

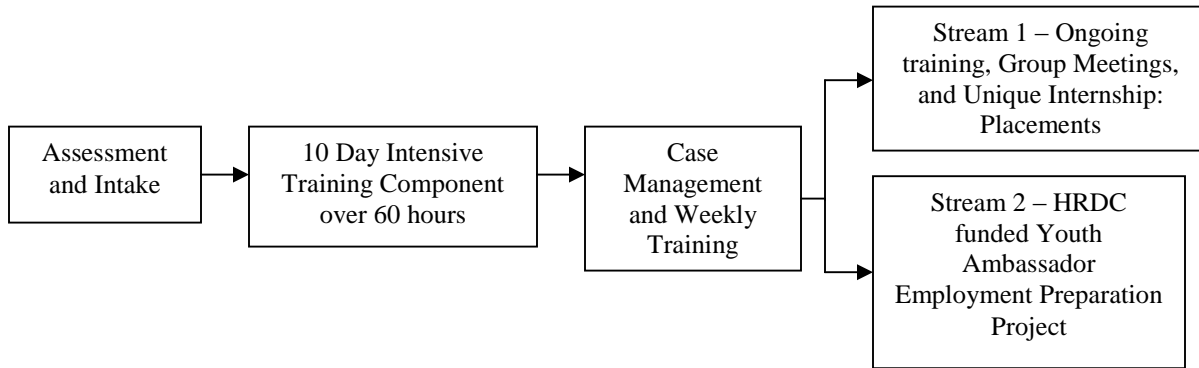
A Message to Local Businesses and Organizations about “Breaking The Cycle: Youth Gang Exit Project And Youth Ambassador Employment Preparation Project”

By way of background information, the Board of Directors of the CTI Canadian Training Institute, Institut Canadien de Formation Inc., translated a concern about rising youth violence/youth crime into a major strategic direction for this organization, some five years ago. In addressing this, we implemented a multi-year, multi-phased organizational change and community development project entitled, “Beyond the Halls”. This project sought to change four high schools in the Greater Toronto Area into places characterized as “safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments.” Each high school operated through multi partner planning committees comprised of Public Health, Black Women’s Congress, Special Education teachers, social workers, youth workers, parents, students and Police. As part of this process we undertook intensive surveys of staff and students within each school. Our surveys assessed culture, the rating of the schools overall, levels of and victimization of violence in the schools, the neighborhoods where schools were located and previous involvement with drugs, alcohol, weapons and police. The surveys revealed a rising level of youth violence both within the schools, the neighborhoods surrounding the schools and the neighborhoods in which students lived. The survey also revealed rising rates of gang activity both within the schools and the neighborhoods surrounding the schools. Many students encountered bullying, intimidation and threats of violence on their way to and from schools. In Rexdale, Scarborough and other parts of Toronto, this rising gang violence has resulted in more than 100 shootings in the past five years.

In responding to this concern, CTI submitted a proposal, which was subsequently approved by the National Crime Prevention Centre for a Community Mobilization Grant to complete the following:

- Research and write an exhaustive literature review on youth violence
- Research and design an intensive ten-day curriculum, one for young males and a separate curriculum for young females
- To design/write a trainers manual to support the delivery of the intensive curricula mentioned above
- To design an intake process including selection of instruments in identifying issues/needs and in assessing movement through the program
- To design a case management process
- To field test the design with gang involved youth

In 2002/2003 CTI received a one-time grant from the City of Toronto under the purview of the Youth Gang Work Group to operationalize the project, to build an Advisory Committee reflective of the area and to train gang involved youth. The Youth Gang Exit Strategy includes the following components that are schematically illustrated as follows:



The vital components to this project include the ten day intensive training/personal development component, the case management and the internship components. Following the 10 Day intensive, youth enter a case management process whereby they develop individual plans, and are assessed for Stream 1 and/or Stream 2 of the project. If staying in Stream 1, youth will enter into an internship component which is envisioned as anywhere from 6 to 15 weeks. Stream 2 which is funded by Human Resources Development Canada and entitled Youth Ambassador Employment Preparation is projected as a 25 week leadership program for up to 14 youth. Within this stream youth divide their time between personal development and outreach, including presentations to youth in schools, to parents, community groups, corporate employees and media. We anticipate providing services to two groups of 14 youth during a one year period.

Several community representatives have been engaged in this project since its inception. These include members of the Project Advisory Committee who are identified on the attached sheet and a number of politicians, civil servants. Roy Cullen MP is the representative for Rexdale, Susan Hall, Ward 1 Etobicoke North Counsellor, City of Toronto and Teresa Damaso External Relations and Employment Manager, Toronto West Human Resources Development Canada.

Additionally, we have also received the support of Humber College, CAA South Western Region, BASF Canada and an indication of support from Labatt's Breweries and John Emery Geotechnical Engineering Ltd.

We invite you to join CTI and others in Breaking the Cycle of Gang Violence by donating some/ or all of the furniture and computers required for this project. Alternatively you can make a financial contribution. As a charitable organization we will be providing charitable tax receipts for your donations.

You can also assist by advising your employees that we are looking for internship opportunities and for individuals to become involved as mentors/role models.

Thank you for your support and involvement in the multi partnered project.

John A. Sawdon
Executive Director, CTI Canadian Training Institute