

Title: The Youth Injection Prevention (YIP) Project: Process Evaluation of Youth Involvement as Co-Researchers in a Qualitative Study of Street-Involved Youth

N. Van Borek¹, L. Coser², YIP Co-Researchers¹
M. Botnick¹, C. Chambers³, D. Taylor^{1,3}, J. A. Buxton^{1,3}

¹ British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

² Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

³ University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Objectives:

To determine how project involvement has impacted youth co-researchers and identify process issues to ensure project relevance, viability and success.

Methods:

Six youth age 17-24 years participated in a qualitative study as co-researchers investigating factors that may prevent youth from transitioning into injection drug use. Participation included: 1) training sessions to develop research skills; 2) community partner site visits to learn about available youth services and study population; 3) designing project logo, focus group and interview scripts; 4) facilitating focus groups with street-involved youth. Co-researchers were subsequently interviewed to evaluate: 1) impact of project involvement; 2) perceived preparedness for data collection; 3) further training desired; 4) project modifications required. Participation in qualitative data analysis and dissemination of results to their peers will also occur and be evaluated at a later date.

Results:

Youth co-researchers developed a greater sense of self-worth and gained valuable knowledge, leadership and research skills, which they perceived were transferable to other areas of their lives. Youth co-ownership over the research process ensured the study was relevant and youth driven. Process evaluation allowed the research team, including the youth co-researchers to monitor their progress, personal development and incorporate necessary modifications from youth input into project design and implementation.

Conclusions:

Involvement of youth co-researchers in the study was a challenging yet essential component which enabled increased opportunities for rich data collection as our study population shared experiences with peers. Process evaluation enriched the study, as it ensured youth input, co-ownership, strengthened study outcomes, and enabled project success.