Muslim youth participated in leadership development, college and career readiness, and workshops on racism, gender, self-expression, bullying, healthy relationships, and other programs at WAW’s NYCC in 2019.

- **40** girls aged 10-15 participated in the Girls Leadership Program (GLP).
- **23** boys aged 10-15 participated in the Boys Leadership Program (BLP).
- **26** young women and **17** young men aged 16-20 participated in Afghan Youth Rising (AYR).
- **41** children participated in our Homework Help program with 100% passing their state exams.

**70%** of participants were Afghan and **30%** were from other Muslim immigrant groups.

Our youth programming started when parents asked us to help their children, most of whom were new to this country, because they were struggling in school. We also found that many of the newly arrived families were following practices harmful to young women, such as forced or underage marriage and being pulled out of school. Boys were raised to treat girls as inferior to them.

WAW launched its leadership programs to address these issues by educating youth on women’s and human rights and the impact of gender inequity. We also encourage youth to pursue their own paths in life by making sure they are ready for college and are aware of diverse career and life options.

**Our culturally sensitive approach ensures none of our participants are taken out of our programs.**

As a result, no youth have been pulled out of school and no girls have been forced to marry despite being at risk.
**FARIHA** and **SALMA**, 19 years old, and 21 years old, are sisters who recently came to the US from Afghanistan. When WAW was called to assist the family, we learned that the sisters were depressed and refused to leave their house. They were traumatized from witnessing their brother’s murder back in Afghanistan. In addition, they were fearful of being forcibly married as their family had arranged marriages for them without their consent.

We also found out that they were receiving counseling in English, however, neither of them spoke or understood English.

We enrolled Salma and Fariha to our Afghan Youth Rising program. A few days before starting the program, Salma attempted suicide—fortunately, she fully recovered.

Today, Fariha and Salma are learning English. They take public transportation. They are learning about their rights and new skills, like identifying healthy relationships, active communication, and building their resumes. They have never missed a day of programs at WAW.

We also connected them to an Urdu-speaking mental health professional to receive counseling in a language they speak and understand.

They have safety plans to prevent their arranged marriages. With our support, they are working on being financially independent, getting an education, and obtaining their US citizenships. Their parents have agreed to hold off on their marriages until Fariha and Salma have their US passports.

The sisters regularly tell WAW that they feel happy when they come to our programs because it is a place where they can make friends and build confidence in themselves.