

THE MENTORING TOOLKIT: RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING PROGRAMS FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH *(Abridged Version)*

Prepared by the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, and At-Risk



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About the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk

The mission of the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk (NDTAC) is to improve educational programming for neglected and delinquent youth. NDTAC's legislative mandates are to develop a uniform evaluation model for State Education Agency (SEA) Title I, Part D, Subpart I programs; provide technical assistance (TA) to States in order to increase their capacity for data collection and their ability to use that data to improve educational programming for neglected or delinquent (N/D) youth; and serve as a facilitator between different organizations, agencies, and interest groups that work with youth in neglected and delinquent facilities. For additional information on NDTAC, visit the Center's Web site at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org>

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- Aftercare for Indiana through Mentoring (AIM)
- Michigan State University Extension Journey Mentoring Program
- The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) Mentor Program
- New York City Administration for Children's Services

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Research has demonstrated that adolescents with at least one high-quality supportive relationship with an adult were twice as likely as other youth to be economically self sufficient, have healthy family and social relationships, and be productively involved in their communities (Gambone, Connell, Klem, Sipe, & Bridges, 2002). Unfortunately, at-risk youth and youthful offenders often have limited contact with positive adult role models with whom they can form and sustain meaningful relationships (Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997). Mentoring programs can provide the opportunity for these young people to establish supportive relationships with positive adult role models (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). *The Mentoring Toolkit: Resources for Developing Programs for Incarcerated Youth* provides information, program descriptions, and links to important resources that can assist juvenile detention facilities and other organizations in designing effective mentoring programs for neglected and delinquent youth, particularly those who are incarcerated.

All children need caring adults in their lives, and mentoring is one way to fill this need for at-risk children. The special bond of commitment fostered by the mutual respect inherent in effective mentoring can be the tie that binds a young person to a better future.

—Shay Bilchik, former Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Administrator (Grossman & Garry, 1997, p. 1)

The Mentoring Toolkit is organized as follows:

Section 1. Mentoring: A Promising Intervention

Strategy. This section contains a review of the literature on effective mentoring strategies, and information on the limited body of knowledge available on programs designed specifically for incarcerated youth.

Section 2. Characteristics of Juvenile Offenders. This section describes the learning, social–emotional, and behavioral characteristics of youth residing in juvenile facilities.

Section 3. Designing Effective Mentoring Programs for Neglected and Delinquent Youth. This section explores the challenges that should be considered and the major benefits of establishing mentoring programs for these youth. It also describes the critical elements that should be included in juvenile justice mentoring.

Section 4. Tools for Developing Mentoring Programs. This section presents links to specific tools and resources that can be used by program developers to design and implement effective programs.

Section 5. Program Overviews. This section contains brief descriptions of selected mentoring programs currently being implemented in juvenile facilities, as well as case studies of several existing programs that serve delinquent youth.

ABRIDGED VERSION

The Mentoring Toolkit: Resources for Developing Programs for Incarcerated Youth provides information, program descriptions, and links to important resources that can assist juvenile detention facilities and other organizations in designing effective mentoring programs for neglected and delinquent youth, particularly those who are incarcerated.

Each of the major areas of content presented in the abridged version of *The Mentoring Toolkit* is examined in greater detail in the unabridged version. Both the abridged and unabridged versions of the *Mentoring Toolkit* are organized in the same manner to help locate further information. The unabridged version is available at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/resources/library/mentoring.asp>.

1. MENTORING: A PROMISING INTERVENTION STRATEGY

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is defined as a “. . . structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing . . . competence and character . . .” (National Mentoring Partnership, 2005, p. 9). The practice of mentoring is not a new approach for those seeking to improve the life chances of youth who are disadvantaged or at risk. “Particularly in instances of high rates of family disruption, mentoring makes alternate adult support networks available to youth and provides them with additional opportunities for developing intimate relations” (Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997, p. 218). Caring adults working with youth can directly help them overcome adversity. Through mentoring relationships, many young people are able to see beyond their current circumstances toward a life filled with future successes.

Incarcerated youth indicate that mentors are valuable as listeners, as sources of information for problem solving, and as individuals with whom they can spend positive time. Mentors who were ex-offenders were particularly effective because the incarcerated mentees felt that they could really understand “where they were coming from” (Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997, p. 223). A positive connection with a caring adult is just as important, and can be just as effective, for youth who are incarcerated as it is for those youth not involved in the juvenile justice system.

Special Considerations for Developing Mentoring Programs for Incarcerated Youth

Although incarcerated youth are similar to youth involved in general mentoring programs around the country, there are some special considerations that should be taken into account when developing programs for the incarcerated youth population. These include the following:

- 1. Emotional and physical availability of youth to develop and maintain involvement in the mentoring relationship.** The literature shows that the most successful mentoring relationships are those that are at least 1 year in duration. For youth who have experienced disappointments and difficulties forming strong positive relationships with adults in the past, the timeframe needed to establish effective mentoring relationships may be even longer. Given this reality, program planners should consider including mentoring in the aftercare plan developed for youth being released from a facility. In addition, mentors should be provided with information and assistance to help them understand and respond appropriately to the emotional status and potential reticence of mentees to engage in this relationship.
- 2. The impact of using gender and culture to match mentor–mentee pairs.** Gender and cultural matching may have some benefits. According to the self-report data collected from participants in the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) funded by OJJDP, boys who were matched with male mentors reported greater benefits with respect to avoiding drugs and gangs than did boys matched with females. When youth and mentors were of different races or ethnicities, mentors reported that they perceived significantly less improvement in avoiding drugs and alcohol, gang involvement, fighting, use of knives or guns, and avoiding friends who were involved in negative activities. Mentors paired with youth of the same race or ethnicity reported that they believed that they understood their mentee better than those involved in cross-race matches (Novotney, Mertinko, Lange, & Baker, 2000). It should be noted that these data are extremely limited. This is an important area for further study.
- 3. Incarcerated youth represent a captive audience for mentoring programs.** Mentoring programs within juvenile correctional facilities may have the advantage of requiring participation for any or all youth under their charge. However, it should be noted that even though participation may be required and a youth is in such a relationship, this does not mean that he or she will be amenable to participation (Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997). Most facilities will introduce mentoring as one of the optional services that can be included in the transition/re-entry plan.
- 4. Mentoring programs must be operated in accordance with the rules, regulations, and limitations of the correctional facility.** The most obvious special consideration when mentoring incarcerated youth is the fact that they are confined to a delinquent facility. This has implications for the types of activities mentors will be able to engage in with their mentees. Mentors will most likely be unable to remove their mentees from the facility and thus will be unable to engage in many of the activities traditionally associated with mentoring. As a result, it is important that programs are designed to maximize the opportunities mentors have to actively engage their mentees within the

confines of correctional institutions. The concerns for the safety of both the mentor and the mentee must also be recognized.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS

The unique emotional, behavioral, and learning characteristics of juvenile offenders must be considered when designing a program for this population. These youth often have multiple risk factors that make them more predisposed to delinquent behavior. Mentoring interventions are well suited to address multiple risk factors such as “alienation, academic failure, low commitment to school, and association with delinquent and violent peers . . .” (Catalano, Loeber, & McKinney, 1999, p. 1).

Special Education in Delinquent Facilities

It is estimated that anywhere from 30 to 50% of youth in correctional facilities have a need for special education services (Rutherford, Bullis, Anderson, & Griller-Clark, 2002, p. 7). “Although the full range of disabilities exists among youth placed in the correctional system, by far the most common special education conditions are specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and mental retardation” (Rutherford, Bullis, Anderson, & Griller-Clark, 2002, p. 8). Mentors should be provided with information on special education and how to address the specific learning and behavioral needs of their mentee within the context of the mentoring relationship.

Behavioral and Emotional Disorders and Other Mental Health Needs

Not only do many incarcerated youth have learning disabilities, but many have diagnosable behavioral disorders and/or other mental health needs. Youth who have an emotional disturbance are arrested at higher rates than those who do not, with as many as 20% of students with emotional disabilities are arrested at least once before they leave school (Burrell & Warboys, 2000, p. 1). Researchers argue that the mentoring programs and services they receive while incarcerated need to be “as powerful and relevant as possible in order to ingrain positive academic and social skills” (Rutherford, Bullis, Anderson, & Griller-Clark 2002, p. 23).

3. DESIGNING EFFECTIVE MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR NEGLECTED AND DELINQUENT YOUTH

Common Elements of All Successful Mentoring Programs

The research is replete with information regarding the core components of successful mentoring programs. The following four components have been found to be successful in mentoring programs, regardless of the population served (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000, p. 31).

- 1. Development and implementation of a thorough volunteer screening process.** The selection of volunteers for the mentoring program is one of the most important aspects of program development. This process should be designed to eliminate adults from consideration who may be unlikely to adhere to the time commitment required by the program. Consistency of contact is critical in developing healthy and strong mentee–mentor relationships. Perspective mentors should also be required to provide information on their background. Most important, these adults should represent positive role models and have a genuine interest in and ability to work with vulnerable and sometimes hard-to-reach youth.
- 2. Conduct a comprehensive mentor training program.** The training program should provide mentors with the tools they need to successfully fulfill their role. Training should include, but not be limited to, an overview of the learning and behavioral characteristics of the population of focus, youth development, training in linguistic and cultural competence, crisis management, communication skill development and limit-setting skills, tips on relationship building, and recommendations on the best way to interact with a young person. Training should also not be limited to the first month a mentor joins the program. Instead training should continue on a monthly basis in order to provide support and guidance for mentors throughout their time in the program. Contact information for program professionals should be provided to facilitate easy access by mentors in times of crisis. Mentors should also be made aware by the program of the mandated reporting requirements related to suspicion of child abuse or neglect under that particular State’s laws.
- 3. Establish matching procedures that are based upon the needs and interest of students, not adult volunteers.** Specific criteria should be established by the program to establish matches.
- 4. Intensive supervision and support of each match.** Mentoring matches should be closely supervised by a case manager who has frequent contact with the parent/guardian, volunteer, and youth and who is available to provide assistance to the parties when requested or as difficulties arise.

Advice From the Field: Critical Elements for a Successful Mentoring Program for Incarcerated Youth

Only a limited number of mentoring programs in the United States are designed specifically to serve incarcerated youth. Very few of these have been systematically evaluated to determine program effectiveness. NDTAC interviewed mentor program directors and staff from three existing programs and reviewed the limited body of information in the literature to compile a list of the elements they felt were critical to a successful mentoring program for incarcerated youth based upon their experiences. The information provided represents a synthesis of lessons learned from programs that serve incarcerated youth, as well as relevant information from the field.

1. **Begin the mentor relationship during incarceration.** In order to create a relationship that will have a greater chance of success, the mentor and mentee relationship should begin while the youth is still incarcerated.
2. **Provide supervision and support for mentors that is customized for programs that serve incarcerated youth.** Mentors working with this population need intense support and supervision from program staff. An extensive orientation as well as ongoing training is necessary to cultivate a successful mentor.
3. **Include mentoring in the Reentry/Transition Plan.** The mentor program should take place in conjunction with the youth's reentry/transition plan. Mentors can provide the opportunity for the youth to maintain contact with a positive role model once he or she returns to the community.
4. **Establish a goal-setting process for the program.** The mentor and mentee should collectively set goals while the youth is still incarcerated (if possible). These goals should directly relate to a youth's transition plan.
5. **Make participation in the program voluntary.** Making the program voluntary for incarcerated youth makes the success rate higher for future participation upon release.
6. **Establish a close relationship between the mentoring program and the courts.** Building a strong relationship between the mentoring program and the court responsible for the youth can support the continuation of mentoring activities once the youth is released from incarceration.
7. **A specific staff person should be designated to manage the mentoring program.** Staff resources are required to conduct recruitment, screening, training, and ongoing support to mentors, mentees, and facility staff. The specific roles and responsibilities of each of the staff assigned to this program should be clearly articulated in either a job or task assignment description.
8. **A minimum of a 1-year commitment should be required for mentors.** Mentor programs should focus on finding volunteers who can commit to at least 1 year of involvement.
9. **The mentoring program should be developed based upon an understanding of the intricacies of working within the juvenile justice system.** It is extremely important to remember that operating a mentoring program in a secure facility and working with incarcerated youth is different from other mentoring programs. The incarceration setting can adversely affect the development of a mentor-mentee relationship if it is not designed to accommodate the policies, procedures, and requirements of the facility.

10. Establishing outcomes for mentoring programs. It has been suggested that rather than using recidivism as the only measure of success or failure, incremental changes in mentee behavior should be documented to more accurately evaluate progress. Small positive or negative changes in behavior can be of great significance (Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997).

4. TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH

This section provides a brief overview of some of the key issues to be addressed by program developers as they plan and implement mentoring programs for incarcerated youth. Links to specific tools and resource materials are provided within each issue area.

Communications/Information Dissemination

Communications strategies should be utilized to build community awareness of your program. Through community partnerships, you can recruit potential mentors and identify potential sources of program funding.

Recruitment Strategies

The successful development and implementation of any mentoring program depends largely on the availability of motivated and qualified mentors. For programs targeted at incarcerated youth, recruiting quality mentors will require a focused and comprehensive strategy to assure that volunteers understand the goals and guidelines of the program and are best able to meet the needs of this unique population.

Guidelines for Developing Your Program Plan

The development of a realistic and well-organized program begins with a clearly articulated mission and specific program guidelines. The JUMP mentoring program and several other national efforts have established several general program guidelines, which other program developers may wish to consider. Information on the guidelines established by this and other programs can be accessed by clicking on the link provided above.

Induction/Orientation of Mentors

The induction and orientation of mentors is critical to the success of both the individual mentoring relationships and the entire program. Substantial time and effort is needed to recruit, screen, orient, and retain the appropriate persons in mentoring roles. Specific guidelines for orientation programs can be accessed by clicking on the link to this section of the document.

General Orientation Information

For many mentors, working in a facility-based mentoring program may be their first experience working with incarcerated youth and/or within a correctional institution. It will be important for them to understand how the juvenile justice system works in general as well as within their particular State, as well as how and why the youth they are working with are incarcerated. Though individual facilities may provide their own orientations for incoming mentors, resources are available that provide a general overview of the juvenile justice system in general as well as specific information for each State.

The Intake and Screening Process

Intake and Screening for Mentors

It is important for any mentoring program, especially one targeted at incarcerated youth, to properly screen mentoring volunteers to assure that they are both suitable for the work and safe to be with youth. Screening is an important primary step for mentoring programs as it has a direct impact on the matching process and also on the engagement of mentees and sustainability of the mentoring relationship. The resources provided in this section of the document may prove helpful as programs develop and implement a screening process, with special consideration for the population being served.

Screening Mentees

As mentioned previously in this mentoring toolkit, properly assessing the mental health needs of youth in correctional facilities is crucial to providing them the most appropriate services while incarcerated. Mentoring programs for incarcerated youth should work with facilities to assure that the needs of the youth they work with are well known and can be accounted for by the program. Resources are available for juvenile justice practitioners as well as those developing mentoring programs.

Induction/Orientation of Mentees

In a dyadic relationship, both persons must work to maintain the relationship. Many resources have been developed for mentors and their role in the mentoring relationship. However, not much has been developed for mentees and their role in the relationship. Frequently, mentoring relationships fall apart due to the mentees' lack of understanding of and preparation for their responsibilities in the relationship. The National Mentoring Center, funded by OJJDP, has developed a training manual for mentees. The manual outlines the need for mentee prematch training, ongoing training, and a mentee handbook. Additional resource materials are also provided in this section.

Matching Mentors to Mentees

Very little research has been conducted on the impact of matching in mentoring relationships. A few studies have indicated that matching objective factors (such as age, race, and/or gender) was not the most critical element of success in instances in which success was defined as the frequency of meetings, length of the match, and its

effectiveness. However, the early results of an evaluation of the JUMP program showed that there may be some benefits related to matching pairs according to race, culture, and ethnicity. This is clearly an area that warrants further examination.

Supervision and Support of Mentors

Mentors working with this population need intensive support and supervision from program staff. An extensive orientation as well as ongoing training is necessary to cultivate a successful mentor. It is also very important to provide mentors with examples of activities to do with their youth. Activities for mentors and youth should be planned and structured, especially during the development stage of the relationship. Some sample activities focus on: community service; learning about or exploring the world of work/vocations; visiting a college campus in town; visiting a business that has entry level positions and a career ladder; learning a new skill; talking about the each others' family life; learning about the mentor's career; sight-seeing or other fun field trips in the community. It is always best for each program to brainstorm with the help of its mentors and the youth involved.

Re-entry and Transition Planning

Mentor programs working within a juvenile justice facility should take place in conjunction with the youth's reentry/transition plan. One example of how this can be accomplished is illustrated by the work of the AIM Program and the JRA Mentoring Program.

Evaluation of Your Program

Mentoring can have an enormously positive impact on the lives of the young people who participate in this experience. Obstacles that prevent programs from functioning at their best, as well as successes that allow programs to thrive, need to be recognized and examined to harness the value of mentoring. In order to do this, mentoring programs should have an evaluation component. An evaluation will reveal the program characteristics that lead to successful outcomes and also provide guidance on how to use these lessons learned to enhance performance.

Sources of Funding for Programs

No program can exist without adequate funding. There are many community resources available to support youth mentoring efforts. This includes Government funding, foundation support, and support from nonprofit agencies such as the United Way of America.

5. PROGRAM OVERVIEWS

Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) Mentor Program, Washington

This program recruits, trains, and matches community volunteers who act as mentors to youth who are serving time in Washington State juvenile correctional institutions.

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/jra/>

Aftercare for Indiana through Mentoring (AIM), Indiana

This program is modeled loosely after the Adolescent Diversion Project in Michigan. AIM uses college students and AmeriCorps volunteers as mentors to help juvenile offenders transition back into the community.

<http://aim.spea.iupui.edu/>

Michigan State University Extension Journey Youth Mentoring Program, Michigan

The Journey Youth Mentoring Program pairs youth in Ottawa County ages 8–17 with positive adult role models in an effort to reduce the frequency and severity of delinquent behavior. Participation in the program by the youth is voluntary, and referrals from probation officers or counselors for youth wanting mentors are never in short supply.

http://www.msue.msu.edu/portal/default.cfm?pageset_id=28508&page_id=46645&msue_portal_id=25643

Juvenile Mentoring Program

Part G of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974, as amended in 1992 (Pub. L. 93-415: 42 U.S.C. 5667e et seq.), established a new delinquency prevention program, JUMP. Through the JUMP legislation, Congress authorized OJJDP to competitively award 3-year grants to community-based not-for-profit organizations or to local education agencies (LEAs) to support implementation and expansion of collaborative mentoring projects. JUMP is designed to provide one-to-one mentoring for youth at risk of delinquency, gang involvement, educational failure, or dropping out of school.

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/952872.pdf>

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

Founded in 1904, Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest and largest youth mentoring organization in the United States. In 2004, the organization served more than 225,000 youth ages 5–18, in 5,000 communities across the country, through a network of 470 agencies. National research has shown that the positive relationships between Big Brothers and Big Sisters and their Little Brothers and Little Sisters have a direct, measurable, and lasting impact on children's lives.

www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have additional questions on how to start a mentoring program for neglected or delinquent youth in your State, contact your NDTAC State liaison. To find your State liaison, please visit the following link on our website, http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/direct_assistance.asp. Also visit our website, <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org>, for all topics related to the neglected and delinquent field.

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