About the Program...

Youth Guidance’s Becoming A Man® program (BAM®) 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 BAM are more likely to stay in school, develop healthy relationships, and stay out of the juvenile justice system.

Projected BAM Reach, 2009-2020

By the Numbers, 2016-2017*

- 50% reduction in violent crime
- 35% reduction in overall arrests
- 19% increase in on-time graduations
- Up to $30 in societal gains for every $1 invested in BAM


BAM Youth

According to the University of Chicago Crime Lab study, 7,000 students have missed more than 40 days of school and are enrolled in schools within communities that have homicide rates more than twice the national average. These youth are at a greatly elevated risk for violence involvement. On average, participants have missed six weeks of school during the pre-program year and have a 1.7 average GPA 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.

Today, BAM serves 6,000+ young men in about 100 schools in 33 communities across Chicago. In 2013, Mayor Emanuel and former President Obama sat in a BAM group session. BAM was later honored to introduce President Obama when he announced his My Brother’s Keeper initiative, which is focused on the life successes for boys and young men of color.
The BAM Curriculum Emphasizes Six Core Values:

**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.

**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.

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

**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.

**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.

**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 for their interactions with women, thereby increasing respect for women of all ages.

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**Student Success Story**

Edward* grew up in a chaotic, unstable household. Edward, his mother, and his siblings suffered from domestic violence at the hands of his father. Knowing pain from an early age. Edward describes his past self as someone who internalized all of his feelings, isolating himself from his peers and family. Though he was initially distrustful of his BAM counselor, he saw the value in continued attendance, even bringing in other students he felt BAM could help. Adopting a leadership role, Edward thrived when he felt the support he received from his BAM group. Through his counselor’s and group’s encouragement, he pursued poetry as a creative outlet to compete in city-wide competitions. He received closure from his painful experiences through writing and performing - and has won awards for his pieces. Now a junior in high school. Edward is sociable, empathetic, and is able to express affection that he didn’t before to his friends and family. He plans to become a teacher so he can help youth like himself. He also wants to pass-on the creativity and positive reinforcement he receives from his BAM group.

*Names have been changed for confidentiality.

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BAM has grown to serve 6,000 participants across the city of Chicago.