



## Mind Body Awareness Project Overview

**Mission:** MBA is an Oakland-based 501(c)(3) organization that teaches mindfulness, emotional intelligence and mental health skills and techniques to high-risk and incarcerated youth in public schools, juvenile justice centers and the community at-large. Our mission is to help youth transform harmful behavior and live meaningful lives through mindfulness and emotional awareness. Our services are based upon a proprietary curriculum synthesized from best practices in counseling, meditation, group-process modalities and socio-emotional learning models.

**MBA Project Goals and History:** MBA has been nationally recognized for its innovation and efforts in the field of mindfulness for high-risk adolescents. Our aim is to empower youth with effective tools, competencies and emotional stamina needed to control negative impulses, manage aggression and mitigate stress. Our unique programs promote self-esteem, emotional competence and self-care. Through mindfulness, counseling and life skills training, MBA builds lifelong internal capacity for youth to choose healthy behaviors, self-regulate their emotions and develop into successful, productive community members.

Since inception in 2000, MBA has provided mindfulness-based services to over 6,000 unique youth in four Bay Area counties. MBA helps disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline through groundbreaking work in formal fee-for-service contract partnerships with Alameda County and San Mateo County Juvenile Justice Centers and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and Newark Unified School District continuation high schools. MBA is the only agency in collaboration with these public systems that focuses on mindfulness-based programming.

**What is Mindfulness?** Mindfulness is an internal regulation technique which helps release negative emotions and stem impulsive reactions to external stimuli through the building of empathy and self-control. Mindfulness practice builds better attention, clarity and emotional regulation, aiding the body to release negative thoughts, reduce negative behaviors and support conscious choices. Mindfulness practice has been in existence for centuries, but its application to business, education, professional sports and corporate environments has grown exponentially over the past ten years. MBA's own research supports mindfulness as an anti-violence and substance abuse intervention for youth ([www.mbaproject.org/research](http://www.mbaproject.org/research)).

**Why Mindfulness in Probation and Alternative Education Settings?** California spends an average of \$199,700 on each youth in the juvenile justice system (\$119,000 at the county level) – almost 20 times the \$9,200 it will spend for each K-12 student.<sup>i</sup> Yet, the system is simply failing at their primary job: rehabilitation. 70 to 80% of youth are rearrested within 2-3 years following release from residential corrections programs and 38 to 58% of released youth are found guilty of new offenses (as a juvenile or an adult) within 2 years.<sup>ii</sup> These youth need portable emotional and behavioral management skills that will keep them out of the criminal justice system. MBA coaches youth to awaken their own internal capacities using tools and techniques for mindfully dealing with anger, fear, impulsivity and the challenges of living with poverty conditions, gang engagement, police profiling and racial oppression and peer pressure.

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By focusing on developing young people's internal capacities, MBA shifts the paradigm, helping youth identify their own assets, gain self-worth and lead productive lives. Effective mindfulness training builds the internal capacity of youth to tap into their inherent strengths through empathy, self-esteem, self-awareness and resilience.

**“ It’s like you hit pause. You have a remote control for life...all that’s going on around you doesn’t matter right now; you’re just doing you.”**

– Marcus, Age 17 Through MBA’s training, Marcus learned how to pause, stop and reflect, and how to respond appropriately instead of impulsively reacting to negative stimuli with negative behavior.

**MBA’s Work:** MBA partners with the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center and the San Mateo Youth Services Center to deliver mindfulness-based services in their juvenile hall and long-term camp facilities (Sweeney and Glenwood). Programs in alternative education settings vary, but are also primary weekly group based programs. MBA developed our 10-session proprietary rehabilitation curriculum designed specifically to meet the social and emotional needs of incarcerated youth with a focus on violence reduction and impulse control. Our philosophy is focused on building authentic heartfelt relationships with the youth we serve.

Ideally, each session consists of 8-12 participants in an intervention cohort, however, we can flex group size and program according to need. The curriculum is based on ten weekly modules on topics including emotional literacy, empathy, interpersonal relationships, forgiveness, and transforming negative beliefs. As each cohort completes the 10-week program, a new cohort will cycle in. In some settings, MBA also delivers one-on-one weekly counseling to ensure that youth are integrating learnings and continuing their self-awareness exploration. In San Mateo County we have also implement daylong retreat programs that allow for deeper self-exploration at Camp Glenwood.

#### **2015 Program Objectives:**

- 1) **Alternative Education Schools** - Serve 175 unique youth in three OUSD continuation high schools and 60 youth in the Newark Unified School District during the 2015-16 school year
- 2) **Probation** – Serve 330 unique youth in the Alameda Juvenile Justice Center and 110 in the San Mateo Youth Services Center.
- 3) **Impact** - Achieve a minimum program participant self-reported reduction of 25% in perceived stress and a 25% increase in self-regulation that MBA participants have historically reported.<sup>iiiiv</sup>
- 4) **Research** - Collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data and share results with our partner organizations to inform ongoing program improvement.

**Our Team:** MBA’s program instructors are a diverse team of trained professionals who deliver mindfulness and therapy services using youth development principles in a culturally competent way: they speak from personal experience in recovery and bring with them solid street credibility. Jennie Powe Runde, LMFT, MBA’s Clinical Services Director oversees program and evaluation.

<sup>i</sup> Taylor, M. (2013). *California’s criminal justice system: A primer*. Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst’s Office.

<sup>ii</sup> California Budget & Policy Center. (March 26, 2014) **Bending the Prison Cost Curve**. [Blog post]. Retrieved from: <http://calbudgetcenter.org/blog/bending-the-prison-cost-curve/>

<sup>iii</sup> Himmelstein, S., Hastings, A. Shapiro, S., & Heery, M. (2012) **Mindfulness training for self-regulation and stress with incarcerated youth: A pilot study**. *Probation Journal*, 59, 151-165.

<sup>iv</sup> Barnert, E.S., Himmelstein, S., Herbert, S., Garcia-Romeu, A., & Chamberlain, L. J. (2014). **Innovations in practice: Exploring an intensive meditation intervention for incarcerated youth**. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 19(1), 69-73.