



Project Characteristics

Innovative

Program Areas

Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety
Child Passenger Safety

Type of Jurisdiction

New York City

Targeted Population

Children, teens, adults with visual, hearing, and mobility disabilities
Third grade students and parents, and older adults

Jurisdiction Size

8,000,000

Funding

Traffic City Inc.: \$150,000
Corporate: \$350,000

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Digest Listing

NEW YORK Access Safety City

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

In response to data identifying motor vehicle crashes as the leading cause of preventable death and a major cause of injury to New York children between five and fourteen, the New York City Department of Transportation opened its first Safety City in 1989. Located in Harlem, the Safety City program provided classroom instruction and hands-on traffic safety training in a simulated street-like setting. The program targeted third graders, which was considered a developmentally ideal age to learn safety behavior.

Three years after the opening, the Columbia University School of Public Health conducted an evaluation that showed a 55 percent decrease in motor vehicle related injuries to central Harlem children. The success in Harlem led to the opening of Safety City programs in the four boroughs of Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx in 1997.

Despite the resounding success of Safety City, there were still underserved segments of the population, specifically the elderly and disabled. The 2000 census showed that although adults aged 65 and older comprise only 12 percent of the population, they comprised 35 percent of annual pedestrian fatalities. The census also revealed that approximately 25 percent of non-institutionalized New Yorkers over the age of four have a disability. To address these issues, a sixth Safety City was opened in Manhattan on October 2, 2002.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of Access Safety City is to decrease motor vehicle related fatalities and injuries to older adults and the disabled by providing classroom training and hands-on experience tailored to their physical, developmental, and learning abilities. In preparation, staff worked closely with the New York City Department of Aging, Department of Education, and St. Mary's Hospital for Children. Collectively these organizations provided information on the best methods of teaching, techniques to work with varying physical abilities, and understanding special needs.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Like the other Safety City programs, Access Safety City emphasizes a learn-by-doing method. An instructional team consisting of specially trained police officers, student interns, health care providers, and educational professionals collaborate in the educational process. Components include:

- An indoor Learning Center that is a special classroom with video equipment, a sound system, and up-to-date learning materials. Educational activities were designed to build self-esteem and strengthen the student's ability to make safer choices when traveling around the city.
- An outdoor simulated environment that includes a realistic street complete with pavement markings, vehicles, traffic and pedestrian signals, street signs, and other "street furniture." Students learn and practice safety skills in this protected environment.
- Car seat installation instruction and bicycle helmet fittings are available by appointment.

RESULTS

Access Safety City has strong partnerships in the local community. Doctors from New York Presbyterian Hospital and police officers regularly volunteer at the site. Access Safety City instructors participate in community health fairs and sponsor safety events with organizations such as SAFE KIDS and Bike New York. Additional results include:

- On-site training classes are conducted four days per week.
- Weekly off-site training at schools and senior citizens centers and special events.
- About 20 percent of those served are children and older adults from local public and parochial schools, senior centers, and day treatment centers.
- About 80 percent come from citywide special education programs such as United Cerebral Palsy.

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