

Using The Situational Prevention Approach To Create Safer BGCA Clubs

Statement Of The Problem

Estimates indicate that more than 74 million children in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013) are regularly involved in a diverse array of youth serving organizations. The largest of these entities are education, sports, and health related. Boys and Girls Clubs of American (BGCA) provides programming to more than 4 million children at 4000 club locations nationwide and represents the largest youth serving organization of its kind. Despite the large number of children and teens participating in youth serving organizations, safety strategies tailored to such organizations has lagged dangerously behind. The development of the Situational Prevention Approach (SPA) for use in youth serving organizations represents an exception. The following summary provides a brief description of the SPA's development and pilot application with BGCA.

Situation Prevention's Long History Of Effective Community Prevention

The "Situational Prevention Approach (SPA)," has deep roots in empirical studies and successful prevention initiatives in the fields of criminology, architecture, and city planning going back more than 60 years. The foundations for the SPA are a group of well established theories that include Rational Choice Theory (RCT; Cornish & Clarke, 2002), Routine Activity Theory, (RAT; Cohen & Felson, 1979), and Defensible Space Theory (DST; Newman, 1972). These theories form the foundation for the Situational Prevention Model (SPM; Clarke, 1995). This criminological approach represents a framework for examining the contextual and situational risks that increase the potential for a crime to occur in a given setting (Clarke, 1995; Clarke & Homel, 1997). Drawing from RCT, the model assumes that perpetrators are active decision makers, continually evaluating the likelihood of successfully committing a crime and balancing these odds against the possibility of incurring consequences. SPM also presumes the presence of a motivated offender, an available victim, and the potential for compromised supervision as suggested by RAT. DST contributes the assumption that environmental factors, both physical and symbolic, can contribute to the risks of crime occurring in a particular situation. The SPM is a probabilistic model, concerned with factors that either increase or decrease perceived opportunities for a crime to be successfully perpetrated.

While initially developed for application with general forms of criminal activity (e.g., robbery, burglary), Kaufman and his colleagues adapted the model for use in the prevention of child sexual abuse (Kaufman, Mosher, Carter, & Estes, 2006; Kaufman, Patterson, & Hayes, 2010). This revision tailored the SPM based upon what is known about the modus operandi (i.e. patterns of perpetration) of child sexual abuse offenders (Kaufman, Knox, Valenzuela, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2002; Kaufman, et al., 1998). This adaptation of Clarke's (1995) SPM (which Kaufman refers to as the **Situational Prevention Approach [SPA]**), was designed to have particular relevance for application in youth serving organizations.

Kaufman's Situational Prevention Approach (SPA): The goal of the SPA is to identify as many risk related concerns as possible in a club setting at a given moment in time (Kaufman, Patterson, & Hayes, 2010; Kaufman, Tews, Schuett, & Kaufman, 2012). The SPA encourages the identification of a broad range of risks that could lead to a myriad of different adverse outcomes (e.g., sexual violence, physical violence, unintentional injuries, health concerns, bullying). Two assumptions underlie this comprehensive approach. First, that a single risk can lead to a variety of adverse outcomes (e.g., poor supervision may allow child sexual abuse to occur, or youth to go off to "get high", or youth to engage in a dangerous behavior that leads to an unintentional injury, or for an older child to bully a younger child). Second, that

a comprehensive approach intended to identify and resolve all possible risks in an organizational setting is the only way to truly ensure youth's safety.

The core four step process that "drives" the SPA involves: (1) Key informant groups' (i.e., BGCA administrators, staff, and volunteers; club members [older teens]; parents of club youth) brainstorming club risks; (2) An organizational workgroup identifying practical and effective solutions to address each identified risk (whenever possible, prevention strategies are preferred over risk reduction strategies and an emphasis is placed on the utilization of strengths and protective factors); (3) Members of the club's management team then prioritize risks to address based on logistical considerations (e.g., strength of concern around the risk, cost of the solution); and finally (4) The development and execution of simple implementation plans to guide the solution process.

The seven areas used as prompts for risk brainstorming meetings (during the first step of the process) include: (1) **High Risk Locations** within the organization setting (e.g., unused classrooms, storage rooms); (2) **Characteristics of High Risk Youth** (e.g., developmentally delayed children, emotionally needy youth) that increase vulnerability; (3) **Facilitators** which reflect factors that can lead to a "blossom" of other risks occurring (e.g., poor staff to youth ratio, long term staff that aren't required to follow the rules); (4) **Organization & Community Policies** (e.g., agency supervision or hiring policies, rules for the use of community pools or a failure to address local gang violence); (5) **Life Style & Routine Activities** of youth participants (e.g., single parents who drop children off an hour before camp opens due to work demands) and organization staff/volunteers (e.g., staff who walk home with teenage members); (6) The **Larger Community Environment** (e.g., abandoned buildings youth play in on the way to the club, poorly lit parking garages); and (7) **Health Concerns, Accident Prevention, & Physical Safety Concerns** represent all non-child sexual violence related risks. This includes a broad range of concerns that may be associated with maintaining organizational participants' health (e.g., exposure to mold in a wet facility wall), accident prevention (e.g., preventing slips and falls on icy steps, injury during sports), and ensuring physical safety (e.g., injuries due to fights, bullying, or gang activity).

Pilot Testing The Situational Prevention Approach With Boys & Girls Clubs of America:

Funded by the "Vision of Hope" grant from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, Dr. Kaufman has conducted a three year pilot study examining the efficacy of the SPA with BGCA clubs across the country. The first year of this project involved tailoring the SPA to the BGCA culture and practices by working through the SPA process with seven BGCA clubs in three cities (Pittsburgh, PA; Philadelphia, PA; and Portland, OR). This resulted in the development of an **SPA Implementation Manual** designed to support BGCA club's self-directed administration of the SPA. The second and third year of this project was designed to test the efficacy and utility of the SPA when self-administered by clubs in contrast to "waitlist" control clubs in the same state. Sixteen clubs across four states participated in this pilot initiative. Preliminary findings for the first half of the clubs completing the SPA indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the SPA process and materials (i.e., all ratings were in the "satisfied" to "very satisfied" range). **Clubs using the SPA process were also able to identify 7-10 times as many risks in their club environment as control clubs doing "business as usual."** The SPA clubs were able to develop a practical solution for each risk identified and quickly intervened. In fact, two of the clubs reported having resolved virtually all of the risks that they had control over within three months of beginning the SPA process.