

Safe Communities - Safe Children

Safe Community Model Recommendations, Through the Eyes of the Child

Safekids New Zealand, Plunket, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner recently delivered five recommendations at the Conference Key Note Session, highlighting the need for renewed focus on child safety within the Safe Communities Model.

The recommendations were created following a workshop attended by over 70 conference attendees, with the goal of answering the question "Safe Communities, Safe Children: How well are children served by the Safe Communities Model?"

Ann Weaver, Safekids New Zealand Director, expressed the workshop attendees' concern that child safety is not specifically identified within the criteria of the Safe Communities Model. "The world is designed for adults, by adults, and a child's world is not the same as an adult's."

"Does your city or community look at safety through the eyes of the child? Ensuring child safety leads to Safe Communities, and we encourage all delegates to keep this in mind throughout the conference," Ann said.

Model Recommendations

In collaboration with the organizers, presenters and attendees at the workshop, the following recommendations were given:

1. That Safe Communities make a commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have a right to be kept safe.
2. There is a lack of investment in Child Injury Prevention, and recommend the need to increase international funding and collaboration between Safe Communities, WHO, ISCAIP, Unicef, SafeKids Worldwide, and EuroSafe.
3. Challenges were identified with the current criteria of the Safe Communities model, and asked consideration for the following issues:
 - a. "One model doesn't fit all" (e.g. high income vs. low income, local vs. national, cultural differences).
 - b. Addressing indigenous needs, and recognizing parallel models for some indigenous communities (ex. Maori in New Zealand).
4. To aim for maximum real performance rather than the minimum, and to include child safety in council/municipalities' core business.
5. Stronger conference representation of high risk communities through sponsorships. The lack of strong Pacific Representation in the 2008 conference was noted.

The need for a child safety champion was also raised. "Safe Communities who have child safety on their agenda need a child advocate who can effect the required change within an organization," Ann said.