

# Practitioner Insights Research-to-Results

Child TRENDS.

...information for program designers and practitioners on recruiting mentors in out-of-school time programs.

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## RECRUITING MENTORS IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS: WHAT'S INVOLVED?

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### BACKGROUND

Many young people would benefit from having a mentor, but some out-of-school time programs face the challenge of recruiting mentors to meet the needs of these young people.<sup>1,2</sup> This brief summarizes steps that programs can use to recruit mentors and recommends resources that can be used in this process.

### WHAT IS MENTORING, AND IS IT IMPORTANT?

Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the young people involved (or the *mentees*).<sup>3</sup> Although mentoring programs vary in their goals, emphasis, and structure, research suggests that mentoring can be an effective tool for enhancing the positive development of youth. However, mentoring programs are more likely to succeed if they are driven more by the needs and interests of youth rather than by the expectations of the adult volunteers.<sup>4</sup> Research indicates that success in mentoring is related to high levels of contact between the mentor and mentee, as well as by the commitment of the young person to the process.<sup>5</sup> Although there is evidence showing that mentoring relationships lasting less than three months can actually produce negative outcomes for young people, there is strong evidence showing that longer lasting mentoring relationships can produce positive outcomes. The longer the mentoring relationship lasts, the more positive the outcomes. Some experimental studies find that young people who participate in mentoring relationships reap a number of positive educational, health, and social benefits.<sup>6</sup> These benefits include:

1. **Educational Achievement:** Mentored youth experience positive academic returns. These young people tend to have better attendance, a higher likelihood of pursuing higher education, and more positive attitudes towards school.<sup>7</sup>
2. **Health and Safety:** Mentoring helps prevent substance abuse and may reduce some negative risk behaviors among youth.<sup>8</sup>
3. **Social and Emotional Development:** Youth participating in mentoring relationships exhibit more positive social attitudes toward their peers and their parents.<sup>9</sup>

### HOW CAN PROGRAMS RECRUIT MENTORS?

To a large extent, the success of a mentoring program is determined by how successfully mentors are recruited. While empirical research on requirements for mentors is limited, program practitioners often use a variety of recruitment tools and targeted strategies to initiate a mentoring program and identify potential mentors. Here are some ways to recruit mentors.

### ***RECRUITING STEP 1: CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PROGRAM***

The first step in the recruitment process is to conduct a needs assessment to identify the challenges and problems facing children, as well as the existing services available within the program and the larger community.<sup>10</sup> Such an assessment will help youth workers identify the types of individuals to recruit as mentors.

For example, if a program seeks to target children between the ages of 5 and 12 who might benefit from improved social skills, senior citizens might be a good source of mentors. Or, if the identified need for youth in your program is improving reading and other academic skills, college students might be an ideal population from which to recruit mentors. If your program has identified the need to help young people learn about the workforce or possible career options, recruiting employees from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors would be an avenue to pursue.<sup>11</sup> Further information on conducting a needs assessment may be found at [www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/).

### ***RECRUITING STEP 2: DETERMINE THE TYPE OF MENTORING TO BE OFFERED***

After the needs of program participants have been identified clearly through a needs assessment, the program can then determine the type of mentoring that will be offered. Several different mentoring approaches exist, ranging from traditional one-on-one adult-youth matching to e-mentoring. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages.

- ***Traditional Mentoring:*** This type of mentoring matches one adult with one young person and focuses primarily on the mentee. The overall goal in using this mentoring approach is to achieve a close bond between the young person and an adult. Research shows that traditional mentoring can foster valuable benefits, such as improving young people's academic achievement and school attendance, and decreasing their risk of substance abuse.<sup>12</sup> This type of mentoring arrangement requires more mentors than does group mentoring and also requires frequent social interaction between the mentor and the mentee.<sup>13</sup> If recruiting mentors is a great challenge, then group or team mentoring matching approaches might be considered.<sup>14</sup>
- ***Group Mentoring:*** This type of mentoring involves one adult and up to four young people, allowing programs to reach a greater number of youth than using the traditional mentoring approach. At the same time, this approach reduces the time programs must spend on recruiting, screening, and supervising mentors, which consequently helps to lower program costs.<sup>15</sup> The goals of group mentoring for young people are often socialization, academic support, building self-esteem, goal setting, and bonding with peers.<sup>16</sup> Research suggests that one benefit of group mentoring can be an improvement in social skills.<sup>17</sup> Despite the advantages of group mentoring, one of the most frequently reported drawbacks to this approach is the inability of mentors to give each young person in the group an equal amount of attention. Another difficulty stemming from this approach is balancing the attitude and behavior of mentees in the group. If some young people show negative behavior, such as fighting, teasing, or excluding others, this behavior may affect other participants adversely and even cause them to drop out of the program.<sup>18</sup> This form of mentoring, however, can be more effective if groups are formed carefully and mentors receive the proper training about group cohesiveness and youth socialization.<sup>19</sup>
- ***Team Mentoring:*** This approach consists of several adults working with small groups of young people. This type of mentoring can help participants understand how to work in teams with diverse personalities and styles to achieve goals.<sup>20</sup> Team mentoring can be effective in creating mentor-rich environments whereby youth can be exposed to several mentors on a regular basis.

For example, if a young person is from a single-parent household and is matched with a couple from a two-parent household, the mentee can be exposed to role models in a family setting.<sup>21</sup> With this approach, not only will youth have greater access to mentors, but also the time commitment and pressure on an individual mentor may be reduced. A limitation to this approach, however, is that mentors who are part of a team may be less committed to attending regular meetings because they know that other mentors will be there. Mentors who are part of a team may feel that their absence will matter less than it would with the one-on-one mentoring approach.<sup>22</sup> Mentor retention, therefore, can be a greater challenge with a team mentoring approach.

- **E-Mentoring:** This arrangement involves the use of e-mail and the Internet. E-mail and the Internet can bridge geographic and time differences because people can e-mail 24 hours a day, seven days a week no matter where they are. Many of the goals of one-on-one mentoring can be achieved through e-mentoring, but concerns have been raised that this approach does not evolve into intense and meaningful mentoring relationships. Therefore, it is important to set goals, such as making sure e-mentoring pairs connect regularly. In addition, programs that are based on e-mentoring must have excellent technology capacities offered in a secure environment. Though e-mentoring can be effective, this type of arrangement requires a great deal of human resources and time to ensure the safety of young people at all times.<sup>23</sup>

### ***RECRUITING STEP 3: ENSURE A WELL-MANAGED PROGRAM***

In planning a mentoring program, it is important to ensure that the program is well managed to support long-term sustainability.<sup>24</sup> One suggestion in this area is to establish an advisory group consisting of community leaders, youth, parents, and other potential stakeholders who can provide guidance. The program should then develop a comprehensive system for managing program information such as finances, personnel records, and volunteer hours. In addition, it is critical to design a resource development plan that allows for diversified fundraising, including in-kind gifts, contributions from individuals, and corporate donations. Lastly, it is critical to design a system to monitor program operations, such as reviewing policies and procedures on a regular basis. By implementing sound management strategies, the mentoring program will have a higher likelihood of success.<sup>25</sup>

Additional information can be found at

<http://www.mentoring.org/DownloadFiles/elementseffectivepractice.pdf>.

### ***RECRUITING STEP 4: FORGE EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS***

Successful mentoring programs devote time and resources to cultivating relationships with program partners. Once established, these relationships can become long-term sources of volunteers.<sup>26</sup>

***Partnering With Colleges and Universities:*** College students can bring unique strengths to a mentoring program and a mentee relationship, although they are less likely to become long-term mentors. The following strategies may help you recruit college students as mentors for your program.

- **Research** to find out if there is anyone connected with your organization (staff, board members, pastor, current volunteers) who can introduce your program to a local college or university. In addition, access the college or university Web site to connect with the financial aid office. The Federal Work-Study Program funds jobs for students with financial need, allowing them to work for nonprofit organizations at no expense to the organizations.<sup>27</sup>

- **Contact** the community relations office, volunteer center, office for student activities, education department, or student services center to establish a partnership for recruiting mentors. If the initial office contact cannot assist you, be prepared to ask for suggestions on what office can.<sup>28</sup>
- **Approach** the campus contact with organized details on what your organization can do to help the college or university to achieve its service goals and how the institution can assist your program. If no pool of volunteers currently exists on campus, discuss the possibilities of implementing recruitment strategies campus-wide, such as:<sup>29</sup>
  - Setting up a table at the entrance of dining halls, libraries, and the student union;
  - Presenting at leadership clubs, fraternity or sorority meetings, or other venues;
  - Sending campus-wide emails or posting an ad in the campus newspaper; and
  - Posting flyers on campus.

**Tip:** Timing is critical for college students, and they are more likely to begin new service projects at the start of new semesters or quarters. Use the academic school year calendar to help plan your approach.

**Partnering With Faith-Based Organizations:** Congregations of all faiths are excellent sources of potential mentors. Faith-based institutions often have talented and committed members who are willing to volunteer their time because mentoring puts faith into practice.<sup>30, 31</sup> Faith-based mentoring can be useful if the goal is character development. The following strategies may be used to recruit mentors from a faith-based organization.

- **Assess** the religious orientation of your program participants. Few people will disagree that religion can be a sensitive topic within communities. Therefore, it is critical to discuss the desire to recruit mentors from faith-based organizations with the parents or guardians of program participants.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the program can be designed with a purely secular focus so selecting mentors could be made without regard to the religious affiliation of the students.<sup>33</sup> This type of assessment will help determine the type of faith-based organizations with which the program should cultivate partnerships.
- **Research** communities of faith within and around youth-serving organizations. The faith community is a logical place from which to recruit mentors, given the various auxiliaries and pools of volunteers. Faith-based organizations often feel an allegiance to improve the lives of those in the immediate community; therefore, a good place to start is to perform a community scan of such organizations near the program site.<sup>34</sup> Proceed by contacting the ministry office of the nearby organization to present and discuss the need for mentors.

**Tip:** Be aware that mentors from faith-based organizations may come prepared to be spiritual role models in the daily lives of their mentees. Therefore, invest time, energy, and resources into mentor training to ensure that the mentor's faith does not infringe on the religious freedom and beliefs of youth being mentored.<sup>35</sup>

**Partnering With Seniors:** Older adults and retired adults represent an under-utilized source of mentors in that they tend to value the importance of volunteering and often have more time for volunteering than many younger men and women.<sup>2</sup> Some older adults, however, have specific reasons that may make them more reluctant to volunteer, such as concerns about safety, transportation, and finances. They also may lack confidence that they can succeed as mentors. Thus, be prepared to

acknowledge these barriers in your recruitment campaign. The following strategies could be useful as you attempt to partner effectively with seniors.<sup>36</sup>

- **Contact** senior centers or tenant committees of apartment buildings near the program site and ask for time to give a presentation. It is critical to locate developments near the program in light of the transportation concerns that older adults may express.
- **Advertise** the mentor position and expectations in flyers, posters, mailings, and presentations at community groups, senior centers, or medical practices. Be prepared to expend some energy and resources in cultivating relationships with a wide range of groups that could be valuable partners, such as:
  - Associations and unions for retired teachers, nurses, social workers, and government employees;
  - Local chapters of the AARP;
  - Local chapters of service-focused fraternities and sororities; and
  - Religious institutions.<sup>37</sup>

**Tip:** Recruiting older men may require some additional effort. Be sure that men who are current or former mentors participate in the recruitment presentations and talk about their experiences.<sup>38</sup>

## RESOURCES FOR MENTOR RECRUITMENT

The following resources may be useful in recruiting mentors for your program.

### National Mentoring Partnership

[http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff)

Provides information for individuals and mentoring organizations, including training for mentors and mentees. See especially, *The National Agenda for Action: Background and Analysis of Mentoring Today*.

### Public/Private Ventures

<http://www.ppv.org>

Provides an entire section of free publications on topics such as recruiting mentors, technical assistance for new mentors, training mentors, and contemporary issues in mentoring.

### Faith-Centered Mentoring and More

<http://www.faithmentionandmore.com>

Provides creative insights for incorporating faith-based mentoring into programs through faith-based partnerships.

### Evaluation, Management, and Training

<http://mt.org/publications/index.htm>

Offers downloadable program development and mentor regional training curricula. Topics include best program practices, working with gang members, fundraising, and marketing.

### ServiceLeader.org

<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/volunteers>

Provides information for volunteers, volunteer managers, school volunteers, and volunteers across states.



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**Program:** MENTORS, INC.

**Location:** Washington, D.C.

**What is Mentors, Inc.?** The mission of Mentors, Inc. is to increase the graduation rates of young adults enrolled in the District of Columbia's public high schools by matching them with caring adult volunteers who promote the students' personal, academic, and career development. The organization was founded in 1987 and has served between 175 and 220 mentoring pairs a year. It serves students citywide, but focuses on recruiting students enrolled in the District of Columbia's lowest performing schools and in its poorest neighborhoods. The model is community- and relationship- based (i.e., not an academic mentoring or tutoring organization). Mentors focus on expanding students' experiences and awareness, building their personal aspirations, and helping them navigate the path through adolescence to adulthood and postsecondary success.

**How are participant needs identified?** Mentors, Inc. staff identify student needs primarily through interviews, feedback from mentors, as well as from local research on the program's target population.

**What type of mentoring exists?** Mentors, Inc. uses one-on-one mentoring to address the diverse needs of students throughout the District of Columbia. The relationships are supported through monthly structured enrichment activities, and the program also provides opportunities for students to access other resources in the community that develop life skills, assist students in planning and preparing for postsecondary education, and help meet psychological and health needs.

**What are the program's recruitment strategies?** Mentors, Inc. recognizes that the success of a mentoring program is determined, to a large extent, by the kind of volunteers it is able to recruit. The organization establishes relationships with organizations that broker volunteer opportunities, and engages active mentors to recruit others, and its executive staff engages the program's board of directors to serve as ambassadors for the program. The staff conducts recruitment presentations throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and holds monthly mentor gatherings to connect mentors with each other, as well as to provide opportunities for other professionals to find out informally about the program.

**Why take this mentoring approach?** The founders of Mentors, Inc. matched students individually because they believed students would benefit from having a stable, professional adult in their lives as a role model. The group's current leadership continues to endorse this model because it is concerned about the whole child and believes that there are many facets of a young person that need to be developed in order for them to be successful later in life—not just their academic development.

**What are the advantages of one-on-one, community-based mentoring?** This approach allows a personal relationship to develop between the student and the mentor that can continue outside of a structured environment. The mentor can more easily serve as an advocate and stable support for the mentee and the mentor can be reached when the student is in need. This approach also offers mentors flexibility in terms of participation, which is essential for busy professionals.

**What are the disadvantages of community-based mentoring?** Since Mentors, Inc. is not a site-based program, consistent and continuous follow-up with mentoring pairs is the main challenge to community-based mentoring. Staying connected can be particularly challenging because pairs are not mandated to participate in program-sponsored activities and when students come from low-income households, which are often less stable, they are more likely to change residences during the relationship and encounter other difficulties which make it difficult for mentors to connect with youth.

**What management strategies contribute to the success of Mentors, Inc.?**

- A continuous review of the program's model and an ongoing evaluation of what is working and what is not. The system in place includes collecting data through satisfaction surveys, pre-post outcomes monitoring, and program improvement surveys. This approach is vital to obtaining continued funding for Mentors, Inc. and also allows the program management to make data-driven improvements as the program evolves.
- Monitors that check in with and support the mentoring pairs when problems and challenges arise in the relationships or when a student's needs exceed the capacity of a mentor to address them. .

**Mentors, Inc. Partners:** Mentors, Inc. works directly with a number of foundations and corporations in the Washington, D.C. and metropolitan area. GEICO has been a partner for many years. Also, the CityBridge Foundation, which supports the volunteer efforts of the Corporate Executive Board and the Advisory Board, has been a consistent partner, and the organization is now getting ready to work with the International Monetary Fund to connect professionals from the Fund with youth who are in the Gear Up program. For Mentors, Inc., partnerships have typically been made with the corporate and professional sectors in the city (e.g. law, accounting and consulting firms) but community- and faith-based organizations are becoming involved with greater frequency as well.

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- <sup>1</sup> MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (2005). *Cross-sector leaders unveil major new plan to close mentoring gap*. Retrieved May 24, 2006, from <http://www.mentoring.org/leaders/files/pressrelease.pdf> estimates that there are 17.6 million young people in the United States who need a structured and trusting mentoring relationship, but only 3 million young people are involved in one-on-one mentoring relationships.
- <sup>2</sup> Moore, K.A. (2006). *Baby boomers and beyond: An untapped resource for volunteers in out-of-school time programs*. (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Using a different methodology, Child Trends estimates that the number of young people ages 6-17 who could benefit from a one-on-one mentoring relationship could be as high as 19 million. Analyses of the 2004 National Health Interview Survey found that there are more than 73 million adults between the ages of 45 and 74 who describe themselves as being in excellent, very good, or good health who could be potential mentors.
- <sup>3</sup> MENTOR /National Mentoring Partnership (2005). *Elements of effective practices*. Retrieved May 12, 2006, from [http://www.mentoring.org/\\_DownloadFiles/elementseffectivepractice.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/_DownloadFiles/elementseffectivepractice.pdf).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Saito, R., & Sipe, C. (2005). *The National Agenda for Action: Background and analysis of mentoring today*. Alexandria, VA: MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership
- <sup>6</sup> Jekielek, S., Moore, K., Hair, E., & Scarupa, H. (2002). *Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Jocovy, L. (2001, February). *Recruiting mentors: A guide to finding volunteers to work with youth*. Philadelphia, PA: Public Private Ventures.
- <sup>11</sup> Jekielek, S., et al.
- <sup>12</sup> Tierney, J. P., Grossman, J.B., & Resch L. N. (1995). *Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
- <sup>13</sup> MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership. (2005). *How to build a successful mentoring program using the elements of effective practice: A step-by-step tool kit for program managers*. Alexandria, VA: MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership
- <sup>14</sup> Morrow, K. V., & Styles, M. B. (1995). *Building relationships with youth in program settings*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
- <sup>15</sup> Fountain, D. L., & Arbreton, A. (1999). "The cost of mentoring" in *Contemporary issues in mentoring*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
- <sup>16</sup> Saito, R., & Sipe, C. *The National Agenda for Action*, 18.
- <sup>17</sup> Herrera, C., Vang, Z., & Gale, L. Z. (2002). *Group mentoring: A study of mentoring groups in three programs*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
- <sup>18</sup> Herrera, C., et al. *Group Mentoring*.
- <sup>19</sup> Fountain, D. L., & Arbreton, A. "The Cost of Mentoring."
- <sup>20</sup> Saito, R. N., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (1992). *Variety of programs meet needs of mentors and mentees*. November 1992, *Source* newsletter. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Saito, R., & Sipe, C. *The National Agenda for Action*, 22.
- <sup>23</sup> MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership. (2005). *How to build a successful mentoring program using the elements of effective practice*, 21. Alexandria, VA: MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership.
- <sup>24</sup> MENTOR/ National Mentoring Partnership (2003). *Elements of effective practices*. Alexandria, VA: MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Garringer, M., Fulop, M., & Rennick, V. (2003). *Foundations of successful youth mentoring: A guidebook for program development*. Washington, DC: The National Mentoring Center.
- <sup>27</sup> Jocovy, L. *Recruiting Mentors*, 19-22.
- <sup>28</sup> Lowenthal, P., Tarnoff, S., & David, L., Eds. (1995). *Recruiting college volunteers: A guide for volunteer recruitment and management*. Washington, D.C.: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America.
- <sup>29</sup> Rehnborg, J., & Clubine, B. (2004). *Volunteer recruitment: Tips from the field*. Retrieved March 26, 2006, from <http://www.serviceleader.org/new/managers/2004/03/000213.php>.
- <sup>30</sup> MENTOR. *Designing and planning a mentoring program*. Retrieved April 24, 2006, from [http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/design\\_and\\_planning\\_a\\_mentoring\\_program.php](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/design_and_planning_a_mentoring_program.php).
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- <sup>32</sup> Phillips-Jones, L. *Common questions about mentoring*. Retrieved May 26, 2006, from [http://www.faithmentoringandmore.com/html/idea\\_25.htm](http://www.faithmentoringandmore.com/html/idea_25.htm)

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<sup>33</sup> Department of Education. (2003). *Guidelines for school officials, volunteers and mentors participating in public school community partnerships*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education.

<sup>34</sup> *Mentoring*. Retrieved May 26, 2006, from <http://www.faithmentoringandmore.com/html>.

<sup>35</sup> Department of Education. *Guidelines for school officials, volunteers and mentors participating in public school community partnership*. Retrieved June 2, 2006, from <http://www.ed.gov/inits/religionandschools/v-guide.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Nefstead, S., & Nefstead, S. (2005). *Recruitment tips for a mentoring program*. Retrieved April 26, 2006, from <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/citizenship/DH6497.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Jocovy, L. *Recruiting mentors*, 16-19.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*