

WORKING ON WOMANHOOD

Teen girls in the United States today are experiencing record-high levels of violence, sadness, and suicide risk. A program called Working on Womanhood (WOW) offers much-needed hope. Developed by the nonprofit Youth Guidance and evaluated by the University of Chicago Education Lab, WOW was found to dramatically reduce anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms among girls in Chicago high schools. The program is designed by Black and Latina women for young Black and Latina girls. Data suggests WOW is both cost-effective and scalable.

OVERVIEW

- ▶ WOW is a school-based, trauma-informed group counseling program that aims to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression in adolescent girls.
- ▶ WOW serves young women in grades 6–12 who have been exposed to traumatic stressors in high-risk and under-resourced communities.
- ▶ WOW consists of weekly 50-minute, in-school group counseling sessions with 10–12 youth led by a trained counselor.
- ▶ The WOW curriculum is informed by cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and narrative therapy.
- ▶ The WOW curriculum has five core values: self-awareness, emotional intelligence, healthy relationships, visionary goal setting, and leadership.

IMPACT

- ▶ A baseline survey of almost 400 girls in grades 9–11 in Chicago Public Schools found that 38 percent showed signs of PTSD—double the rate of PTSD in service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, according to [a randomized controlled trial](#) by researchers at the University of Chicago Education Lab.
- ▶ Girls who participated in WOW saw a 22 percent decrease in PTSD symptoms, [according to the study](#). They also experienced a 38 percent reduction in moderate trauma-related distress, a 14 percent reduction in depression, and a 10 percent decrease in anxiety.
- ▶ WOW costs about \$2,300 per participant.
- ▶ WOW currently serves about 2,600 students across 41 schools in the Chicago, Illinois area; Boston, Massachusetts; Dallas, Texas; and Kansas City, Missouri.

TAKE ACTION

- ▶ Consider bringing trauma-based counseling to schools in your community: Contact your local school district and ask about adding therapeutic elements to existing mentoring programs.
- ▶ Ask about becoming a WOW partner: Visit [Youth Guidance](#) to learn more about becoming a partner in school-based programs like Working on Womanhood.
- ▶ Learn about data partnerships to design, test, and scale programs for students: Visit the [University of Chicago Education Lab](#).