

## USING RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTOR DATA FOR PREVENTION PLANNING IN CHILE AND COLOMBIA

**Communities That Care™ (CTC) is a science-based, community-centered approach to improving youth outcomes by preventing substance abuse and other problem behaviors. CTC has been proven effective in the United States. Adapted versions are available in Europe and Australia, as well as Chile and Colombia.**

CTC relies on local survey data on community risk and protective factors, as well as outcomes. CTC mobilizes prevention coalitions to use the data to set priorities and choose and implement evidence-based programs for youth and families aligned with them. It is crucial for coalitions to have high-quality survey data and to be able to interpret and use it. When we started working with communities in Colombia and Chile, we wanted to find out how useful and usable coalition members found the data on their own community's levels of risk and protection. We could not assume coalitions would find the reports useful or meaningful just because the reports are well received in other countries.

Our collaboration involved researchers at two universities in the United States, a nongovernmental organization in Colombia, a foundation in Chile, and local community coalitions in Chile and Colombia. We adapted and piloted CTC under the name *Comunidades Que Se Cuidan* (CQC).



### Summary of Findings

Many effective community health delivery systems in the U.S. assess risk and protective factors for youth problem behaviors and report data back to local coalitions for prevention planning. This study examined the reaction of community prevention coalitions in Chile and Colombia to risk and protective factor data reports. Were the reports understandable, valid, useful, and worth sharing? Focus group members did not all react the same, but most participants found the reports to be:

- Thorough and easy to understand
- True to their communities
- Useful for diagnosing and prioritizing needs, action planning, and mobilizing others in their communities
- Worth disseminating and sharing with others

These results show the potential usefulness in Latin America of community prevention systems that use data-based decision making.

## What we did

We collected focus group data to understand how four Colombian and three Chilean communities used the risk and protective factor reports from the CQC youth survey. The reports included bar graphs and tables showing levels of risk, protection, and problem behaviors for each grade level surveyed. Trained facilitators shared the reports in a workshop focused on using the data to guide the prioritization of risk and protective factors to be addressed by prevention programming.

The focus groups allowed coalition members to express opinions and experiences in their own voice, and share their personal and local understanding of the CQC system and the risk and protective factor data. Focus group participants—representing a wide range of sectors—were asked about their experience with CQC, their understanding and use of the data, whether they found the reports easy to interpret, how well the reports reflected their communities, and the reports' potential for further dissemination. We used indirect checks to guard against tendencies to provide socially desirable responses. We qualitatively analyzed the transcriptions of the interviews by coding them into themes.

## What we discovered

Most participants stated the reports of risk and protective factor data were clear and user friendly. Some participants showed a strong understanding of risk and protective factors, whereas others did not. Most participants felt the reports were valid and confirmed their own observations of their communities. They also felt that the data expanded their understanding of youth in their communities, despite some examples of cultural differences where the survey or report wording could be improved.

Participants regarded the reports as a useful diagnostic tool, as a strategy for mobilizing awareness and action, and, in some cases, as a means for shaping municipal policies. Most also saw potential for further dissemination of the data, although some noted potential adverse consequences, such as stigmatization of their community.

This study fills a gap in existing literature by examining how local coalitions perceive, interpret, and use reports of risk and protective factor data. It provides evidence that community-based prevention coalitions can use data-based decision making and mobilize around improving the health and well-being of Latin American youth.

For additional information on this topic, please refer to the original article:

Eisenberg, N., Brown, E. C., Pérez-Gómez, A., Mejía-Trujillo, J., Paredes-Aguilar, M., Cardozo-Macias, F., Fundación San Carlos de Maipo, & Guttmanova, K. (2021). Community utilization of risk and protective factor data for prevention planning in Chile and Colombia. *Health Promotion International*, 36, 417-429.

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“[The report] has been a great source of support. If we decide to start a program, if we decide to strengthen what we have or to create something new, the report helps us to decide what we strengthen and what new things we should do.”

“Reports ... led us to a higher level of commitment as a coalition; when we observe and understand the risk factors, the graphics, [we think] ‘what can I do to collaborate?’ ... This generates a connection. I think that in the future it will allow others to join with a common interest in serving the community.”

“[Our community] should get to know this diagnosis because, when you know how things really are, you realize that it’s everyone’s problem and not an individual’s problem.”