



Across Ages

Program Description

Across Ages is a mentoring program that pairs adult mentors over age 50 with youth ages 9 to 13. The goal of the program is to enhance the resiliency of children in order to promote positive development and prevent involvement in high-risk behaviors. The program consists of four components: (1) adults mentoring youth, (2) youth performing community service, (3) youth participating in a life skills/problem-solving curriculum, and (4) monthly activities for family members. The program can be implemented as a school-based or after-school program. Across Ages was developed at Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning and was originally funded in 1991 by SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP).

Target Audience

The target audience for Across Ages is youth ages 9 to 13.

Special Populations

Across Ages was designed and tested with African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and white sixth-grade students living in a large urban setting. It has been replicated with American Indian, white, Hispanic/Latino, and African American youth in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The program may not be effective in extremely rural settings that may not offer the anonymity necessary for the youth-mentor relationship. Materials are available in English and Spanish.

Program Components

Across Ages is made up of the following four program components:

- **Mentoring:** Adults ages 50 and older are recruited and trained as mentors and spend at least two hours per week in one-on-one contact with the youth. Activities include tutoring, assistance with school projects, recreational activities, and performing community service.
- **Community Service:** Youth spend one to two hours per week performing community service.
- **Social Competence Training:** Youth participate in 26 weekly lessons from the Social Problem Solving Module of the Social Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescents. The curricula focus on stress management, problem solving, self-esteem, substance and health information, and peer-resistance skills.
- **Family Activities:** Monthly weekend events are held for youth, their family members, and mentors. Families are provided with the *Handbook for Parents*, which contains resources and information about the program.

Training and Technical Assistance

A two-day training session is required, and two days of technical assistance during the first year and one day in subsequent years are required. Training and technical assistance are provided by the developer, Dr. Andrea Taylor, and the Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning.

Program and Training Costs

A two-day on-site training package costs \$1,000 per day, plus expenses. The *Across Ages Program Development and Training Manual* costs \$75, and other program materials range from \$25 to \$65 (see <http://www.templecil.org/files/CILPublicationsList.pdf> to order materials online). On-site technical assistance costs \$500 per day, plus expenses. Telephone technical assistance is also available at \$30 per hour. Training and technical assistance focus on all aspects of implementing an effective mentoring program including recruiting, screening, training, and supporting mentors; creating and supporting mentor-youth matches and relationships; developing mentor-youth activities; and providing strategies for implementation and evaluation. Other program costs include staff salaries (ideally including one full-time project director, one half-time project coordinator, one outreach coordinator, and part-time support staff); recruitment and screening fees for mentors; advertisement costs; transportation costs; training costs; activity funds or stipends for mentors; funds for family activities; and administrative costs.

Evaluation Results

Two evaluation studies of Across Ages have been conducted. The first study used a quasi-experimental design, comparing three groups of sixth-grade students: (1) those who received a Positive Youth Development Curriculum (PYDC), (2) those who received the PYDC plus mentoring, and (3) the control group. The groups were compared at pretest and posttest. Key outcomes for the intervention groups, especially for the mentoring group, included the following:

- Increased positive attitudes regarding school, the future, and older people
- Increased knowledge about older people, higher rates of community service, and improved reactions to situations involving drug use
- Significantly improved school attendance
- Increased sense of self-worth and feelings of well-being
- Reduced feelings of sadness and loneliness

The second study used a similar design with a sample of approximately 400 sixth-grade students. Outcomes for the group who received the mentoring intervention included the following:

- Significantly lower levels of problem behavior and alcohol use
- Significantly higher levels of self-control, cooperation, attachment to school and family, school absences, and attitudes toward the elderly and helping
- At six-month follow-up, there was a reduction in initiation of marijuana use

Evaluation Components

An evaluation protocol has been developed and is available to replication sites. This includes instruments, a scoring key, and evaluation methodology. The program developer also provides technical assistance in designing the evaluation.

Agency/Institution Recognition

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Model Program
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Best Practice Model in Youth Violence Prevention
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Top 25, Youth Development Program
- Child Welfare League of America: Commendable Practice
- United Nations Office of Drug Control Programs: Model Program—Case Study for North America

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References

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