



# **GloboTron Evaluations Inc.**

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A Proposed Evaluation of MARC's Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project

Prepared for: The Methamphetamine Response Committee (MARC)

February 5, 2011



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To: The Methamphetamine Response Committee (MARC)

Re: Proposed Evaluation of the Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project

GloboTron Evaluations Inc. is pleased to have the opportunity to work with the Methamphetamine Response Committee and facilitate the evaluation of the Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project.

Program evaluation is an important activity that organizations engage in to enhance program functioning and to obtain valuable information that can be used for decision-making purposes. We commend the Methamphetamine Response Committee for undertaking an evaluation of its program and hope that the comprehensive evaluation plan developed by the GloboTron Evaluations Inc. meets your needs.

Our consulting team has extensive experience with regards to developing surveys, facilitating focus groups, conducting interviews, and carrying out records reviews. Therefore, our strong methodological abilities, coupled with our expertise evaluating harm reduction programs, will ensure the success of this evaluation.

It is our hope that this evaluation proposal will benefit the Methamphetamine Response Committee. We thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

GloboTron Evaluations Inc.



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## **I. Program Overview**

The Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project is a program created by the Methamphetamine Response Committee (MARC), with funding from Health Canada, to deliver harm reduction training to street-involved youth in downtown south Vancouver. The program employs a “peer-based” model, meaning that the youth in the program have significant involvement in the program’s overall operation and content. The program includes five distinct components: 1) harm reduction training; 2) needle exchange/outreach; 3) youth support meetings; 4) a newsletter; and 5) speaking opportunities. The specific objectives of the Crystal Clear program are:

- To increase the amount of crystal methamphetamine related harm reduction information available to street-involved youth in Vancouver;
- To increase access to training for street-involved youth interested in harm reduction, related peer support and outreach;
- To increase capacity to liaise between street-involved youth and the community at large;
- To increase public awareness;
- To build and maintain partnerships between street-involved youth and relevant service agencies

The Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project has been in operation for three years, with the first year acting as a one-year pilot project. The pilot project was followed by three cycles of training over a two-year period. The training cycles are approximately one month in length and are typically provided over the course of 12 group meetings that last between two and three hours. The training is organised into several topic modules (e.g., leadership training, sexual health, understanding violence). Additionally, all cycles include a range of activities intended to build the group, develop the youths’ self-confidence, and provide opportunities for them to use their newly developed skills and knowledge.

## **II. Purpose of Evaluation**

The purpose of the proposed evaluation is to assess the Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project’s design and delivery of outcomes. Therefore, the research questions of the proposed evaluation address both the operation of the program as well as the desired outcomes. The results of this evaluation can be used by the Methamphetamine Response Committee to improve the Crystal Clear program. Additionally, the evaluation will address specific concerns regarding: 1) how the evaluation will handle the diversity and cultural mix of the target population; 2) what the implications are of having no exit strategy in the program and alternatives to this approach; and 3) the project staff’s limited management and administration skills.



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### **III. Theoretical Approach**

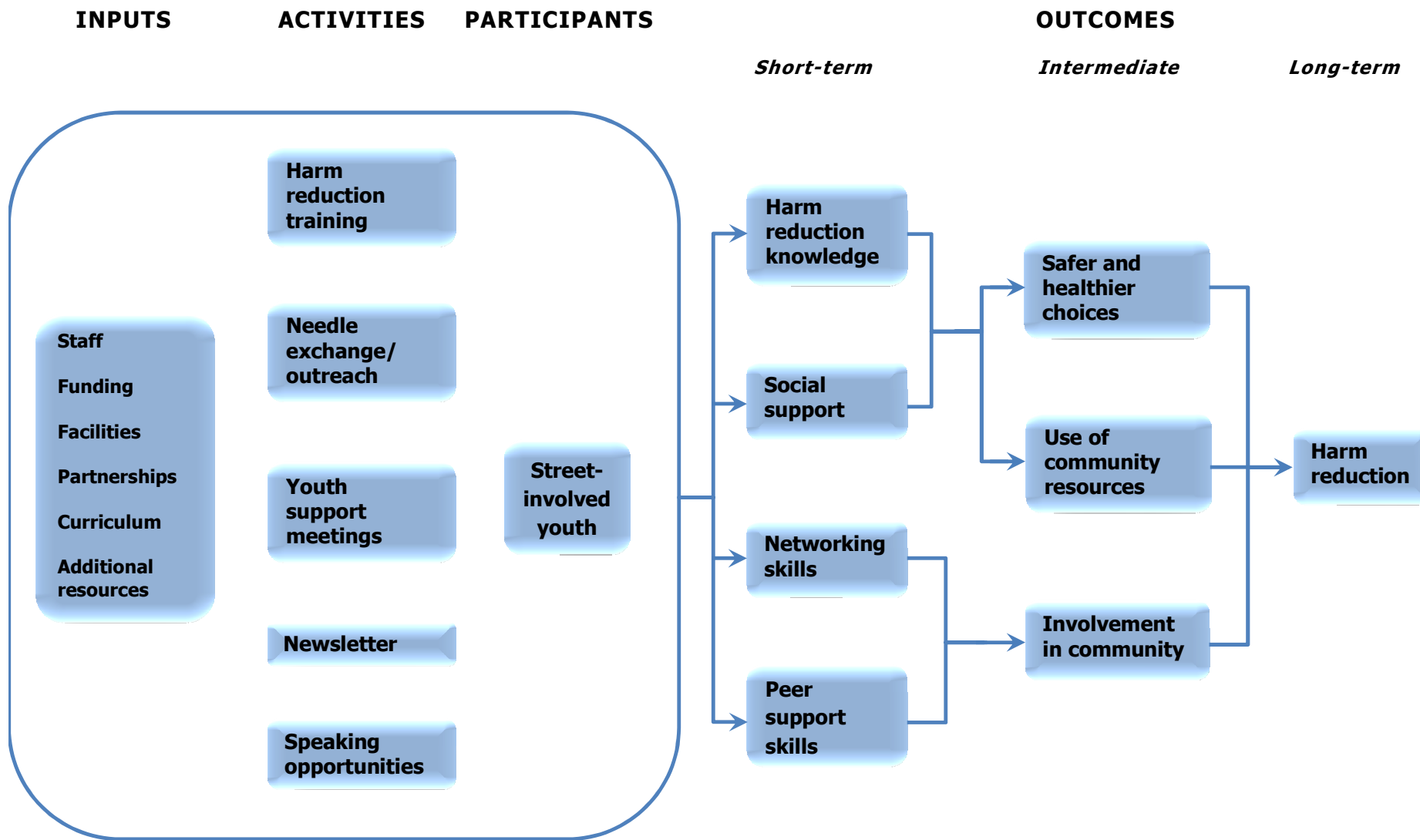
Globotron Evaluations Inc. will conduct a combination process/outcome formative evaluation on MARC's Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project. A process evaluation will allow us to determine if the program has been implemented as planned and that it carries out its intended functions in the intended way (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Given that the program has only been implemented for three years it is important to verify if the program is running as it was intended. Additionally, although Health Canada is specifically interested in understanding the impacts of the program, we recommend that an outcome evaluation be conducted as opposed to an impact evaluation. Due to the fact that the program was implemented relatively recently, it may be premature to conduct an impact evaluation given that no outcome records have been collected thus far. Furthermore, given that a definitive evaluation of impact requires the comparison of individuals receiving an intervention with those who do not (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freedman, 2004), there would be concerns regarding the exclusion of some youth from participating in a program that could theoretically reduce the harm associated with methamphetamine use. Based on this limitation, we believe that an outcome evaluation is the best approach while still allowing the provision of useful information about the extent to which the program produces its intended results (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freedman, 2004).

The proposed evaluation will employ a utilization-focused model to address the research questions. The utilization-focused model maintains the focus of the evaluation on the intended uses by the intended users (Patton, 2008). This model dictates that decisions will be made in collaboration with an identified group of primary users and the information provided as a result of the evaluation will be usable to the program's stakeholders (Patton, 2008). Given this consideration, we will maintain regular consultation with the program's steering committee who can provide guidance and support throughout the proceedings of the evaluation. Finally, the proposed evaluation will meet the standards set out by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation to ensure the highest level of quality (Yarborough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011).



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**IV. Program Logic Model: Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project**



## **V. Program Theory**

The relationship of the program activities to their intended outcomes is described in the program logic model on the previous page. The program logic model was developed based on the Knowlton and Phillips' (2009) guidelines for logic model development. Through training, direct application and other experiences, program activities are expected to contribute to youths' knowledge of harm reduction issues and techniques. Participation in activities, including the youth support meetings, provides social support and helps build youths' sense of belonging. The purpose of the increased knowledge and support is to help youths make safer and healthier choices and enhance their use of community resources.

Training and participation in program activities are also intended to help youth gain peer support and networking skills, which will enhance their community involvement through outreach and the development of relationships with other organizations, agencies, and the community at large. By making safer choices, using community resources, and enhancing their community involvement, youth will engage in fewer harmful behaviours related to their methamphetamine use.

## **VI. Methodological Justifications**

### Records Review

A records review will be conducted to assess the program implementation and outcomes. Referring to existing program documents will provide insight into the rate of attrition and completion for program participants as well as the point in time at which they exit the program. Further, these records will be reviewed in order to assure that proper records are being kept and maintained. In terms of outcomes, a review of the Coroner's report will also be included to determine whether the rate of methamphetamine related deaths has changed since the program began.

Strengths:

- Records are easily accessible and efficient to obtain

Limitations:

- The quality of the data is unknown, records may be incomplete

### Focus Groups

The goal of conducting focus groups is to be able to reach a population that may have low literacy skills and, thus, be able to more easily express themselves and discuss behaviour in conversation. These group interviews will also broach topics covered by the survey (i.e., using learned skills, behaviour change, knowledge change) using skills but the issues will be able to be explored more indepth and serve as triangulation for the other methods.

Strengths:

- Provides rich, detailed data
- As youth are used to meeting together, should be a format they are comfortable with
- Can be conducted after or before a previously scheduled support meeting



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#### Limitations:

- Can obtain only self-reported behaviours rather than actual behaviours

#### Surveys

Surveys will be employed to evaluate the program process and outcomes and will be distributed to Crystal Clear participants as well as street involved youth. The in-coming program participants will receive a pre-survey upon entrance into the program. A subsequent post survey will be administered to the new participants and to past participants in order to also elicit responses from those who did not receive the pre-survey. This second broader survey will include measures of participant satisfaction with training and managerial support as an indicator of program implementation. Measures of self-reported drug use, usage of harm reduction behaviours/engaging in healthy behaviours, knowledge of harm reduction methods and peer support will be incorporated to assess program objectives. Previously validated and reliable measures will be selected for the surveys where possible, otherwise measures will be created with the evaluation team in consultation with members of the steering committee. Street-involved youth will receive a survey similar to that administered to Vancouver street youth some years ago. It will measure the number of youth who have access to and use methamphetamines.

#### Strengths:

- Allows us to gather a large quantity of quantitative data
- Pre-post survey will allow us to assess changes in knowledge of harm-reduction and peer-support skills and the behaviours associated with these skills
- Participant Survey allows us to assess current knowledge and behaviours of those who have completed the training, suggesting the potential for long-term maintenance of these outcomes and changes in education over time
- Street-Involved Youth survey will provide data necessary to compare with survey performed with this population before commencement of Crystal Clear, thus providing evidence for the community-wide effectiveness of this program.

#### Limitations:

- Information will be self-reported, may not indicate actual behaviours
- Pre-post survey will not show definitively that Crystal Clear is causing any observed changes
- Surveys may be challenging to distribute to a representative population of street-involved youth

#### Photovoice

A small group of Crystal Clear participants will be recruited to engage in a photovoice project about experiences in their community, social support, engaging in healthy behaviours, and the role that Crystal Clear has had in these processes. Photovoice has been used effectively in participatory action research with marginalized communities to empower individuals to share their voices with decision-makers and their communities. Participants will be asked to take pictures (using a disposable camera) of things that represent these processes to them. These images could be literal (e.g., an organization where they obtain meals) or metaphorical (e.g., a



buttressed building that represents social support). After taking photographs individually for one week, participants will meet in a group to discuss and analyze their images. These images can be presented as a gallery exhibit, at the discretion of the Steering Committee, the photovoice participants, and Crystal Clear administration, to share participants' experiences with the community.

Strengths:

- Rich, pictorial data on street-involved youth's experiences
- Participants are expected to become involved with this procedure, leading to deeper data

Limitations:

- Requires more prolonged effort on part of participants
- Images may be biased towards participants' positive experiences

### Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews will be included in the process evaluation. Staff members will be interviewed about their perceptions of how the program functions as well as asking about their opinion as to why some participants exit the program before completion. If past participants are willing to participate, these same questions will be asked with the aim of discovering their perspectives on program implementation.

Strengths:

- Rich data on staff and past participants' experiences
- Private interviews will increase the likelihood that staff will feel comfortable reporting areas wherein Crystal Clear can improve
- Private interviews will increase the likelihood that past participants will report any socially undesirable behaviours (e.g., drug use) that may have contributed to their desire to exit the program

Limitations:

- May be difficult to contact participants who have left Crystal Clear
- As staff members are likely deeply involved in the program, their responses may be biased towards displaying Crystal Clear in a positive light

## **VII. Detailed Description of Photovoice Analysis**

The photovoice data will be analyzed in accordance with Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock, and Havelock (2009). The pictures taken by the photovoice participants will be analyzed in group meetings, which will be audio-recorded. All photographs will be developed and passed around the group for commentary. The participants and a researcher will analyze the photographs in the following steps:

1. Participants will be asked to select the photographs that reflect their community and experiences.
2. Participants will discuss, as a group, what the selected photographs mean to them and say about their community. Specifically, participants will be asked to discuss what the photographs say about social support in their community, and the healthy or unhealthy choices and behaviours they engage in.
3. Participants, supported by the researcher, will examine the transcripts of the discussions in Step 2 for pervasive themes, issues, and categories among the stories and meanings





related. The relations between these themes and the Crystal Clear program will be discussed.

The researcher will develop these themes into a comprehensive report on participants' community experiences, the choices they make, the social support they give and receive, and the place that Crystal Clear has in these processes.

### **VIII. Potential Challenges and Proposed Solutions**

#### *1. Challenge: Inability to contact past participants*

The street-involved youth are likely a transient population without a permanent address or phone number and are, therefore, difficult to contact. Indeed, the project manager has experienced difficulty tracking youth to obtain their feedback. The evaluation team, therefore, will develop several strategies for contacting these participants such as using current program participants as key informants and using a snowball technique among past participants. Although three years of program existence is not a long period, the transient nature of this population and their engagement in risk behaviours will likely not allow for interviewing and surveying all 42 past participants. A prudent goal is to reach at least 25 of them.

#### *2. Challenge: Inability to gain trust from other street-involved youth*

The evaluation plan involves sampling among non-participating street-involved youth. As outsiders to the community, the evaluators will likely not have established trust with these youth. Either one of the Crystal Clear staff, or staff from another similarly-focused organization or participants currently involved in the Clear Crystal programming will be asked to assist with the youth recruitment as they have more trust among this population.

#### *3. Challenge: Low literacy level*

The average education level reported by the Clear Crystal clients was Grade 9. Thus, it needs to be assumed that the literacy level of the street-involved youth is rather low. All our survey and interview questions as well as our consent forms and other communication with these youth will be kept at about a Grade 6 level to ensure their understanding. The experience of the Clear Crystal staff suggests that the attention span of participants is rather short as their workshops were abandoned by some participants. Therefore, the questions and the data collection tools will be designed to be as short as possible in order to keep the attention of the youth.

#### *4. Challenge: Attrition*

As mentioned, it is difficult to track the street-involved youth which may result in high attrition rates. The youth will participate in the photovoice technique and those who will be asked to fill out a survey will be rewarded for their time and effort with gift cards to selected grocery stores. Participants of focus groups will be provided with refreshments during the groups. These kinds of rewards were selected under the assumption that the impoverished youth will appreciate such incentives and will be more likely to participate and return with their photos.

### **IX. Addressing the evaluation objectives identified by Health Canada**

*Diversity and culture*



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While some cultures rely more heavily on verbal expression, some others tend to express themselves through more creative and non-verbal means of communication. The photovoice technique is recognized as a tool that enables people of all cultural backgrounds and language skills to express their opinion and share their experience. In particular, this technique has become increasingly popular with marginalized populations whose voice would otherwise not be heard. Street-involved youth represent one of these populations given their socio-economic situation and also the cultural and potential linguistic diversity. The photovoice technique, therefore, is the most appropriate method of addressing the diversity challenge.

#### *Exit strategy*

Due to the lack of knowledge of the exit of participants, it is not possible to determine whether the participants leave the program when they are ready to leave (i.e. they learnt all necessary knowledge and skills and are ready to pass them on to their peers in the community), or whether they leave due to other external causes such as economic hardship or drug addiction. One of the proposed evaluation questions will explore the reasons and timing of participants' exit from the program and will bring important information for future exit strategies.

#### *Operational Support*

The program evaluation will examine whether the program was implemented as intended and this question also includes the management and administration related to the program operation. Objectivity will be ensured by triangulation of data sources and methods of data collection on this subject. The staff will be asked to describe any issues they may have had with the operations of the program, participants will be asked about their opinions about the program management and will be encouraged to provide suggestions for improvement. Lastly, program records will be reviewed to obtain more objective information that will be triangulated with the information obtained from the interviews with staff and randomly selected participants.

## **X. Ethical challenges**

### *1. Under age youth*

Many of the youth who use the services of the Crystal Clear Peer-Based Harm Reduction Project are under the age of 19. The Program Evaluation Standards require obtaining a parental consent for youth under the age of consent (19 in British Columbia). However, because the majority of these youth are homeless and come from different provinces in Canada, it is assumed that their contact with their families is minimal and obtaining parental consent would be very difficult. Since in exceptional cases, age of consent is decreased to 16 and because these youth are likely fully independent and responsible for their own everyday decisions, the minimal age for participation in this evaluation project will also be set to 16. As there is no way that the self-reported age of the potential participants can be verified, the evaluation team will rely on the self-reported age of street-involved youth.

### *2. Vulnerable youth*

The street-involved youth frequently have negative life experiences such as abuse, exploitation, or poverty. For these reasons, they are considered a vulnerable population and will be treated with a special care from the surveyors and interviewers. The evaluators will put special emphasis on ensuring that these youth are treated with respect, that all behaviour and procedures are



transparent, and that the youth understand their role in the program evaluation and they know what they consent to.

### *3. Privacy of other youth*

Several of the evaluation questions will be addressed by the technique of photovoice. The youth will receive disposable cameras and will be asked to take pictures of their everyday life situations in which they demonstrated some of the learned behaviours or skills. It is possible that the photos will capture behaviour that may be perceived as inappropriate and they can also identify people engaging in this kind of behaviour. Participants will be asked to sign consent forms before they start taking photos which will reassure participants about the confidentiality of all materials that they will provide to the evaluation team. Although the team does not expect that criminal behaviour would be captured in these photos, the consent form will explicitly state that the evaluators are under the obligation to report instances of criminal behaviour.



**Table 1: Methodology Matrix**

<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Method &amp; Data Source</b>
<b>Process</b>		
1. When and why do participants leave the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported and perceived reasons</li> <li>• Completion and attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informant interviews (past CC participants and staff)</li> <li>• Records review (program documents)</li> </ul>
2. Is the program implemented as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of program operations</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction</li> <li>• Record completeness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informant interviews (staff)</li> <li>• Survey (CC participants)</li> <li>• Records review (program documents)</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>		
3. Has the harm of methamphetamine use been reduced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of deaths due to methamphetamine use</li> <li>• Self-reported use</li> <li>• Self-reported harm reduction behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records review (coroner's report)</li> <li>• Survey (street-involved youth)</li> <li>• Survey (CC participants)</li> </ul>
4. Have knowledge and skills been increased among those who have completed training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge score</li> <li>• Self-reported skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post survey (new CC participants)</li> <li>• Focus group (CC participants)</li> </ul>
5. Has social support increased among program participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photovoice (CC participants)</li> <li>• Focus groups (CC participants)</li> </ul>
6. Have participants' choices and behaviours become healthier?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported behaviour change</li> <li>• Examples of healthy behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post survey (new CC participants)</li> <li>• Survey (past CC participants)</li> <li>• Photovoice (CC participants)</li> </ul>
7. Are participants using learned skills?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported skill use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group (CC participants)</li> </ul>



### References

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