



• From the Australian Institute of Criminology •

Sport and antisocial behaviour in youth

Sport and physical activity programs can have a positive impact on young people’s behaviour, and may provide an important vehicle for their personal and social development. A project funded by the Australian Sports Commission, and conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology, identified 606 programs for young people in Australia that focused on sport and physical activity. A survey was used to find out who the programs targeted, how participants were referred to the program, how the program developed and was implemented, how it was funded, key outcomes and successes of the program, and whether these were evaluated. Of the 175 programs that responded, 77 focused solely on physical activity, outdoor activity or sport; the remaining 98 focused on a combination of all three. The intended outcomes of these programs were primarily to increase social skills (32 per cent), reduce antisocial behaviour (30 per cent) and improve self-esteem (29 per cent). Just over half (51 per cent) of programs indicated that they had been formally evaluated. Analysis of these evaluations formed the basis of the “good practice program principles” outlined below. This set of principles is intended to aid administrators and practitioners in developing effective programs and to allow government, funding bodies and stakeholders to assess the integrity and rigorousness of programs.

Good practice program principles

ADMINISTRATIVE	→	CLEAR AIMS & OUTCOMES, CONSTANT MONITORING/EVALUATION & INTERESTED STAFF
ENVIRONMENT	→	COMFORTABLE & SAFE ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOP TRUST BETWEEN STAFF & YOUTH
ACTIVITIES	→	OFFER NOVEL, ENGAGING, CHALLENGING & RELEVANT ACTIVITIES
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT	→	PROVIDE LEADERSHIP, PROMOTION & PEER SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES
ACCESSIBILITY	→	MAKE PROGRAM MORE ACCESSIBLE BY PROVIDING TRANSPORT AFTER DARK
EXTERNAL SUPPORT	→	PROVIDE INFORMATION, LINKS TO OTHER SERVICES & RESOURCES
UNDERLYING ISSUES	→	PROMOTE FAIRNESS & THE RELEVANCE OF ACTIVITIES TO OTHER LIFE AREAS, PROVIDE A CONTINUING CONTACT POINT FOR YOUTH, BE AWARE OF SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES & TREAT YOUTH AS INDIVIDUALS

SOURCE: Morris, L., Sallybanks, J., Willis, K. & Makkai, T, 2003, “Sport, Physical Activity and Antisocial Behaviour in Youth”, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 249, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

Full report available on AIC web site: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi249.html>