

Preventing Long-Term Anger and Aggression in Youth (PLAAY)

What is the practice?

Preventing Long-Term Anger and Aggression in Youth (PLAAY) is a culturally responsive, strength-based, healing centered intervention that incorporates competitive peer activities to teach children skills for reducing their stress during intense face to face racially stressful events leading to fewer incidents of physical aggression and healthier emotional outcomes. PLAAY relies heavily on the relationship formed between participant and mentor-facilitator. It teaches participants skills for reducing and managing stress during conflict, particularly racialized conflict. PLAAY uses the organic moments of stress that arise during athletic games between peers to address children's strengths and challenges associated with stress. The practice includes group skill building sessions, participation in athletic games and parent empowerment groups. PLAAY was developed in 1998 by Dr. Howard Stevenson at the University of Pennsylvania in response to ongoing racial violence and microaggressions affecting Black men and boys.

What outcomes does this practice produce?

PLAAY has been shown to produce the following participant outcomes:

- Stress reduction
 - Improved stress management
 - Increased capacity to challenge racial and gender stereotypes
 - Improved interpersonal skills
 - Increased school achievements
 - Enhanced positive self-identity
 - Decreased intrapersonal conflict
 - Improved physical and mental health
 - Emotion awareness and regulation
 - Increased confidence
 - Resiliency
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What is the evidence for this practice?

Dr. Howard Stevenson has conducted several research studies on PLAAY since 1998. The findings from his randomly assigned control group study of PLAAY in Black male youth published in 2003 demonstrate positive outcomes for participants assigned to the treatment group. These positive outcomes include improved attendance rates, increased homework completion rates, increased school engagement and reduction in school assault rates (Stevenson, 2003).

How is this practice implemented?***In what contexts is this practice implemented (e.g., schools, clinical)?***

PLAAY is frequently offered during school, in after-school athletic programs and at therapeutic centers. The program has been implemented in schools as a preventative tool for suspensions and at therapeutic centers as a group therapy intervention. Several municipalities and counties are working to develop juvenile detention diversion programs centering the PLAAY intervention.

What is the dosage of this practice (e.g., one-time training, six-week curriculum)?

PLAAY is designed to be delivered to youth in 20 sessions over a period of ten weeks. Parents generally attend two to four of these sessions. Each session lasts approximately 60 minutes, with 30 minutes for skill building group therapy and 30 minutes for games and practical skill application. PLAAY originally incorporated basketball as the game for every session, but has been expanded to football, video games, board games and other competitive peer activities.

How is the practice delivered (e.g., online, in-person)?

PLAAY is most frequently delivered in-person, but has also been adapted for online delivery with the use of video games.

What infrastructure or readiness is needed to implement this practice (e.g., capacity for data analysis, individual full-time equivalent [FTE])?

The following resources are needed to implement PLAAY:

- Two facilitators per group of 8-15 youth
- A physical room or space to provide skill building group sessions
- Journals and pens for participants
- PLAAY manual
- PLAAY pre and post measures
- Athletic court, field, or space
- Athletic equipment
- Transportation for participating youth
- Childcare for parent sessions

For which population(s) can this practice be implemented?***For which population(s) is this best or promising practice (BPP) intended? Has it been adapted for diverse groups? If so, which ones?***

PLAAY was originally created to address the challenges faced by Black male youth between the ages of 10 and 19; however, the program has been adapted for children of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds ages 7 to 19.

For which populations is there evidence of effectiveness (e.g., at-risk youth; clinically depressed)?

PLAAY has been proven effective for at-risk Black male youth between the ages of 10 and 19.

With which specific populations has this practice been successfully implemented?

PLAAY has been successfully implemented with Black youth.

For which populations, if any, is this practice NOT a good fit?

PLAAY is not a good fit for children who are uninterested in competitive sports, games, or video games. It may not be a good fit for children who prefer to engage with traditional group therapy.

Who can implement this practice?***What expertise is needed to implement the practice?***

No clinical license is required to facilitate PLAAY. Invested community members with relationship building skills are very effective PLAAY facilitators.

What specific training or certification is required to implement the practice?

Completion of a 16-hour PLAAY facilitator training is required prior to implementing the practice.

What costs are associated with delivering this practice?

All program materials are included in the PLAAY facilitator training. Other costs associated with delivering this practice include the cost of staff salaries, journals, pens, recreation space rental fees, recreation equipment and childcare during parent sessions.

What costs and commitments are associated with becoming trained in this practice?***What is the cost associated with becoming trained?***

The Center for Resilience in New Orleans offers PLAAY training on a sliding scale that generally ranges from \$550 - \$750 for a training workshop. These workshops are typically offered to multiple staff from one organization at a given time, but virtual workshops are scheduled throughout the year allowing individuals to attend. Depending on an organization's need and grant availability, the training cost can occasionally be lowered further. Additionally, The National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health (NNED) offers a free training on PLAAY each year to a limited number of participants.

What is the time commitment associated with completing training?

PLAAY training workshops require a 16-hour time commitment which may be in person or virtual workshops.

Are there recognized providers of training in this practice?

Recognized PLAAY trainers currently include The Center for Resilience in New Orleans, The Racial Empowerment Collaborative at University of Pennsylvania and The National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health (NNED).

Does the practice have an associated fidelity assessment?

Yes, PLAAY has a fidelity assessment evaluation tool that incorporates data prior to enrollment in PLAAY, mid-way through the program, and post-program completion.

***What resources or references are useful for understanding/implementing the practice?
Where should you go for more information?***

- The Racial Empowerment Collaborative at University of Pennsylvania: <https://www.recastingrace.com/research/plaay>
 - University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education Podcast with PLAAY Creator, Dr. Howard Stevenson: <https://youtu.be/PAu4UoMqrsq>
 - Center for Resilience in New Orleans: <https://www.cfrla.org/plaayatcfr>
 - National Network to Eliminate Disparities In Behavioral Health (NNED) Prior PLAAY Training Opportunity: <https://nned.net/opportunities/nnedlearn/plaay/>
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References

PLAAY at CFR. (2021). Center for Resilience. <https://www.cfrla.org/plaayatcfr>

Stevenson, H. C. (2002). Wrestling with Destiny: The Cultural Socialization of Anger and Healing in African American Males. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 21(3), 357–364. https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=gse_pubs

Stevenson, H. C. (Ed.). (2003). *Playing with Anger: Teaching coping skills to African American boys through athletics and culture*. Praeger Publishers.

Turner, B. (2021, August 5). Join the Conversation Session 6: Preventing Long-Term Anger and Aggression in Youth (PLAAY) [Webinar]. <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/global-mhttc/product/join-conversation-preventing-long-term-anger-and-aggression-youth>

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