

# DSM Heroes



Iowa Arts-in-Education dba ArtForcelowa announces DSM Heroes, a program that will provide a supportive, arts-based community for Immigrant and Refugee youth who have experienced violence and trauma.

## Demographic

The DSM Heroes program will maintain an active participant list of 30-40 youth over three years, reaching approximately 225 youth fitting the following demographic:

- Age: 13.5 to 19 years old
- Location: Living in Polk County
- Race/Ethnicity: Born in another country or 1st generation American
- Socio-economic status: Receives free or reduced priced lunches
- Victim of Crime including, but not limited to hate crimes, sexual abuse, child abuse, trafficking

## Program

The program model is based on artist mentoring using our three-force model (artforce, workforce and lifeforce) to create community for youth. This program model has seen high levels of engagement and success with juvenile delinquents in our Creative Pathways program. We believe it will improve the lives of immigrant and refugee youth who have been victims of crime.



Small Group Arts - Youth will have a variety of opportunities to work in small groups with artist-mentors. They will explore different art forms, increase skill, and learn more about art as a healthy means of expression as well as a coping mechanism.

DMS Heroes Weekly Group - This large group workshop will integrate different art forms into life skills that will help youth cope with past trauma. Workshops will include focus on life skills (health, wellness, etc), work skills (applications, resumes, etc), and mental health (meditation, self-improvement, self-image).

Direct Support - Youth will have individual time and support from their artist-mentor and/or program staff. These supportive adults will help to advocate for participants in school, at home, and in the community. They will also work to refer youth as needed to therapy and counseling, addiction counseling, and other supportive services.

## Evidence

DSM Heroes is based on evidence that close relationships and mentorship have a significant impact on youth. Results include higher graduation rates and better civic engagement ([Mentoring.org](https://mentoring.org), "Why Mentor." Multiple studies have also shown that involvement in arts programs results in better grades, better scores on standardized tests, and increased likelihood to go to college ([Caterall, et al., "The Arts in Achievement of At-Risk Youth"](#)). Based on evidence as well as best practices over the last three years, ArtForcelowa has developed an effective program that encourages engagement among a group of extremely at-risk youth.

## Outcomes

The program staff will seek the following outcomes for the youth served by DSM Heroes.

**Engagement.** We will measure overall engagement by comparing the number of youth who come to programming 10 or more times to the total number of participants. We aim to have 60% engagement in the first year, and then 65% and 70% engagement in the following years.

**Target Measure: Academic.** Through partnership with DMPS, we will show that 75% of actively engaged participant have the same number or less behavior referrals, as well as the same number or less classes failing.

**Target Measure: Quality of Life.** A gallup-style questionnaire will gauge participants' quality of life, self esteem, and sense of hope. After 3 months of engagement, participants' quality of life will improve.



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