



Blueprints Promising Programs FACT SHEET

FS-BPP04

2000 (Updated 08/2006)

CASASTART

CASASTART (Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows), formerly the Children at Risk (CAR) program, targets youth in high risk environments, and seeks to reduce their exposure to drugs and criminal activity. The program seeks to decrease individual, peer group, family and neighborhood risk factors through case management services, after-school and summer activities, and increased police involvement. CASASTART also works to improve attachment to adults, attachment to prosocial norms, school performance, and participation in prosocial activities/peer groups.

Program Targets

Youth who participated in this program were aged 11-13, a time when most youth are most developmentally vulnerable, who were living in severely distressed neighborhoods. These youth met criteria for being at risk in school, in the family and at personal risk.

Program Content

There are 8 core CASASTART components which target different areas of risk for youth, including the family, peer group, individual, and community:

- *Community-Enhanced Policing/Enhanced Enforcement:* increases police presence and involvement in the community and working with youth.
- *Case Management:* small caseloads (13-18 families) ensure close attention to the needs of participating youth and their families and implementation of plans to meet their needs.
- *Criminal/Juvenile Justice Intervention:* communication between case managers and the juvenile justice and probation departments ensure enhanced supervision and planning for youth who become involved with the courts.
- *Family Services:* parent programs, counseling services, organized activities and family advocacy by case managers increase positive involvement of parents in the lives of their children.
- *After-School and Summer Activities:* offer prosocial activities with peers. These types of activities include not only recreation and entertainment but also personal social development programs, particularly those aimed at self-esteem, cultural heritage, and social problems.
- *Education Services:* strengthen individual skills by offering tutoring and homework assistance, as well as work preparation opportunities.
- *Mentoring:* group or one-to-one relationships are fostered to promote positive behaviors.
- *Incentives:* both monetary and non-monetary incentives for participation in CASASTART activities.

Program Outcomes

The only significant difference immediately following the program was: a lower rate of past month drug use, lifetime use of gateway drugs, and any drug use among CASASTART youth compared to the quasi-experimental group; no differences between CASASTART youth and control group. Most differences between CASASTART youth, a control (C) group and a quasi-experimental (Q) group (of matched neighborhoods and youth) occurred at one-year follow-up. At one-year follow-up, CASASTART youth, compared to the two control groups (C and Q):

- ∞ were less likely to report past-month use of any drugs, gateway drugs, or stronger drugs (C);
- ∞ were less likely to report past year use of any drugs and gateway drugs (C);
- ∞ were less likely to report lifetime use of any drugs or gateway drugs (Q);
- ∞ reported lower levels of violent crimes in the past year and were less likely to be involved in drug sales during the last month (C); and
- ∞ were less likely to report lifetime drug sales (C and Q).

References

- Harrell, A.V., Cavanagh, S., & Sridharan, S. (1998). *Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Comprehensive Final Report II*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Harrell, A., Cavanagh, S., & Sridharan, S. (1999, November). *Evaluation of the Children at Risk Program: Results One Year After the End of the Program*, (NCJ 178914). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.
- National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. (1996, March). *Comprehensive Service Delivery Program for Children at Risk*. New York, NY: Author.

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