National Urban League | *The Division of Education & Youth Development*

The National Urban League's evidence-based and scalable signature programs are professionally implemented by local Urban League affiliates to enhance the economic and educational status of our constituents.
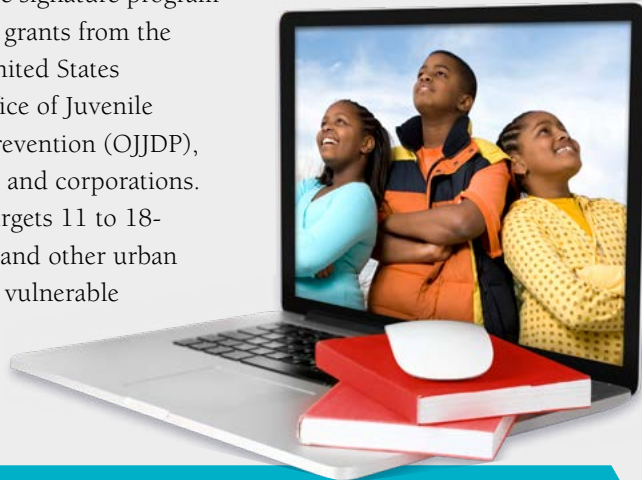
Project Ready: Mentor

A SIGNATURE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

THE URBAN LEAGUE
FIGHTS
FOR YOU!

Our Purpose.

Project Ready: **Mentor** helps students to progress academically and intellectually, benefit from enrichment opportunities, and develop important skills, attitudes, and aptitudes that position them well for success during and after high school. This National Urban League signature program enhancement is funded by grants from the AbbVie Foundation, the United States Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and a range of foundations and corporations. The program specifically targets 11 to 18-year-old African American and other urban youth who are particularly vulnerable to disengagement from school, community, and the workforce.

2025 EMPOWERMENT GOAL
Every American child is ready for college, work and life.

1911
young people served since 2011

182
hours of mentoring and asset-focused youth development provided per participant per year

25
affiliate participants since 2011

A SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE OF THE PROGRAM WILL HAVE:

Been exposed to a whole child, asset-based, and comprehensive approach to youth development

Been paired with a mentor

Completed an individualized College and Career Development Plan (ICCDP)

Maintained academic progress

Participated in historical and cultural literacy projects, service-learning activities, and in career activities

Received academic and developmental supports

Community Outreach.

The *Project Ready:* Mentor program helps local communities and institutions across the country to develop the internal resources needed to support youth through robust national and local partnerships. This is accomplished by:

○ **EXPANDING THE SUPPLY** of well-trained mentors and mentoring supports

○ **INTENTIONALLY ADDRESSING** youth development and wellness, community violence, and stressors

○ **CREATING AND SUSTAINING** meaningful and supportive relationships between caring adults and youth, directing those relationships toward reducing behaviors that undermine youth well-being, and increasing educational and employment success

○ **CONNECTING** youth development specialists, youth health and wellness experts, mentors, and a wide set of community members (civic leaders, law enforcement, juvenile justice, social workers, etc.) via positive relationship-building, constructive dialogue, and a clear focus on postsecondary success.

ENHANCEMENTS

of *Project Ready* allow the National Urban League to innovate, build on current success, and be responsive to young people without having to launch completely new program designs.

Primary Cornerstones.

A mentor/mentee relationship-building model, inclusive of virtual mentoring

Comprehensive wraparound activities, such as community service-learning and financial capability-building

Core career and college readiness activities leveraged from both the National Urban League's *Project Ready* signature program and Youth Development Framework & Guide in addition to local program designs, services, and supports

Intentional focus on building and maintaining meaningful relationships and fostering health and wellness

Meaningful youth, parent, and family engagement

An Individualized College and Career Development Plan (ICCDP)

A counselor who advocates for each young person and each mentor/mentee relationship

An explicit focus on restorative justice and anti-bullying approaches and strategies

An extension of mentoring supports for youth drawn from existing Urban League programs

PROJECT READY mentor

> Readying students through social, cultural, and academic supports and opportunities designed to aid in their transition to and through high school, to graduation, and onto postsecondary success.

Our Approach.

Youth success is often chiefly attributed to school-based factors, yet academic accomplishment is not the only consideration. Rather, in order to grow into responsible adults, youth require a range of appropriate supports, services, and opportunities, only some of which exist in their communities and home lives. These opportunities and supports can exist in a mentor relationship, in a community-based program, or in an internship. For the majority of urban and vulnerable youth, the location of meaningful relationships and opportunities matters far less than their sustained presence and their quality.

Project Ready: Mentor uses two approaches:

1. *RELATIONAL APPROACH:*
Aims to develop senses of agency and efficacy and a close, trusting emotional connection between the mentor and mentee via activities, such as reading and discussing books or magazine articles where there is common interest or volunteering together.

2. *INSTRUMENTAL APPROACH:*
Focuses primarily on encouraging the mentee to grow and learn through goal-oriented activities found in Project Ready, including going on college visits together, working on projects such as flying drones, building youth voice and agency via service and leadership activities, or developing a small business/entrepreneur plan together.

Our Partners.

In our design, mentors are required to complete a pre-match course, attend an in-person or virtual workshops, and complete additional web-based courses early post-match, via Mentoring Central.

1. Mentoring Central (mentoringcentral.net) is hosted by our partner, **INNOVATION RESEARCH & TRAINING (iRT)**, which solves significant real-world problems facing children, adolescents, families, communities, and organizations by developing and evaluating the effectiveness of innovative prevention programs and other services based upon the most current scientific findings, methods, and best practices.

2. Our second *Project Ready:* Mentor partner and contractor is **MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership**. For over 25 years, MENTOR has served the mentoring field by providing a public voice, developing and delivering resources to mentoring programs nationwide, driving mentor recruitment, and promoting quality standards for mentoring through cutting-edge research and state-of-the-art tools.

3. Our third partner is **KUDER, INC.**, which provides online evidence-based career assessment, education planning, and guidance resources to students via Kuder Navigator®. By using Navigator's exploration and preparation tools, *Project Ready:* Mentor participants learn how their interests, passions, skills, and values connect to potential education and career pathways, making it easier to establish and achieve their goals.

Advisory Councils.

To better coordinate and leverage community resources, *Project Ready:* Mentor requires National Urban League affiliates to establish a local Advisory Council to provide program oversight and opportunities to leverage additional resources and support for program success and sustainability.

The following are specifically represented in varied combinations on local Advisory Councils:

School and district leadership

Local youth-serving institutions

Business and industry leaders

Representatives from higher education and key public health agencies

Linkages with juvenile and criminal justice agencies and professionals, including those advocating for restorative justice, trauma-informed, and pro-social approaches.

Our Alumni.

According to National Student Clearinghouse Data on our *Project Ready* **alumni:**

62% ATTEND 4-YEAR COLLEGES

38% ATTEND 2-YEAR COLLEGES

Of those attending 4-year colleges:

66% ARE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

34% ARE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Of those attending 2-year colleges:

98% ARE PUBLIC 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

2% ARE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS (TWO OF WHICH ARE TECHNICAL SCHOOLS)

Enrichments.

The National Urban League's grant from the OJJDP provides funding for affiliates to send youth, staff members, and mentors to our annual Youth Leadership Summit, as well as to the annual National Urban League's Whitney M. Young, Jr. Leadership Development Conference for professional development opportunities. We have also enhanced the *Project Ready:* Mentor program by introducing two online supports:

1. A program data tool powered by CiviCRM that allows the National Urban League to track program enrollment and achievements.

2. A college and career-readiness tool—Kuder Navigator®— for all *Project Ready:* Mentor youth and their mentors to use as the youth prepare for their futures.

CORE ACTIVITIES FOR COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

Youth can also take advantage of a range of Urban League developmental and learning opportunities such as tutoring, college preparation courses, accelerated education pathways, job shadowing, career days, classroom and job-based training courses, and others, each of which is enhanced by mentoring.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

YOUTH/PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Intake & student assessment

Individualized college & career development plan

Parent/caregiver/family engagement & support

Restorative practices & trauma-informed approaches

Anti-bullying approach

Training & support related to seeking social support & help

MENTORING SUPPORT

Mentor identification & support

Mentor screening & interviews

Ongoing mentor training & support (virtual & in-person)

Intentional mentor-mentee matching & closure processes

MENTEE/MENTOR SUPPORT

Youth & mentor matching & learning process

Mentor & peer-to-peer relationship-building

Mentor learning community

25 PARTICIPATING AFFILIATES

Since 2011, Urban League affiliates from across the country have been providing close to 2000 young people with virtual mentoring and positive youth developmental learning opportunities through *Project Ready:* Mentor at a minimum of 182 hours per year.

Map labels: WA SEATTLE, CA SAN DIEGO, NE OMAHA, OK OKLAHOMA CITY, TX HOUSTON, WI MILWAUKEE, IL, IN, MI, KY, TN, LA, GA ATLANTA, FL, NC, SC, NY, PA, CT, NJ, DE, FORT WAYNE INDIANAPOLIS, DETROIT, ROCHESTER BUFFALO, HARTFORD, PITTSBURGH, NEWARK, WILMINGTON, LOUISVILLE, CHARLOTTE, COLUMBIA GREENVILLE, KNOXVILLE, NEW ORLEANS, WEST PALM BEACH, CHICAGO SPRINGFIELD