

The Brothers as Allies Study

Parent FAQ

The New York State Department of Health and Cornell University are collaborating on a research grant to evaluate Brothers as Allies, a program for middle school boys. The study is funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Brothers as Allies: the Basics

Brothers as Allies is a program for boys age 12-14 to promote their safe and healthy passage through adolescence. The program focuses on boys' strengths and the skills needed to build healthy relationships. Over ten weeks, in a small group called a "council," the program aims to help boys learn:

- How to talk with people in a respectful and positive way,
- How to understand other people's perspectives,
- What it means to be a healthy, balanced man.

What is the evaluation study about?

The purpose of the evaluation study is to see if participating in the Brothers as Allies program makes a difference in how boys feel and act, and if the program helps them develop healthy relationships. We expect that the Brothers as Allies program will increase how comfortable boys feel with themselves and other people, and that this, in turn, will lead to less sexual harassment and abuse. Our hope is that the study will show that the program works, and that many other boys will be able to participate in the future.

How will the study work?

We cannot know if this program works unless we compare boys who participate in the Brothers as Allies program to boys who participate in a different form of youth programming. There will be two groups of boys in the study:

- One group of boys will participate in Brothers as Allies programs;
- The other group of boys will participate in different youth programs.

We will use surveys to find out if there is a difference in how the boys feel and act over time. We will be looking to see 1) how the boys' answers to the survey change after the program and 2) do the boys who were in the Brothers as Allies programs tend to answer differently from the boys who were in other youth programs.

What is in this for the boys?

In addition to the new skills, friends, and positive experiences they are likely to have as part of the program, all participants—whether they are in the Brothers as Allies group or not—will receive gift cards or cash for each completed survey (see below).

If my son is in the Brothers as Allies group, what should we expect?

In the Brothers as Allies program, boys form a "council" of about 10 boys age 12-14. Each council will be led by one or more trained male facilitators following program guidelines. Sessions are 90 minutes long and include group activities, reflection, and discussion. One complete program consists of 10 sessions, each of which focuses on a theme such as identity, masculinity, respecting differences, emotions, communication, bullying, dating, and gender expectations. Boys will also participate in four survey interviews and receive a gift card or cash for each one they complete.

If my son is NOT in the Brothers as Allies group, what should we expect?

Boys who are part of the study but are not joining a Brothers as Allies council will participate in other youth programming, such as after-school programs or summer camps. They will also participate in four survey interviews and receive a gift card or cash for each one they complete.

Tell me about the surveys.

Conducted by trained facilitators, the surveys will take about 30-40 minutes each. Participants will take the survey on tablets, and no one will see their individual answers. The surveys ask questions about your son's relationships with peers as well as with adults. It also asks questions about how your child thinks and feels about issues such as bullying, harassment, relationships, and dating. It includes several questions about sexual assault and harassment, since this is part of what we are hoping the program will affect. It also includes questions on communication styles, caring and cooperation, social support, and healthy decision making.

All boys, even if they are not in the Brothers as Allies program, will be asked to take a total of four surveys over the course of nine months: one survey at the beginning of the program, one at the end, and follow-up surveys three and six months later. A person from the research team will call or text your son to schedule the follow-up surveys.

All boys who take the survey will receive money or a gift certificate for each survey they complete: \$10 for the first survey, \$20 for the second survey, \$30 for the third survey, and \$40 for the last survey.

The surveys will be kept entirely private and confidential.

What is the timeline?

The timeline of the study will span about eight months: two months for conducting the program and six months after the completion of the program for follow up surveys. Final study results will be shared with partners and community members at the conclusion of the study in 2019.

How can I find out about the results?

Results will be published in 2019 on the web page www.actforyouth.net/brothers.

How can I find out more about Brothers as Allies?

The Brothers as Allies curriculum is part of One Circle Foundation's Council for Boys and Young Men program (also called "Boys Council"). More information is available on the One Circle Foundation website: <http://www.onecirclefoundation.org/TC.aspx>

Additional information is posted on the web page: www.actforyouth.net/brothers.

Whom can I contact with questions about the study?

If you have general questions about the study, contact Janis Whitlock at Cornell University, (jlw43@cornell.edu or 607-254-2894), or Leah Wentworth at the New York State Department of Health (leah.wentworth@health.ny.gov).

Parents who have been contacted about this study can also call or text Amanda Purington (607-216-8794) or email Sara Komoroske (sara.komoroske@ppcwny.org) with questions or to opt your son out of the study.