

HIGHLIGHTS

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Mentoring Makes a Difference: Findings from the Commonwealth Fund 1998 Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People

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FULL REPORT: <http://www.cmwf.org/programs/child/mclea277.asp>

Following are excerpts from the report.

Summary and Implications

At a time when this nation is searching for ways to reach out to youth, the survey findings indicate that mentoring makes a difference for youth at risk. Moreover, mentors value their experiences mentoring young people. These findings confirm and support studies of mentoring programs that find mentoring makes a positive difference for youths at risk.

The Commonwealth Fund 1998 Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People indicates that youths in mentoring relationships are indeed at risk. Eight of 10 young people have one or more problems that could adversely affect their healthy development and school success. Confronted with these problems, mentors report a high rate of success in helping young people overcome problems of youths' negative feelings about themselves, poor grades, substance abuse, getting into trouble in and out of school, and physical or sexual abuse.

Efforts are under way in cities across the nation to expand the numbers of adults willing to volunteer as mentors. The survey findings suggest strategies for recruiting future generations of mentors. The high rate of adults who mentor and also volunteer in other community activities indicate that recruitment efforts could reach out to adults who volunteer in community activities such as Sunday schools, organized sports such as Little League, scouting groups and academic tutoring programs.

Increasing the rate of employer-sponsored mentoring programs also offers a recruitment strategy. Employers appear to be a major route into formal mentoring programs for their employees. Including local employers in this effort is important since most mentoring occurs at the community level. In addition, the information about the mentors themselves provides a valuable indicator of how best to locate additional adults in mentoring. Mentors are more likely to be college-educated, to have higher annual incomes and to have had a mentor when a child.

Current and former mentors are a recruitment resource. Mentors state they would be likely to mentor again and to recommend mentoring to a friend. Given the high rate of satisfaction with mentoring, mentors also are important ambassadors for mentoring.

Promotional efforts could emphasize the fact that adult mentors can make a difference in the lives of young people. The expectation of being able to help is likely to appeal to future mentors based on survey findings about mentor motivation. Adults who mentor say they were motivated to do so because they believed they could make a difference and help the young person.

For policymakers and program administrators, the survey points to factors that are likely to foster more successful mentoring relationships. These include engaging youths in a wide range of activities and offering them guidance, and maintaining relationships for at least two years. Additionally, formal training and mechanisms for ongoing support for mentors are valued components of mentoring programs.

Collectively, the voices of the mentors in this survey provide valuable information to pivotal sectors of society — policymakers, mentoring program sponsors, volunteer organizations, employers and the public — about the value of mentoring. Expanding mentoring and building on features that make it more successful will require the concerted effort of all adults interested in helping young people become productive adults.

Survey Data

The following tables illustrate the types of problems youth may experience, characteristics of mentors and examples of mentoring programs, and the percentages of mentors and youth fitting these descriptors.

Incidence of Problems for Youths in Mentoring and the Impact of Mentoring

Problem	Youth Has	Mentor Helped
	Problem*	"A Lot"***
	%	%
Negative feelings about himself/herself	55	62
Poor relationships with his/her family members	49	35
Poor grades	42	48
Hanging out with the wrong crowd	41	42
Getting into trouble at school	36	49
Getting into trouble outside of school	29	47
Skipping school	24	52
Smoking, drinking or drug use	22	45
Sexual activity	14	25
Running away from home	14	62
Physical or sexual abuse	10	55
An eating disorder	9	26

* Based on mentor reports

** Based on youth who mentor believes has/had the problem

Characteristics and Incidence of Mentors Compared to Adults Who Have Never Mentored

	Total	Have	Never
	%	Mentored	Mentored
	%	%	%
<u>Other volunteer activities</u>			
Little League or other organized sports team	37	50	32*
Community recreation program	26	44	20*
Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts or some similar program	38	48	33*
Academic tutoring or literacy program	21	39	15*
Sunday school or other religious activities	47	61	42*
Some other program for young people	24	42	18*
<u>Respondent's sex</u>			
Female	55	54	54
Male	45	46	46
<u>Respondent's age</u>			
18-24 years of age	12	14	12
25-34	21	23	21
35-44	22	25	21
45-54	16	20	14*
55-64	11	9	10
65 and older	16	6	17*

<u>Background</u>			
Hispanic or Latino	8	8	8
White not Hispanic	76	76	76
Black not Hispanic	10	12	9
Other race	2	2	3
<u>Highest grade completed</u>			
Less than high school	16	10	17*
High school	32	27	34*
Some college or technical school	27	30	26
College or more	23	32	20*
<u>Income category</u>			
Less than \$10,000	10	8	11
\$10,000 to <\$15,000	7	6	7
\$15,000 to <\$25,000	13	13	13
\$25,000 to <\$35,000	13	15	13
\$35,000 to <\$50,000	14	16	13
\$50,000 or more	20	28	18*

* Difference between those who have and have not mentored is statistically significant at 95% level or greater

**Mentoring Activities with Youths
by Type of Mentoring Relationship**

	<u>Total</u> %	<u>Formal</u> %	<u>Informal</u> %
<u>Skills and Social</u>			
	% of Mentors Who Spent "A Lot" or "Some" Time in Activities		
Working on academics or homework	64	68	63
Talking about or investigating college or career opportunities	62	57	63
Going to a library, museum, concert, play, movie or sporting events	61	56	61
Participating in a sport together or going for a walk or hike	65	61	65
Talking about his/her personal issues or problems	89	87	90
Eating meals together	79	69	81*
Just hanging out	81	72	83*
Participating in a job internship or shadowing program	22	24	21
<u>Guidance and Networking</u>			
	% Who Engaged in Activity		
Provide cultural, social or entertainment opportunities that wouldn't normally be available to him/her	71	66	72
Teach social skills or manners	83	80	84
Teach job-related or work skills	54	53	54
Introduce him/her to other people who could help him/her reach his/her academic or career goals	62	64	62
Expose him/her to your own work	68	66	68
Stand up for him/her when he/she gets/got in trouble	75	59	78*
Help him/her get a job or serve as a job reference	34	27	36*
Lower activity level: 0-8	31	40	29*
Mid-range activities: 9-11	42	37	43
Wide-range activities: 12-15	27	24	27

* Difference between formal and informal mentors is statistically significant at 95% level or greater