

# MENTORING YOUTH AND YOUNG PARENTS

## A Guidebook for Programs Helping Youth and Young Parents Navigate a Pathway to Self-Sufficiency



*Developed for:*

U. S. Department of Labor  
Employment and Training Administration  
200 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

*Submitted by:*

Social Policy Research Associates  
1330 Broadway, Suite 1426  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Phone: (510) 763-1499  
Fax: (510) 763-1599

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor developed the Young Parents Demonstration Project (YPD) to explore the value of mentoring in improving the employment and training outcomes of low-income young parents. In 2011, ETA awarded more than \$5 million in grants to four local non-profit organizations to provide intensive mentoring services to low-income parents (both mothers and fathers, and expectant parents ages 16-24) participating in workforce development programs. This Mentoring Guidebook, developed as part of the Young Parents Demonstration, is based in part on the experiences of the four grantees. While it was developed to support the four demonstration grantees, this guidebook offers user-friendly guidance for local workforce programs and agencies that want to develop and implement mentoring programs to help youth or young parents improve their employment and education or training outcomes.

This guidebook was written by staff of the Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor, ETA, for the YPD project. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the ETA. SPR wants to acknowledge the following ETA staff members for their review of the guide: Michelle Ennis, Cheryl Martin, Dan Ryan, Evan Rosenberg and Gloria Salas-Kos. We also acknowledge the YPD grantees for their participation in the production of the guidebook: Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM), AltaMed Health Services Corporation, The Dannon Project and Training Resources of America, Inc.

Developed by SPR staff:

Vinz Koller  
Chandra Larsen  
Maya Thornell-Sandifor  
Christian Rummell  
Eric Engles  
Trace Elms

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## INTRODUCTION

A growing body of research indicates that it is important for youth to have supportive relationships with adults if they hope to achieve positive outcomes in academics, social settings, career development, health, and safety (Hansen et. al, 2012)<sup>1</sup>. Young people need support and guidance from their elders, family and community to develop qualities, such as individual responsibility and self-sufficiency. However, many youth, that may or may not also be young parents, lack such support and have few opportunities for developing positive relationships with older adults or other significant role models. The need to create opportunities through adult or positive peer-to-peer support and guidance is especially more evident for low-income youth. Single-parent households, reduced services in school districts, and less-than-ideal safety conditions in neighborhoods have created environments where there are fewer and fewer supportive adults in the lives of low-income youth (Tierney, et. al, 2000) and mentoring is one approach for developing those positive relationships.

Although, the general lack of supportive inter-generational relationships in many of our communities is a broad and difficult-to-solve problem with many causes, there is a way that public agencies and community organizations, like yours, can intervene effectively: they can provide young people with older-adult mentors. According to the Federal Mentoring Council (FMC), preliminary studies show that high-quality mentoring has the potential to be a successful strategy for addressing risk among youth and for promoting positive behaviors and attitudes. Researchers have not yet sufficiently distilled the specific impacts of mentoring apart from the impacts of the programs in which they take place, but the evidence suggests that close, consistent, and enduring mentoring relationships have positive benefits for participants. A strong connection characterized by mutuality, trust, and empathy that spans a significant period and is focused on the young person's interests and preferences, is likely to make an impact, while a distant, brief, or inconsistent relationship is not (Rhodes, et. al, 2008). In addition, FMC studies indicate that youth or young adults in mentoring relationships stand to gain many potential educational benefits, such as better academic performance, better school attendance, and positive attitudes. Potential behavioral benefits of mentoring include decreased likelihood of illegal drug and alcohol use and decreased violent behavior.

In general, youth can benefit tremendously from mentoring relationships with older adults; such relationships can be particularly crucial for youth who face significant barriers, such as young parents. Even the well-resourced adult faces increased emotional, financial, and personal demands when he or she becomes a parent. For a low-income young person who may not have completed his or her education or secured employment, adding on the responsibilities of parenthood can be daunting, to say the least. Parenting requires a new set of skills for managing the responsibilities of caring for a child, including providing for the child's health, safety and education. Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup> Final Report on Enhanced School-Based Mentoring Pilot, Developing and Sustaining a Evidence-Based Model, September 2011, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Hansen, Keoki, Romens, Kristin

LaFleur,Sandra, [http://www.bbbs.org/atf/cf/%7B8778D05C-7CCB-4DEE-9D6E-70F27C016CC9%7D/012412\\_ESBM\\_final.pdf](http://www.bbbs.org/atf/cf/%7B8778D05C-7CCB-4DEE-9D6E-70F27C016CC9%7D/012412_ESBM_final.pdf)

many of the approximately 770,000 American youth with family care-giving responsibilities<sup>2</sup> face considerable barriers: they often have difficulty finding affordable childcare, housing, and transportation, and those seeking stable employment are constrained in their ability to participate in continuing education or training courses. Mentors can be invaluable resources in helping youth and young parents overcome these barriers, navigating the new demands of adulthood and parenthood, and figuring out their education and career goals.

Set up in the context of five major steps, this guidebook offers suggestions, strategies, examples, and tools intended to help you set up a mentoring program or add a mentoring component to an existing youth services program. The first section lays out the process of setting up a mentoring program as a series of five steps, each composed of a set of discrete tasks. The second section helps you set up a mentoring program through examples: it profiles the experiences of the four YDP grantees and highlights the lessons they learned in designing and running their programs. The final section lists a large number of helpful resources, organized by the five steps that you can consult for advice more detailed than what we can provide in this brief guidebook. Because this guidebook was developed as part of the YPD, it focuses on working with a population of pregnant or parenting youth and on providing this population educational and employment services, with mentors to help them navigate their futures. Nevertheless, the Mentoring Guidebook can be printed and shared; and the information in the guidebook can be applied to new or existing youth services and mentoring programs that may or may not concentrate on educational and employment services.

## CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MENTORING SERVICES FOR YOUTH & YOUNG PARENTS

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes mentoring as one of ten youth program elements that can be provided to low-income youth seeking academic and employment success and who are facing one or more barriers. The YPD program was funded through an annual appropriation as a demonstration project designed to test one or more interventions for parenting or pregnant youth who receive services in the local workforce investment systems.<sup>3</sup> Given the limited information and resources about mentoring youth within the workforce system, this guidebook can be used as a stepping stone for youth service providers interested in implementing mentoring as an intervention.

Beginning a mentor program or adding mentoring as a component of an existing program can require a lot of effort up front to develop capacity, create materials, and establish policies and procedures; however, the result—as demonstrated by the YPD sites profiled in the next section—can make a positive difference in the lives of many youth or young parents. The older-adult mentors you recruit can offer youth in your program the critical support needed to guide them in planning their careers, attaining their personal goals, and finding meaningful employment.

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<sup>2</sup> p.5

<http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/OpportunityRoadthePromiseandChallengeofAmericasForfottenYouth/CEoportunityroad2012.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, as amended (29 United States Code 2801 et seq), Title I, Subtitle B, Chapter 4—Youth Activities, Section 129; and Subtitle D, Section 171 Demonstration, Pilot, and Research Projects. WIA Final Rule, 20 Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 661 and 664, (published at 65 Federal Register 49294, August 11, 2000).



## STEP1. Laying the Groundwork

Before you begin to consider the shape your mentoring program might take, you should complete a number of preliminary tasks that will help build a solid foundation for the design of the program. These tasks can range from conducting research about existing mentoring programs to building relationships with potential stakeholders and partners. The key to laying the groundwork involves taking the initial steps to understand the elements of success in mentoring for your community.

### RESEARCH EXISTING MENTORING PROGRAMS

If there are any existing mentoring programs in your community, you need to know about them. What populations do they serve? Do any include workforce development components, such as occupational skills training, or job training? Are they school-based or stand-alone programs? Are they able to meet the demand for mentoring services in the community? This information is important for three reasons. First, it can help you decide if your agency or organization should really go ahead with a plan to set up a new mentoring program. Because mentoring programs require substantial time and resources to run, you will want to be clear that a new mentoring service will add value or fill a specific need and not duplicate what already exists. Second, if you are confident that your community needs a new mentoring service, knowing what existing mentoring programs do can help you tailor yours toward filling the community's un-met needs. Third, familiarity with existing mentoring programs can help your organization decide if it should consider collaborating with any of the other programs.

### DETERMINE THE NEEDS OF THE TARGET POPULATION

A mentoring program exists primarily to benefit the young parents or youth, in

general, who will receive the mentoring services. Accordingly, a crucial first step is to assess the particular mentoring needs of the young parents or other youth in your community. What types of barriers do these youth or young parents face? Are the majority of these youth still in high school? Are there a large number of ex-offenders? How limited are the job and training opportunities for young parents or youth facing significant barriers? Are young parents primarily dependent on subsidized services or support programs (SNAP, TANF, etc.)? To gather this information, develop a list of relevant questions (such as the ones just cited) and talk to key community stakeholders that interface with youth or young parents like school officials, health and human services staff members, city officials, youth workforce system staff members, and juvenile justice department staff members. It is also important to have an understanding of the current economic and social factors in your community that might affect your population. For example, are there high rates of poverty? What is the market like for young job seekers? What industries offer employment opportunities and training to youth and young adults?

### ESTABLISH A MISSION FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Once you complete a scan of the landscape and decide to provide mentoring services, you

will want to develop an overall mission for your mentoring program. You can look at your mission as a broad statement about the big-picture impact you would like your program to have. Your mission statement might be similar to this one: “To operate a continuously improving mentoring program that provides disadvantaged youth in the community with supportive adult advisors.” In later steps, this mission statement serves as the basis for establishing the desired individual outcomes and creating goals indicators that will help you measure your program’s impact. As part of developing your mission statement, you should think about the values you want to uphold for program operation. Ensuring the safety of participants, generating mutual trust, and observing patience are examples of values you might identify. Those values should be evident to everyone— staff, volunteers, and external partners—while you plan and design your program, and then when it is in full operation.

### **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS**

Once you start mentoring services, you will need to tap into a variety of resources, human, case management, funding, volunteer mentors and otherwise, for support. Take time now to build relationships with the organizations and agencies that might be able to provide you with these resources, either informally or through formal partnerships. You should also identify and form relationships with the individuals, agencies, and organizations that you see as potential stakeholders in your program.

A major goal of the YPD program was to support young parents in finding sustainable employment. YPD sites that had established

relationships and partnerships with the workforce system had a greater level of success in providing additional case management, supportive services and finding employment and/or training opportunities for their young parent participants. To increase opportunities for youth in your programs building relationships with your local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), American Job Centers (AJCs), Youth Councils, and job training or education programs can help you frame potential goals and outcomes focused on youth as you embark on your mentoring program. [Here is a link to the service locator for the American workforce system: <http://www.servicelocator.org/>. On this site, you can search and find workforce providers and job centers in your local area.]

### **BECOME FAMILIAR WITH MENTORING BEST PRACTICES**

Familiarity with the key practices of operating a mentoring program will go a long way toward helping you create a program that provides high quality-mentoring services. A valuable resource offering guidance on mentoring-program practices comes from The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR). *MENTOR’S Elements of Effective Practice (2009)* is a series of mentor program guidelines developed from evidence-based research as well as input from some of the nation’s leading practitioners in the mentoring field.

Now in its third edition, *The Elements of Effective Practice* (Mentor, 2009) describes operational standards for the six areas of recruitment, screening, training, matching, monitoring and support, and closure. Each standard contains a description of suggested benchmark program practices as well as enhancements that can strengthen mentoring experiences for participants.



## STEP 2. Designing an Effective Program

Bring together a team of staff and volunteers for a session dedicated to creating a plan for the mentoring program to understand how it will function within your agency or organization. Ask team members to use the guidance provided in the following section to prepare in advance a set of tasks and questions that can move program design forward.

### DETERMINE THE PROGRAM'S KEY PARAMETERS

The shape of your mentoring program is determined by a number of key decisions that should be made up front, before you settle on the specific operational details. These decisions concern who will receive the mentoring services, how to obtain mentors, how the mentoring will occur, and which community partners to engage. All decisions related to the design of your organization's mentoring services should reflect the mission and values statements you developed in Step 1.

- **Choose target population(s).** Using information from your initial community scans (and possibly constrained by your funders' priorities or the mission of your organization), decide which population you will target for mentee participants. You will want to consider factors like age, income status, employment status, education status, etc.
- **Identify the ideal characteristics of your potential mentors.** Your mentors can come from a variety of populations, as defined by various sets of demographic characteristics. You will want to consider characteristics such as age range, profession, ethnicity and race, and education status. Clarity about the demographic characteristics that will

#### Mentor's Elements of Effective Practice 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

**Standard 1:**

Recruit appropriate mentors and mentees by realistically describing the program's aims and expected outcomes.

**Standard 2:**

Screen prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment, and personal qualities to be effective mentors.

**Standard 3:**

Train prospective mentors in the basic knowledge and skills needed to build an effective mentoring relationship.

**Standard 4:**

Match mentors and mentees along dimensions likely to increase the odds that mentoring relationships will endure.

**Standard 5:**

Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and support mentors with ongoing advice, problem-solving support and training opportunities for the duration of the relationship.

**Standard 6:**

Facilitate bringing the match to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of both the mentor and the mentee and offers both individuals the opportunity to assess the experience.

Link:

[http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1222.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222.pdf)

yield the best mentors for your target population will help when you begin to think about your mentor recruitment approach in Step 3.

- **Choose a mentoring model.** There are several mentoring models to choose from when you implement a program. The model you choose will determine how you match your mentors and mentees, the types of mentoring activities that may occur, and how these activities are structured. The most frequently used

model is based on one-on-one activities; others models include the group-based services, a circle of mentors to one individual approach or variations of these three types of models. An example of the circle model is included in the section of this guidebook where YPD grantees are profiled. Each model has a different set of advantages and disadvantages relative to the needs and characteristics of your targeted participants (mentees). For example, if the youth participants you plan to serve are transient, flexibility in meeting locations and timing is important so mentors and mentees can get together, and a one-on-one model offers more flexibility than a group model with a set meeting location. [See the resource

section for a list of links to resources about different mentoring models.]

- **Determine necessary partners.** Decide if you will form any formal partnerships with other organizations or agencies as part of your plan to deliver mentoring services. Will you collaborate with a particular school to recruit mentees? Will a particular business be a source for volunteer mentors? If you do not already have existing relationships with agencies in the workforce system or provide case management and on-site job training, consider forming relationships with the American Job Centers, local Youth Councils, and Workforce Investment Boards.

## PLAN TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF YOUTH AND YOUNG PARENTS

If your organization chooses to focus on young parents or other youth with significant needs as your target audience for mentoring services, you will need to have a clear understanding of the challenges faced by many members of this population. Understanding the challenges will help your organization and case managers prepare to meet their special needs and prevent those needs from becoming roadblocks to success. Accommodating the challenges listed below might lead your organization to consider certain forms of collaboration (with organizations providing childcare, for example), adopt a particular mentoring model, or develop an innovative way of keeping track of the program participants.

Note that many of the challenges outlined below can pertain to many youth, as well as those who are also young parents.

- **Transportation is challenging** for many youth. If a youth or young parent does not

have access to reliable transportation, he or she may be less consistent in meeting with his or her mentor or showing up for program services. When planning activities, make sure you take into consideration the time of day and accessibility to public transportation. Consider providing travel vouchers as incentives for participants to come to planned activities. Mentors might also volunteer to provide travel assistance for participants [mentees] to get to planned activities.

- **Childcare needs are inhibiting** for even the well-resourced parent. Know where in your community you can refer your participants for affordable, reliable childcare. If your organization has space and capacity, consider offering childcare on-site to make it easier for parents to participate in programs.
- **Varied methods of communication may be necessary.** The cell phone that was on one week might be out of service the next. So make sure you have several means for

reaching each participant: a landline number, an email address, and multiple contacts on file. Consider creating a Facebook page for your program where participants and mentors can check in to see upcoming activities and send messages to one another and program staff.

- **Stable housing can be difficult for participants to secure.** Case managers should be aware of options for subsidized housing in the area. Recognize that participants who do not have stable housing may need to relocate and that this can affect their participation in the program.
- **Quality of interaction is more important than quantity.** Given all of the challenges mentioned above, you should remember that frequency of contact between the mentor and mentee is not as important as quality of the interaction. Remain flexible



and ensure that you offer mentors and mentees a variety of opportunities to engage and communicate with one another. In addition to one-on-one in-person meetings, options for mentor and mentee engagement can include phone calls, texts, email, attending events together, and participation in multiple or regularly scheduled group activities.

- **Building trust takes time.** Participants who are not used to having strong support networks may be apprehensive about inviting strangers into their lives. Mentors and case management staff should set realistic expectations for how long it takes for trust between a mentor and mentee to be established. Encourage mentors to remain consistent and reliable in an effort to build confidence with the mentee.

## **DETERMINE HOW THE PROGRAM WILL BE STAFFED, MANAGED AND FUNDED**

Your organization will want to have a detailed plan for how your mentoring services will be staffed, managed and funded. This plan not only should cover the start-up costs; it should also consider how the services would be sustained over the period of the program. It is particularly important to have protocols that define the roles played by staff members and volunteers and to specify who on staff has oversight over the various moving parts of your program.

- **Design a staffing structure.** Plan for how services will be staffed and determine if you will utilize existing staff members or if you will need to hire additional staff

members, and for what roles. Once you determine the specific job roles, create a staffing chart that shows all the staff members involved and indicates appropriate reporting lines for accountability.

- **Create detailed job descriptions** for all staff members. Job descriptions should outline specific roles and responsibilities for each position associated with the implementation of the mentoring program. In particular, mentors should not be expected to fill the roles of case managers.
- **Determine program management.** Decide who will manage the overall program and be the main person to have oversight over mentoring services.

- **Create and implement training** for staff members to orient them to the new policies and procedures related to the mentoring program.

#### *A PROCESS FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING*

- Though detail on evaluation is provided in Step 5 of this guidebook, your organization’s approach to evaluating service design and impact should be ongoing.
- Thinking of evaluation as a continuous activity will allow you to make adjustments in your program or services as needed instead of waiting until the end of a program cycle to make corrections to a particular aspect of service design or process.
- Create regular opportunities in your organization to get feedback from staff, volunteers and participants that will help you understand if your services are working to meet the outcomes you outlined [see Step 2]. For example, just as important as it is to learn from what is working, we often learn from what did not work.
- Consider setting aside time during staff meetings to share a “flop of the month” something that was tried in the program that did not work.
- Make sure you use those examples as opportunities to learn and brainstorm a different approach so you do not repeat the mistakes, but take them as learning opportunities.

- **Develop a financial plan** that includes details on long-term funding to sustain the mentoring services. You will want to consider if there are funding partners (especially businesses) that can also be engaged in other ways, like providing mentor volunteers or in-kind donations.

- **Determine what public relations and marketing strategies** will be used to create awareness about your mentoring services and how you will incorporate social media. Specific considerations for use of social media should include creating policies for sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, etc. These social media policies should clearly outline the type of information and images that can or cannot be posted in the public domains.

#### **DETERMINE DESIRED PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Building on the mission statement that you established in Step 1, and with key staff members at the table, discuss how you want your mentoring services to affect your participants and the broader community. Direct this discussion towards developing a set of statements about the more-or-less specific outcomes you want your mentoring services to generate. These outcome statements should describe what mentees would gain or do because of their participation in the program. An example is “Participants will have a better understanding of the steps needed to achieve their educational or career goals.” In Step 5, you will develop a set of indicators that will help you gauge progress towards achieving these desired outcomes.



NOTES:



## Step 3. Designing the Components of Recruitment and Mentoring

Management, funding, staffing, case management and desired outcomes are important aspects of any program, but the essential core of a mentoring program consists of its mentors, the youth who receive mentoring services, and the interactions that occurs between them.

The success of your program, therefore, is highly dependent on the attention you give to recruiting mentors, making successful mentor–mentee matches, and supporting the relationships once you make the matches. Attention to sustaining successful matches must begin during the planning stages, when you create the procedures, policies, documents, training curricula, and other structures that govern how mentors and mentees are recruited, how they are oriented and trained, how they are matched, and how they interact.

### SET UP THE STRUCTURE FOR RECRUITING AND ENGAGING MENTORS

The following are key considerations for creating the procedures and policies that will govern mentor recruitment, screening and training:

- **Design recruitment strategies** that will allow you to recruit an adequate number of mentors who have the right characteristics for the population you are targeting for mentoring services.
- **Set up and document mentor requirements.** Develop a set of criteria that define who is eligible to be a mentor. Include these requirements in your recruitment materials.
- **Develop a mentor job description** that includes your expectations for participation and the roles mentors play. According to the National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR<<http://www.mentoring.org/>>), a mentor’s main purpose is to help a young person define individual goals and find ways to achieve them. The mentor encourages the development of a flexible relationship that responds to both the mentor’s and the young person’s needs, encourages the mentee to make positive choices in day-to-day life, and supports academic and professional achievement. A mentor can also introduce a young person to new ideas and perspectives on addressing challenges or taking advantage of opportunities. In the mentor job description you develop, be sure to include what is NOT expected of the mentor (such as paying a mentee’s bills or providing other financial support).
- **Design a screening process** for potential mentors. This process should include at a minimum a drug test and a criminal background check, but it should also involve assessing the potential mentors’ capacity to give time, the fit of their personalities with the program, and their level of commitment.
- **Develop a mentor orientation** for potential volunteers and staff, to provide an overview of the program and that sets out overall expectations. Recognize that an orientation helps potential volunteers decide if the program is a good fit for them, just as much as it helps you make

sure that the volunteers are a good fit for the program.

- **Develop a mentor training** that gives mentors knowledge of the policies and practices of your organization, the mentoring program, and the population you serve, and that allows mentors to practice using the skills needed for effective mentoring.



## SET UP A STRUCTURE FOR RECRUITING AND ENGAGING PARTICIPANTS (MENTEES)

If your organization runs other youth programs or young parent programs, you are already in touch with a potential pipeline of participants.

If not, you may need to put in place an outreach and recruitment strategy, perhaps one that takes advantage of existing partnerships with other youth-serving organizations. Setting up the procedures and policies that will govern the mentee side of your program involves some of the following tasks:

- **Develop recruitment and marketing strategies.** Refer back to your target audience for mentee recruitment. When developing a recruitment strategy for mentees you may decide to engage a population you are already serving through workforce programming or get new participants from other partners or sources like schools, training programs, youth development programs, etc.
- **Specify and document participant requirements.** Specifying requirements for your participants—that they be within a certain age range, for example, or have children—is a way of operationalizing the targeting of the population you identified in Step 2. It may be the case, as well, that specific requirements have come attached

- **Create a mentor agreement.** Using a job description for mentors, outline a set of behavioral and program guidelines with which mentors will agree to comply. You can ask mentors to sign the agreement during the orientation or the training.

to your funding. Make sure you are clear about these imposed requirements when you document participant requirements and when you design your recruitment approach.

- **Create a process for screening participants.** Like mentors, mentees will need to be screened for fit with your program. Screening is a way of checking to make sure potential participants (1) meet the requirements you have set down for participating in the program and (2) have the time, motivation, and temperament needed to derive benefit from the program. Screening information can be solicited through written questionnaires, in-person interviews, or through both means.
- **Design a participant orientation.** You will want to create an orientation process that helps mentees understand what the program is all about, what activities they can expect, what the role of the mentor is, and what kind of time commitment is involved.
- **Create a participant agreement.** As you did for mentors, create an agreement for mentees to sign on to that articulates the protocols, policies, and level of participation you would like them to agree to.

- **Design participant services and activities.** Map out the specific activities and services you will be providing participants as part of your mentoring program. For example, will you coordinate regular outings like

college tours? Will you have group activities on site like job fairs and topical workshops? Will participants be asked to participate in community service activities?



## DETERMINE THE SPECIFICS OF MATCHING AND MENTORING

When you have developed the program procedures and formal or informal structures are in place to ensure your mentors are prepared, and your mentee-participants are ready to receive their advice and guidance, matches can begin. Include guidance to specify how participants will be matched with mentors and create a schedule to set a minimum length of time for the relationships established. Much of this is shaped and constrained by the mentoring model you chose in Step 2.

- **Develop a process for making matches.** A youth participant cannot be paired with just any older adult. The compatibility of a match determines in large part its success and the benefits it confers on the participant. Compatibility, however, is dependent on a variety of factors, including personality characteristics, personal histories and experiences, gender, class, and race/ethnicity. Therefore, it is necessary to identify methods to measure or gauge the characteristics of both mentors and mentees; and to develop a system or guidelines to capture this information in the matching process. This is a complex topic involving many considerations and options, so you may want to consult a source for more detailed information. Seek advice from mentoring experts in the field or service providers who work with

diverse groups. [A resource with activities to guide making successful matches, *Making and Supporting the Match*, can be downloaded from:

[http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/224](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/224)].

- **Develop guidelines for how and where mentor-mentee interaction occurs.** There are certainly activities and events that are appropriate for mentor-mentee interaction and others that are not so appropriate. You will want to provide directions on when and where interaction between the mentor-mentee will take place. Include in these guidelines a list of suggested appropriate activities.
- **Determine the duration of the mentor/mentee match.** Research shows that the longer the match engagement the more positive the results for the youth participant (mentee). Most mentoring experts recommend that mentoring relationships last at least one full academic or calendar year (12 months).
- **Select core program activities.** What activities will you have for both mentor and mentees as a part of the program? Will you coordinate group outings to events, sports games etc.? Will you have on-site activities for mentors and mentees like networking events and group meals? You might consider creating and publicizing a calendar for the year so that both the mentors and mentees can plan.



## Step 4. Running the Program

Running a mentoring program requires the same kind of administrative and management stewardship involved in running a typical social service program. A mentoring program has only a few special requirements, as detailed below.

### LAUNCH THE MENTORING

The successful launch of your mentoring program depends in large part on how thorough you have been in the preparation addressed in Steps 1 through 3. Once you have addressed all of the mechanics of your program, you are now ready for actual implementation.

Here are some key activities to consider in getting your program off the ground.

- **Publicize the program.** You will want to take some steps to let the external community know what you are doing and what your program and services are all about. Consider using media, community events and communications vehicles (newsletters, emails, your organization’s website) to promote your program and as avenues for recruitment. Ask community partners and funders if they will help spread the word.
- **Develop flyers, ads, or other marketing to promote the program.** If the materials are for recruiting mentors or participants, make sure those materials have messaging and images that your target audience will be able to relate to. Put the materials in different formats (electronic files, hard copy, web ready) so you can easily take advantage of opportunities for promotion. [See sample marketing materials in the Appendix]
- **Jumpstart your recruitment effort.** Find opportunities to talk about the program

### Quick Tip

#### A Mentor Is Not a Case Manager

The YPD sites learned quickly that the line between mentor and case manager could sometimes be blurry.

It is important to outline and document the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and case manager at the beginning of the program so expectations are clear for everyone.

A mentor “job description” can be included in training materials along with a list that describes the role and responsibilities of a mentor and expectations from a mentee.

and physically go about recruiting mentors. Ask local businesses, churches, and volunteer organizations if you can have an opportunity to make presentations to their staff or members about mentoring. Consider setting up a recruitment table at community events like job fairs, festivals, farmers markets etc. Hold recruitment fairs at your organization that allows volunteers to come to your space. Be prepared to provide materials at such events that will allow individuals interested in becoming a mentor with directions on how to follow-through.

- **Making the Match.** Once you have recruited and screened mentors and mentees, you are ready to make a match. Have both the mentors and mentees complete a questionnaire that responds to their interests and hobbies and the characteristics they want in a mentor-

mentee (include personality, ethnicity, race, religion, geographic location, etc.). Use these questionnaires to inform your matches by looking for similarities in responses across interest areas and

characteristics they have identified as desirable. Have a kick-off event in a safe and comfortable setting where staff can introduce the mentor-mentee matches.

## TAKE STEPS TO SUPPORT AND RETAIN MENTORS AND MENTEES

Once you have made mentor/mentee matches you will need to have an ongoing process for supporting the relationships. There are several things to keep in mind to ensure that the matches are successful.

- **Supervise the initial meetings of mentoring pairs.** It is ideal to have a staff person present at the initial meeting of mentor and mentee to ensure everyone understands expectations and roles.

This first meeting is a good time to have the mentor, mentee sign their agreements, and to answer any questions they might have. This is also an opportunity for the staff member to make an initial observation about the match and assess if it is a good fit for both mentor and mentee.

- **Ensure ongoing supervision of each match.** Periodically check in individually with both the mentor and mentee so that you can assess, from each person's perspective, how the relationship is developing and address any issues that might come up.

- **Provide continuous support for mentors.** Provide mentors with resources that they can refer to easily. For example, it is a good idea to create and distribute a mentor handbook that contains protocols, tip sheets, and best practices for successful mentoring.
- **Celebrate your mentors** for their commitment to the program. The Dannon Project (a YPD program discussed below) provides an excellent example of a way to celebrate the efforts of mentors. As part of a partnership with the City of Birmingham, the mayor hosts a celebratory dinner for The Dannon Project's mentors every year. In addition to the public recognition, mentors get a plaque and photo op with the mayor. Other YPD sites have celebrated their mentors by featuring them in their organization's newsletter and in media articles and by giving them small gifts, like gift cards and tickets to events. A simple, but meaningful, way to celebrate mentors is to have each mentee write a personal letter thanking his or her mentor for their support.

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## HELP YOUR YOUNG-PARENT PARTICIPANTS FIND EMPLOYMENT

Helping a participant secure a job is often one of the most important kinds of assistance a mentor—or a mentoring program—can provide. Employment provides a young parent not only the obvious benefit of income, but also the intangible but crucial benefits of improved self-image and self-confidence, a sense of contribution to society, and the opportunity to develop important skills. A key aspect of this part of a mentoring program is how the respective roles of the mentor and case manager and job development specialist are defined. Typically, the mentor provides support to participants as they seek employment and the case manager or job development specialist provides employment and training services to participants. As indicated in Step 1, establishing relationships with American Job Centers, registered apprenticeships, and other job training or education programs to connect the youth that are being mentored to receive guided employment and education assistance, as needed.

We recommend that you consider pursuing all the following activities in your effort to help your participants find employment.

- **Create partnerships within the workforce system.** If your agency does not already have a relationship with your local WIB, Youth Council and AJC, you will certainly want to establish one. These entities are valuable sources of information and resources for employment, education, and training services. Case management staff should also become familiar with America's Service Locator (<http://www.servicelocator.org/>).
- **Utilize current labor market information.** You should maintain and have access to current labor market information (LMI)

especially as it relates to youth employment and training. Current LMI data will help you direct your participants to viable employment and training opportunities that are likely to lead to sustainable jobs. [See resources list at the end of guide for LMI resources].

- **Employ assessment tools.** Make sure that case managers have access to a variety of tools that can assess participants' strengths and assets, needs and challenges, interests, and goals for job matching.
- **Create Individual Employment Plans (IEP).** Utilizing assessment and LMI data, you will want to establish a process to help participants develop IEPs or career plans. An IEP lays out the various steps an individual should take to meet his or her long-term career goals.
- **Provide adequate support for employment.** Decide what job readiness and training services you can offer in-house and what you would need to subcontract or refer out to other agencies or programs.
- **Address challenges to employment.** A process should be in place to assist participants in identifying and overcoming any challenges or barriers for job retention and advancement. This might include providing for immediate needs like transportation or childcare or addressing more long-term challenges like getting additional training and certification. Although this area should primarily be the responsibility of case managers, mentors can often provide critical support when a participant's barriers to obtaining employment are emotional or psychological.
- **Engage business and employment partners.** Someone, such as job development specialists, in the agency should be responsible for engaging with employers to understand their employment needs and

formalize relationships with them to meet those needs. In this particular area, it is valuable to have a relationship with workforce partners who can both introduce you to employers and help facilitate partnerships. Note: Businesses, both large and small, can be great sources for mentor volunteers. Larger corporations who have employee volunteer programs will see this as another opportunity to engage with your organization.

## **PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR ENDING MATCHES**

It is likely that even a successful mentor–mentee relationship will run its course. Your organization should be prepared to handle relationship closures both expected and unexpected. When a mentor–mentee relationship has run its course, you should ensure that there is a process for closure. Schedule and hold exit interviews with both the mentor and mentee. If the original match did not work out, make sure there is a process for setting up a rematch and addressing any issues that might have contributed to the original match failure.



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## STEP 5. Ensuring Continuous Improvement and Impact

Thoughtful planning and preparation will help your mentoring program operate as smooth as possible and to the highest level of satisfaction for everyone involved in it, whether it is the mentors, mentees, employers, staff, workforce system partners. Even so, the most expertly planned programs can experience setbacks, unexpected glitches, and results that do not match expectations. On the other hand, when program operations do succeed according to plans, there is always room for improvement and for intensifying or broadening, the positive impacts of the mentoring services provided and received. To fix problems and nudge the program in a positive direction, you need both a way of identifying areas that need improvement and a set of strategies for bringing about the needed changes. An evaluation system serves the former need, and a commitment to promoting professional development among your staff is one important way of satisfying the latter.

### SET UP A PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

Once your program is underway, you will want to formalize processes to assess its impact and to identify any areas for improvement. If your mentoring services are not a part of a program or initiative that requires performance tracking or evaluation, your organization may want to create its own system for collecting data, reflecting on findings, and making improvements as needed. Depending on your organization's capacity, you might consider getting support from an external evaluator to help you think through and create a process for measuring progress.

Consider the performance and evaluation systems a necessary set of tools and activities used to assess the quality and impact of your program. These systems may include the tools your organization uses to collect regular data (enrollment and case management information, individual development plans, surveys, evaluation forms, interviews with participants and mentors) and the activities you use to understand the data collected (debriefing meetings and reports).

You can create an effective performance and evaluation system by undertaking the following tasks—

- **Determine what program objectives to measure.** Looking at the desired outcomes you developed in Step 2, create a set of indicators, each related to each one of your outcomes. An indicator is a measurable variable that allows you to gauge your progress towards realizing a particular outcome. Progress toward achieving the outcome encapsulated by the statement “Participants will have a better understanding of the steps needed to achieve their educational or career goals,” for example, might be indicated by the percentage of participants who can describe the education or training required to pursue the career they are interested in.
- **Establish a set of data collection tools.** To measure each indicator variable, you need to collect relevant information. The type of information that is needed determines, in turn, the kind of tool to use to collect the data. There are many tools for collecting data: performance and case management systems, written surveys, online surveys, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, records of mentoring

conversations and activities, and simple tallies of service parameters like hours per month spent with mentees. You are likely to need to use a variety of tools to collect all the kinds of data you need for effective performance management and evaluation.

- **Establish a timeframe with monthly or quarterly reports for data collection.** Meaningful comparisons depend on when data are collected. Ideally, you will collect data on each mentoring match when it begins, at its midpoint, and when it ends. Other kinds of data—such as, measuring mentors’ time spent with mentees—may be recorded daily and collected at regular intervals.
- **Create a standard communication method for providing or receiving feedback.** Mentors and mentees, as well as partner organizations, should be able to give you their input on what is working and not working in the program. This feedback mechanism can be incorporated into your evaluation system—but keep in mind that it also serves the purpose of assuring participants and stakeholders that they have a voice in how the program operates. You can utilize free online surveys like Survey Monkey [www.surveymonkey.com] or Boomerang [www.boomerang.com] or paper surveys depending on your participants’ level of comfort with technology. These tools are simple to setup and user-friendly.
- **Set aside time to reflect.** Schedule a regular time with staff and key stakeholders to conduct an analysis of the data collected. If monthly data is

collected, you might decide to review that data on a quarterly basis.

- **Use data analysis to recognize successes and for program improvements.** Include reporting processes for utilizing analyzed data either to demonstrate accomplishments or to make changes to the program. In performance management meetings, you might set aside time to discuss and prioritize any program changes.
- **Use data to market and recruit.** Decide what data to share with funders and the media and what to use in recruitment materials.

## PROVIDE STAFF WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Program staff members and case managers benefit from ongoing training and skill building regardless of whether they are highly experienced or new to the organization or program. Providing training for staff members when transitions occur and as program operations or policies change, helps you with maintaining continuity, integrity. Training also addresses other program management concerns as they occur. If particular program capacity-building areas exist and staff members need to build their skills, focus the training on specific topics or staff development activities to improve individual and overall program performance. Make sure there is a training plan in place for new staff members. An easy way to orient new staff to the program, or its mentoring services component, is to have them go through the same orientation activities setup for the mentors and mentees in your program.



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# LEARNING FROM THE YOUNG PARENTS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT GRANTEES

The local non-profit organizations awarded the YPD grants operate programs for young parents that include educational and occupational skills training, case management, and supportive services intended to lead to family economic self-sufficiency. The funded projects serve young parents in high-risk categories, including victims of child abuse, children of incarcerated parents, court-involved youth, youth at risk of court involvement, homeless and runaway youth, Indian and Native American youth, migrant youth, youth in or aging out of foster care, and youth with disabilities. Demonstration funds for the YPD were authorized through annual appropriations for programs in the WIA, and designed to test new strategies to improve education and employment outcomes for young parents who receive services through the local workforce system. The YPD was funded to test interventions that are part of the ten required program elements in the WIA Youth Program. Mentoring is one of the ten youth program elements that are offered to all youth participants based on individual needs in local workforce investment areas.

All YPD grantees agreed to participate in a random assignment evaluation designed to test the impact of the mentoring services as an intervention. To conform to the requirements of the evaluation, the grantees planned to enroll at least 400 young parents during the first two years of the grant period of performance. A random assignment process is used to determine which 200 participants receive the mentoring services for eighteen months. In addition to the existing services provided by the grantee (or its designated partner) for a minimum period of eighteen months. The remaining 200 participants participate in the grantees' existing educational and employment programs and do not receive the mentoring services. Full-time paid professional mentors or volunteers (who receive appropriate compensation) are engaged to mentor young parents. Mentoring relationships started after the young parents enrolled in the program. The YPD programs use the mentoring intervention to provide help to the young parents in these individual development areas: education, career advancement and personal development.

The mentors in the demonstration projects support young parents in a variety of ways, and:

- offer specific career and education advice based on their personal experiences;
- help young parents complete job or college applications, apply for financial aid, open bank accounts, and access support services;
- prepare young parents for job interviews by determining appropriate interview dress and by role playing;
- connect young parents to useful resources, such as affordable and reliable childcare, transportation, and housing that allowed them to sustain employment; and
- serve as formal references to potential employers.

The YPD programs contribute to the success of the young parents in their programs by preparing them for their futures and those of their families. The sites each developed service strategies and practices to support mentoring components of the program. Overall, these programs aim to help participants address barriers to employment and education such as criminal records, transportation challenges, lack of access to childcare, limited training or education, and poorly developed job and life skills.

Each of the YPD sites profiled in this guidebook spent months planning, setting up participant tracking systems, accessing technical assistance, and working with their local communities to create strong and responsive programs. The sites became familiar with the challenges of implementing and running measurable mentoring programs for young parents. In so doing, these grantees, also intentionally took time to build the programs to ensure continuity and maintain integrity for the evaluation. While the sites understand the implications about starting a demonstration with an impact evaluation, they are learning the importance of developing rigorous evidence while the program runs its course.

The experiences of these four grantees are shared in the profiles in the pages that follow and are provided as examples for mentoring activities with a variety of different program structures. Ashville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry adopted a model, called Circles that connects several caring adults as mentors or “allies” to individual youth, identified as “leaders.” The Dannon Project provides a wide array of services targeted to previously incarcerated non-violent individuals, of which mentoring is utilized to engage community members and other local stakeholders to address the needs of their youth. AltaMed Health Services uses a combination of mentoring models that include group activities organized by AmeriCorps volunteers and matches youth with slightly older peers who have shared interests. Training Resources of America provides an individually-matched mentor with youth in ten separate locations allows more young parents’ access to caring adults.

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# Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM)

Asheville and Davidson Counties, North Carolina

[www.abccm.org](http://www.abccm.org)

ABCCM is a cooperative ministry of 271 congregations and over 3600 volunteers responding to the needs of the Asheville and Buncombe County communities in North Carolina through different caring ministries.

Among the services provided are emergency assistance for individuals and families; two transitional housing facilities; a free clinic for uninsured families; ministry for the incarcerated; employment and training services; and the Circles mentoring program.

ABCCM utilizes a unique mentorship structure based on the circles model. In this approach, mentees are

*"My mentor drove me to places to apply for jobs. Not having to take the bus to all of those locations saved me a lot of time. As we were driving, he gave me a pep talk and helped me stay positive when places turned me down.*

*Just knowing I didn't have to do it all alone was encouraging. Having support outside of my family and friends helps me stay focused and I feel encouraged. I can discuss my goals with my mentor and get their ideas. I appreciate just knowing I have someone there to listen and give me advice."*

*- Ambrosia, Mentee, ABCCM*

known as circle leaders and the mentors as allies. The circle leaders participate in training where they learn strategies for building their financial, emotional and social resources and develop an economic stability plan to set goals that are unique to their own needs and dreams. Two to four allies are matched with each circle leader; together they form a "circle group." The trained volunteer allies serve as mentors to support the circle leaders' economic, educational and employment goals. Each circle group (the circle leader

and his or her allies) meets weekly over an 18-month period to provide the circle leader with peer support and discuss strategies to help the leader meet his or her goals.

Instead of ABCCM staff making the match assignments between circle leaders and allies, the circle leaders themselves get to interview and choose the allies for their mentor matches. This process provides an opportunity for young parent participants to take some leadership in making the mentor–mentee match and experience what it is like to be an interviewer versus the interviewee.

One of the benefits of the circle model is that the mentees (leaders) have access to not just one mentor but multiple mentors. In this way, mentees can take full advantage of a nucleus of support and the multiple perspectives of their allies. Likewise, the allies can work collaboratively to support the mentee including looking to each other to brainstorm ways to address challenges their mentee might face.

For the YPD, ABCCM collaborates with the Family Services of Davidson County to implement the program in both Asheville and Davidson counties in North Carolina. ABCCM and Family Services came into the YPD program with a history of providing professional counselling, education and training support services for families over the last 20 years.

*"As a mentor, I am in a relationship – like extended family – with someone I may have never known or been friends with otherwise. The experience has really opened my eyes to the kinds of barriers that young people face and what it means to have someone they can trust and rely on."* - Claude, Mentor, ABCCM

# The Dannon Project (TDP)

Birmingham, Alabama

[www.dannonproject.org/](http://www.dannonproject.org/)

Targeting non-violent previously incarcerated individuals in Birmingham, Alabama, TDP provides case management, mentoring, job readiness, job placement, education, homeless prevention and other support services that allow ex-offenders the opportunity to reintegrate into their communities. In a region where levels of poverty and crime are among the highest in the nation, TDP is a vehicle of transformation for community members facing multiple barriers who desire to become productive and contributing members of society and the workforce.

*“Being a mentor has really helped me to appreciate the support I received as a child. I am grateful to be able to give that support back to someone who needs it.”*  
- Jennifer, Mentor,  
The Dannon Project

Beginning in 2010, TDP expanded its Youth Careers Program and its Allied High Growth Careers Program to include young pregnant and parenting teens (ages 16–24). Through these programs, TDP offered young participants comprehensive life- and job-skills training, career counseling, job development and placement services, short-term licenses and certification training, parenting classes, financial literacy, and a range of support services.

*“Having a mentor encourages me to talk through difficult situations and have a positive outlook on life.”*  
- Marion, Mentee,  
The Dannon Project

As part of the YPD project, TDP’s goals were to utilize the mentoring component to engage community and stakeholder support in addressing the education and income disparities facing the young parent population. TDP also saw mentoring as a vehicle for deterring its participants from engaging in criminal behavior. By providing them with alternative perspectives, TDP believed mentors could show youth participants how they could overcome some of the barriers they faced, using their own life experience as examples.

In the process of implementing the YPD project, TDP developed strong partnerships with the City of Birmingham, Alabama Department of Human Resources, Lawson State Community College, Birmingham Health Care Inc., the local Workforce Investment Board and the Alabama Industrial Development Board. Leveraging these partnerships, TDP has been able to offer its young parents state career certifications, low- or no-cost health services, free GED testing, and job placement support.



### *CREATING A ROBUST PIPELINE FOR MENTORS*

TDP staff has a talent for facilitating strong community partnership. When a youth participant shared with church leadership her experience being mentored through TDP's program, the worship center church located in the local vicinity was intrigued. Specifically, the church board members church had already discussed implementing a mentoring program when they learned TDP was providing mentoring services for parenting or pregnant youth in the community. After months of conversation, the church and TDP agreed to a partnership in which TDP screens and trains church members who wish to become mentors and the church leadership, in turn, promotes the mentoring opportunities and provides facilities for mentor-mentee training and engagement activities. Churches, colleges, network organizations, and businesses are all great resources for potential mentors. When recruiting for mentors, identify organizations that have a built-in community of individuals who are likely to be committed to giving back through volunteer efforts.

### *HELPING PARTICIPANTS OVERCOME CRIMINAL RECORDS*

Many of the young people who come to TDP have an arrest record or other criminal history. Having experience working with ex-offenders and supporting their re-entry, TDP quickly works to address such barriers. TDP has a strong relationship with the court system and has a court advocate on staff to help participants overcome issues, such as resolving warrants, reducing fines, and expunging records. TDP learned that if a youth in the program can show the court that he or she is on the right path, such as taking steps to complete education or training goals and sustain employment, the judge is more likely to help resolve records or fines. TDP also conducts criminal background checks on all of its participants so that case managers have a clear picture of all of the potential challenges their clients may face. TDP learned that in some cases the participants themselves are not aware of everything that is remaining on their records. With full knowledge of these issues, TDP staff can work proactively with the participant and court system to clean up any issues that might get in the way of obtaining or retaining employment.

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## ALTAMED Health Services

Los Angeles, California

[www.altamed.org/programs\\_and\\_services/youth\\_programs](http://www.altamed.org/programs_and_services/youth_programs)

In Los Angeles County, persons of Hispanic or Latino origin make up nearly 50 percent of the population. The region is a cultural and linguistic melting pot, with over 224 distinct languages spoken. For over 40 years, AltaMed has served this diverse region and become a known and trusted entity, primarily focused on serving Latino, multi-ethnic and underserved communities in Southern California with quality health and human services.

AltaMed strives to connect community residents with a wide spectrum of health, education and economic improvement opportunities including chronic disease management, workforce readiness programs, after-school tutoring and mentoring services for youth.

*"My mentor comes from a similar environment as me and she has shared with me the issues she has faced and what she did to overcome those challenges. My mentor went to college and I like hearing about what she did in college and what she is doing now to keep on growing. Listening to her stories push me to be better, because I know that I can do it too.*

*One of my goals is to complete the Certified Nursing Assistant Program. I am happy that I have options that are within my reach as a young mother. My mentor has really helped bring my thoughts together."*

- Melany, Mentee, AltaMed

Within the matrix of these vital community services is the Escalera Program, through which AltaMed runs its Young Parents Demonstration. *Escalera* means ladder

in Spanish and reflects a deep commitment to promoting upward economic mobility for Latino youth. Programming at Escalera includes opportunities for education attainment, career planning, and access to

information about well-paying careers.

In the base year of the YPD program, over 163 young parents in the greater Los Angeles area were matched with a mentor; and received personal, education, training, and career

support or guidance. By participating in this program, these young parents gain access to intensive, individualized and intentional support that is helping to move them upward on the ladder of success.

AltaMed uses a combination of different models for mentoring. In addition to the one-to-one mentoring, they also have group sessions led by AmeriCorps volunteers. AltaMed often utilized mentors who are relatively close in age to the participants. For the mentees, having a mentor that is more like a peer makes the experiences of their mentor in shared interests, like attending college or getting a job, more tangible. On the other hand, having a younger mentor who had not yet experienced parenthood or not held a job meant there were some advice the mentee was not equipped to offer based on not having lived that experience.

*"Personally, what I find rewarding is that even though I am supposed to be helping my mentee, I feel like I am also learning from and being helped by her. I have learned to see things from her perspective and try to understand what it is to have a child and still try to go to school. Thanks to my mentee, I can talk to others with her similar background and relate to them in some form.*

*I am not married and don't have any kids and often don't know what is the right thing to say is, but my mentee has opened up to me and I find it rewarding that she can count on me to hear her out when she is having an issue."*

- Janet, Mentor, AltaMed

# Training Resources of America (TRA)

Massachusetts

[www.tra-inc.org/YPD](http://www.tra-inc.org/YPD)

Training Resources of America, Inc. (TRA) is a Massachusetts-based private non-profit organization that has been operating a variety of education, skills training, and employment programs that have served close to 40,000 educationally and economically disadvantaged youth and adults over the past 37 years.

In addition, hundreds of employers statewide have met their employment needs by hiring

TRA-trained employees and utilizing TRA's customized workplace literacy services. Workforce Investment Boards and funding organizations have benefitted from TRA's ability to provide high quality workforce development services. TRA's training programs are customized to be current with employment trends and responsive to the specific occupational needs of each particular area of the commonwealth.

Since 1992, TRA has operated a Young Parents Program (YPP) at 10 locations across Massachusetts. TRA's YPP programs are funded by a partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). Through the demonstration grant, TRA was able to add mentoring services to its

*"I really feel like my mentor is in my corner. She listens to me and often tells me hard things that I don't necessarily want to hear but that I know are important. My mentor really pushes me; I know I am still in school because of her. I am thankful to have my mentor sticking by my side."*

**- Rose, TRA/LARE, Mentee**

existing YPP program. TRA serves as the lead agency, managing the overall demonstration and providing mentoring services at its program sites in Brockton, Fitchburg, Holyoke, New Bedford, Quincy, Salem, Springfield, and Worcester, MA. Through a subcontract agreement, key partner LARE American

Training, provides mentoring services at program sites in Chelsea and Lawrence, MA. TRA's and LARE's YPPs provide a variety of workforce programs and services to young parent participants including education, training and employment strategies, case management, supportive services, and follow-up and post-program transition services.

TRA has shared the model for providing mentor services to young parents with other agencies in the state and as a result generated widespread enthusiasm among service providers for adding mentor components to their existing young parent programs. Mentors at some TRA sites have started

*"It has been a rewarding experience seeing my mentee move forward in life despite some of the difficulties she has faced. I feel like I am a part of her success. Seeing the input become output and forward progression in another's life that I touch. Nothing is better than that! - Camille, TRA/LARE, Mentor*

breakfast clubs where they meet to share their experiences as mentors and exchange ideas about challenges and or things that have worked well in their mentoring relationship.



## PROMISING PRACTICES

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### *Grandparents as Mentors*

In the Latino community, grandparents often see themselves as mentors to the parents of their grandchildren. While AltaMed leaders see the value in having non-familial members serve as volunteer mentors to their young parent participants, they also did not want to exclude grandparents, who are a critical part of support systems for young parents and other youth. AltaMed has begun plans to include grandparents in the YPD program and has considered such strategies as having them serve as on-site care providers while the young parents are in training, education, or receiving other services. In addition, AltaMed staff members have discussed creating a grandparents committee of the YPD program to engage the senior parents in activities that will support their children in meeting their employment and parenting goals.

### *Intensive and Ongoing Mentor Recruitment*

Training Resources of America's (TRA's) strategy is to maintain a steady pipeline of mentors through ongoing mentor recruitment. The agency conducts targeted presentations and outreach to former program participants, local colleges, community-based organizations, Workforce Investment Board meetings, Youth Council Board members, Chamber of Commerce members, employers, and seniors. TRA also utilizes social media, posting its mentor volunteers opportunities on Idealist.org and Craigslist.org. Once an individual expresses interest in becoming a mentor, TRA invites him or her to participate in a mentor orientation. The orientation serves to generate enthusiasm among prospective mentors, but also clearly lays out the guidelines and goals of the mentor program. Before a prospective mentor even begins the rigorous application and screening process, TRA wants to ensure that the person has clarity on what the commitment involves and what is expected of a mentor.

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## RESOURCES

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*The following pages contain a list of resources and reference materials, organized by the five steps outlined above in the guidebook.*



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## Step 1: Laying the Groundwork

- **Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models. Jerry Sherk.**  
[http://calswec.berkeley.edu/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/02Mentor\\_Assess.pdf](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/02Mentor_Assess.pdf)  
This needs assessment guide contains a general discussion of program needs, associated start-up costs, mentor program models, staffing, and options for program implementation.
- **Building an Effective Advisory Committee. Education NW.**  
[http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/232](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/232)  
Advisory committees can offer guidance and direction to both new and established mentoring programs. They can also serve a variety of roles—from fundraising to volunteer recruitment. This resource breaks down different functions of advisory committees and highlights strategies to maximize support they provide. Youth and young parents programs should examine how to leverage this resource to build partnerships with other workforce agencies and employers in their local area.
- **Play Well With Others. Leveraging Program Partnerships for Success.**  
[http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/165](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/165)  
Partnerships can help to strengthen a variety of opportunities for mentoring programs. This resource offers tips and strategies to maximize outcomes from collaborations. For agencies that are working with other local employers, “leveraging partnerships for success” is a vital tool that offers important marketing and outreach tips to these groups.
- **Effective Practices of Mentoring, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. MENTOR**  
[http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1222.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222.pdf)  
The third edition of the Effective Practices of Mentoring outlines in detail the six effective practices of mentoring programs. It provides advice on program planning and design, program management, program operation, and program evaluation. It also includes measures that can be implemented to ensure that mentor relationships thrive and endure in any setting.

## Step 2: Designing an Effective Program

- **Design Guide: Formal/Volunteer Mentor. Jerry Sherk**  
[http://calswec.berkeley.edu/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/03Mentor\\_Design.pdf](http://calswec.berkeley.edu/files/uploads/pdf/CalSWEC/03Mentor_Design.pdf)  
This resource contains tips and strategies to assemble a mentor program design team.
- **Group Mentoring Model**  
[http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1323.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1323.pdf)  
The Group Mentoring Model provides an overview of the different aspects of the group mentoring model including design, pros and cons of this model.
- **Circles Mentoring Model**  
<http://www.circlesusa.org/index.php?page=circles-campaign>  
Circles USA is a specific group-mentoring model where mentees are matched with multiple mentors. This website provides details on the Circles model, framework and resources on design and implementation.

- **One-to-One and Group Mentoring an Integrated Approach. Education NW.**  
[http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/216](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/216)  
 Education Northwest looks at both the one-to-one and group mentoring model and ways that you can integrate the tool models in a mentoring program.
- **Research in Action: Program Staff in Youth Mentoring Programs: Qualifications, Training, and Retention. MENTOR.**  
[www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_384.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_384.pdf)  
 The direct link between research and program practice can help to justify improvements and strengthen mentoring services. This resource offers a detailed literature review of promising practices related to staffing youth mentoring programs and the types of qualifications that might be necessary for mentor program coordinators. In addition, an “Action” section gives agencies a tangible checklist that notes promising hiring practices and professional development activities for mentor program staff.
- **Basic Management Skills. Gerard Blair.**  
[www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/index.html?oldeee.see.ed.ac.uk/%7Egerard/Management/index.html](http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/index.html?oldeee.see.ed.ac.uk/%7Egerard/Management/index.html)  
 This webpage includes articles on basic management. Promising practices for supervising teams and groups, presentation skills, time management, quality, writing skills, delegation, managing people, project planning, and tips to be a great manager are noted. This resource is specifically useful for mentoring programs that want to move to higher phases of implementation of effective management practices.
- **Funder Search Database, The Foundation Center**  
<http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/?;jsessionid=TVYGCGVGXE14BLAQBQ4CGW15AAAACI2F>  
 This webpage is a link to a search of the Foundation Center’s database by location, population served and funding areas.

### Step 3: Designing the Mechanics of Mentoring

- **Generic Policy and Procedure Manual. Education NW.**  
<http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/360>  
 This resource provides examples, templates, sample forms, job descriptions, and detailed directions for how to design a policy and procedure manual specifically for mentoring programs. Programs serving young parents and other youth will want to adapt and adjust this template to reflect the unique circumstances of providing employment services to this population.
- **Marketing for the Recruitment of Mentors: A Workbook for Finding and Attracting Volunteers. Education NW.**  
[http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/178](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/178)  
 Contains tools, templates, and best practices for developing a plan to locate and secure suitable volunteers to serve as mentors.

- **Mentoring Fact Sheet: Volunteer Motivation and Mentor Recruitment. Education NW.**  
[www.educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/170](http://www.educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/170)  
 Gives an overview of motivations of potential volunteers that can be used to develop messaging and outreach.
- **Men in Mentoring Toolkit. Mentor Michigan.**  
<http://www.michigan.gov/mentormichigan/0,1607,7-193--211411--00.html>  
 Mentoring programs often struggle to recruit men as mentors. This toolkit offers tips, suggestions, and pathways to conduct outreach to this population.
- **Social Media and Mentoring. Mentor Michigan.**  
[www.michigan.gov/mentormichigan/0,1607,7-193--252667--00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mentormichigan/0,1607,7-193--252667--00.html)  
 Includes an overview of social networking tools; and it demonstrates how to apply social networking tools, resources for nonprofits, tips for using social networking to recruit mentors, social networking tips to share with mentors, tips for mentoring programs to share with staff and further resources to explore.
- **Background Check Overview (Process and Definitions) MENTOR**  
[www.mentoring.org/program\\_resources/criminal\\_background\\_checks](http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/criminal_background_checks)  
 This webpage includes an overview of the importance of screening: confidentiality, assessing program risk, screening tools, informing prospective volunteers, criminal record policies, documenting policies and decisions, fingerprint versus name based background checks, convictions versus arrests, county/local checks, state background checks, and supplemental criminal background checks such as driver's license, sex offender, and child abuse registries.
- **The US Department of Education Mentoring Program's Guide to Screening and Background Checks. Education NW.**  
[www.educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/182](http://www.educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/182)  
 This resource is useful for coordinators and other staff that conduct screening for mentoring programs. It provides a framework for screening, including the wide variety of background checks you may choose to conduct. This resource also explores issues around safety and suitability of potential volunteers.
- **Background Screening Suggestions. National Center for Exploited Children.**  
[http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/NCMEC\\_Background\\_Screening.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/NCMEC_Background_Screening.pdf)  
 The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) Background Check Unit (BCU) is comprised of analysts trained to review criminal history records based on a set of established criteria. This webpage offers an overview of screening suggestions that can help to protect young people in your mentoring program.
- **Background State Background Contacts. National Center for Exploited Children.**  
[www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1340.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1340.pdf)  
 This link contains contacts for state background checks in each state. This is useful for agencies looking to understand where to go to begin the process of conducting a background check for a new program.

- **State Sex Offender Registries**  
[www.nsopw.gov/en-US/Registry](http://www.nsopw.gov/en-US/Registry)  
 The Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) provides access to sex offender data nationwide. NSOPW is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Justice and state, territorial, and tribal governments, working together for the safety of adults and children.
- **Training New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities. Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & Education NW.**  
[www.gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/20697/n/off/other/1/name/trainingpdf](http://www.gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/20697/n/off/other/1/name/trainingpdf)  
 Provides ready-to-use training modules for your program.
- **For Mentees: Preparing for a Mentoring Relationship. Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota.**  
[www.mpmn.org/Resources/MenteeResources.aspx](http://www.mpmn.org/Resources/MenteeResources.aspx)  
 Webpage includes video, strategies to get started, roles (what is a mentor? What is a mentee?), relationships (communication plan, mentor panel, mentoring journals), safety and boundaries, goals, activities, and wrapping up.
- **Talking it Through: Communication Skills for Mentors. Education NW.**  
[www.talkingitthrough.educationnorthwest.org/](http://www.talkingitthrough.educationnorthwest.org/)  
 This webpage includes a series of videos that highlight examples of different situations that mentors might need to address. Each example is based on an actual situation.

## Step 4: Running the Program

- **Effective Case Management in the Workforce Toolkit. Social Policy Research Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.**  
<https://effectivecasemanagement.workforce3one.org/index.aspx>  
 The following website contains a wealth of resources and tools designed to help system administrators, local leaders and staff to support high quality case management in the workforce system.
- **Research in Action: Fostering Close and Effective Relationships in Youth Mentoring Programs. MENTOR.**  
[www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_385.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_385.pdf)  
 This resource provides an overview of research on the ingredients of a close mentoring relationship between mentors and mentees. Also includes tools that a mentoring program can use to strengthen opportunities for mentors and mentees to bond.
- **Activity Ideas. Youth Friends.**  
[www.youthfriends.org/resourcecenter/activity\\_ideas.html](http://www.youthfriends.org/resourcecenter/activity_ideas.html)  
 This webpage includes printable activity ideas including an overview of career/college/military resources.

- **Research in Action: Why Youth Mentoring Relationships End. MENTOR.**  
[www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_386.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_386.pdf)  
 This brief describes several reasons that mentoring relationships might terminate early. This resource also provides program staff with prototype tools to better assess the effectiveness of supervision and support strategies for different mentoring scenarios.
- **Career One Stop**  
<https://www.CareerOnestop.org>  
 This website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor provides a wealth of resources for job seekers, employers and agencies including career assessments, resume builder tools, career exploration, job search, training and education information etc.
- **My Next Move**  
<https://www.mynextmove.org/>  
 My Next Move is an interactive tool for job seekers and students to learn more about their career options. My Next Move has tasks, skills, salary information, and more for over 900 different careers. Users can find careers through keyword search; by browsing industries that employ different types of workers; or through the O\*NET Interest Profiler, a tool that offers personalized career suggestions based on a person's interests and level of work experience.
- **Labor Market Information – USDOL-ETA Employment Projections**  
<http://www.doleta.gov/business/projections/InternetLinks.cfm>  
 This U.S. Department of Labor web page provides links to national, state and local labor market projections. Labor projections can be useful to agencies for career counseling, to plan employment, education and training programs and for marketing to and engaging potential employer and business partners.
- **Expanding Business Engagement, Community of Practice**  
<http://businessengagement.workforce3one.org/>  
 This online community of practice sponsored by U.S. Department of Labor, ETA, houses a variety of best practices, tools, discussion, models and resources for engaging business partners in workforce development.
- **Workforce Systems Strategies**  
<http://strategies.workforce3one.org/>  
 This website houses a variety of workforce specific research and tools that have been tried and tested in the field. The user can search the site in key content areas including: employment, retention and advancement, education and training, and management and operations.
- **Sustainability Planning and Resource Development for Youth Mentoring Programs. Education NW.**  
[www.educationnorthwest.org/resource/365](http://www.educationnorthwest.org/resource/365)  
 In order to run a successful mentoring program that lasts the test of time, agencies must create a long-term sustainability plan. This resource provides tools, templates, and worksheets that can help program staff create and successfully implement a resource development plan.

## Step 5: Ensuring Continuous Improvement and Impact

- **Evaluation Instrument Toolkit. Oregon Mentors.**  
[www.oregonmentors.org/library/evaluationtools/](http://www.oregonmentors.org/library/evaluationtools/)  
This webpage is a practitioner friendly resource that gives easy step-by-step guidance on how to think about and use different evaluation instruments. The toolkit also has direct links to different tools and information about how to administer each.
- **Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring. University of Massachusetts Center for Evidence Based Mentoring.**  
[www.chronicle.umbmentoring.org/](http://www.chronicle.umbmentoring.org/)  
Includes links to the latest research on mentoring and interactive discussion opportunities to engage with experts and other practitioners.
- **Center for Interdisciplinary Mentoring Research. Portland State University.**  
[www.pdx.edu/mentoring-research/](http://www.pdx.edu/mentoring-research/)  
This resource offers an overview of research on mentoring across the life course, including mentoring children and youth, mentoring college students, and mentoring employees in the workplace.

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