

## RESEARCH, BEST PRACTICES, AND RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE YOUTH MENTORING <sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Recent years have seen youth mentoring programs flourish in a variety of settings, such as schools, community centers, faith institutions, and in conjunction with other support services, such as tutoring, counseling, and job training. The number of young people in mentoring relationships in the U.S. increased by 3 million between 2002 and 2005 alone (MENTOR, 2006a), and the number of programs operating has grown dramatically as mentoring is woven into countless prevention and intervention efforts.

However, with this expansion of services has come an increase in the scrutiny programs are placed under. Practitioners, researchers, and the general public, are looking for evidence that mentoring “works.” While mentoring is, in many ways, an easily understood construct, there is little agreement on how mentoring actually creates changes in particular youth or on the amount and types of impact it can have. And in spite of many substantial efforts to evaluate and analyze mentoring programs over the past dozen years, the field as a whole is just now beginning to adopt a common set of best practices that can guide the development and delivery of mentoring services. Thus, youth mentoring is poised to “come of age” as a prevention strategy, but only if its practitioners operate from a shared understanding of the research into effective strategies and best practices.

This presentation will provide an overview of several prominent pieces of mentoring research, a summary of the current best practices being implemented in the field, and an extensive overview of several newly revised publications that can give mentoring practitioners the concepts and tools they need to run high-quality programs.

### Mentoring Research

Compared to other types of prevention and academic enrichment activities, youth mentoring is fairly under-researched. While there have been several prominent experimentally-designed evaluation efforts (mostly those conducted by Public/Private Ventures), the research base on mentoring is thin compared to other prevention efforts (suicide prevention, for example). However, the research that we do have is painting an increasingly clear picture of what quality mentoring looks like and what mentoring programs can reasonably be expected to achieve.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the Executive Summary of the forthcoming series on *Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities* to be published by the Hamilton Fish Institute and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory with the support of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

The following represents a brief summary of several of the more widely disseminated research reports and what they say about outcomes and effective practices:<sup>2</sup>

## Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Author(s): Joseph P. Tierney and Jean Baldwin Grossman, with Nancy L. Resch

Publisher: Public/Private Ventures

Date: 1995, revised in 2000

About the study: A dozen years later, this research report remains one of the cornerstones of youth mentoring research. In fact, many of the “best practices” used in mentoring programs today are the result of the eight years Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) spent researching Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) agencies. This initial Impact Study is one of several research reports derived from P/PV’s BBBS research, but it is by far the most frequently cited because it deals with the data everyone is most interested in: the outcomes.

For this study, P/PV studied 959 youth, ages 10–16, who applied for a mentor at eight BBBS agencies around the country. Roughly half were matched with a volunteer, with the others forming a control group to compare results against. The researchers did a pre-post analysis consisting of interviews and other self-reported data examining the impact of the mentoring services in six areas:

- Anti-social activities,
- Academic performance, attitudes, and behaviors,
- Relationships with family,
- Relationships with friends,
- Self-concept, and
- Social and cultural enrichment.

## Findings

The findings from this study are perhaps the most widely quoted in the field. Participants:

- Were 46 percent less likely to initiate drug use,
- Were 26 percent less likely to initiate alcohol use (that number reaches 50 percent for the girls in the programs),
- Were 33 percent less likely to hit someone,
- Skipped half as many days of school,
- Showed modest gains in GPA (3 percent gain over control group), and
- Reported improved parent and peer relationships (this was especially true among boys).

Participants showed no substantial changes in perceptions of self-worth and self-confidence, participation in social and cultural activities, or participation in other educational activities, such as homework completion and college planning.

Since their original publication, these statistics have been used as some of the strongest evidence that mentoring is effective. However, perhaps more important than these outcomes is the study’s investigation into the programmatic context that produced them. To their credit, P/PV illustrated that anyone hoping to achieve similar results needs to build similar program structures to those found at the BBBS agencies. Specifically,

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<sup>2</sup> Research summary adapted, with permission, from MacRae, P., & Garringer, M. (2007). *Using mentoring research findings to build effective programs: Collected training supplements and materials from the MRC Web Seminars on Mentoring Research*. Folsom, CA: Mentoring Resource Center.

the Impact Study recommends that programs implement a one-to-one model where matches are made in a structured way based on common interests and other factors. It also recommends that programs provide rigorous screening, training, and match support for mentors, and frequent contact with youth and parents as the match progresses.

Other P/PV studies would further explore the program and relationship characteristics that define successful mentoring, but this study was a tipping point in the creation of mentoring best practices. The question shifted from “can this be successful?” to “how do we ensure good results?”

## Building Relationships With Youth in Program Settings

Author(s): Kristine V. Morrow and Melanie B. Styles

Publisher: Public/Private Ventures

Date: 1995

About the study: Another critical piece of research from the P/PV examination of BBBS, this study focused on 82 matches from eight BBBS sites (four of which were also participants in the Impact Study). The matches, which had been meeting from four to 18 months, were studied over a nine-month period. Participant interviews and surveys were the main forms of data collection.

### Findings

This study had major implications for how we now define the role of a mentor. P/PV found that the approaches mentors took in working with their mentee could be easily divided into two categories: developmental (with the mentor providing broad emotional support and building the relationship around youth goals) and prescriptive (in which the mentor attempted to address specific behaviors through targeted activities or even brought their *own* goals to the match). The results for these two groups were remarkably different.

Youth reported being much more satisfied with the developmental relationships. They felt closer to their mentors and were more likely to seek out their support and advice. Since other research has demonstrated that mentoring outcomes are closely tied to relationship quality, this study provides valuable insight into the styles of mentoring that produce close, supportive relationships. Developmental mentors spent more time building trust with the youth, gave the youth a prominent role in setting goals and deciding activities, regularly engaged in activities that were simply “fun,” and listened more while judging less. Prescriptive mentors were less likely to do these things and their youth reported far less match satisfaction.

A surprising 22 of the 28 prescriptive matches had significant problems or closed outright over the course of the study, while 50 of the 54 developmental matches continued to develop.

These findings do not mean that mentoring relationships should avoid spending time addressing specific needs or problems, nor does it mean that youth are in the driver’s seat regarding activities and other aspects of their participation. However, it does mean that mentoring programs must create matches that put the relationship, the bond between adult and youth, first and purposeful activities second. The positive impacts of mentoring start with the friendship and role modeling a mentor provides, a theme that is further explored in Dr. Jean Rhodes’ model of mentoring (see Table 1, next page). Keeping mentoring matches grounded in close friendship and broad personal development is one of the mentoring field’s big challenges as it is increasingly viewed as a means of addressing serious educational and health-related issues.

Table 1. Dr. Jean Rhodes' Model of Youth Mentoring

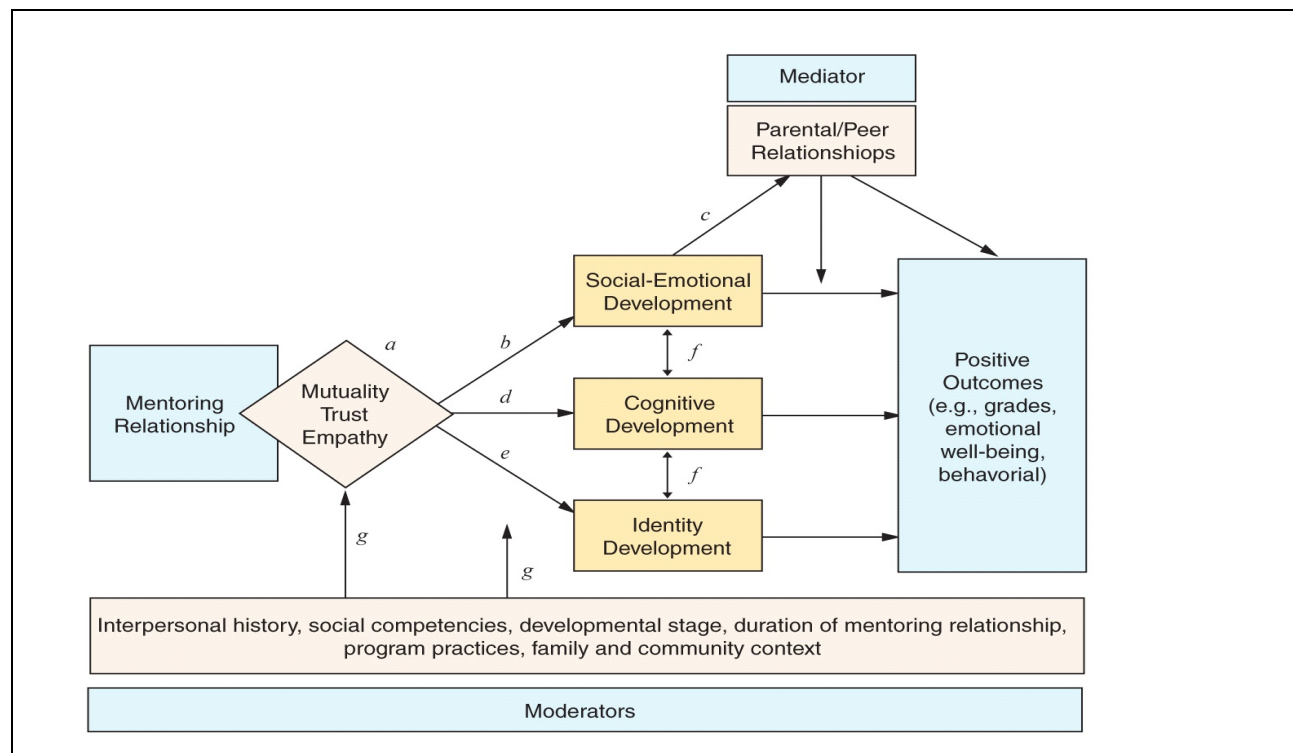


Figure 3.1 Model of Youth Mentoring

Source: Rhodes, J. E. (2005). A Model of Youth Mentoring. In D.L. DuBois & M.J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, (p. 32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dr. Jean Rhodes's model of mentoring offers a wonderful framework for understanding how the work of a mentor, all those little interactions and conversations, translate into meaningful changes in the lives and personalities of mentees. Her model is discussed at length in her excellent book *Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth*. However, there are two interesting aspects of the model that highlight several of the concepts discussed in this presentation:

The entire model hinges on the development of mutuality, trust, and empathy that the mentoring relationship creates. That development is moderated by a whole host of other factors, such as personal history, length of the match, and the youth's family and community environment. But the reality is that programs need to develop close, trusting, valued matches in order to make this model work and achieve their desired outcomes.

Outcomes from a mentoring relationship—whether improved grades, increased self-esteem, or declines in risky behavior—are often mediated by the youth's parent and peer relationships. The youth may develop in the three areas Rhodes identifies (social-emotional, cognitive, and identity) but those improvements may not translate directly into positive outcomes unless those relationships with others improve as well. Thus, mentoring can be viewed as something other than a direct intervention—it's not a straight line from relationship to outcome. The mentor may develop the young person in several ways, but how that newly-developed young person in turn interacts with the world around him or her is what determines the ultimate outcomes.

Programs should take the time to examine Rhodes's model and think about its implications for their own programming. They may find an increased emphasis on parent involvement or social activities is in order. Or, they may be better able to explain to funding sources or partners exactly how their program is having an impact on the youth they serve.

## Making a Difference in Schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Impact Study

Author(s): Carla Herrera, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Tina J. Kauh, Amy F. Feldman, and Jennifer McMaken, with Linda Z. Jucovy

Publisher: Public/Private Ventures

Date: 2007

About the study: A timely companion to the first Impact Study, this evaluation examined the school-based matches at 10 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies (in a total of 76 schools). The study randomly assigned 1,139 students in grades four through nine to either a control group or a mentoring group. Mentors were a combination of adult volunteers and high school-aged “Bigs” who were matched with younger students. Data were provided by youth, teachers, and mentors at the baseline (beginning of the school year), the end of the school year, and at the winter break of the following year. The study examined 31 potential youth outcomes (23 of them related to school or academics), in addition to examining match length, program practices, and the costs of running the programs.

### Findings

This was a very important and timely report for the mentoring field. School-based mentoring’s popularity has surged in recent years, due mostly to the availability of federal funds, the potentially lower cost of running in-school programs, and the inherent difficulties of trying to expand mentoring using only adult volunteers in community-based settings. School-based mentoring, especially the peer mentoring model that matches older and younger students, was in desperate need of definitive research. Thankfully, there were many compelling findings in this study, which highlighted both program practices and the outcomes these programs were achieving:

- School-based mentoring is not tutoring, but it is not necessarily community-based mentoring set in a school either.  
Most matches did not spend significant time on schoolwork-related activities or conversations. These school-based mentors still seemed to be taking a developmental approach in spite of the rather prescriptive emphasis on improved grades and other academic indicators that are common to school-based programs. However, these programs did provide more structure and set activities than typical community-based mentoring programs. The relationships were shorter than community-based programs and had, overall, slightly lower levels of closeness. Perhaps most significantly, these school-based programs seemed to be serving many youth who would not have been involved in community-based mentoring, indicating that in-school programs may be an excellent complement to community-based services.
- There were several positive school-related outcomes, but no impact on out-of-school outcomes. At the end of the first year, Littles showed improvement in overall academic performance and meaningful gains in science and written and oral language. They also had improved class work, turned in homework more frequently, and had fewer school disciplinary infractions. They also reported feeling more competent academically, skipping school less, and indicated that they had a caring non-parent adult in their life more than the control group did. Unfortunately, most of these impacts did not last into the second school year (see next paragraph), nor did there seem to be any impact in the out-of-school areas examined (substance use, peer relations, self-worth, etc.).
- One year of school-based mentoring seems to be insufficient. Educators have long lamented “summer learning loss” – the decline in academic achievements and school connectedness that happens to most youth over their summer break. What was surprising was the “mentoring loss” that happened in these programs: on average, virtually no positive gains from

the previous year were present at the year two follow-up. Littles were still less likely than their control group peers to skip school, but those other positive outcomes had simply disappeared.

There are two main reasons for this loss of impact: one, only half of the mentored students even had a mentor the following year – the result of students graduating to different schools, transferring, or simply opting out of the program. This is a large attrition rate and it implies that school-based programs should try to work with “feeder schools” so that matches can continue across grades and school locations. The second reason for this “loss” was the lack of contact between mentors and mentees over the summer months. Those programs that encouraged or facilitated summer contact seemed to increase the chance that youth would continue with the program and were able to maintain some of the closeness that the match had developed over the year. The need to provide some form of summer contact, and to provide consistent mentoring across school years and sites, are major findings for those providing mentoring in schools, most of whom are currently offering single year program models.

- Once again, program practices matter. Participant training, supervision, and support seemed to be key indicators of relationship success. These program characteristics fostered longer and closer relationships, which were, in turn, predictive of more positive youth outcomes. So, while much of the appeal of school-based mentoring has been that it is “easier” because of the school setting, the matches still need significant support and maintenance if they are to achieve outcomes. Obviously, this level of program support costs money, and the \$1,000 per match that these 10 sites were operating at is roughly comparable to the cost per match in community-based mentoring (but not significantly cheaper, as was once thought).

The coming years will likely see P/PV further examining these data to learn more about the types of mentors and variations in programming that speak to emerging best practices for delivering mentoring in school settings.

## The Test of Time: Predictors and Effects of Duration in Youth Mentoring Programs

Author(s): Jean B. Grossman and Jean E. Rhodes

Publisher: *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 30, No. 2

Date: April 2002

About the study: This study made a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge about mentoring by fully exploring the impact of match duration on mentoring outcomes. Esteemed researchers Dr. Jean Grossman and Dr. Jean Rhodes studied 1,138 youth in eight BBBS agencies. The study, which also featured a control group of youth, focused on the mentees’ parent relations, school attitudes and feelings of scholastic competence, grades and attendance, and feelings of self-worth. The researchers also examined the relationship between the quality and duration of the mentoring matches.

### Findings

The study showed a strong relationship between relationship length and quality of outcomes. Youth who had been matched for 12 months or longer showed significant improvements in self-worth, feelings of social acceptance, feelings of scholastic competence, improved parent relations, with decreases in drug and alcohol use.

Conversely, youth whose matches had terminated before three months (for a wide variety of reasons) showed significant *regressions* in self-worth and feelings of scholastic competence. They actually wound up worse in these areas than youth in the control group. This finding highlights the critical nature of the early months in mentoring relationships and places heightened importance on the match support services programs provide.

Overall, youth whose matches did not last six months showed no positive impacts. They did, however, show an *increase* in alcohol use.

There were several factors that influenced these results:

- Youth from abusive backgrounds were more likely to have their matches dissolved. This may indicate a need for more formal training tailored to the background and needs of specific youth and perhaps increased access to other youth services through strategic partnerships.
- Matches serving older youth (13–16) were more likely to terminate than matches serving younger (10–12).
- Married volunteers were much more likely to terminate, perhaps indicating that family needs limited mentors' flexibility and availability for meeting times.
- When looking at the factors that predicted match duration, relationship quality was by far the biggest influence – no surprise in light of much of the other research covered in this presentation.

This report raised the stakes for mentoring programs nationwide: no longer was mentoring something that could be viewed as only a positive. Mentoring, done poorly or with the wrong types of youth, could actually damage a young person rather than helping. While a sobering finding, it has had a positive impact on the field. Programs are increasingly aware of the specific needs of the youth they serve and are enhancing mentor training, activities, and supports so that their volunteers provide proper assistance. Programs are also more likely to refer youth to other services and recognize that some youth problems may be beyond the capabilities of mentors. And programs are placing greater emphasis on match duration and consistency of meeting times, developing program structures that facilitate long-term mentoring relationships.

### Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review

Author(s): David L. DuBois, Bruce E. Holloway, Jeffrey C. Valentine, and Harris Cooper

Publisher: *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 30, No. 2

Date: April 2002

Type of analysis: As with the BBBS Impact Studies, this meta-analysis by Dr. David DuBois et al. had major ramifications for mentoring programs in the United States. Instead of looking at the practices of one program or one model, this research looked at the methods and results of many programs and attempted to examine the effectiveness of mentoring at more of a macro level.

The meta-analysis began with a literature review that identified and codified existing scientifically valid program evaluations. The researchers narrowed the field to evaluations of one-to-one mentoring programs that offered pre-post data or a control group. The programs also had to serve mentees 19 or younger for inclusion in the analysis (likely leaving out many programs that offered services transitioning youth into careers or higher education). In all, the researchers identified 55 separate research reports containing 575 instances of reported effect sizes (i.e., changes in the youth served). The researchers also examined characteristics of the various program models, the youth they served, and their mentoring relationships. All these data were then categorized, aggregated, reorganized, and generally subjected to a seemingly endless assortment of data analysis procedures – with rather surprising results.

### Findings

Overall, the news on the impact of mentoring was good: the authors concluded that formal mentoring programs *could* reproduce the positive benefits that natural mentoring relationships had been known to

provide. However, the meta-analysis also showed that while these programs were, overall, having a positive impact, the impact itself was rather small. The effect size for mentoring was far short of those reported for other psychological, educational, behavioral, and mental health treatments for youth. In fact, the authors indicated that it may be exceedingly difficult to say that mentoring “works” across the board because of the many specific program and participant factors that moderate impact and outcomes.

Needless to say, this news was somewhat unsettling for the mentoring community. This was not a study of one program’s specific model. This was an analysis of a wide cross section of mentoring programs that reached the broad conclusion that mentoring, as currently provided, was not fostering huge changes for the nation’s youth compared to other interventions. An effect size of that stature might spell trouble in any future cost-benefit analyses that might be performed. However, those who dug a little deeper into the meta-analysis found the road map for changing all that.

The real value in the DuBois study is in those moderators of impact – the personal traits, program structures, and relationship characteristics that improved outcomes. When one looks at those moderators, a much brighter picture of youth mentoring emerges:

- The programs in the study that provided ongoing training for mentors, offered matches structured activities, set firm requirements around frequency of mentor-mentee contact, offered mentor support services, or found ways to increase parent involvement showed a greater impact. All these factors were strong predictors of higher outcomes for youth.
- The programs where youth felt most positive about their relationships also had higher effect sizes.
- The impact of mentoring seemed to be greatest for youth who were most at-risk. There was evidence that mentoring helps those who need it most.

Viewed through this lens, the meta-analysis is actually a call for program quality. The below-average impact was produced not by inherent problems with mentoring as a strategy, but by the number of programs not following what are now considered “best practices” for delivering services. Restricted to programs that followed a structure based on today’s body of research, the analysis might have painted a much rosier picture. However, by including a wide variety of programs, both good and not-so-good, the analysis offered a realistic portrait of how mentoring was being delivered, while also illuminating a set of program features that could lead to improved outcomes.

The practice of youth mentoring has come a long way in the last decade. It will be interesting to examine overall effect sizes in future meta-analyses. With an ever-increasing body of knowledge about youth mentoring, and the translation of that knowledge into the services at the program site level, one would expect that future “big picture” analyses of mentoring outcomes would find improved results.

In the end, the meta-analysis offered as many questions as answers: how do individual children’s circumstances affect outcomes? Does mentoring have a lasting impact after matches end? As comprehensive as this analysis was, it only represented the tip of a very large iceberg of questions.

## Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement

Author(s): Jean E. Rhodes and David L. DuBois

Publisher: *Social Policy Report*, Vol. 20, No. 3

Date: 2006

Type of analysis: This recent journal article offers a clear, concise overview of current mentoring concepts,

research, and practice. It combines a review of “what we know” about mentoring with policy analysis and a discussion about the expansion of youth mentoring. The policy elements are not directly related to this presentation, but the summary of mentoring research findings is very comprehensive.

## Findings

The discussion of research findings covers the full range of program practices and mentoring models, but a few of the key, research-derived findings presented include:

- Relationship closeness – Research indicates that the impact of mentoring hinges on this factor.
- Mentoring approaches – Mentors must provide a role model of relevant skills (and not negative ones). There is strong evidence that a youth-centered (developmental) approach seems to work best. However, matches do need structured activities and meaningful goals. Successful mentoring relationships cannot be *entirely* unstructured and friendship-based.
- Consistency and duration of meetings – Regular, stable meetings for one year are most likely to produce results. There is also strong evidence that programs should do everything they can to keep matches from terminating prior to six months.
- Coordination with other services and supports – There is evidence that improved interaction and coordination of mentoring activities with parents, teachers, counselors, case workers, and other adults in the mentee’s life can enhance mentoring outcomes.

This article nicely summarizes many of the key concepts discussed in this presentation. Practitioners interested in public policy and funding decisions related to mentoring will likely enjoy the discussion of how this body of knowledge on mentoring influences (or should) the expansion of youth mentoring in the United States as a strategy to address serious youth and societal needs.

## Best Practices

These research reports, and many other local program evaluations, paint a fairly complete picture of what mentoring can achieve and how programs can achieve it. Recent years have seen the development of lists of “elements of effective practice” by organizations such as MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR, 2006a), multiple state mentoring partnerships, and direct service providers such as BBBS. The following list summarizes the commonly-recognized best practices for running an effective program.

- Targeted recruitment and thorough screening of appropriate mentors and youth – As the research noted previously indicates, not all volunteers may be a good fit for the demands of a mentoring relationship (in terms of closeness and duration) and not all youth may be in a state-of-mind that can benefit from one. Mentoring programs must ensure that the adults they recruit are both safe and suitable for their mentoring role and that the youth they target needs that are within the scope of a mentor to change. This is not to say that programs should be overly-restrictive in who they recruit – no one is advocating for mentoring to be narrowly applied to hand-picked groups. However, programs do need to ensure that the populations they are serving, and the volunteers who will be forming relationships, are likely to have a successful mentoring experience.
- Customized training for mentors, youth, and, if appropriate, parents and others who have a role in the match – One of the big changes in the youth mentoring field in recent years is the recognition that not all mentoring is equal. Some programs serve very difficult and transient youth populations (foster care children, for example), and mentors working with these groups need specific training on their

mentees' circumstances, strengths, and challenges. All mentors will be tested by their mentee in a variety of ways as the relationship evolves – learning coping skills and strategies for overcoming barriers can increase the odds of making it through these challenges to have a long, successful match. Regardless of the program setting or goals, all mentors should be trained in youth development principles, listening and communication skills, and the role of a mentor, with additional topics added over time as the need arises. Youth and parents should also be provided pre-match training (or at least an orientation) to prepare them for the work that is ahead.

- Sound matching, monitoring, supervision, and retention procedures – Recruitment and pre-match preparation will mean little if programs do not make sound matches and monitor them properly over time. Most programs develop a set of matching criteria consisting of such attributes as common mentor/mentee interests, compatibility of meeting times and locations, similar personal backgrounds, and, depending on the program, such considerations as race, religion, or gender. Matches should be monitored at least monthly early in the match and quarterly thereafter, assuming that the match is progressing as planned. These check-ins should involve the mentor, youth, and parents to make sure that all parties are happy with the match and that any issues can be addressed. Programs should also have retention strategies that reward and honor all participants for the hard work they do in the program.
- Closure procedures that leave all participants satisfied – Mentoring relationships end for many reasons, some good, others not. The closure process in a mentoring program should be designed to let all participants reflect on the experience, process their feelings about it, and, ideally, leave the program on a positive note. It is especially important for young people to feel like the experience was valuable and positive: it may greatly influence how they approach other relationships with adults in the future.
- Process and outcome evaluation – Quality mentoring programs are constantly analyzing and enhancing their services. Program evaluation can highlight aspects of service delivery that need improvement, demonstrate the usefulness of mentoring strategies or program curriculum, provide evidence of success to funding sources, and generate many qualitative and quantitative results that can be used in marketing, recruitment, and sustainability activities.
- Skilled and committed staff – One of the great challenges for many types of youth services is staff turnover. Mentoring programs are often quite small, using only one or two paid staff members and a rotating cast of volunteers. The disruption in services when a program coordinator leaves can be substantial and programs should do what they can to minimize turnover and provide ongoing professional development opportunities to that their practitioners can keep up-to-date on the latest concepts in mentoring.
- Stable funding – As noted in the Rhodes and Grossman research cited previously, matches that end abruptly after a short period of time have the potential to do harm to the youth involved. And certainly nothing can sour a community on mentoring more than having a trusted program close its doors in a funding crisis. Thus, sustainability planning and resource development are critical components of running an effective program. Adequate funding allows programs to operate with a full staff, helps pay for special activities (such as group outings for youth or volunteer recognition events), and keeps the program from having to cut corners in how services are delivered.

Depending on the mentoring model, there may be other best practices that are critical to program success. For example, the recent P/PV research into school-based mentoring revealed that providing a structure for continued contact between mentors and mentees over the summer months was a critical component (Herrera

et al, 2007). Programs designed for foster care youth may place a special emphasis on consistent meeting times, as the mentor may be the only consistent aspect of the child's life as they transition from home to home. Peer mentoring programs may want to place extra emphasis on match supervision in an effort to mitigate potential "negative role modeling" that can happen when peer mentors deviate from program guidelines.

Because these core best practices can be endlessly modified and expanded depending on the population served and the goals of the program, it is critical that mentoring programs develop a logic model illustrating exactly how their services will result in the desired impact for youth. This logic model can also drive program evaluation, providing a road map to understanding which parts of the program may need refinement over time.

These best practices highlight the structures that can lead to success at the programming level. However, what about best practices at the *relationship* level? What are the strategies the research indicates are best for mentors and their relationships?

- Take a developmental approach – While there is plenty of room in mentoring relationships for purposeful activities and hard work towards goals youth set, research indicates that close mentoring relationships develop more easily when mentors take a broad youth development approach. Looking at Rhodes' model of mentoring (p.4), one can see that the mutuality, trust, and empathy formed in the relationship are the basis for internal change in the young person. Matches sometimes have a hard time generating this trusting bond if the mentor is too focused on "prescriptive" actions – activities that will "fix" the young person's "problems." Mentors must focus on building a close relationship, especially early in the match, and resist the urge to rush into big projects or set demanding goals. Mentors are there to help youth find their own paths and their own voices.
- Be consistent and committed – Much of the research covered previously shows a clear relationship between mentors' consistency, their matches' longevity, and positive outcomes for youth. Mentoring only works when mentors are literally there for the child. The role modeling, the sharing of ideas, the listening, the stability a mentor can provide to a troubled young person – none of this can happen if mentors are missing meetings or terminating their match prematurely. If mentors wish to avoid doing harm, they must stand by their commitment and meet program expectations for meeting with their mentee.
- Understand the scope and limits of a mentor's role – Mentors sometimes struggle with the limited nature of their role. They often see mentees dealing with serious issues and want to intervene. They may get drawn into family conflicts, get focused on "fixing" the child's circumstances, or provide help beyond the limits of what the program can support. Mentors need to remember that they are not psychologists, teachers, or social workers. As volunteers, they should not be taking on paraprofessional roles. Instead, they should recognize, with the help of program staff, when helping with a particular youth problem is beyond their ability. However, with the assistance of match supervisors, mentors can play a critical role in referring youth and their families to other support services. In this way, mentors can still help them get the other support they need while not deviating from their traditional "trusted friend" role.
- Work with effectively with program staff, parents, and other stakeholders in the relationship – If mentors are to be successful, they need to make sure the support they are providing works in concert with the other supports and "strengths" in the child's life. Open, positive communication with program staff, parents, and other educators and youth service professionals is critical. Some program models, such as school-based mentoring, often limit the communication between mentors and other

stakeholders, such as parents or teachers. Other models encourage extensive communication among the “team” of people working with a particular young person. Regardless of the configuration of the program, mentors must realize that they are not doing their work alone and that their mentee will have an easier time benefiting from the relationship if the advice and support of the mentor does not conflict with the other supports in their life.

When looked at together, these two sets of best practices for youth mentoring both revolve around the concepts of guidance and responsibility. The program must design its services responsibly and support the mentors as they do their meaningful, yet often difficult, work. Mentors, in turn, must be consistent and supportive, walking side-by-side with the youth through whatever lies ahead. Thus, doing mentoring well – from both the program and relationship perspectives – is a matter of being there to provide meaningful help when needed.

## **Resources for Effective Mentoring**

One of the biggest changes in the mentoring field in the last decade is an exponential increase in the number of quality program development materials available to programs at the local level. The work of the National Mentoring Center (NMC), MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, BBBS, and others has created a wealth of how-to guides, planning toolkits, and online tutorials for managing almost every aspect of a mentoring program. We conclude this presentation by examining the recently-revised mentoring publications from the *Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities* series, published by the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence at The George Washington University. Additional resources for programs are listed at the end of this paper.

The purpose of the *Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities* series is to provide practitioners with expert advice, best practices, and practical how-to materials that they can use to implement programs in the areas of youth mentoring and school safety. The six mentoring publications in the series were all originally developed by the National Mentoring Center as part of its work with several federally-funded mentoring initiatives. Through funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the U.S. Department of Justice, the Hamilton Fish Institute has worked with the NMC to infuse these publications with new research and updated resource listings. When viewed as a whole, these six publications offer the key strategies and tools for designing, implementing, and maintaining a successful youth mentoring program.

## **Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring**

This guide serves as the series’ most comprehensive program planning tool. While written mostly with community-based programs in mind, its strategies and principles can be adapted for use in a variety of other program settings, such as schools and faith institutions. Based on research, and the NMC’s own experience working with thousands of local programs, the guide identifies three major phases of program development: planning to start a new program, designing mentoring services, and sustaining the program through increased organizational capacity.

The planning section details activities such as conducting a needs assessment, creating a logic model, identifying and working with partners, and preparing to launch the program. The designing services topics include volunteer recruitment, training participants, monitoring matches, and conducting a program evaluation. The sustainability section thoroughly examines resource development strategies, but also covers such topics as staff development and program marketing. Each section provides dozens of self-assessment questions so that programs can make key decisions as they develop and implement services, as well as listings of additional resources that they can use to enhance their program.

The guide also provides an overall “program progress” checklist and a timeline for a typical first year for a new mentoring program.

## Generic Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual

One of the cornerstones of any mentoring program is a policy and procedure manual that provides governance and guidance in the delivery of services. While most nonprofit agencies and schools have written policies and procedures, mentoring programs within these settings should develop a manual that specifically addresses their purpose, rules, and procedures. Written policies and procedures contribute greatly to the long-term stability and safety of a program by:

- Providing documentation of the organization’s vision and operating principles,
- Providing staff with clear guidelines on how to administer the program,
- Addressing risk management issues,
- Ensuring consistent operations despite possible turnover in key staff,
- Serving as a blueprint for program replication and expansion, and
- Serving as a baseline for continuous improvement.

This workbook offers a set of sample policies and procedures that are common for a typical community-based youth mentoring program. School-based programs (and other models) can also use this book as a starting point, provided they include relevant policies or regulations and modify the content to reflect the exact nature of their services (for example, most school-based programs will not need an overnight visit policy if all off-campus contact is barred).

In addition to this “full” version, which offers advice and self-assessment questions for programs, a “template” version is also available. This Microsoft Word document allows programs to modify and print their own finished manual – a resource that lays the foundation for all of the other work the program will do as it implements services.

## Training New Mentors

Because the relationship between a mentor and young person might seem to be a “natural” connection, programs sometimes overlook the importance of training. However, like anyone stepping into a new role, mentors are more likely to succeed if they participate in useful training sessions that prepare them for what lies ahead. Because the tone of a mentor-youth relationship can be set quickly during the first few meetings, it is important that some training take place before the two begin to meet.

This guide provides a set of initial training activities that programs can use as-is, or adapt for their own needs. Topics include the role of a mentor, active listening skills, youth development concepts, and role plays where mentors can practice communication skills.

The guide also includes substantial information on how to facilitate training, including preparing a curriculum, building a training agenda, setting up the training space, and tailoring activities to appeal to a variety of adult learning styles. Additional listings of training resources guide practitioners to other curriculum sources for either preservice or ongoing mentor training. The guide also includes sample agendas for preparing mentees and their parents.

## The ABCs of School-based Mentoring

This guide was extensively revised in light of the new research on school-based mentoring conducted by P/PV (Herrera et al., 2007). It is designed to assist any mentoring program that wants to deliver services at the school site. Some school-based programs may be entirely staffed and supported by school personnel and facilities – others might be a collaborative effort between a traditionally community-based program and a school or school district. Regardless of the configuration, this guide can help new programs define roles and responsibilities, determine staffing patterns and operational procedures, and develop effective partnerships. It also provides advice for integrating the program into the existing services and culture of the school. Worksheets, sample forms, and other planning tools help the reader plan around the concepts presented.

Among the critical additions to this revised version are two new program recommendations derived from the new P/PV school-based mentoring study: keeping matches in contact over the summer months and the need to identify strategies (such as working with feeder schools) that can keep matches together over multiple years and across multiple school sites. The matches in the P/PV study only received about 5 months of mentoring per school year on average, and half of the participants ended their participation after one year. This guide explores how programs can minimize this attrition and build consistency and longevity in the school-based mentoring relationships.

## Building Relationships: A Guide for Mentors

This publication is written directly for mentors, providing them with advice and strategies that can guide their developing relationship with a young person. P/PV, in their previous work evaluating BBBS community-based matches, identified 10 key qualities of effective mentors – quotes from mentors and youth illustrate these core concepts of mentoring:

1. Be a friend
2. Have realistic goals and expectations
3. Have fun together
4. Give your mentee voice and choice in deciding on activities
5. Be positive
6. Let your mentee have much of the control over what the two of you talk about – and how you talk about it
7. Listen openly
8. Respect the trust your mentee places in you
9. Remember that your relationship is with the youth, not the youth's parent
10. Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship

While establishing a friendship may sound easy, it often is not. Adults and youth are separated by age and, in many cases, by background and culture. Even mentors with good instincts can stumble or be blocked by difficulties that arise from these differences. It takes time for youth to feel comfortable just talking to their mentor, and longer still before they feel comfortable enough to share a confidence. Learning to trust – especially for young people who have already been let down by adults in their lives – is a gradual process. Mentees cannot be expected to trust their mentors simply because program staff members have put them together. Developing a friendship requires skill and time and this guide can get new mentoring relationships off on the right foot.

## Sustainability Planning and Resource Development for Youth Mentoring Programs

As youth mentoring has increased in popularity over the last decade, so has the competition for funds to support local mentoring programs. While mentoring programs come in all shapes and sizes – from small grassroots efforts with shoestring budgets to multimillion-dollar not-for-profits – all face the constant

challenge of finding sufficient funds to deliver their services over time. Mentoring programs face competition not only from each other, but from other youth-serving and social-profit organizations as well. With program staff focused on providing quality services to youth, resource development and sustainability planning are tasks that occasionally fall through the cracks. Even with concerted effort by program staff, the road to program sustainability can be filled with unexpected challenges and tough decisions.

This guidebook is intended to give youth mentoring programs a basic overview of resource development planning and many of the major funding sources that programs target through their planning efforts. Specific chapters, authored by successful program fundraisers and expert NMC trainers, teach program staff how to pursue funding from corporations and businesses, foundations, government sources, individual giving campaigns, and special events and other local sponsorships.

The appendices of the guidebook cover additional topics and provide tools that can help with a program's sustainability efforts, including involving your board in resource development (a critical aspect for most mentoring programs) and ethical considerations in resource development (always important when programs are serving and advocating for youth).

These resources, along with the many others listed at the end of this paper, provide mentoring programs with a blueprint for operationalizing the research-based best practices discussed earlier, while allowing for variations and adjustments in program practice that can make their services even more effective for their specific youth populations and program circumstances. The future for youth mentoring will involve finding new strategies and programming nuances that build on the current research base on mentoring while still preserving the core intervention of friendship and role modeling that produces the magic of mentoring.

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## Additional Reading and Resources

### From the National Mentoring Center

Marketing for the Recruitment of Mentors: A Guide to Finding and Attracting Volunteers – <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/marketing.pdf>

Measuring the Quality of Mentor Youth Relationships: A Tool for Mentoring Programs – <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/packeight.pdf>

Mentoring Program Development: A Start-Up Toolkit – [http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/startup\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/startup_toolkit.pdf)

Supporting Mentors – <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/packsix.pdf>

Training New Mentees: A Manual for Preparing Youth in Mentoring Programs – [http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/training\\_new\\_mentees.pdf](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/training_new_mentees.pdf)

Other titles, such as the *Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum* and back issues of the *NMC Bulletin*, can also be downloaded at: [http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/nmc\\_pubs.php](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/nmc_pubs.php)

### **Select Titles from the Mentoring Resource Center (a project of the NMC)**

Making the Grade: A Guide to Incorporating Academic Achievement Into Mentoring Programs and Relationships – [http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/making\\_the\\_grade.pdf](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/making_the_grade.pdf)

The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Program's Guide to Screening and Background Checks – <http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/screening.pdf>

Going the Distance: A Guide to Building Lasting Relationships in Mentoring Programs – [http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/going\\_the\\_distance.pdf](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/going_the_distance.pdf)

Preparing Participants for Mentoring: The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Program's Guide to Initial Training of Volunteers, Youth, and Parents – <http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/training.pdf>

Effective Mentor Recruitment: Getting Organized, Getting Results – <http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/recruitment.pdf>

Ongoing Training for Mentors: 12 Interactive Sessions for U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Programs – [http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ongoing\\_training.pdf](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ongoing_training.pdf)

Building a Sustainable Mentoring Program: A Framework for Resource Development Planning – <http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/sustainability.pdf>

Guide to Mentoring for Parents and Guardians – [http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/parent\\_handbook.doc](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/parent_handbook.doc)

Marketing Toolkit for Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Mentoring Programs – <http://www.edmentoring.org/toolkit/>

The Guide to Key Mentoring Research – [http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ws2\\_supplement1.pdf](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ws2_supplement1.pdf)

Frequently Asked Questions About Research and Evaluation – [http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ws2\\_supplement2.pdf](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ws2_supplement2.pdf)

## Key Mentoring Research Resources

Bauldry, S. (2006). *Positive Support: Mentoring and Depression among High-risk Youth*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. Available [http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/202\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/202_publication.pdf)

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Jucovy, L. (2003). *Amachi: Mentoring children of prisoners in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. Available [http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/21\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/21_publication.pdf)

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More useful mentoring research articles can be found in Dr. Jean Rhodes' "Research Corner" on the

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership Web site at  
[http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/index.php?cid=63](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/index.php?cid=63)