FY 2022 OJJDP Mentoring Opportunities for Youth Initiative Grantee Profile

Up2Us Sports

Program Overview and Background

Sports and coaching represent a specific and often untapped resource for increasing the number of mentors available to young people of color in underserved urban areas. Sports is a proven hook that creates opportunities for youth to connect with supportive, trained coaches to develop lifelong skills, such as teamwork and sportsmanship. Yet, over the last 30-40 years, there has been a seismic shift from youth-led sports programs to adult-led, pay-to-play programs, making sports even less accessible to youth in low-income neighborhoods. In 2010, Up2Us Sports responded to this by launching the Sports-Based Youth Development (SBYD) movement. The mission of Up2Us Sports is to recruit, train, and support coaches to inspire all youth to achieve their potential.

Program Services

Sport-based youth development is a proven strategy to facilitate socio-emotional, mental, and physical health among youth by merging the best practices in mentoring with coaching through sports. An SBYD coach has high expectations and clear intentions for youth administrators, parents, and others involved with organizing the programs. SBYD coaches address issues like fostering prosocial behavior by emphasizing relationships that youth athletes have with their coach and peers. Research indicates youth athletes with trained coaches have higher outcomes rates than their non-participating peers, including: increased physical, increased social-emotional resiliency, better academic achievement, improved career and economics, and reduced incidences of reported juvenile delinquency. Additionally, a new study published as recently as June 1, 2022 (Barnes, Tremblay, et al.) conducted on 11,000 adolescents found that those who participated in team sports had significantly fewer mental health difficulties. Youth engaged in Up2Us Sports programming will experience 1:1 and group mentoring activities facilitated through sports and recreational activities.

Target Population

We aim to provide mentoring under this grant to young people with any one or more of the following:

HQ: New York, NY

Founded in 2010

3,000 Youth Served

5 Program Locations

Grant: *JJ FY22 Mentoring: Multi-state*

Award Number: *15JDP-22-GG-03832-MENT*

Award Amount: *$2,000,000*

Mentoring Model & Structure

- Community-based and site-based
- One-to-one and group
- Partnering with professional sports teams and non-profit organizations
- Programs focus on Sports and Credible Messenger Mentoring

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- Low-Income Urban Youth

Mentor Recruitment & Training

- 11,000 matches and youth served under this grant
- 135 mentors recruited under this grant
- For mentor recruitment, we target Athletic Coaches
- Duration of program services: 5-12 months
- Expected intensity of match contact: 5 hours per week
- Expected length of a match: 5-12 months
- Expected frequency of match contact: 2-3 times per week
- Number of training hours required before a mentor is matched with a youth: 20 hours

Additional Program Information

What is unique about Up2Us Sports' project is that it will be the first-ever multi-state effort to draw on professional teams to launch or expand the SBYD Mentoring movement through their community-based programming. Professional Sports teams have a unique role in facilitating SBYD programming and mentors for underserved youth. Their brand presence, fanbase, players, stadium and facilities, and staff can all be utilized to enhance mentoring practices, including mentor recruitment, training, recognition, and closure. Yet, to this date, there has never been a multi-state effort to actively engage the assets of professional sports leagues and teams through a consistent mentoring model.

Additional Resources

- Up2Us
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter

This data is accurate as of April 1st, 2023.

For more information on our OJJDP grant:

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