Mission Statement

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.
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.

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.¹ 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.² 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.

Noah Levine and a group of his close friends founded the Mind Body Awareness Project in June 2000. Like many self-destructive kids, Noah tried to cope with life’s challenges with alcohol and drugs, but still felt empty. While locked up in the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall, Noah searched for positive ways to channel his anger and rebellion, and began to practice mindfulness-based meditation.

Meditation transformed Noah, and after practicing it for over five years, he wanted to equip other at-risk youth with the same tool that helped him. Noah, along with Isaiah Seret, Scott Diamond, Catherine Diamond, and Jonathan Raymond, founded MBA Project with this mission. Today, Noah is a well-known meditation teacher who leads retreats nationally, as well as leading groups in juvenile halls and prisons.

In 2006, MBA merged with its sister non-profit, Youth Horizons, founded by Andrew Getz and Soren Gordhammer. The following year, MBA merged with another nonprofit that served at risk youth, Vision Youthz, founded by Dr. Kyra Bobinet. MBA is the result of the merger of these three organizations, with a combined 23 years of experience serving at-risk youth through inner awareness practices.

In January 2016, MBA formally affiliated with another organization founded by Noah Levine, Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society (ATS). This partnership will bring a deepened stability and focus for both organizations; for ATS by a more direct involvement in social justice issues and MBA who will now have stronger organizational support.
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.

In addition to serving at-risk and incarcerated youth, MBA is developing evidence-based mental rehabilitation intervention trainings that are relevant to youth’s lives. MBA provides training to youth service providers, and conducts research to advance the science based mindfulness field.
Impacting the Lives of Youth

Meet Michael

Michael is a young man who was able to cope with his grief when he attended MBA Project groups at Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center.

Watch His Story

Meet Jonathan

Because of the generosity of our supporters, Jonathan was able to develop the skills he needed in order to become the grounded and relaxed person he is today.

Watch His Story
Since its inception, MBA has provided mindfulness-based services to over 6,000 unique youth in four Bay Area counties.

In 2015, MBA served 3,587 youth from Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, San Mateo Youth Services Center, Oakland Unified School District, and Newark Unified School District. MBA is the only agency in collaboration with these public systems that focuses on mindfulness-based programming.

97% of the youth we serve say MBA groups are a safe place to share, 95% feel connected to instructors, 90% report that MBA groups taught them positive coping skills, and 100% would recommend MBA Project to a friend. The youth we serve are primarily young people of color, ages 15-18.
Contact Us

Office Location:  
3700 East 12th St, Ste 3B  
Oakland, CA 94601

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 7541  
Oakland, CA 94601

info@mbaproject.org  
www.mbaproject.org  
+1.415.824.2048

Mary Stancavage  
Executive Director  
mary@mbaproject.org  
415-824-2048 x701

Jennie Powe-Runde  
Clinical Program Director  
jennie@mbaproject.org  
415-824-2048 x702

Shelby Jackson  
Communications & Operations Manager  
shelby@mbaproject.org  
415-824-2048 x700

Micah Anderson  
Program Director  
micah@mbaproject.org  
415-824-2048 x703