

Youth Guidance's BAM[®] (Becoming a Man[®]) is a school-based group counseling program that guides young men in 7-12th grades to learn, internalize and practice social cognitive skills, make responsible decisions for their future and become positive members of their school and community. BAM integrates clinical theory and practice, men's rites of passage work, and a dynamic approach to youth engagement. Each session is built around a lesson plan designed to develop a specific skill through stories, role-playing and group exercises.

BAM students learn and practice impulse control, emotional self-regulation, recognition of social cues and interpreting intentions of others, raising aspirations for the future and developing a sense of personal responsibility and integrity. Students who participate in B.A.M. are more likely to stay in school, develop healthy relationships, and stay out of the juvenile justice system.

BAM Growth Plans

- Last school year, BAM served more than 2,700 male youths in around 50 schools in 33 communities across Chicago. This year, B.A.M. expanded to serve 4,000 students in over 60 schools as part of Mayor Emanuel's mentoring initiative.
- BAM in Chicago will grow to serve 8,000 youth by the 19-20 school year
- A pilot replication of the program in Boston will launch at the start of the 2017-18 school year
- Additional cities outside of Chicago will be selected for geographic expansion of BAM in the 18-19 and 19-20 school years.
- BAM plans to serve over 9,000 young men across four cities by 2020.

University of Chicago Research

The second randomized controlled trial conducted by the **University of Chicago Crime Lab** replicated the initial study results, and showed that BAM:

- **Reduced violent crime arrests by 50%**
- **Reduced overall arrests by 35%**
- **Increase high school graduation rates by 19%**
- **Return on investment estimated to be as high as \$30 for every \$1 invested in the program** from the reduction in crime alone. Researchers believe the increased earnings often associated with high school diplomas may mean the true return is far higher.

BAM Youth

BAM students are at a greatly elevated risk for involvement in violence and high school drop out. On average, students in the Crime Lab study have missed six weeks of school during the pre-program year and have a mean GPA of 1.7 on the 4-point scale, or a "D" average. Nearly 40 percent have been arrested and more than half are over-age or under-credited in school. Youth are 67% African American; 30% Latino and 3% Multiracial, Asian, White or Other.



In 2013, President Obama sat in on a BAM group session. BAM was later honored to introduce President Obama when he announced the My Brother's Keeper Initiative, which is focused on life success for boys and young men of color.

Photo Credit: Pete Souza

The B.A.M.® Curriculum Emphasizes Six Core Values:

1. INTEGRITY

Students learn that a man is someone who is reliable, honest, either in touch with his virtues or finds his inner virtues, makes amends when he loses his direction and does what he says he is going to do.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

Students learn that they should be responsible for the choices they make and take ownership for their feelings, thoughts and behaviors. A man can feel anger, sadness or fear, but he must own his reactions to those emotions.

3. SELF-DETERMINATION

Students learn the importance of focus and perseverance in reaching one's goals. They learn to deal with self-defeating feelings, thoughts and behaviors that can become obstacles or barriers to achieving their goals.

4. POSITIVE ANGER EXPRESSION

Students learn anger management, coping skills and effective techniques to express anger. In turn, students may avoid negative consequences such as suspensions, arrests and damaged relationships.

5. VISIONARY GOAL-SETTING

Students learn to envision their futures and make clear connections between current behaviors, attitudes, values and visions. They seek to identify any traumas or faulty thinking that may cause them to respond in negative and destructive ways. They then learn how to heal themselves and direct energy toward achieving their vision.

6. RESPECT FOR WOMANHOOD

Students are challenged to take a critical look at the values and actions that represent positive experiences and appreciation for women. They learn appropriate and positive communication skills to begin using them in their interactions with women, thereby increasing respect for women of all ages.



At 17, Phillip has lost many of the most important people in his life. His older sister was beaten to death. His father is in prison. Phillip's setbacks and family losses have caused a great deal of distress and depression and led to failing grades.*

Through weekly, group sessions and the support of a trauma-informed B.A.M. counselor, Phillip has learned to calmly deal with difficult emotions and stay focused on school. He now has a trusted circle of support. He improved his GPA, is on track to graduate and has started to submit college applications for the fall. B.A.M. has helped change the trajectory of his life.

No matter what the circumstance or challenge, we never give up on our kids. The B.A.M. program offers the support that young men like Phillip need to commit to education and achieve goals that lead to success in adulthood.

*Name changed for confidentiality.