



## PROPEL VIRTUAL ACADEMY

*“Across the United States, millions of workers of all ages suffered job losses in the coronavirus-driven recession, but the economic impact on young workers has been even more intense. Not only have many young people in this country faced the harsh reality of returning to school without in-person classes at their colleges and high schools, the job prospect for those seeking employment have been particularly bleak . . . Furthermore, many have been all but blocked from receiving jobless benefits even with meaningful expansions to the unemployment insurance system.”*

- Economic Policy Institute Report • By Elise Gould and Melat Kassa, October 14, 2020.

### OVERVIEW & PURPOSE OF FUNDING

The Propel Virtual Academy is a free eight-week online training program for young Black males, 18-28 years of age, to focus on the personal challenges and needs of each participant through personal assessment, counseling, structured classes/workshops, one-on-one mentoring, job readiness training, and other life enhancing services. CCMA provides this support to our participants to guide them towards the successful completion of program requirements and gainful employment after graduation. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented young Black males from attending in-person classes for in-person training, the Propel Virtual Academy will meet this need.

### OBJECTIVE & COMMUNITY NEED

CCMA serves economically marginalized communities predominantly occupied by African Americans. In these communities, grim statistics validate the need to address the issues of one of the most disadvantaged population in the African American community, the young black male aged 18-28:

- 40% of Black males are unemployed.
- 1.5 million or 47% of the penal population are Black males.
- 1 in 3 Black males drop out of school.
- Every 5 hours a Black youth dies of homicide, they lead the nation in homicides as victims and perpetrators.
- Black males are the fastest growing rate of suicides among youth.

In addition to these daunting statistics, many at-risk young men of color have been unable to access in-person training and other resources that they sorely need to obtain sustainable employment and overcome the challenges that they face due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A 2020 report from the Economic Policy Institute, “Young Workers Hit Hard by the COVID-19”, cites the following:<sup>1</sup>

- *Workers ages 16–24 face high unemployment and an uncertain future” during the pandemic.*
- *Unemployment skyrocketed for young workers in the COVID-19 labor market*
- *Young Black workers experienced the highest unemployment of any racial/ethnic group, 14.5.*
- *Young workers have had the largest job losses since February 2020.*
- *Young workers are the most likely to be unemployed or underemployed, least likely to be able to work from home, and more likely to work in industries and occupations with the largest job losses in the COVID-19 labor market.*
- *Young workers are more likely to be in jobs impacted by COVID-19.*
- *Young workers have been excluded from certain COVID-19 assistance.*
- *Young workers are heavily represented in the industries most affected by COVID-19 shutdowns*
- *Young workers are the least likely to be able to telework or to work from home*
- *The economic effects of the COVID-19 economy on young workers may persist for years.*

Despite the plethora of hardships and risks endured by African American males, CCMA believes that these statistics and challenges can be effectively addressed with constructive strategies that take into consideration the harmful effects of poverty, societal hindrance, cultural forces, and the COVID-19 pandemic; and counter these effects with positive methods of action. The Propel Virtual Academy was created for this purpose.

The Propel Virtual Academy will be conducted in a manner consistent with studies that demonstrate strategies through which African American students have achieved a positive response to education. The eight-week series of virtual classes will provide a comprehensive experience for the participants, who are taught by dynamic instructors, many of whom have experienced their challenges, successfully overcome their circumstances, and now serve as role models.

Collaborations are critical to delivering the benefits to at-risk populations. CCMA collaborates with local organizations, schools, churches, and others to provide and obtain needed services and resources for young males in the targeted age group. CCMA will continue to collaborate with its current partners and will establish new community and business partnerships for in-kind assistance.

<sup>1</sup> Economic Policy Institute Report • By Elise Gould and Melat Kassa, October 14, 2020.

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### **CCMA BACKGROUND:**

- CCMA was founded in 2008 as a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization to provide free services to at-risk individuals and communities through its free programs:
- CCMA communicates a clear sense of purpose
- CCMA is committed to educating all its participants and imposes high standards.
- CCMA has a supportive nurturing environment that engages the cooperation of its participants providing a stimulating, relevant educational experience.
- Since 2008, over 3,000 at risk young males, 18-28 years of age have been provided free life-skills and job readiness training and resources, including the Priority Male Institute, the Propel Academy, Overcoming the Odds: Success Strategies for Young Black Males workshops, Propel Yourself to Success workshops, and open forums.
- Participants are assigned to work one-on-one with male mentors who help them navigate personal visions, purpose, and knowledge of themselves, and create sustainable change in their journey toward manhood.
- The Propel Virtual Academy includes a structured job readiness program, mentoring, counseling, and referral center to direct participants to community-wide resources that further address their needs. CCMA will also collaborate with other nonprofit organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and potential employers to accept and receive referrals for training employment and other services.

During the eight-week Propel Virtual Academy, young men in the target age group will be guided through the five pillars of empowerment: Enlighten, Educate, Expose, Engage, and Employ. The curriculum includes training in the following critical areas:

- *Self-awareness/self-management*
- *Heritage lessons*
- *Interpersonal skills (teamwork, communication, customer service, and conflict resolution)*
- *Goal setting*
- *Strategic thinking*
- *Criminal justice system*
- *Ethics and social responsibility*
- *Financial literacy and money management*
- *Entrepreneurship*
- *Vocational exploration and career development*
- *Job Search and interviewing skills*
- *Work ethics*

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CCMA realizes the challenges and limitations imposed by virtual training, particularly for young males who do not have access to critical resources. To counteract these challenges, Propel Virtual Academy students will be provided a laptop computer and internet services to enable them to participate in the training and will be paid a stipend of \$50.00 per class attended, if assignments are satisfactorily completed.

## OUTCOMES:

The expected outcomes of the virtual Propel Virtual Academy are to:

- Improve sustainable employability of graduates.
- Increase self-image, attitude, and self-esteem of students.
- Increase the earning potential of students.
- Increase the number of students in the program that pursue advanced degrees or technical careers.
- Establish financial independence through entrepreneurship.
- Develop and maintain viable relationships with mentors.

## PROPEL VIRTUAL ACADEMY SESSIONS:

WEEK	DATES	SESSION
Week 1	Tuesday	Personal Assessments & Self-Management
	Thursday	Goal Setting
Week 2	Tuesday	Strategic Thinking
	Thursday	Communication Skills
Week 3	Tuesday	Interpersonal Relations
	Thursday	Conflict Resolution
Week 4	Tuesday	Criminal Justice
	Thursday	LIFE: <i>“Legal Concepts to Empower Life”</i>
Week 5	Tuesday	Financial Management
	Thursday	Entrepreneurship
Week 6	Tuesday	Vocational Exploration
	Thursday	Career Development
Week 7	Tuesday	Interviewing Skills
	Thursday	Job Search
Week 8	Tuesday	Work Ethics
	Thursday	Visions for Success
	Thursday	Graduation

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### **CONCLUSION:**

The available statistics paint a bleak picture for young black males in the United States which has been further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Community Council asserts that we have a communal responsibility to address this challenge. Rather than offering theoretical dialogue, the CCMA provides a positive and viable response to addressing this critical issue in the multi-county metropolitan area. With a tax-deductible donation from your organization, CCMA will be able to provide the virtual Propel Empowerment Academy to help improve the quality of life for young black males, who are being underserved during the COVID-19 pandemic. By helping young black males become productive and contributing members of our society, we will, in effect, enhance the socioeconomic status of the metropolitan Atlanta area and the country as a whole.

CCMA is so appreciative of the opportunity to present our life-enhancing programs that are changing young lives one young man at a time. Won't you join us?

### **STATISTICAL SOURCES & SUGGESTED READING MATERIALS:**

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Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Dept. of Justice

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