



Corporate Report

NO: R269

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REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **December 12, 2007**
FROM: **Crime Reduction Strategy Manager** FILE:
SUBJECT: **Crime Reduction Strategy - School Suspension Program**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The intention of this report is to inform Council of the progress that has been made to date in the development and implementation of a school suspension program in Surrey.

BACKGROUND

The Surrey Crime Reduction Strategy (CRS) was publicly launched on February 26th 2007. The CRS contains 106 recommendations that are focussed on reducing crime and improving perceptions about crime in Surrey and thereby improving quality of life for those who choose to live in, work in or visit the City.

One of the recommendations contained in the CRS is:

- **School Suspension Program** – That the School District, the City, the RCMP, the Surrey Fire Department, Fraser Health Authority and other community stakeholders work together to develop and implement the iR3 (Intervention, Reflect, Refocus and Reintegration) program for children and youth suspended from school.

The iR3 program is an alternative school suspension program designed as a resource for youth, their families and their schools when a student is temporarily suspended for substance misuse or threatening or aggressive/violent behaviours.

When a student is suspended from their school, even for a short duration, they often find themselves feeling unsupported and detached; students then find alternative ways to fill the void and time, which in some cases can be unhealthy to themselves and others or creates undesirable

impacts on the community. The iR3 program offers services to respond to students who are under school suspension by providing them, their families and their schools with tools to make their time away from school more wholesome and productive than may otherwise be the case.

The iR3 program aims to increase the personal growth, leadership abilities, motivation and feelings of self worth of all its participants. Youth, who feel they are a valued part of their communities, supported and encouraged, active and free from substances; are much less likely to engage in undesirable and criminal behaviour than those who are not. The iR3 program builds resiliency in it's participants, assisting them back to their schools and community better equipped to handle peer pressure, to cope with stress, better educated on the damage done by substance use and violence, empowered and more confident in themselves and with stronger ties to their families and communities.

The iR3 program allows students to serve their suspension time (necessary to review and reflect on the circumstances that have led them there) in a supported and supervised atmosphere that is designed to increase a student's personal educational and social awareness.

The program takes place over two days and each day includes:

- group workshops on a variety of topics including stress management, leadership, personal awareness, decision-making, coping and refusal skills;
- homework facilitation and academic support to catch up on missed assignments;
- guest speakers to share personal anecdotes or professional support on substance use, violence, gang activity and other related topics;
- individual assessment and intervention;
- recreation opportunities with RCMP or Surrey Fire-fighters Association members or Parks, Recreations and Culture staff members;
- referrals to appropriate community resources; and
- an opportunity for parents to connect with iR3 school staff.

City Involvement in the Program

The City of Surrey is a key partner in the delivery of this program. Surrey Parks, Recreation and Culture Department were an integral part of the planning process and remains a key resource in its delivery. This includes but is not limited to the following 'in kind' support:

- Provision of facilities in which the program takes place;
- Provision of storage space for learning and office supplies;
- One staff member for 3 hours each day, 5 days a week; and

- Continuing collaboration with School District staff to coordinate programs for youth during the day; such as sports, arts and health/wellness programs.

DISCUSSION

The program first ran from April until June 2007 and focussed on referrals from schools in the Whalley area. Results from this pilot were very encouraging. Sixty-seven youth from grades seven to nine (inclusive) were accepted into the program over the three months. Feedback from their schools indicated that of the 67 students that went through the program, 56 showed a noticeable positive behavioural change in the 2 weeks following the intervention and 47 were still exhibiting such positive changes after 6 weeks.

Results of feedback from the youth and their parents are equally as positive. Sixty-four of the youth found the program helpful and 62 believed the program to be a better alternative than the normal suspension process.

The National Institute for Research in Sustainable Community Development in Kwantlen University College has described the iR3 program as an unqualified success in engaging at-risk youth.

The program recently received funding from the Federal government that will enable it to continue for an additional three years and include an external evaluation component. In November of this year, the Public Safety Minister, Stockwell Day, announced that additional funding of \$249,488 was being made available to Surrey School District from the National Crime Prevention Centre to extend this program.

The intention moving forward is to consolidate and build upon the progress made in the pilot project, adding elements that will enhance sustainability of the program, including exploring the possibility of peer-to-peer mentoring for those being referred to the program.

School District staff in consultation with the City are now designing a plan for a district wide implementation in order that all youth, families and schools can benefit from the positive changes that the program facilitates. The additional funding, made available from the National Crime Prevention Centre, will assist in making this program available more broadly across the City.

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