



Young Man with a Plan (YMWAP) delivers holistic mentoring and success planning to 290 young Black and Latino men aged 13 – 24 in Boston.

"Sometimes being present is the work. Young Man with a Plan is present."

– Dr Kevin Simon, Boston's Chief Behavioral Health Officer



Centering Mental Wellness

At YMWAP's recent Fireside Chat Boston's Chief Behavioral Health Officer Dr. Kevin Simon called YMWAP a **"safe brave space."** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsxxrU7JUzA>

Young Man with a Plan centers mental wellness in the following ways:

A space of belonging: Research shows that a sense of belonging positively impacts academic and health outcomes for youth. Young people who do not belong are at risk of choosing the wrong groups to belong to. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, <https://www.aecf.org/blog/creating-a-sense-of-belonging>) YMWAP is an inclusive bridge builder in Boston. We bring together Black males from every Boston neighborhood and many cultures—African Americans who have resided in Boston for generations, along with students newly immigrated from Haiti, Cape Verde, Jamaica, Trinidad, Colombia, and Africa. We focus on unique identity-- as well as what unites us. Our bridge-building creates brotherhood, inspires positive peer pressure, and disrupts violence. "I learned that I was valued somewhere."

Normalized discussion of mental health: We start every student and staff meeting with a meaningful check-in. Students keep Wellness Journals and wellness goals are included in Success Plans.

Highly trained staff and strong community connections: YMWAP staff of experienced educators have been trained on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), racial trauma and trauma-informed care. We maintain tight connections with families and schools and have regular contact with mental health partners, including Boston Children's Hospital, school counselors and psychologists, and art therapists.

Wellness through agency: Young men have the opportunity to lead projects that include "The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health" (funded by Boston Children's Hospital) and "Climate Resiliency and Justice" (Funded by Liberty Mutual). They gain research experience, develop a point of view, and learn how to raise their voices through advocacy. We also train a team of Near-peer Mentors who help with recruiting, support program operations, tutor younger students, and lead community service projects.