

INTEGRATED POLICE RESPONSE FOR ABUSED SENIORS



▶ General Overview

Practical and Theoretical Knowledge Learned from the IPRAS Action Research Project

INTRODUCTION

The *Integrated Police Response for Abused Seniors (IPRAS)* is a three-year action research project. Starting in July 2013 and extending over a three-year period, this project was jointly carried out between the “Section de la recherche et de la planification du Service de police de la Ville de Montréal” (SPVM)¹ and the Research Chair on Mistreatment of Older Adults of the University of Sherbrooke.

This general overview presents the practical and theoretical knowledge learned from the IPRAS action research project. Three other general overviews can be consulted. They highlight:

- › the needs analysis and police practices inventory enabling the development of the model;
- › the evaluation results of the IPRAS Model pilot project;
- › the description of the model’s components implemented throughout the SPVM.

WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH?

- › “A systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives”² (p. 1).
- › Research into action that deals with problem solving which may affect people. It requires a democratic partnership based on collaboration on all stages of the project. Participants are therefore considered as actors in the process leading to the elaboration of the research model³.

For example, the writing of the IPRAS Model was the result of a collaboration between the Research Chair, the “Section de la recherche et de la planification” of the SPVM and police officers. All stages of the project were then made collectively.

¹ Research and Strategic Planning Division of the City of Montréal Police Service.

- › Research taking into consideration the existing complex dynamics in specific situations and providing concerned people with means of better understanding their situation and taking action to resolve their problem².

With the aging population, police officers are increasingly being required to work with older adults and therefore are more likely to intervene in situations of mistreatment.

- › A long process that requires several months or even years on-site⁴.

During three years, IPRAS project's actors were on-site, whether for data collection or ongoing evaluation of the model's implementation.

Example of an action research model

Several action research models exist⁴. Figure 1 presents a spiral where participants are constantly engaged in a process of observation, reflection and action. They must initially describe and collect relevant data regarding the situation. Then, they must analyze and interpret the situation in order to plan, elaborate and evaluate the action plan. They are encouraged to do these steps several times². This is a cyclical and flexible process⁵.

In the IPRAS project, the elaboration and the evaluation were carried out simultaneously. The actors elaborated and evaluated the pilot projects concurrently.

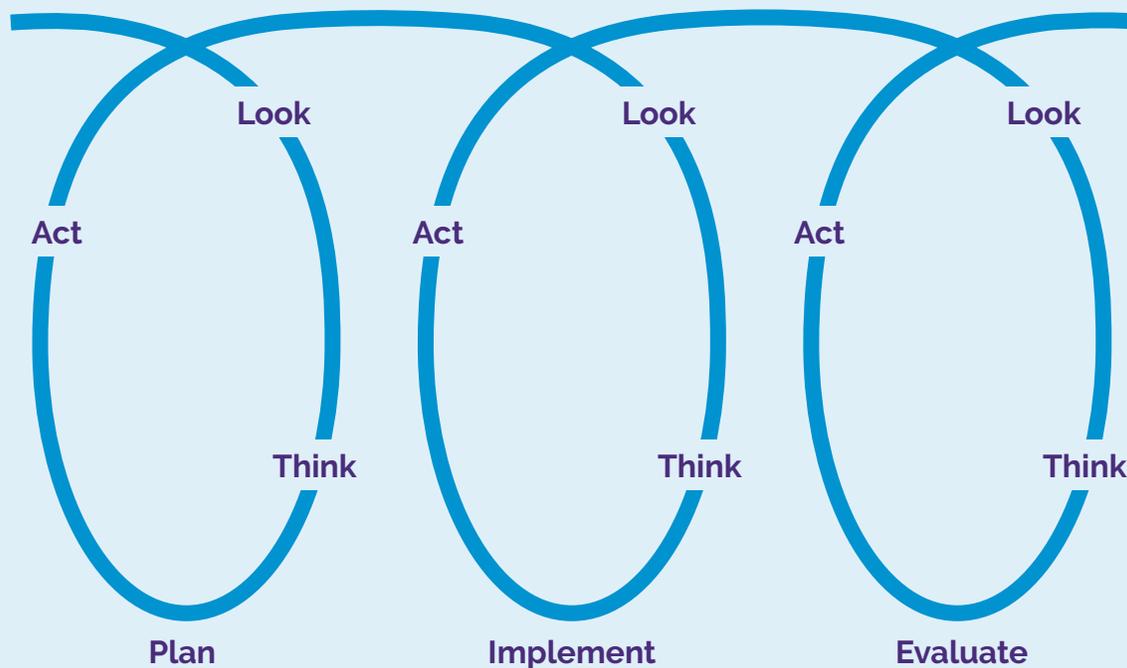


FIGURE 1: ACTION RESEARCH INTERACTING SPIRAL² (P. 9)

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

- › It aims to find an appropriate answer to a particular problem or a particular situation².

The objective of the IPRAS project was to develop, test and implement a police intervention model to counter mistreatment of older adults. More specifically, the aim of the research team was to improve police interventions with older adults, the ultimate goal being to improve the quality of life of the latter.

- › It provides useful knowledge to practitioners and to researchers³. This knowledge, coming from practice or supporting it, may be transferable to other similar contexts⁵.

In the IPRAS project, data collected from different data collection, based on writings or police practices, contributed to knowledge development.

- › It improves the daily work practices, resolves specific problems or develops projects or programs².

For the IPRAS project, a police intervention program was developed. It includes various tools in which police officers can rely on in their daily practices such as an Operating Mode (OM), an intervention flowchart and a Detection Pocket Tool.

WHAT ARE ITS PRINCIPLES?

- › Action research is based on basic principles:

- **Interaction:** Interactions between participants of an action research should be based on harmony, acceptance, cooperation, collaboration as well as sensitivity to others². This sensitivity to others is not only reflected towards people, but also towards systems.

In the IPRAS project, certain realities specific to each organization had to be accepted by both sides. For the Police Service, it was necessary to mobilize a large number of resources in order to detail the needs and solutions. As for the Chair, the working plan was adjusted to organizational realities by adding a pilot in a Neighbourhood Police Station and dividing it into two phases instead of one as originally planned.

- **Communication:** It requires being mindful to other people's words, using a clear vocabulary in order to be understood by everyone, informing participants, and being honest, sincere and open².

During the IPRAS project, a special attention was paid to the transmission of information between all participants in order to reach the entire organization, which counts over 6 000 members.

- **Participation:** All concerned actors are required to commit to the process and the performance of important tasks. However, to achieve this requirement and perform their tasks, they need support and encouragements².

Participation of police officers from different functions (patrol officers, supervisors, investigators and commanders) was essential to ensure IPRAS project's progress.

- **Inclusion:** This principle means the inclusion of all people or all issues relevant to the situation. People must also be able to benefit from the activities of action research².

The IPRAS participation strategy favoured the inclusion of all project's actors (police officers, researchers and partners).

- **Knowledge cogeneration:** All stakeholders generate knowledge together⁵.

Police officers who were in action did not wait to be told what worked and what did not. They were proactive in identifying needs and proposing solutions.



WHAT ARE ITS CHALLENGES?

- › The application of certain action research principles, previously mentioned, remains challenging². All action research participants must understand and use the same terminology to ensure a common understanding.

To this end, each IPRAS project participant had to learn new terms such as “OM”, which corresponds to an Operating Mode. It is possible to assume that we know what it is before knowing the full scope of what an OM meant for the SPVM. The same goes for understanding and learning about all the intricacies of administrative structures.

- › Collaboration between researchers and other participants can be challenging on a personal and professional level. However, these experiences are often rewarding as they allow to acquire new knowledge⁶.

The collaboration of SPVM police officers and researchers was very rewarding and allowed the appropriation of IPRAS project. As a result, SPVM police officers are now engaged in an intervention model to counter mistreatment of older adults and the integrated approach of the model is considered as a successful one by the SPVM. The Police Service also wishes to apply it to other social issues.

- › Some action research participants may be required to get involved beyond their regular work.

Police officers who participated in the action research, particularly in the model’s operationalization phase, did it in addition to their regular work.

WHAT ARE ITS ISSUES?

- › Action research projects must receive prior approval from the organization’s management⁵. Therefore, it is necessary to respect the approval procedure of the organization where the project takes place.

Before IPRAS started, and throughout the project, the SPVM’s Board of Directors approved the steps of the action research project.

- › The role of the researcher is seen as a process facilitator or resource person rather than an expert^{2, 5}.

Particular attention was paid to this issue during the IPRAS project.

- › Action research process is open and cyclical⁵.

Some changes took place during the IPRAS project’s development. While only one pilot project was planned, a second pilot phase was added - since the first phase was carried out in Neighbourhood Police Stations where police officers had already a considerable expertise in mistreatment of older adults’ cases. Before deploying the IPRAS Model to the entire SPVM, it was important to test it in Neighbourhood Police Stations less familiar with these types of cases. Thus, the actors had to be flexible. Furthermore, since no budget was planned for the second pilot, the researchers had to adjust in order to ensure more monitoring and analysis, and this, with the same budget.



WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

- › “By relying on the views of the practice settings actors and by integrating them in the research process, action research allows that the renewal of knowledge ‘for’ the practice is done with respect and recognition of knowledge ‘of’ practice”⁷ (p. 8, free translation).

It allowed the merging of knowledge and recognition of the expertise of each IPRAS project participant (researchers, police officers and partners).

- › It is anchored and aims to meet specific and concrete needs and expectations of practice settings. This allows developing relevant and inspiring programs or models for these practice settings or other similar settings.

The IPRAS Model was developed with the SPVM and its partners. It meets the needs identified by them and corresponds to an organizational, political and social reality. Although the model was developed to directly answer the needs and challenges of the SPVM, it is transferable and adaptable to other police services.

- › These programs or models have more opportunities to perpetuate over time.

Since May 2016, the IPRAS Model was adopted within the SPVM permanently.

WHAT ARE ITS “SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES”?

- › Respect best practices already in place.

This was the starting point of the IPRAS project, which began by identifying SPVM police officers’ needs and current practices in terms of mistreatment of older adults in order to reinforce those that were the most valued.

- › Identification of risk management strategies.

The IPRAS Model operationalization was made in progressive steps before general implementation to the entire SPVM.

- › Adoption of a continuous improvement approach.

Police officers knew they were not the ones who were evaluated, but the components of the model.

- › Information sharing. “Access to information, the use of information during and after the action research project [and] intellectual property of publishable material that comes out of the process”⁵ (p. 144, free translation) are the ethical considerations that must be addressed.

From the beginning of the IPRAS project, it was agreed that all intellectual property would be shared by all team members. Thus, everyone could publish provided that all the project collaborators were mentioned.

- › Establishment of an Operational Committee.

It is mainly composed of local and regional unit managers who have responsibilities and latitude to develop the project. A senior manager coordinates the work and linkage with the organization’s direction. The members of the committee are close to police operations, ensuring that actions and strategies proposed are appropriate and accepted by police officers.

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