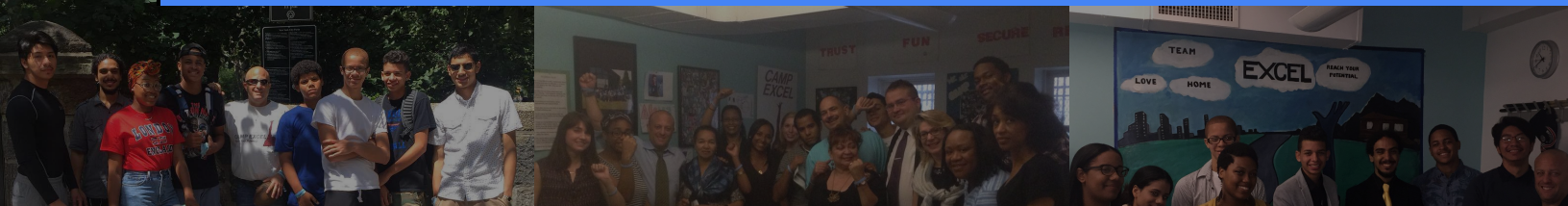




# GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

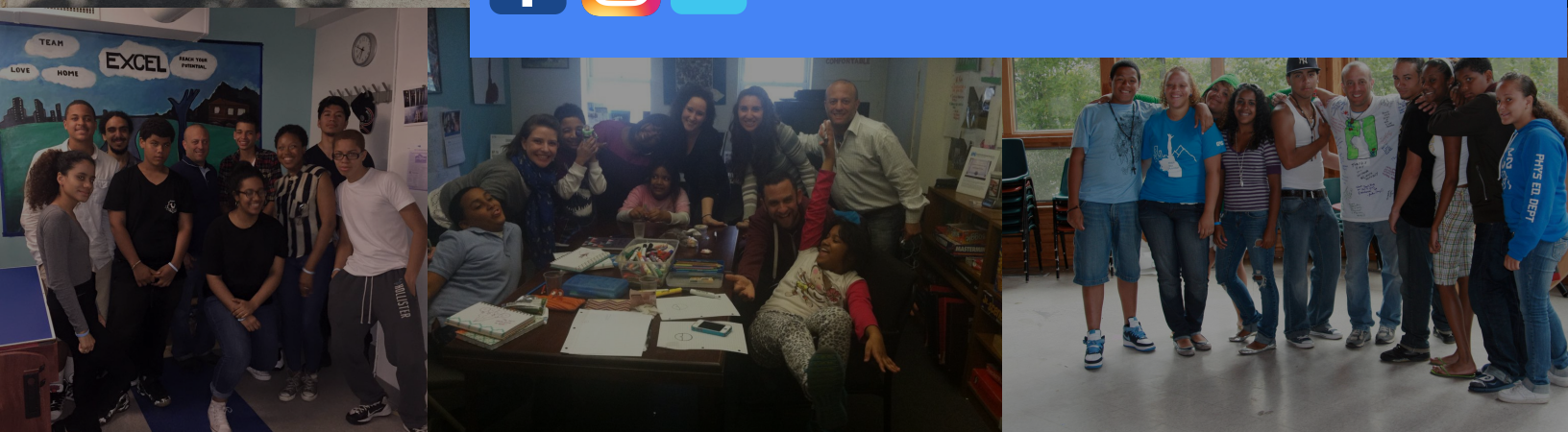


**Growth and Development Services, Inc (GDS)**

[www.excelgds.org](http://www.excelgds.org)



@ExcelGDS



## Contact:

Dr. Gary Altheim

Executive Director/Director of Programs

[drgaryaltheim@excelgds.org](mailto:drgaryaltheim@excelgds.org)

Lenishemarie Lopez

Program Coordinator

[llopez@excelgds.org](mailto:llopez@excelgds.org)



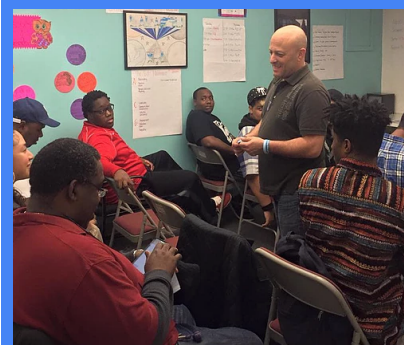
## Overview:

Growth and Development Services, Inc. (GDS) is a nonprofit organization based in Northern Manhattan. Founded in 1996, GDS empowers inner-city youth through mental health, youth development, and intergenerational programs to Reach their Potential! For more than 25 years, GDS has helped young adults in Upper Manhattan beat the odds and create bright, self-sufficient futures. Through our quality leadership development, counseling services, training programs, and community advocacy, we've leveled the playing field for more than a thousand underserved young people, providing them with the skills, support, confidence, and motivation they need to succeed in school, in their communities, and in the workforce. Building on decades of experience and proven success, GDS is proudly entering a new era: The challenges and opportunities facing Upper Manhattan are evolving, and so are we. We hope you'll join us as we partner with middle and high schools, community-based organizations, and senior centers so our youth gain the education, skills, and confidence to unleash their potential and create positive, lasting change in their own lives and in the life of their community.

***“As a youth myself.. I have never seen free programs like GDS that allow the youth to open themselves so freely while having adult guidance.”***

**--Vanessa, ExcelGDS participant**

GDS is led by Dr. Gary Altheim, a Clinical Psychologist with deep roots in the Upper Manhattan neighborhoods he's dedicated his life to serving. Dr. Altheim was honored by the Child Mind Institute as a 2018 "Change Maker" for his "unwavering dedication to the vulnerable teens who live in Upper Manhattan who face the challenges of mental health disorders, family instability, and community violence," and for "changing life trajectories, enabling countless kids to count on a promising future." Dr. Altheim is joined by a team of passionate professionals and volunteers: mental health counselors, social workers, arts educators, wellness instructors, academic tutors, and youth mentors. Together, they create a safe, empowering environment where the talents of young people are identified and nurtured and where the mental, emotional, and environmental challenges they face are addressed with compassion and knowledge.



# The Excel Program

## Team-Building/Leadership Development:

GDS offers youth an opportunity to learn leadership, teamwork, and public speaking skills. The Leadership Development program uses the GDS Reach Your Potential model, where the youth set goals for themselves and as a group to work on throughout the program. In these sessions, the youth participate in different activities in which the youth develop problem-solving and public speaking skills and find their strengths to help them become successful individuals and peer leaders.

## Mental Health Awareness and Counseling:

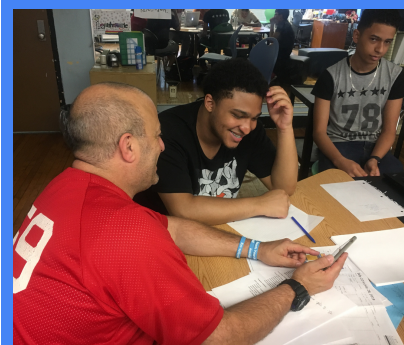
Through its counseling services, GDS provides young people with the ongoing, individualized support that is critical to their psychosocial development and mental health. Experienced psychologists and social workers help GDS students find positive solutions to the behavioral, psychological, and social challenges they face. Together they develop strategies to cope with stress and trauma in their lives and to avoid destructive behaviors and peer pressure.

## Mentoring/Life Coaching and Life Skills:

GDS participants are assigned mentors (often GDS graduates), who act as positive role models, offering a stable, supportive presence in their lives. Mentors give participants practical guidance in addition to emotional support. Mentors are supervised by licensed psychologists or social workers and are required to keep detailed records of their mentees' development.

## Wellness Workshops- Mindfulness, Meditation, Yoga:

Our wellness programming seeks to instill lifelong healthy habits in the young people we serve. Our holistic approach includes yoga, meditation, and fitness. We emphasize the connection between psychological and physical health and teach methods for coping with stress and trauma.





## Educational Empowerment/College Success:

Our staff work with the youth to outline their educational plans to help them reach their potential in school. After-school tutors assist youth with their homework and assignments and provide strategies to improve time management, effective studying, and overall school performance. Youth are also trained in computer skills, becoming familiar with programs such as Google Suite and Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.

## Job Readiness/Career Awareness/Entrepreneurship:

Our counselors help guide participants into possible career paths based on their interests and abilities and provide hands-on assistance with interview preparation, resume development, and cover letters. We teach them the skills and behaviors required to succeed as young professionals in the workplace.

## Advocacy Through Arts:

Access to the arts has been shown to enrich the lives of young people across the opportunity spectrum, from improving academic performance to remedying antisocial behaviors. It promotes self-esteem, motivation, concentration, and decision-making, encourages creativity, self-expression, and perseverance and improves connections among individuals.

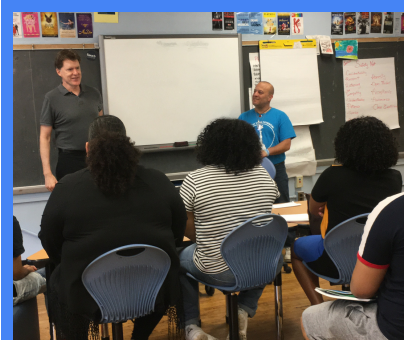
ExcelGDS's arts workshops are facilitated by experienced arts educators.

## Youth Advocacy and Public Speaking Training:

We work to develop engaged, confident leaders and provide them with concrete skills, including training in public speaking, to allow their voices to be heard and help them understand their power as citizens and advocates. We help our youth engage constructively with the issues they're most passionate about, from drug abuse and homelessness to police brutality and gun violence. They organize talent shows, spoken-word events, advocacy presentations, and open mic nights to increase awareness about issues and needs within their community, as well as promote solutions and resources.

## Leaders For Change

As a response to Covid-19 GDS instituted a virtual version of The Excel program - Leaders for Change (LFC). LFC creates a safe haven to build connections and develop tools to cope with the trauma of the pandemic and other life obstacles, by providing mental health counseling, mentorship, leadership development, arts, job readiness, and youth advocacy.

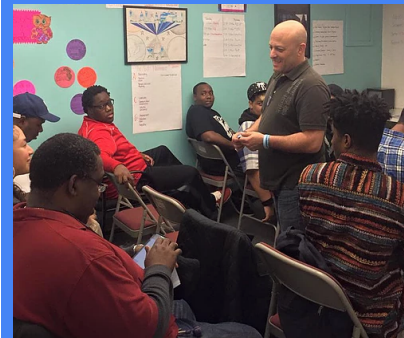




# Training Institute

GDS provides internships and training for aspiring youth workers and mental health professionals on how to effectively work with at-risk youth. Interns receive instruction, professional development, and hands-on experience in the most effective approaches to working with challenged youth and families.

We're proud that a number of our Training Institute alumni have been graduates of the Excel Program who have decided to pursue careers in mental health and youth services as a result of their GDS experience. Many of our volunteers and interns have gone on to pursue graduate-level degrees and become leading professionals in their field. Youth workers and aspiring mental health professionals receive certificates upon successful completion of the Training Institute program. Volunteers are eligible for letters of recommendation to schools or potential employers.



For more information about Youth Engaging Seniors and our other programs visit [www.ExcelGDS.org](http://www.ExcelGDS.org) for ways to partner with us and/or become involved.