



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES CITY MENTORING PROGRAM FOR YOUTH ON PROBATION REDUCES REOFFENDING

Study finds program significantly reduces recidivism for young adults on probation

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City Department of Probation Commissioner Ana M. Bermúdez today announced that young people under probation supervision who participated in the Arches Transformative Mentoring Program were significantly less likely to have future justice system involvement, according to an independent evaluation. This multi-year study – [Evaluation of Arches Transformative Mentoring Program](#) – was conducted in partnership with the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity by the Urban Institute.

“In New York City, we believe in giving young people a second chance – and opportunities to change themselves and their communities for the better. Mentoring programs like these are laying a strong foundation and creating pathways for young people to lead productive, stable lives,” said **Mayor de Blasio**.

Arches is a transformative mentoring program that uses curriculum-based interactive journaling, group mentoring, and individual mentoring by connecting high-risk young people ages 16 to 24 on probation to credible messenger mentors in their own neighborhoods. Community-based organizations employ the credible messenger mentors, who may be formerly justice involved or otherwise share similar backgrounds with the young people they serve. The credible messengers are respected in the communities where they work and undergo rigorous training. Credible messenger mentors, working alongside Probation Officers, help young people make better and safer decisions, pursue their goals, get connected to school and work, and repair relationships with family and community – all of which helps build a safer city. The service providers are able to equip young people with the tools to change their lives while providing them with a living example of hope and transformation.

“This landmark evaluation quantifies what we already believed from watching the transformation of Arches participants: connections to positive, relatable role models from one’s community work to change high-risk behavior, thereby enabling young people involved in the justice system to thrive and to contribute positively to the safety of their communities. This

evaluation also has important ramifications for the justice field and we look forward to expanding the credible messenger-based initiatives,” said **Ana M. Bermúdez, Commissioner, New York City Department of Probation.**

Participants typically take six to 12 months to complete the program, but as the Urban Institute study revealed, many often maintain contact with their mentors and peers long after that time. From November 2015 to June 2017, the Urban Institute conducted an implementation and impact evaluation of Arches. The implementation evaluation consisted of collecting qualitative data from several sources, including focus groups with Arches participants and alumnae; in-depth interviews with program directors, mentors, DOP staff, and other justice system stakeholders; and direct observation of programming.

The results of the evaluation indicate that:

- Arches participants had a 69% lower felony reconviction rate than the comparison group within 12 months of starting probation. At the 24 month mark, it was still 57% lower.
- Arches has a particularly strong impact for participants aged 17 and younger.
- Young people who participate in Arches improve their relationships with others and their self-perception – both of which are critical to making progress in all areas of life, not just in reducing the likelihood of reconviction.

Elements that are critical to the success of the program include:

- The mentors’ statuses as credible messengers;
- Use of a cognitive-behavioral therapy curriculum, which provides adaptable structure for the group sessions;
- The close partnership between mentors and Probation Officers working with the young people as a team; and
- The creation of a safe, family-like atmosphere in the groups.

“This research shows that the Arches Transformative Mentoring Program has a significant and sustained impact on recidivism at rates rarely seen among programs serving young adults involved with the justice system,” said **Carson Hicks, Deputy Executive Director, Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity** who helped launch the program. “Arches contributes to public safety and helps participants achieve economic advancement. The Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity is proud to partner with the Department of Probation and the Urban Institute to support innovative programming and build evidence for what works.”

“The Arches evaluation details the impact that community and relationships have in shaping and changing criminalized behavior,” said **Charissa Townsend, Deputy Executive Director of New York City’s Young Men’s Initiative.** “It also demonstrates the inherent value those in and returning from the justice system have in solving problems within their communities. The young people in Arches are assets to their communities and they need our continued investment, love and developmental support. New York City’s Young Men’s Initiative will continue to assist the Department of Probation as they work to prevent more youth, especially young people of color, from entering or returning to the justice system.”

Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, said, “Just as there are many ways to come into contact with the justice system, we must always look for those routes out of the system. New York City has employed credible messengers in a number of other areas, including violence prevention. The science shows its demonstrable effectiveness. I applaud Probation for its vision and hard work in developing and implementing this transformative program that is having a deep impact on the lives of those young people it touches and putting them on a better path.”

“The Arches results are outstanding – reducing the reconviction rate by nearly 70 percent among participants. This is an encouraging sign that we can keep young people out of prison when we provide mentorship and meaningful intervention. I commend the Department of Probation on this successful program. As Chair of the Criminal Justice Committee, I look forward to its continuation and expansion,” said **Council Member Keith Powers, Chair of the Criminal Justice Committee**.

“By connecting participants with positive role models, Arches is empowering young people to contribute positively to their communities and stay out of jail. I applaud the Department of Probation for implementing this transformative program,” said **Council Member Rory I. Lancman, Chair of the Committee on the Justice System**.

“I support any program that works to keep young people out of prison. The reduction in reconviction rates among Arches participants encourages my belief that intervention, education and mentorship can lead to positive outcomes. Based on these findings, I am cautiously optimistic about the program’s prospects, and as a member of the Criminal Justice committee, I will work to ensure this program continues to be low cost and high impact,” said **Council Member Robert F. Holden**.

"Our criminal justice system’s priority must be to reduce the recidivism rate for justice-involved New Yorkers. That’s why it’s so exciting to see the results of the Arches program in lowering reconviction rates, particularly among young men, who have their whole futures ahead of them. I look forward to the Department of Probation continuing to expand successful programs like Arches so that more New Yorkers can get the mentorship, training, and intervention they need to be effective members of our communities,” said **Council Member Carlina Rivera**.

Arches was launched in 2012 with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies as a component of the New York City Young Men’s Initiative, a public-private municipal strategy that aims to reduce inequities between young men of color and their white peers in the areas of education, employment, health, and justice. Based on early evidence of success, Arches was replicated in a program called Next STEPS, servicing young people living in certain NYCHA developments, as part of the Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety.

About the New York City Department of Probation (DOP)

The New York City Department of Probation (DOP) helps build stronger and safer communities by working with and supervising people on probation, fostering positive change in their decision-making and behavior, and expanding opportunities for them to move out of the criminal and

juvenile justice systems through meaningful education, employment, health services, family engagement and civic participation.

Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity

The Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity) uses evidence and innovation to reduce poverty and increase equity. It advances research, data and design in the City's program and policy development, service delivery, and budget decisions. NYC Opportunity's work includes analyzing existing anti-poverty approaches, developing new interventions, facilitating the sharing of data across City agencies, and rigorously assessing the impact of key initiatives. NYC Opportunity manages a discrete fund and works collaboratively with City agencies to design, test and oversee new programs and digital products. It also produces research and analysis of poverty and social conditions, including its influential annual Poverty Measure, which provides a more accurate and comprehensive picture of poverty in New York City than the federal rate. Several of NYC Opportunity's programs have been incorporated into the Young Men's Initiative, a comprehensive and expansive program designed to address disparities between young African-American and Latino men and their peers.

About the Urban Institute

The nonprofit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy and is the United States' leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. With nearly 50 years of expertise, Urban is a trusted resource for timely, nuanced analysis of social and economic policy. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the fiscal health of government across a rapidly urbanizing world.

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