

RESEARCH ON EFFICACY OF MENTORING

Mentoring has been embedded as a component in many substance abuse prevention programs, but research studies rarely have been structured to look at the specific effects of mentoring itself. Under a 1996 grant from the National Institute of Justice, the University of Maryland found only six studies of community-based mentoring that met reasonable standards of scientific inquiry. Based on the available research, the University of Maryland report concluded that mentoring can reduce the likelihood of drug use but appeared ineffective in reducing juvenile delinquency and crime involvement (Sherman et al. 1997).

In 1995, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), Inc. concluded an 18-month study of Big Brother/Big Sisters after allowing Sherman et al. (1997) to report their early findings. The P/PV study examined a randomized sample of 10 to 16 year-old youth in eight cities. The findings included the following:

- . Mentored youth were 46 percent less likely than controls to begin using drugs during the study period. Among African American and other minority youth, the mentored youth were 70 percent less likely to begin using drugs.

- . Mentored youth, especially minority Little Sisters, were significantly less likely than controls to begin drinking alcoholic beverages during the study period.

- . Mentored youth were less likely to skip classes and were more likely to feel competent about doing schoolwork. They also experienced a modest gain in grade point average during the study period. The largest positive effects again were found among minority Little Sisters.

- . Unlike controls, mentored youth indicated improved family relations, measured by gains in trust between parent and child during the study period. This effect was strongest among white Little Brothers.

TYPES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

The following discussion on Formal and Informal mentoring is taken from literature available from the Connecticut Mentoring Partnership:

FORMAL MENTORING

Formal mentoring is relatively structured and programmatic. It involves a prolonged relationship between a caring mentor and young person (mentee), the goal of which is to provide the mentee with long term guidance and support.

Formalized youth mentoring is now being encouraged, not only in urban and suburban areas, but in rural areas as well, to ensure that the mentoring relationship is a socially positive experience. Formalized mentoring counters the potential effects of harmful mentors and peer relationships, and reinforces pro-social bonding with the help of a caring, committed adult.

Definition of Mentoring

A relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where an older, caring, more experienced individual provides help to the younger person as he/she goes through life.

Where Mentoring Activities Occur

Mentoring activities occur at a designated site. Activities that occur off-site are done as a group under supervision. The location of the mentoring activities is at the discretion of the mentor/mentee. At mentees school (or mentors campus if high school or college student). At mentors place of business. Mentoring takes place in prisons, youth shelters YWCA, Boys & Girls clubs, community centers. A church, synagogue, JCC.

(Source: DRUGS DON'T WORK!, The Governor's Prevention Partnership/The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership, 1999)

Formal Mentoring typically:

- . Takes place for a minimum of 12 months,
- . Involves frequent and regular contact between mentor and mentee,
- . Is assisted by an organized service or organization,
- . Focuses on providing life-guidance and support,
- . Includes support and/or supervision for the mentee and the mentee's family,
- . Involves screening and training as well as ongoing support and/or supervision of the mentor.

Formal Mentoring Programs fall into one or more of the following categories:

- . Group Mentoring programs involve one or more adults mentoring a group of two or more Young People.
- . Team Mentoring programs involve two or more adults mentoring one young person; each mentor provides individual time with each youth as well as participating in a group activity such as tutoring or job readiness. Another team approach allows youth access to any of several adult mentors, depending on the special expertise needed or on mentor schedule and availability.
- . One-to-One Mentoring programs involves one adult mentoring one young person. The one-to-one contact of this type of mentoring can be achieved either through an individual-to-individual relationship or through a team approach.

Informal Mentoring, on the other hand, is identified as involving a relationship between a caring individual and young person, which is formed during the course of regular life events, and in which the adult provides guidance and support to the young person.

Informal Mentoring typically:

- . Involves a minimum time requirement based upon the needs of the child and activity.
- . Usually involves frequent or regular contact between the mentor and mentee,
- . May or may not include assistance by an organized service or organization,
- . Involves guidance and support to young person only as a bi-product or secondary focus of the relationship,
- . Usually involves support and/or supervision for the mentee and/or the mentee's family,
- . Exists in the form of: Youth Programs, Athletics, Youth Groups, Religious Instruction, and School Volunteers.

Some activities, such as Tutoring and School-to-Career programs, involve a mixture of both formal and informal mentoring activities.