



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
*Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



**ARTICLE 6 – APRIL 21, 2008 - CTC® EFFECTIVENESS**

*The Effectiveness of the CTC® Process*  
*By Brian Bumbarger*

Brian Bumbarger is the Director of Policy Research & Outreach at the Prevention Research Center For The Promotion of Human Development. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care*® serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*® serving the State College Area School District.

Like nearly one hundred other Pennsylvania communities, the neighborhoods served by the Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, Philipsburg-Osceola, and State College Area School Districts are involved in the *Communities That Care*® (CTC®) process of addressing youth problems such as delinquency, violence and drug use, and promoting positive youth development throughout Centre County. CTC® assumes a public health approach to prevention that recognizes that youth behavior problems have “risk factors” that can be identified and addressed in order to reduce the number of children who might otherwise become delinquent. The process begins by collecting local data on the prevalence of these known risk factors and using that data to prioritize where the community will focus its prevention resources. This type of “community diagnosis” allows each community to tailor its prevention efforts to the issues that are contributing most to poor outcomes for youth – whether family conflict issues, low attachment to school or poor academic achievement, or community factors such as the availability of drugs and alcohol. It’s easy to imagine how these factors affect each community differently, and thus, why it is important for each community to develop a prevention strategy that is specific to its unique needs and risks.

The Prevention Research Center recently conducted a large evaluation of the impact of CTC® in Pennsylvania and found that it has been effective in preventing and reducing youth problem behaviors. In our study, we compared 147 CTC® and non-CTC® communities, representing nearly 100,000 teens, and found that communities using the CTC® approach had lower levels of risk factors, as well as significantly lower rates of juvenile delinquency and youth drug use.

One of the critical elements of the CTC® process is the use of “evidence-based” prevention programs to address prioritized risk factors. These programs have shown clear evidence in rigorous scientific evaluations that they are effective in addressing delinquency, drug use, or other problem behaviors. By focusing resources on these proven-effective programs, communities have the greatest likelihood of seeing reductions in youth problems. Over the past 8 years, Centre County has implemented a number of these evidence-based programs including the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program, the PATHS elementary social-emotional learning program, the Olweus School Bullying Prevention Program, LifeSkills Training & Project Towards No Drug Use – school drug prevention curriculums, Reconnecting Youth, Guiding Good Choices, and the Strengthening Families Program. The use of these model prevention programs is critical to achieving meaningful reductions in youth delinquency and drug use at the community-level. Further, recent economic analysis of these programs has shown that **they not only pay for themselves but actually represent considerable positive cost-benefit ratios in long-term financial savings to both program participants and taxpayers.**

The many members of the CTC® coalitions in Centre County are taking a thoughtful, informed and deliberate approach to reducing problems for youth and making life better for families in Centre County, and we applaud their efforts.

For more information on the research described in this article, please visit the Prevention Research Center's website at [www.prevention.psu.edu](http://www.prevention.psu.edu).

Centre County *Communities That Care*®

*Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola*

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