

Creating a Continuum of Care: National Models & Promising Practices

Focus Area: Working with youth with high/multiple needs in community based settings

Model: Transformative Mentoring/Credible Messenger Mentoring

Transformative Mentoring is an intensive youth development model that seeks to transform the mentality and behavior of the most at-risk or hardest to reach delinquent youth and provide them with healthy relationships with positive adults. A core element of this approach is the belief that communities are best positioned to respond to the needs of youth given the opportunity and the resources.

The model centers around the pairing of youth with specially trained adults who have had relevant life experiences, most commonly previous involvement in the criminal justice systems, called Credible Messengers.

Outcomes: This approach has demonstrated improved outcomes for system-involved youth, including increased engagement with programs and services; a reduction in youth re-arrests, violations, and anti-social behavior; increased compliance with court mandates; improved relationships between system stakeholders and community members; and more community capacity to support system-involved youth.

Examples:

New York, NY – *Arches Transformative Mentoring Program*– Arches uses an evidence-based interactive journaling curriculum centered on cognitive behavioral principles, delivered by mentors with backgrounds similar to those of their mentees, known as “credible messengers,” direct service professionals with backgrounds similar to the populations they serve, often including prior criminal justice system involvement. Serving young adult probation clients ages 16 to 24, Arches has been shown to reduce one-year felony reconviction by over two-thirds and reduces two-year felony reconviction by over half.¹ Launched in 2012 as part of the NYC Young Men’s Initiative (YMI) and with private funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies and oversight from the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC

Credible Messenger Justice Center

Serving as a training and research center, policy and practice thought leader, and program incubator for an approach to social reform at the intersection of government, community, and academia, the Credible Messenger Justice Center seeks to improve, legitimize and disseminate the practice of Credible Messenger mentoring and other programming in communities and jurisdictions around the country. See <https://cmjcenter.org/>

Opportunity), Arches is managed by the NYC Department of Probation (DOP) and currently operates with City funding at 13 sites across the five boroughs.

New York, NY – *Advocate, Intervene, Mentor (AIM)* is a six- to nine-month court-mandated community-based mentoring program that serves youth under probation supervision ages 13 to 18 who would otherwise be placed away from home. AIM utilizes a one-on-one mentoring model with a paid advocate-mentor available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. AIM advocate-mentors are credible messengers, defined as individuals who are respected in the communities served, typically coming from the same neighborhood and backgrounds as the participants, including prior justice system involvement. Advocate-mentors work with AIM participants to co-create individualized service plans designed to transform attitudes and behaviors, reduce recidivism and improve participants' personal outcomes. Over 90 percent of AIM participants avoided felony re-arrest within 12 months of enrollment.ⁱⁱ Launched in 2012, AIM is implemented in all five New York City boroughs by local nonprofit service providers, and is managed by DOP as a component of the Young Men's Initiative.

Washington, DC – The *Credible Messenger Initiative* at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) is a transformative, mentoring intervention program for youth committed to the agency, with a restorative justice philosophy for young people in the community at large. The mission of the initiative is to connect all young people in the care and custody of DYRS to healthy homes and supportive communities, and to provide preventative supports to all youth in Washington D.C. Credible messengers are neighborhood leaders, experienced youth advocates and individuals with relevant life experiences whose role is to help youth transform attitudes and behaviors around violence. They also assist young people and their families in navigating the justice system and accessing other needed supports and services. The initiative is also a job-creator providing opportunities for formerly system-involved adults to work and build opportunity in their own communities. See more at: <https://dyrs.dc.gov/page/credible-messenger-initiative>.

ⁱ *Arches Transformative Mentoring Program: An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City*, Urban Institute, February 2018. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96601/arches_transformative_mentoring_program.pdf

ⁱⁱ *Evaluation Report on New York City's Advocate, Intervene, Mentor Program*, Urban Institute, October 2018. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/evaluation-report-nycs-advocate-intervene-mentor-program/view/full_report