



Program Description

The YMCA of Montclair, along with other organizations, is partnering with the [Obama Foundation's My Brother's Keeper Alliance](#), an initiative launched by former President Obama in February 2014 to address the persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color in our nation. Many organizations have responded to the call to action to ensure that all young people can achieve their full potential. **The Pathways Program**, as part of the [YMCA Boys and Young Men of Color \(BYMOC\) strategy](#), is one such response.

At the YMCA of Montclair, Pathways aims to invest in channels to success to help boys and young men of color reach their full potential. Through the implementation of a comprehensive program, we seek to ensure equitable outcomes for boys and young men of color ages 11-17 by addressing systemic barriers, providing relevant services and support systems, and creating nurturing environments that promote confidence and growth. Below we outline the activities and goals of the Program, designed to help participants envision a future filled with possibilities, foster a sense of belonging, and promote well-being.

Project Goals

- **College and Career Readiness:** To broaden participants' horizons and spark curiosity, we organize interactive workshops, college tours, and workshops that introduce them to various career options. Accomplishing this goal enables participants to envision a future beyond their immediate circumstances and inspires them to explore their passions and interests.
- **Belonging and Community Building:** Creating a sense of belonging is crucial for the development of self-confidence and positive relationships. Through service-learning projects, academic enrichment activities, and social events, participants strengthen their ties with peers, mentors, and the community. Specialized workshops focus on self-confidence, decision-making skills, conflict resolution, and teamwork, ensuring holistic personal growth.



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- **Mentorships:** Participants are paired with caring and trained mentors who provide guidance and support throughout their adolescent journey. The mentorship program aims to develop their social-emotional intelligence, foster trust, and provide a safe space for conversations. The mentors focus on instilling values, building resilience, and empowering participants to navigate challenges and make informed decisions.
- **Health and Wellness:** The program recognizes the importance of well-being and offers **free YMCA youth memberships** to Pathways participants. This membership provides access to the facility and a wide range of physical activities, including **swimming lessons** that teach essential life-saving skills. According to the CDC, [drowning death rates for Black people are 1.5 times higher](#) than the rates for white people. Disparities are highest among Black children ages 5-9 (rates 2.6 times higher) and ages 10-14 (rates 3.6 times higher). According to the USA Swimming Association, [swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning by 88%](#). By offering swim lessons, the YMCA of Montclair is prioritizing water safety and drowning prevention for our Pathways program participants. Additionally, age-appropriate workshops will be held to address chronic disease prevention and health concerns that disproportionately affect communities of color. This proactive approach to overall well-being will encourage participants to take control of their health and make positive changes for their future.

Conclusion

The YMCA of Montclair's Pathways program offers a comprehensive approach that empowers boys and young men of color, fostering their personal growth, academic achievement, and career readiness. With this targeted approach, we can address systemic barriers, provide relevant support systems, and create nurturing environments that empower and uplift this underserved population. Together, we can bridge the opportunity gap and ensure equitable outcomes for our future leaders.