the fire safety resources into their regular family visits. Visits occur two to three times a week over several years.

Support activities were then designed to motivate both the KidsFirst staff and their client families to use the fire safety resources. These activities include contests for the children, an annual fire safety carnival and picnic held at a fire station, and regular presentations by fire department staff to parents.

The final implementation piece was development of a KidsFirst Fire safety Curriculum, developed jointly by Regina Fire & Protective Services and KidsFirst Regina. The Curriculum provides the guideline for work expected to be completed between the staff and their clients.

Impact Evaluation (identification of measurable changes that are cognitive gains or behavior changes that reduced risk)

Annual fire data analysis is used to determine whether the program objectives are being met. In addition, training evaluations and evaluation forms to rate and critique the fire safety resources have been implemented, and regular evaluation meetings are held with the KidsFirst staff.

Surveys designed to evaluate fire safety knowledge, attitudes and actions are completed by families attending KidsFirst fire safety events. These are compared with data from the general population. The KidsFirst families check their smoke alarms more frequently and regularly – monthly - (45 per cent of surveyed families) than the general population (40 per cent of Fire Station Open House participants surveyed). The program is a regular part of the work carried out by KidsFirst staff. Their clients have demonstrated – and continue to demonstrate – that the fire safety knowledge and behaviors have been transferred to them by the KidsFirst staff, as evidenced by the evaluation tools.

In regular staff evaluations, KidsFirst Home Visitors noted they primarily discussed fire escape planning and testing smoke alarms with their client families. They also indicated noticing behavioral changes by the families, particularly in seeing the parents making a point of putting their lighters up high.

Surveyed families noted practicing firesafety behaviors, primarily designing and practicing an escape plan, teaching that plan to their children, and testing their smoke alarms.

Outcome Evaluation (longer term documentation that supports reduction of injury, death or economic losses)

The fire losses attributed to the target audiences for this program have decreased consistently since program implementation. In 2003, there were 43 house fires in Regina caused by young children playing with matches or lighters. Two-thirds of these fires occurred in the program's target area. In 2010, there was one child-caused fire in the program's target area (the only child-caused fire city-wide). A cost comparison of fire dollar loss figures 2003 to 2010 shows a savings of \$187,953 in fire loss caused by young children in the program's target area.

Both KidsFirst Regina and Regina Fire & Protective Services are committed to continuing the program in order to maintain its success.

Recommendations for Others

Work with an established organization that works regularly with families in your community's high fire-risk areas and obtain buy-in from your partner organization by showing how their work can positively impact and change the fire problem among their clients.

Provide a thorough fire data analysis of the community, then demonstrate the fire issue and its impact on the clients of your partner organization.

Outline common goals and objectives and work collaboratively with your partner organization to develop resources specific to your client needs.

Develop and provide regular support activities to your partner organization and their clientele.

Formalize your partnership agreement.

Incorporate multi-level evaluations of the program's impact and outcomes.

Celebrate your successes.

For More Information

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To see an expanded version of this case study that was presented at the 2012 National Symposium on Model Performance in Fire Prevention hosted by Vision 2020, click <http://strategicfire.org/page.cfm/go/2012-Model-Performance>.