

# Community Youth Counseling Program

Masjid Al-Salaam and Education Centers Youth Counseling programs seek to improve the lives of children and adolescents by meeting their basic physical, developmental, and social needs and by helping them to build the competencies needed to become successful adults. Examples of youth development programs include community service, mentoring programs, and neighborhood youth center.

Our youth development efforts focus on meeting needs and developing competencies for *all* youth, not just for those engaged in problem behaviours or perceived to be at risk for doing so. The youth development model assumes that because all youth must pass through a specific developmental process to become successful adults, all youth are at risk for problems.

Youth development replaces the deficit-based focus of public-health prevention models with a strength-based approach that focuses on meeting needs and building competencies, rather than solving problems and providing treatment. The needs that must be met and the competencies that must be built to ensure the transition to successful adulthood are done.

Unlike the public-health prevention model's focus on individual behaviour, youth development assumes that the way to improve the lives of young people is to improve the communities in which they live. Thus, community-level variables, rather than individual-level variables, are targeted for intervention and play a key role in youth development initiatives. Youth development's focus on community-level interventions influences how youth development initiatives are structured and implemented. Specifically, youth development programs focus on the creation of a supportive community for children and families and mandates that community-wide support and participation must be objectives not only within an initiative's institutional collaboration structure, but also between a community's institutions and those citizens who live within it.

Finally, the youth development approach requires the active participation of youth in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services. The notion of involving youth as partners, rather than simply as clients is of utmost importance.

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