

Urban Resource Institute Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)



Urban Resource Institute: Organization Overview

For over 40 years, Urban Resource Institute (URI) has been committed to the vision of a world free of domestic violence, homelessness, poverty, and trauma, where individuals, families, and communities are safe, stable, and thriving throughout New York City. URI works across the spectrum of prevention, intervention and services to empower individuals, families, and communities, particularly communities of color and other disenfranchised populations, to increase their safety and resiliency. Each night, we serve and protect more than 1,100 survivors of domestic violence and have more than 1,000 additional beds available for homeless families. URI is the largest provider of domestic violence shelter services in the country and oldest in New York State with 12, soon to be 14, domestic violence shelter, and nine homeless shelters. We have over 550 front-line staff helping our clients every day.

Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

RAPP is a unique part of URI's holistic suite of domestic violence prevention, intervention, education, and outreach programs and services. Violent behavior typically begins between the ages of 12 and 18. Through RAPP, URI stands out in the DV field by using education to help stop violence and abuse before it begins and creating opportunities for young people to have a future free of intimate partner violence. RAPP teaches NYC public school students how to have healthy relationships, recognize bullying and abuse, and help themselves, their families, and peers to handle dangerous relationships.

URI places a RAPP Coordinator, who is a full-time masters-level social worker, at each participating school. The coordinator provides educational and counseling services; conducts staff development and training to staff, parents and other community members to better support teens; and - as a mandated reporter - serves as a critical member of each school's crisis response team, which includes personnel from the school and other community-based organizations (COBs). We develop positive and constructive relationships with the principal, head of guidance and parent coordinator. Principals integrate the RAPP Coordinators into their schools, provide space for URI staff, and provide space for individual and group counseling.

The comprehensive RAPP curriculum is designed to end relationship abuse among young people, teach students that abuse has no place in any relationship, and empower them to recognize and change destructive patterns of behavior before they transition into adult relationships. These are important skills for young people who face abuse in their lives and can help them lead productive lives as adults. RAPP Coordinators hold

individual and group sessions to create a customized plan for each student to meet their needs related to their age, gender identity, sexuality, race, relationship status, and comfort with disclosure. Group session subjects include how to leave abusive relationships; helping friends who are in abusive relationships; dealing with trauma related to witnessing violence in the family; reporting crimes; obtaining orders of protection; building confidence and self-esteem; preventing domestic violence in the community; among others.

Classroom and group activities include self-evaluation and self-esteem building exercises, examining gender roles, role playing, review and discussions of literature and handouts.

Participation in RAPP requires parental notification and consent. School staff development and training includes safety planning information; resources for teens; understanding dynamics of abusive teen relationships; impact of abuse on teen development; identifying warning signs; and documenting evidence of abuse to be effective mandated reporters. RAPP Coordinators engage parents by meeting them at open school nights, presenting at PTA meetings, and offering workshops about topics of interests to parents. RAPP fosters a climate that discourages abusive behavior in all of its forms and promotes a safe and productive learning

environment for students, parents and staff.

RAPP has been replicated across the country and is one of the most successful programs of its kind in the United States. It is universally recognized for preventing domestic violence among high school students, building important skills among teens to have healthy relationships as adults, with the ultimate goal of ending relationship abuse among young people.

URI's RAPP program currently serves nearly 45,000 ethnically and culturally diverse students, Department of Education staff and community members in 65 middle and high schools.

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Summer Peer Leadership Program

URI believes trained teens are one of our best resources to teach additional teens about healthy relationships. As such, the intensive, seven-week Summer Peer Leadership Program is an important component of RAPP. The Peer Leadership Program educates young leaders to help their schoolmates how to have healthy relationships. A central goal of the program is to promote active student involvement as peer partners, peer educators, and mentors. It nurtures and develops teen leaders who are able to speak out against relationship abuse and to promote active student involvement among their peers. RAPP Coordinators nominate up to ten students from their schools to participate in the summer program. Coordinators and participating students work together to develop trainings for their teen peers throughout the New York City. The program emphasizes professional development, responsibility and community building. After completing the program, student peer leaders are prepared to discuss relationship abuse with their classmates when they return to school in the fall. Each summer, 80 to 100 students are trained to become peer leaders.



Outcomes

As a result of their participation in RAPP, students will gain the following:

- Increased self-esteem
- Increased commitment to educational and career goals
- Higher than average placements in college and trade schools
- Involvement in service-learning programs such as City Year and continued ongoing civic engagement
- Improved ability to use time effectively
- Healthy interpersonal relationships
- Increased willingness to take responsibility for their actions
- Increased problem-solving skills
- Willingness to tackle challenges

By building these skills and characteristics among students in NYC public schools, URI's overarching goal is to reduce violence and abuse among teens and create generations of young adults with the ability to lead more productive, safer lives. RAPP is one of the most cost-effective social intervention programs for teens in NYC and has been replicated nationally. While we have enjoyed a supportive relationship with the City Council, which has allocated funding for the program for nearly two decades, it still only serves a fraction of the 1.1 million students enrolled in the NYC Department of Education system. **URI aims to grow this critical educational program by enhancing existing sites with additional support from institutions and individuals and expanding it to as many middle and high schools as possible.**



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