



The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring



A report for MENTOR:
The National Mentoring Partnership
January 2014

By Civic Enterprises in association with
Hart Research Associates

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A Report By



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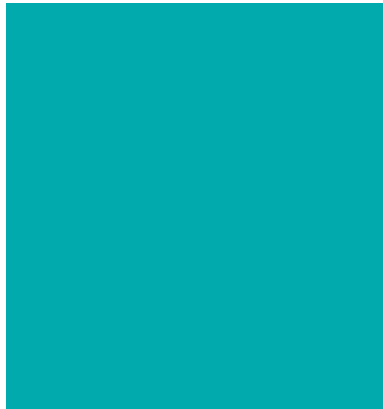
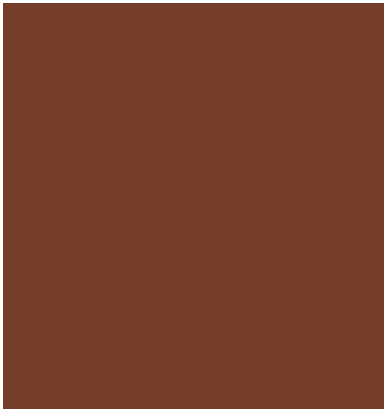
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MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. MENTOR's mission is to close the "mentoring gap" and ensure our nation's young people have the support they need through quality mentoring relationships to succeed at home, school, and ultimately, work. To achieve this, MENTOR collaborates with its *Mentoring Partnership Network* and works to drive the investment of time and money into high impact mentoring programs and advance quality mentoring through the development and delivery of standards, cutting-edge research and state-of-the-art tools. Learn more at www.mentoring.org.

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Open Letter to the American People

As we work to improve life outcomes for young people, their voices must guide our efforts. The report that follows includes the results of the first-ever, nationally representative survey of young people's perspectives on mentoring. Core to our collective work is the fundamental belief that children and adolescents should receive the supports they need and deserve — including consistent and caring relationships with adults. By asking 18- to 21-year-olds across the country to share their opinions on and experiences with mentoring, they shared their realities with us: while the mentoring needs of our young people are not being fully met, for those with quality mentors, there is a powerful effect on their life trajectory.

The consistent, enduring presence of a caring adult in a young person's life can be the difference between staying in school or dropping out, making healthy decisions or engaging in risky behaviors, and realizing one's potential or failing to achieve one's dreams. Mentors can make a profound difference in the lives of their mentees — and in turn, strengthen our communities, economy, and country. The stakes are high, and we are encouraged to find that young people's experiences with different types of mentoring relationships provide powerful and complementary benefits. Young people with mentors, especially at-risk youth, have more positive visions of themselves and their futures, and they also achieve more positive outcomes in school, the workplace, and their communities.

While many young people benefit from mentoring relationships, the fact that more than one in three young people told us they had never had a mentor exposes the frays in our community fabric. As a society, too often we leave these mentoring relationships — powerful human connections — to chance. We must close this “mentoring gap” — for the good of young people and our country.



Willem Kooyker
Board Chair, MENTOR

Facing this mentoring gap, and reflecting on the progress made in the mentoring movement, we are not discouraged. We are emboldened. Our nation is committed to advancing opportunities for young people. Where a child starts in life cannot determine how far he or she climbs. Equipped with this new data to inform our collective work, we must adapt our approach accordingly and attract new partners and advocates to close the mentoring gap. Young people deserve quality mentoring relationships that will allow them to more completely realize their full potential. In many regards, we are well on our way. One recent study showed that every dollar invested in quality youth mentoring programs yields a \$3 return in benefits to society at a minimum.

Since the founding of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership more than 20 years ago, the number of structured mentoring relationships for at-risk youth in the United States has increased from an estimated 300,000 to 4.5 million. Quality program practices have been codified through *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, and our national network of locally-based *Mentoring Partnerships* serves a unique role as a clearinghouse for resources to thousands of program providers across the country informed by a growing body of research. Ultimately, our mission is to advance the dedicated efforts of local and national organizations, and the millions of Americans who step up as mentors to deliver on the promise of mentoring.

The research base is strong, the need is clear, and the field is ready. We know now, more than ever, that we can meet many needs of young people through the support of caring adults and continued collaborative efforts of schools, businesses, community organizations, government, philanthropy, and young people themselves. Now, with this national survey, young people's powerful voices can help ensure the fate of America and its next generation are not left to chance.



David Shapiro
President and CEO, MENTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report shares the findings from the first nationally representative survey of young people's perspectives on mentoring. While mentoring is needed and wanted by young people to help them stay on the path to high school graduation, college success, and productive adulthood, a significant mentoring gap exists in America, especially for at-risk youth. More than one in three young people — an estimated 16 million — never had an adult mentor *of any kind* (structured or “naturally occurring”) while they were growing up. This population includes an estimated nine million at-risk youth who will reach age 19 without ever having a mentor — and who are therefore less likely to graduate high school, go on to college, and lead healthy and productive lives. The survey also revealed a difficult paradox that the more risk factors a young person has, the less likely he or she is to have a naturally occurring mentor.

There is also good news. Encouragingly, young people confirmed and deepened our understanding of what research tells us: structured and naturally occurring mentoring relationships have powerful effects which provide young people with positive and complementary benefits in a variety of personal, academic, and professional factors.

While a significant mentoring gap exists for at-risk youth, the survey also found that the more risk factors a young person has, the more likely he or she is to have a structured mentor, indicating a positive trend toward closing the mentoring gap for those most in need. The survey also revealed key leverage points where mentoring can better support young people, including by using structured mentoring as an intervention strategy to meet the needs of youth most at-risk. In the absence of naturally occurring mentoring relationships, structured relationships can help young people stay on or return to a successful path when they may falter, and help them achieve key milestones on the path to adulthood, such as high school graduation and college completion.

This report provides insights on young people's perspectives on mentoring in three areas: (1) Mentoring's Connection to Aspirations and Outcomes; (2) The Value of Mentors; and (3) The Availability of Mentors. The report then offers recommendations to guide community, state, and national partners in their work to close the mentoring gap and increase the powerful effects of mentoring. By connecting young people to caring, consistent, and supportive adults, the nation can help young people achieve their dreams, and also strengthen communities, the economy, and our country. In addition to the nationally representative survey of 18- to 21-year-olds, this report reflects discussions with key leaders in business, philanthropy, government, and education, and a literature and landscape review of the mentoring field. While the field of mentoring has reported service gaps in the past, the estimates in this report are not meant to provide a direct comparison. Instead, they are meant to form the most accurate picture possible of how the mentoring needs of young people are currently being met through their perspective, highlight gaps that remain, and chart paths forward to create more caring adult relationships in the lives of children.

INSIGHT AREA 1: Mentoring's Connection to Aspirations and Outcomes

Mentoring helps young people, especially at-risk youth, succeed in school, work, and life. A strong research base supports the efficacy of quality mentoring, including a recent meta-analysis of more than 73 independent mentoring programs that found positive outcomes across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic areas of youth development. In our survey, we find evidence to suggest that young people's experience confirms this: youth with mentors are more likely to report engaging in positive behavior.



Young people who had mentors report setting higher educational goals and are more likely to attend college than those without mentors. High expectations and higher educational attainment are key factors in life success.

- More than three quarters (76 percent) of at-risk young adults who had a mentor aspire to enroll in and graduate from college versus half (56 percent) of at-risk young adults who had no mentor.
- At-risk young adults with mentors are also more likely to be enrolled in college than those without a mentor (45 percent of all at-risk youth with a mentor are enrolled in some type of postsecondary education as opposed to 29 percent of at-risk youth who are enrolled but never had a mentor).

Young adults who had mentors, particularly those at-risk, are more likely to report engaging in productive and beneficial activities than youth without a mentor. These activities translate into the higher self-esteem and self-confidence that are necessary traits for youth to engage in teamwork and community work, and to be successful in life.

- At-risk young adults with a mentor are more likely to report participating regularly in sports or extracurricular activities (67 percent of at-risk youth with mentors compared to 37 percent of those without them).

- At-risk young adults with a mentor are more likely to hold a leadership position in a club, sports team, school council, or another group (51 percent versus 22).
- At-risk young adults with a mentor are more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities (48 percent versus 27).

The longer the mentoring relationship lasts, the greater the value for youth. The survey confirmed that the length of a mentoring relationship matters, both in structured and informal mentoring relationships.

- Youth satisfaction in mentoring relationships doubled when comparing relationships of more than a year to less than a year (67 percent of young adults found their structured mentoring relationship very helpful if it lasted for a year or more versus 33 percent when the relationship lasted less than a year), confirming the notion that longer relationships are stronger relationships.
- Young people with longer mentoring relationships report better outcomes than youth with shorter mentoring relationships in areas such as higher educational aspirations (86 percent of young adults in relationships of more than a year versus 77 percent of those in relationships of a year or less always planned to enroll in and graduate from college), sports participation (77 percent versus 70 percent), leadership positions (61 percent versus 50 percent), and regular volunteering (61 percent versus 53 percent).

INSIGHT AREA 2: The Value of Mentors

Young adults value mentoring relationships. The survey shows that young people also believe mentoring provides them with the support and guidance they need to lead productive lives.

- **Young adults who had mentors speak highly of these relationships.** They offer that their mentors help them stay on track in school, make good choices, and provide consistent support.

- Nearly all young adults who had formal mentoring relationships (95 percent) found these experiences to be “helpful,” including more than half (51 percent) who found the relationship to be “very helpful.” Similarly, nearly all youth in informal mentoring relationships (99 percent) say their experience was “helpful,” including seven in 10 (69 percent) reporting it as “very helpful.”

Informal and structured mentoring relationships can provide complementary benefits.

- Structured mentoring relationships tend to provide more academic support.** Youth report that formal mentoring programs provide a variety of benefits, and most commonly offer that they receive advice about school and get help with school issues and/or schoolwork. They also reference to a lesser degree receiving help to address life problems including assistance in getting a job, choosing a career, and getting into college.
- Informal mentoring relationships tend to support personal development.** Mentees in informal mentoring relationships commonly offer that their mentors provided developmental, more than academic, support. These mentors conveyed advice and encouragement to help them make good decisions, and taught young adults how to make the right decisions, follow the right path, and stay motivated.

Mentees want to serve as mentors, indicating both an endorsement of mentoring and a powerful proof point that mentees are empowered to contribute to the world around them.

- Nearly nine in ten respondents who were mentored report they are interested in becoming mentors (86 percent of all youth who were mentored, and 85 percent of at-risk youth who were mentored). In addition to confirming the value of mentoring, this desire to become a mentor also strengthens the earlier finding that mentoring is linked with higher

rates of leadership and volunteering and offers a pool of future mentors to be activated.

INSIGHT AREA 3: The Availability of Mentors

A mentoring gap exists that the nation must close. The research demonstrates — and young people agree — that mentoring relationships support personal and academic outcomes, regardless of a young person’s background, as well as help prepare young people for the future workforce. As at-risk youth are simultaneously more likely to have academic struggles and less likely to have naturally occurring mentors, their immediate mentoring needs could be met through formal mentoring programs. While the field of mentoring has grown significantly in recent years, millions of young people — especially those who could most benefit from a mentor — still do not have a supportive adult in their life.

One in three young people do not have a mentor.

The rates are even higher for at-risk youth, likely the result of compounding risk factors including poverty,



limited networks, schools with large proportions of high-needs students, and under-resourced communities.

- In our survey, one in three young people overall (34 percent) and even more at-risk youth (37 percent) report they never had an adult mentor *of any kind* (naturally occurring or structured) while they were growing up
- **Nationwide, that means today approximately 16 million youth, including nine million at-risk youth, will reach age 19 without ever having a mentor.**
- Encouragingly, an estimated 4.5 million young people are in structured mentoring relationships today, an increase from the estimate of 300,000 from the early 1990s.

At-risk youth are less likely to have mentors and more likely to want one. They understand the value of mentoring and report having wanted a mentor at higher rates.

- At-risk youth are also much less likely to report having had a naturally occurring mentoring relationship (57 percent of at-risk youth had a naturally occurring mentor versus 67 percent of those not at risk).
- At-risk youth are more likely to want a mentor. As young adults, these youth are more likely to recall a time growing up when they did not have a mentor but wish they had had one (29 percent of all youth versus 37 percent of all at-risk youth).

The mentoring needs of youth who demonstrate the early signs of falling off track to graduate are not being fully met. A powerful research base shows that attendance, behavior, and course performance in reading and math (“the ABCs”) are highly predictive of a student’s likelihood to graduate from high school, and that early interventions can get students back on track — while saving schools money. Mentoring can be a powerful early intervention, and more students with these risk factors could benefit from getting the preventive mentoring support they need.

- While there are mentoring gaps at all levels, the gaps are larger in students’ earlier years. Two-thirds (66 percent) of at-risk young adults do not recall having a formal mentor in elementary school while just over half do not recall having one in middle school or high school (57 percent and 56 percent, respectively). Mentoring could have powerful effects if leveraged as an intervention earlier in life.
- Youth who struggled with attendance, behavior, and course performance are 10 percentage points less likely to have an informal mentor than those without these risks (56 percent versus 66 percent). While these youth are more likely to have a structured mentor than youth without these risk factors (21 percent versus 11 percent), four in five (80 percent) youth with these off-track indicators do not have a structured mentor.

Paths Forward

Governments, businesses, nonprofits, and young people endorse and value mentoring as an important asset in a young person’s life. Yet in America today, too many young people — including nearly nine million at-risk youth — do not have access to a mentoring relationship. While the mentoring field has expanded and gained incredible momentum in the last 20 years, more must be done to meet the needs that young people have defined.

The recommendations in this report, guided by the voices of young people, provide paths forward to build a society where all young people have access to a quality mentoring relationship and receive the adult supports they need to succeed in school, work, and life. Mentoring can, and should, be integrated into holistic approaches to drive achievement and increase opportunity at school and home, and in the workforce. With the youth endorsement of mentoring, champions across multiple sectors, an expanding research base, and the dedicated efforts of the field, the mentoring gap can be closed — with benefits to young people, their communities, and our country.

- **Utilize mentoring to address national challenges.**

At the local, state and national levels, mentoring should be leveraged as a key tool to address the pressing issues facing the next generation. When integrated into national initiatives, mentoring strengthens efforts to reduce poverty, truancy, drug abuse and violence, and promote healthy decision-making, positive behaviors, and strong futures. Already, mentoring has been connected to core outcomes for our country's youth, including educational attainment, poverty alleviation, and youth violence prevention through initiatives such as Grad Nation and Opportunity Nation.

When quality mentoring is integrated with other research-based reforms and interventions, high school dropout rates fall, college completion rates rise, economic mobility increases, and ultimately, the economy is stronger from an increase in productive workers. In addition to more intentionally integrating mentoring in efforts that address our nation's most pressing problems, the successes of mentoring and the commitments of foundations and agencies that support mentoring should also be celebrated. For example, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's *American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen* initiative and NBC's Education Nation have already included mentoring in their programming. Likewise, the Corporation for National and Community Service, Harvard School of Public Health, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United Way Worldwide, and MENTOR collaborate to promote mentoring throughout January, which is National Mentoring Month. These initiatives should be celebrated and expanded.



- **Ensure that young people most in need have a quality mentoring relationship.** A mentor provides critical guidance to a young person on his or her path toward productive adulthood, and these important relationships should not be left to chance. Stakeholders from across the sectors should develop or strengthen systems that identify the children most in need of a mentor, determine their mentoring needs, and match them with quality mentors and wraparound services that can meet those needs. This intentional relationship building could dramatically improve the lives of children, the culture of schools, and the fabric of communities. In addition to meeting children's needs, these targeted interventions could lower costs and improve outcomes. Children who could most benefit from a mentor, but are least likely to have one, should be prioritized (including children of incarcerated parents, youth in foster care, or young people with other risk factors that jeopardize their path toward high school, college, career, and life success). At the local systems level, we should look to replicate models such as NYC Success Mentors where structured, targeted, and integrated mentoring support for students has helped reclaim thousands of school days. And at the national policy level, efforts that once provided mentors to 100,000 of the more than two million children with an incarcerated parent should be reinstated and scaled, and Congress should pass the Foster Care Mentoring Act (last introduced in

the 112th Congress in 2011-2012), which looked to provide a much needed sense of permanency and support to young people facing some of the most challenging and frequent transitions. Quality mentoring can also help address early warning indicators of potential dropout, keep students on track and save schools' precious educational dollars in comparison to more costly dropout recovery strategies enacted later in young people's development.

- **Expand local, state and federal public policies that advance quality mentoring.** Public policies at the local, state, and federal levels can be expanded to advance quality mentoring.

Local and State Policies

Every community and state can work to better align its unique mentoring needs with its local assets. To most effectively do this work, community leaders can adopt best practices that have already been tested and proven at the federal level and in other states, cities, and towns, including by integrating mentoring into the strategies of state agencies that promote education, youth development, and community service. Leaders can work to implement policies that provide public employee release time to engage in mentoring, raise revenues to support mentoring, and administer state mentoring grant programs. In Washington and Indiana, license plate campaigns generate financial support for mentoring. In Massachusetts, a competitive line item in the state budget supports mentoring and is administered by the Mass Mentoring Partnership. States have also helped drive cost savings and operational efficiencies for quality mentoring programs, such as by offering free background checks for mentors. In cities such as Jacksonville, Tulsa, and Pittsburgh, mayors have used their platforms to lead city-wide mentor recruitment campaigns and drive public-private coordination in expanding mentoring opportunities for young people.

Federal Policies

Given the return on investment and savings to taxpayers from quality mentoring programs, federal policies and funds should promote the implementation of evidence-based practices. In order to ensure quality and increase the number of children served, competitive grants could be designed by federal agencies that require quality mentoring as a qualification, or reward it as a preference. Funding competitions at agencies including the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Corporation for National and Community Service, which already support mentoring, could further spur innovation, advance research, and support the scale of programs that work. Interagency task forces, including the Federal Mentoring Council, which must be re-established, and the Task Force on Expanding National Service, should develop strategies to meet the mentoring needs of our nation's youth.

In addition to agency-designed competitive grants and interagency collaboration, Congress should work to ensure that the FY 2014 budget includes \$90 million for the Youth Mentoring Program at the U.S. Department of Justice, and expand access to funds for long-unfunded mentoring programs at other agencies. New and current federal funds should be highly leveraged for maximum impact. Public funds can attract and magnify private sector investment through matching requirements or incentives, and leverage the "people power" of volunteers, a core piece of most program models' service delivery. Regulations for funding should also promote the implementation of evidence-based practices to achieve specific outcomes. For example, the Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act, introduced in August 2013, would establish a national competitive grant program to combat the nation's high school dropout rate and better prepare off track middle school students for a productive transition to high school by utilizing



mentors as “success coaches.” Additionally, the FOCUS Act (the America’s Fund for Future Opportunities and Outcomes), introduced in November 2013, would use revenues from corporate civil and criminal penalties to support evidence-based youth mentoring programs as one of three planks of ensuring future U.S. global competitiveness and leadership.

- **Ensure all structured mentoring is quality mentoring.** The mentoring field has codified quality youth mentoring through *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, yet the broad interpretation of “mentoring” in public policies and funding programs can lead to inconsistent quality and ultimately, uneven results. Facilitated by *Mentoring Partnerships* (third party intermediary organizations who are well-equipped to serve in a quality assurance role), MENTOR’s National Quality Mentoring System provides an ongoing opportunity to recognize and support quality mentoring programs. A corresponding demand for quality from major stakeholders, including the philanthropic sector, parents and youth

themselves, will result in a deeper focus on quality assessment and continuous improvement, and deepen the impact of mentoring programs.

- **Support and increase private sector engagement in mentoring.** Given the combination of financial and human resources (including more potential mentors) and its business interest in the development of the current and future workforce, the private sector is uniquely positioned to strengthen the fabric of communities. Many national, regional, and local private sector companies already champion this important work, developing youth mentoring strategies in close collaboration with partners and staying informed by the evidence base. Companies can offer employees paid time off to volunteer, financially support external mentoring programs, and set corporate mentoring goals. In return for these investments, corporations see increased employee productivity, improved morale and retention of employees, and improved public image and community relations. The Corporate Mentoring Challenge, originally launched by First Lady Michelle Obama, and a developing Ad Council campaign called *Pathways to Employment*, offer leverage points for greater recognition of exemplary models of engagement in mentoring and provide roadmaps for replication.
- **Facilitate connections between research and practice.** The mentoring field has an increasingly robust research and practice base. These two communities should be more closely integrated, aligned, and informed by one another in order to most efficiently and effectively meet young people’s mentoring needs. Practitioners, through participating in quality assurance efforts like the National Quality Mentoring System, have the opportunity to more deeply apply evidence-based practice to their work. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funded National Mentoring Resource Center can provide opportunities for programs to learn how to more effectively incorporate research-

based practices into their work. Efforts such as the Center for Evidence Based Mentoring at the University of Massachusetts Boston provide robust opportunities for researchers and practitioners to engage in ongoing dialogue with one another. Other leading national organizations have also identified mentoring in their research-based toolkits to drive student outcomes, including the Middle School Matters Field Guide, the Grad Nation Community Guidebook, and United Way Worldwide's "Solving the High School Graduation Crisis: Identifying and Using School Feeder Patterns in Your Community." These tools should be leveraged by local communities, as well as informed by the most recent lessons from research and practice.

- **Explore innovations to close the mentoring gap.**

In order to close the mentoring gap, additional adult mentors must join the effort to meet the needs of young people each year. Innovations in how existing mentoring programs collaborate

may also hold promise for closing the mentoring gap. Rigor and evidence should guide the sector as it develops innovations to meet this need.

Two examples of cutting-edge innovations — technology and youth-initiated mentoring — may have the potential to dramatically increase the supply of adult mentors. The best-in-class technology-driven programs ensure evidence-based practices are effectively translated to their platforms with well-implemented and supported curricula to achieve intended outcomes. Likewise, youth-initiated mentoring provides youth the tools to codify mentors in their lives. The use of technology and youth-initiated mentoring should continue to be tested, and other innovations yet unknown should be encouraged, unearthed, and evaluated. In addition to the public and private sector funding outlined earlier, support could be generated through new innovative initiatives like individual crowd-funding.





The Mentoring Effect:
Young People's
Perspectives on
the Outcomes and
Availability of Mentoring



Introduction

Our nation faces many challenges. The rungs of the ladder of economic mobility are broken. Young people in other highly industrialized countries now have a better chance of moving up the economic ladder than children in the United States, despite our national commitment to equality of opportunity.¹ A child born in the United States today is twice as likely to have a parent in jail as compared to a child born just 20 years ago.² Compared to 40 years ago, two and a half times as many children live without the presence of a father at home, which puts more children at-risk for having fewer caring adult examples in their lives.³

In an economy that is increasingly dependent on postsecondary education, about one in five students still does not graduate high school with his or her peers⁴ and even fewer go on to college.⁵ Educational attainment and performance rates lag far behind global counterparts.⁶ Some children and youth are surrounded by adults who support, guide, and shape their journeys into productive adulthood while others are not. Too often, the formation of these positive relationships is left to chance — with consequences to youth, their communities, the economy, and our country. In fact, research shows that when young adults (16-24 years old) fail to connect to school or a career, their lifetime earnings diminish. Young adults who are not connected cost society \$93 billion annually in lost wages, taxes, and social services.⁷ On the other hand, recent data show that every dollar invested in quality youth mentoring programs yields a \$3 return in benefits to society.⁸

Because of these challenges, and because of the robust body of research demonstrating the positive effects of quality mentoring on a variety of youth outcomes, this report seeks to determine how young people's mentoring needs are — or are not — being met. MENTOR reported a "mentoring gap" nearly a decade ago. This report is meant to update the data and provide the most accurate picture possible on the mentoring needs of young people. (It is important to

note that because the methodologies are distinct and the circumstances are different, the gap numbers are not meant to be compared or used to assess progress over time. See Appendix 1 for additional information on survey methodology and Appendix 3 for more information on MENTOR's work to support quality mentoring relationships.)

These findings — the first of their kind — are also meant to put the youth voice at the center of mentoring, and to guide our understanding of the challenges faced by young people, the benefits they garner from mentoring, and how as a nation we can work to better support their transition from youth to adulthood. During the summer of 2013, 1,109 young adults (ages 18 to 21) shared their opinions and perspectives on both naturally occurring and formal mentoring relationships through telephone, online, and in-person interviews. Encouragingly, young people confirmed and deepened our understanding of the positive effects of mentoring, but they also revealed a difficult paradox that the more risk factors a young person has, the less likely he or she is to have a naturally occurring mentor. In all, more than one in three young people, or 16 million young people, today never had an adult mentor *of any kind* while they were growing up, including an estimated nine million at-risk youth. This mentoring gap is something the nation must address to boost the life prospects for all young people, and help children — regardless of background — graduate high school, go on to college, and lead healthy and productive lives.

The report is centered on three major insights that emerged from the survey results: **(1) Mentoring's Connection to Aspirations and Outcomes, (2) The Value of Mentors, and (3) The Availability of Mentors.** Then, **Paths Forward** provides recommendations for how communities, schools, states, and the nation can support and advance quality mentoring relationships for young people, and in turn help communities and our country thrive. Appendices 1 and 2 provide additional information on the survey methodology and the methodology used to define the mentoring gap. Appendix 3 provides additional information on MENTOR: The National Mentoring

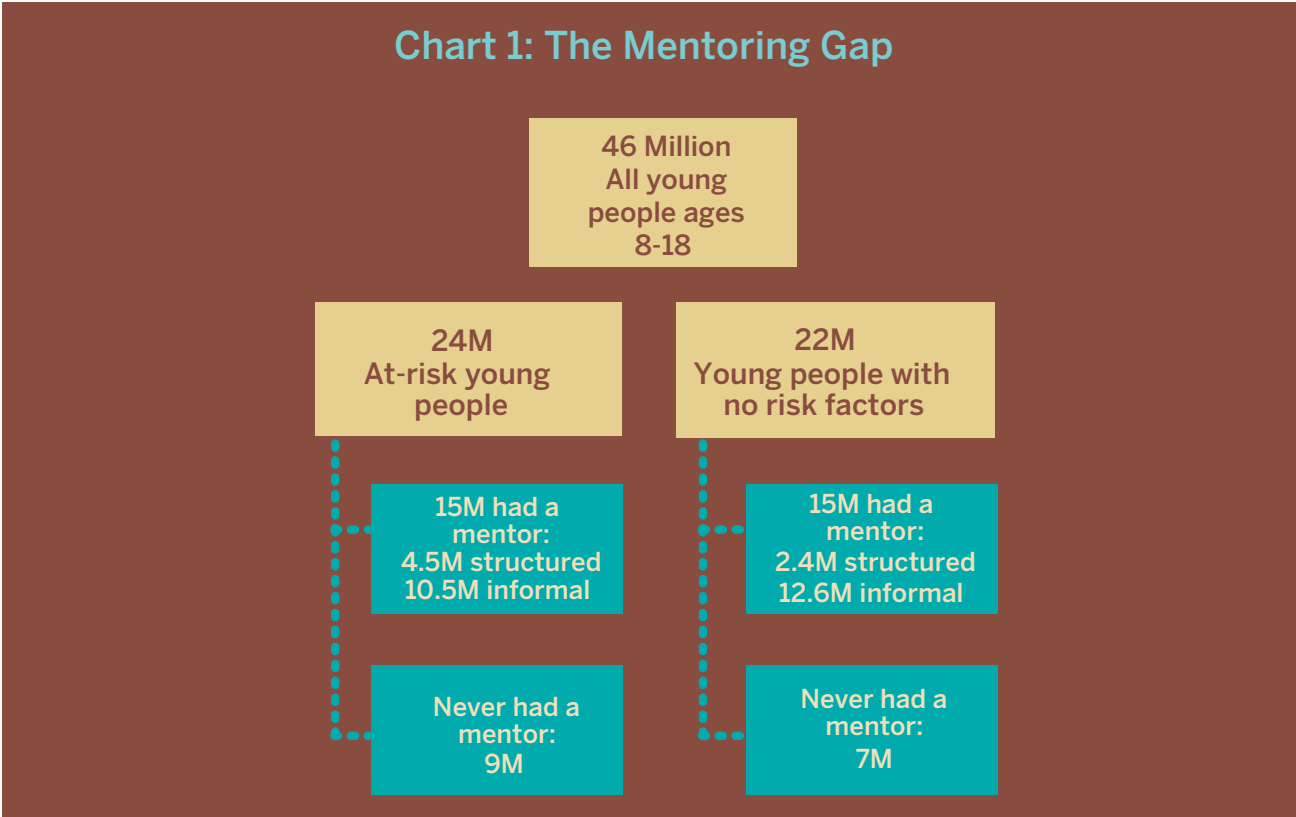
Partnership. In addition to the voices of young people, this report is also informed by a comprehensive literature and landscape review, and shaped by conversations with a variety of representatives within the youth development field, researchers as well as leaders in government, philanthropy, and the private sector.

Survey Findings

This first nationally representative survey of young people on the topic of mentoring confirms the robust research on the mentoring field: structured and informal mentoring relationships are linked with higher aspirations for youth as well as tied to complementary benefits on a range of academic and nonacademic indicators. Yet, one in three young people report they never had an adult mentor while they were growing up, and approximately the same proportion can recall a time when they wanted a mentor and did not have one. That means today in America, approximately 16 million youth, including nine million at-risk youth, never had a mentor of any kind. This mentoring gap is a central

finding of the report: mentoring is needed and wanted by young people — especially at-risk youth — and proven to produce positive outcomes to help them stay on the path to high school graduation, college success, and productive adulthood, and in turn strengthen communities and the country.

The country’s mentoring capacity needs to expand to meet the needs of our youth, and structured mentoring programs play a unique role in closing the gap. Quality mentoring relationships, which are backed by a strong research base, endorsed by young people, and supported by a robust field of stakeholders, could be the leading edge in reaching community, state, and national goals, including regaining our position as first in the world in college completion, developing a future workforce for a global economy, and securing an opportunity society where all children, regardless of background, are equipped to achieve their dreams. (For additional information on survey methodology, please see Appendix 1.)



DEFINING OUR TERMS

(For additional information, please also see Appendix 1 on Survey Methodology and Appendix 2 on Defining the Mentoring Gap.)

Mentor – For the purposes of this report, a mentor is defined as a supportive adult who works with a young person to build a relationship by offering guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person's positive and healthy development over a period of time. The most traditional understanding is a relationship between an adult acting as the mentor and a younger person acting as the mentee, and we will use those terms throughout. Although the adult is not the parent of the younger person, he or she could be another relative or close family friend.⁹ In the field more broadly, mentoring can also include peer-to-peer mentoring and group mentoring, which includes multiple mentors and mentees.¹⁰

Formal/informal mentoring – The survey considered two different types of mentoring relationships and defined these terms for survey respondents: formal/structured or informal/unstructured (also known as “naturally occurring”). The terms will be used interchangeably throughout this report. Respondents were told, “One way that a young person can receive mentoring is through a structured program. An organization like a school, a community group, or a faith-based organization matches an adult with a young person with whom they develop a relationship in a structured manner through regular meetings and activities. An example of a structured mentoring program is Big Brothers Big Sisters. A second type of mentoring is when an adult comes into a young person's life and they naturally develop an informal mentoring relationship. The adult could be a friend of the family or a teacher with whom the young person maintains a relationship outside of the classroom. In both structured and informal mentoring relationships, the adult is supportive and works with the young person to build a relationship by offering guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person's positive and healthy development over a period of time.”

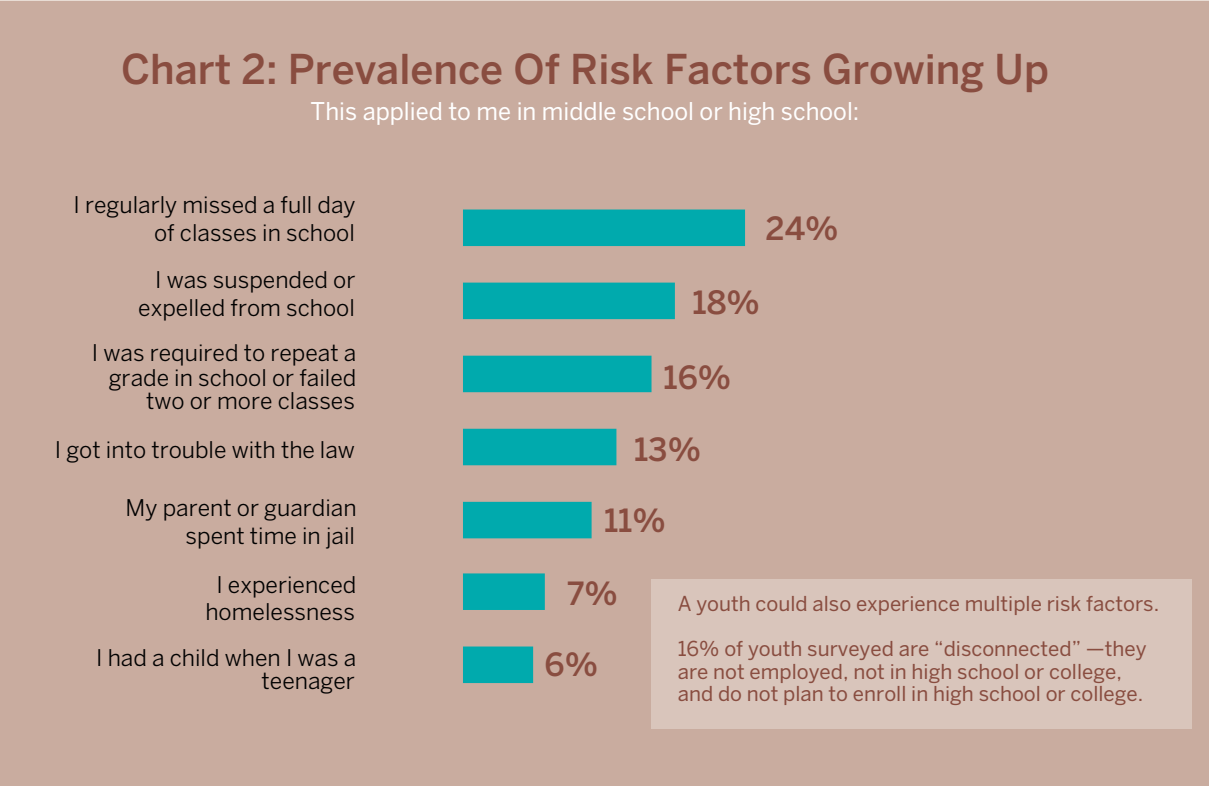
Quality mentoring – In quality mentoring, the relationship results in the positive development of the youth toward a healthy and productive future in which the young person can achieve his or her fullest potential.¹¹ After almost a century of leadership in practice from Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, MENTOR first set the bar for the more diverse application of quality mentoring with the publication of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™], which defined standards of practice for operating quality mentoring programs. Currently in its third edition, the *Elements* define a set of six evidence-based standards that address critical dimensions of mentoring program operations. Quality programs in turn support mentoring relationships to be safe, effective and enduring, which in turn can lead to a range of positive outcomes for young people. MENTOR's National Quality Mentoring System takes the *Elements* deeper by defining a continuous quality assessment and improvement process to help programs reach greater levels of quality. This term was not defined for survey respondents.

At-risk youth – There is no universal consensus for what factors make a youth “at-risk.” For purposes of this survey, an at-risk youth is a respondent who is at the time of taking the survey disconnected (out of school and out of work) and/or responds “yes” to any of the risk factors reflected in the survey screening tool that are linked to decreased rates of achieving “productive adulthood”: incarcerated parent or guardian,

Continued from previous page.

regular absenteeism, poor academic performance, behavioral problems in school, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and homelessness.

Respondents were asked if they experienced these conditions when they were in middle or high school. This term was not defined for survey respondents.



INSIGHT AREA 1: Mentoring’s Connection to Aspirations and Outcomes

While mentoring as a broad-based field is relatively new, mentoring as a concept dates back centuries. In fact, the term mentor appeared in the epic poem attributed to Homer, *The Odyssey*, as the name of the friend Odysseus appoints to look after his son, Telemachus, when he leaves for the siege of Troy.¹² Mentor acts as a supportive figure and role model to Telemachus, guiding him as he transitions from a child to an independent, intelligent, and responsible adult.¹³ Relationships like the one Mentor and Telemachus share have proliferated

the pages of history and increasingly, are found in everyday news and popular culture.

For purposes of this report, a mentor is defined as a supportive adult who through a consistent presence develops a relationship with a young person — whether through a formal program or an informal network. The mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person’s positive and healthy development over a period of time. That adult is not the parent of the mentee, though he or she can be a relative.¹⁴ In naturally occurring mentoring relationships, mentors may have no professional training with regard

to youth development or programming, but rather serve as a role model of a healthy, functioning, successful adult and are consistently dependable.¹⁵ (See sidebar “Defining our Terms” on page 13 for additional details).

The professional mentoring field is robust, diverse, and growing, consisting of a network of organizations, individuals, and research centers dedicated to the science and practice of mentoring. Some providers like Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Girls Inc., and the National 4-H Council have household name recognition. Other programs are smaller in scope and known mainly to the children and families served in a local community. In addition to formal programs, many individuals engage in mentoring relationships through informal family, neighborhood, or civic networks. These mentors provide a range of supports to their mentees, from the academic to the inspirational and the personal to the professional.

Mentoring relationships are widely accepted as positive for youth of all backgrounds and abilities, and have been identified as a key tool by corporations, nonprofits, and government entities to help young people reach their full potential — though the implementation of quality mentoring remains underutilized. In the corporate space, more than half of the companies (53 percent) surveyed by Billion+Change report providing mentoring when asked how companies are addressing community needs with their talents and services.¹⁶ Presidents from both parties and over multiple administrations have endorsed, funded and publically supported mentoring¹⁷, as have officials from federal agencies, including the Department of Education,¹⁸ the Corporation for National and Community Service,¹⁹ and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.²⁰ For example, in 2003, President George W. Bush included a three-year, \$450 million mentoring initiative in the State of the Union, recognizing the power of mentoring as a social policy to boost the life prospects of the millions of children who were at risk of not reaching productive adulthood, including the nearly two million children with a parent in prison.²¹ Members of Congress, on a bipartisan basis, largely supported this mentoring initiative.



“I believe so strongly in the power of mentoring because I know the transformative effect one caring adult can have on a child’s life. That caring adult is a gateway to all the other resources that young person needs to fulfill their potential.”

—Alma J. Powell, chair of America’s Promise Alliance

National initiatives have identified mentoring as a key tool to reach their goals. The Grad Nation campaign led by General Colin and Alma Powell and their America’s Promise Alliance, which brings together organizations across the country in support of the national goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020 (up from 78.2 percent today²²), has identified quality mentoring as an essential tool in meeting this national goal. “A caring adult” is also specifically identified as one of the Alliance’s “Five Promises,” which they have identified as the fundamental resources that young people need to succeed.²³ Alma J. Powell, chair of America’s Promise Alliance, explains, “I believe so strongly in the power of mentoring because I know the transformative effect one caring adult can have on

a child's life. That caring adult is a gateway to all the other resources that young person needs to fulfill their potential." Likewise, Mark Edwards, Executive Director of Opportunity Nation, explains, "When young people are connected to caring adults, communities do well. That is why **Opportunity Nation**, a national movement of 275 organizations, reaching 100 million people, has identified mentoring as a pillar of our shared plan to rebuild the American Dream."

Grantmakers for Education (a national network of more than 275 public and private philanthropies that represent \$1.5 billion in annual support for education²⁴) assessed responses from 164 education grant-making organizations. The report on top priorities included many strategies tied to mentoring, though many quality mentoring programs remain underfunded and too many children still do not have access to a caring adult in their lives. These philanthropic priorities included: increasing outcomes and opportunities for the most disadvantaged; investing in educators; reforming school systems to promote college and career readiness; early learning and literacy as keys to long-term success; offering learning and support beyond the school day; and investing in innovation.²⁵ In short, stakeholders across the country — from the White House to the local community center — are invested in the concept and field of mentoring. Perhaps more importantly, we now know from the results of our nationally representative survey that young people agree: mentoring matters and is linked with their success.

"When young people are connected to caring adults, communities do well."

—Mark Edwards, Executive Director, Opportunity Nation

Young People Report Mentoring is Linked to Higher Educational Outcomes and Aspirations

A rich body of research supports the concept that quality mentoring is associated with positive outcomes for youth. The benefits of mentoring can be seen across many facets of an individual's life, including

better attendance and attitude toward school, less use of drugs and alcohol, improved social skills and interactions with peers, more trusting relationships and better communication with parents, and an increased chance of continuing on to higher education.²⁶ Dr. Jean Rhodes, Director, MENTOR/University of Massachusetts Boston Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring, explains, "Virtually every aspect of human development is fundamentally shaped by interpersonal relationships. So it stands to reason that when close and caring relationships are placed at the center of a youth intervention, as is the case in mentoring programs, the conditions for healthy development are ripe."

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A recent and comprehensive meta-analysis of more than 73 independent mentoring program evaluations published between 1999 and 2010 found positive outcomes across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic areas of youths' development. In comparison to the positive gains of mentored youth, non-mentored youth were actually found to exhibit declines in some outcome areas, suggesting mentoring can function as both intervention and prevention.

Similarly, another meta-analysis on the evaluation findings across national organizations found six favorable program effects, including presence of a supportive, non-familial adult relationship; perceived scholastic efficacy; decrease in school-related misconduct; peer support; reduction of absenteeism; and decrease in truancy.²⁷ More recently, a meta-analysis of programs for high-risk youth found that mentoring had a modest positive effect for delinquency



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and academic functioning, with trends suggesting similar benefits for aggression and drug use.²⁸

Further evidence shows mentoring is linked to positive outcomes.²⁹ A landmark random assignment impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring in 2007 found that by the end of the first school year, the program had improved mentees' outcomes in a range of areas, including their academic attitudes, performance and behaviors.³⁰ A 2013 study categorized youth based on their level of individual risk, environmental risk, or both by investigating the risk backgrounds of each individual as opposed to the average "risk profile."³¹ Youth experiences in the program differed based on the levels and types of risks they faced. After an average of 10 months of mentoring, mentored youth fared better than those without mentors in emotional/psychological well-being, social relationships, academic attitudes and self-reported grades. There were also notable reductions in depression symptoms across all groups who participated. After 13 months of mentoring, youth also displayed greater acceptance by their peers, and more

positive beliefs about their ability to succeed in school and achieve better grades in school. Overall, mentored youth were more likely to show improvement on multiple social, emotional, and academic levels. Another study that provides support for mentoring with high-risk youth is the recent National Guard Youth Challenge program evaluation, which showed positive impacts on educational and employment outcomes sustained three years after entering the program.³² Only those youth with mentors retained the important program effects.

The voices of young people across America confirm the research and provide tangible examples of the benefits of mentoring. This survey overwhelmingly shows that young adults who had mentors were more likely to report positive behaviors and less likely to report negative ones. Youth with mentors report setting higher educational goals and being more likely to attend college than those who did not have mentors. At-risk young adults are more likely to have planned to enroll in college and to be in college now if they had a mentor than if they did not have a mentor. In fact, more than three quarters (76 percent) of at-risk young adults

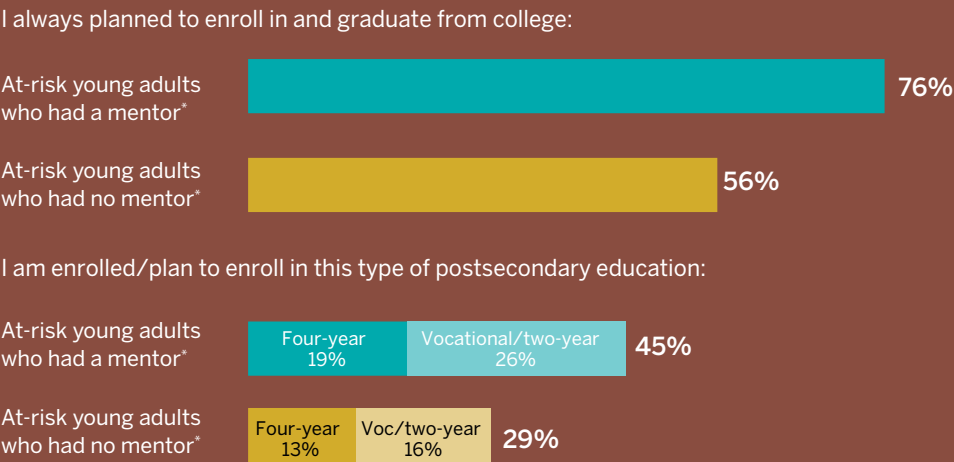
who had a mentor aspired to enroll in and graduate from college versus 56 percent of at-risk young adults who had no mentor. Nearly half (45 percent) of at-risk youth with a mentor are enrolled in some type of postsecondary education (including 19 percent at a four-year institution and 26 percent at a vocational/two-year institution) as opposed to 29 percent of at-risk youth who are enrolled but never had a mentor.

Mentoring is successfully used in many schools across the country for similar targeted results. For example, Dr. Betty Molina Morgan, 2010 American Association of School Administrators “National Superintendent of the Year,” explains that, “As a teacher, principal, and superintendent, I’ve seen how mentors can profoundly affect students’ lives and when integrated and leveraged by schools, can contribute to successful student outcomes. I’ve mentored young people throughout my career, as well as supported educators to establish partnerships with mentoring programs for their students. In education, we don’t give up on kids. Strong mentoring relationships can set the standard for valuing young people, and show that giving up is not an option.” For students who may falter along the

educational pipeline, mentors can provide the added supports in and around schools to help students get what they need to succeed.

To illustrate this effect, one mentee recalled his mentor who “helped me choose the classes I needed to graduate and apply to college and for financial aid.” Another shared, “My mentor attended the college I’m at now, and she took me out and informed me of how to get into college. She was always there to support me.” For this young person and thousands of others, mentors shared resources to help mentees gain a better understanding of the power of education. By sharing their own postsecondary experiences, they helped their mentees gain a sense of perspective and opened up new networks. These survey results provide much cause for hope, especially related to mentoring’s impact on an individual mentee’s social and economic mobility. There is evidence that shows a mentor in a young adult’s life can help change the trajectory of his or her life, and help those off a path to productive adulthood get back on the road to success. Organizations such as YouthBuild USA, The Aspen Forum on Community Solutions’ Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, Opportunity Nation,

Chart 3: At-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to have aspired to go to college and to be in college now.



* At-risk youth surveyed who had a mentor = 32% of all young adults; at-risk who did not have a mentor = 20% of all young adults

Forum for Youth Investment, Jobs for the Future, Year Up, National Youth Council, Hope Street Group, and many others are working together to reconnect youth to school and work.³³ Melody Barnes, Chair, Aspen Forum for Community Solutions, and former Director of the Domestic Policy Council and Assistant to President Obama, explains, "There are 6.7 million 16-24-year-olds who are disconnected from school and work. Previous research has shown that, despite many challenges, opportunity youth remain hopeful about and accept responsibility for their futures. Developing relationships with caring and supportive adults through mentoring is a key tool through which we can help these young people achieve their dreams. The promise of a generation depends on our efforts to reconnect these young people to education and career opportunities."

"Developing relationships with caring and supportive adults through mentoring is a key tool through which we can help these young people achieve their dreams. The promise of a generation depends on our efforts to reconnect these young people to education and career opportunities."

—Melody Barnes, Chair, Aspen Forum for Community Solutions

It is reported that at least 25 percent of young adults face a risk of not achieving "productive adulthood,"³⁴ and the United States is lagging behind peer nations on a variety of educational outcomes. According to a recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics, students in the United States lag far behind other countries in education.³⁵ For example, students in Mississippi, Alabama, and the District of Columbia scored well below the international average on math and science exams, meaning their scores were on par with much less economically developed countries.³⁶ West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Tennessee students scored below the international average in math. Even Massachusetts, which is the top performing state, lags behind global leaders in education; just 19 percent of

students in Massachusetts reached the "advanced benchmark" in math and 24 percent reached it in science, versus scores in the 50 percentiles for Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore.

Many young adults are also entering the labor force with limited skills that are necessary to attain a job in the first place, such as interview skills, conflict resolution, and effective communication. Mentoring has been linked with a myriad of intellectual skills and development, including good decision-making skills, in-depth knowledge of more than one culture, knowledge of both essential life skills and vocational skills, and rational habits of mind such as critical thinking and reasoning skills.³⁷ As one mentee stated, his mentor "gave [him] the skills necessary to diffuse conflicts between individuals." Likewise, Dr. Anthony Carnevale, Director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, explains, "Mentoring, particularly skills-based mentoring and apprenticeship programs, prepares our future workforce by exposing young people to the world of work and developing their life skills and vocational skills which are critical to success in today's economy."

With postsecondary education increasingly becoming a necessity in today's economy, mentors play a key role in opening the doors in a young adult's mind to the life choices one must make in order to be a successful, autonomous, and contributing citizen. For example, high school graduates earn on average \$130,000 more over the course of their lifetimes than those without a high school diploma,³⁸ and college graduates earn at least \$1 million more over their lifetimes than high school dropouts.³⁹ Because of these benefits, many private sector leaders are taking an investment in mentoring seriously. Charlene Lake, Senior Vice President Public Affairs and Chief Sustainability Officer at AT&T explains, "At AT&T, we believe that investing in education is one of the most important things we can do to help strengthen the economy and create a brighter future for all of us. Business leaders everywhere struggle to find qualified employees who have the education, skills and training to be successful in the workplace. Mentoring is a

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—Charlene Lake, Senior Vice President Public Affairs and Chief Sustainability Officer at AT&T

critical ingredient in the mix of approaches desperately needed to widen the pipeline of talent. That's why part of our \$350 million commitment to education includes the Aspire Mentoring Academy and a goal of providing 1 million hours of employee mentoring to students by the end of 2016. Our employees are eager to be the ones who spark excitement in students about their future so they stay on track to graduate and succeed in college, the workforce and beyond.”

Mentoring is Correlated with Positive Developmental Growth

In addition to correlations with higher educational aspirations, research shows that mentoring is correlated with positive outcomes, including changing attitudes (higher self-esteem, stronger relationships with adults, including teachers and peers), better behavior (avoiding drugs and alcohol, juvenile justice issues, bullying), and higher academic performance (lower truancy, better connection to school and adults, lower dropout indicators, and higher achievement).⁴⁰

⁴¹ Here again, the survey of young people confirms what research tells us about the positive correlations between mentoring and youth behavior. In our survey, young adults who had mentors, particularly those at-risk, report being more likely to have engaged in productive and beneficial activities than youth who did not have a mentor. For example, at-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to report regular

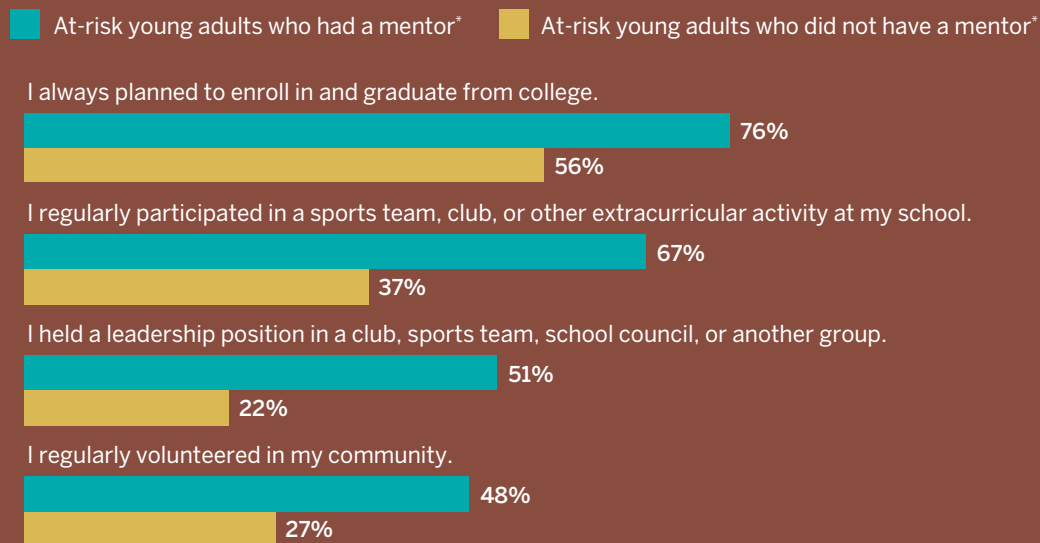
sports or extracurricular participation (67 percent for at-risk young adults who had a mentor, versus 37 percent for at-risk young adults who did not have a mentor, for a difference of 30 percentage points) and to have held a leadership position in a club, sports team, school council, or another group (51 percent for at-risk young adults who had a mentor, versus 22 percent for at-risk young adults who did not have a mentor, for a difference of 29 percentage points). They are also more likely to have regularly volunteered in their communities (48 percent for at-risk young adults who had a mentor, versus 27 percent for at-risk young adults who did not have a mentor, for a difference of 21 percentage points). Once again, the findings support the positive impact of quality mentors.

Powerful evidence in psychology and neuroscience shows that human connection is tied to our ability to thrive and succeed⁴², yet the nation is increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and democratic structures⁴³ — with consequences to individuals, communities, and society. Children, in particular, can suffer the effects of this isolation, including by the impacts of “toxic stress” created by poverty especially when they do not have a relationship with an adult who can help them feel safe and emotionally connected.⁴⁴ Mentoring can provide powerful connections to decrease these stressors, and improve connections. Robert Putnam, Malkin Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and author of *Bowling Alone*, explains, “In recent decades, we have seen a growing class gap in time spent with parents, educational performance, and participation in school activities,” adding that, low-income children need more time with caring adults, including mentors.

“In recent decades, we have seen a growing class gap in time spent with parents, educational performance, and participation in school activities.”

—Robert Putnam, Malkin, Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University

Chart 4: Having had a mentor is correlated with engaging in more positive activities for at-risk youth.



* At-risk youth surveyed who had a mentor = 32% of all young adults; at-risk who did not have a mentor = 20% of all young adults

The survey shows that mentoring translates into better self-esteem and self-confidence, which are necessary traits for youth to engage in teamwork and community work, and have higher life aspirations. These survey findings are corroborated by positive youth development (PYD), which asserts that youth bear remarkable flexibility in their ability to change their behavioral and psychological characteristics.⁴⁵ This adaptive trait allows them a level of resilience that enables them to prosper even if they are exposed to numerous internal and external risk factors, if they also experience positive influences such as caring and committed adult mentors.⁴⁶

The Longer Mentoring Relationships Last, the Greater the Positive Outcomes for Youth

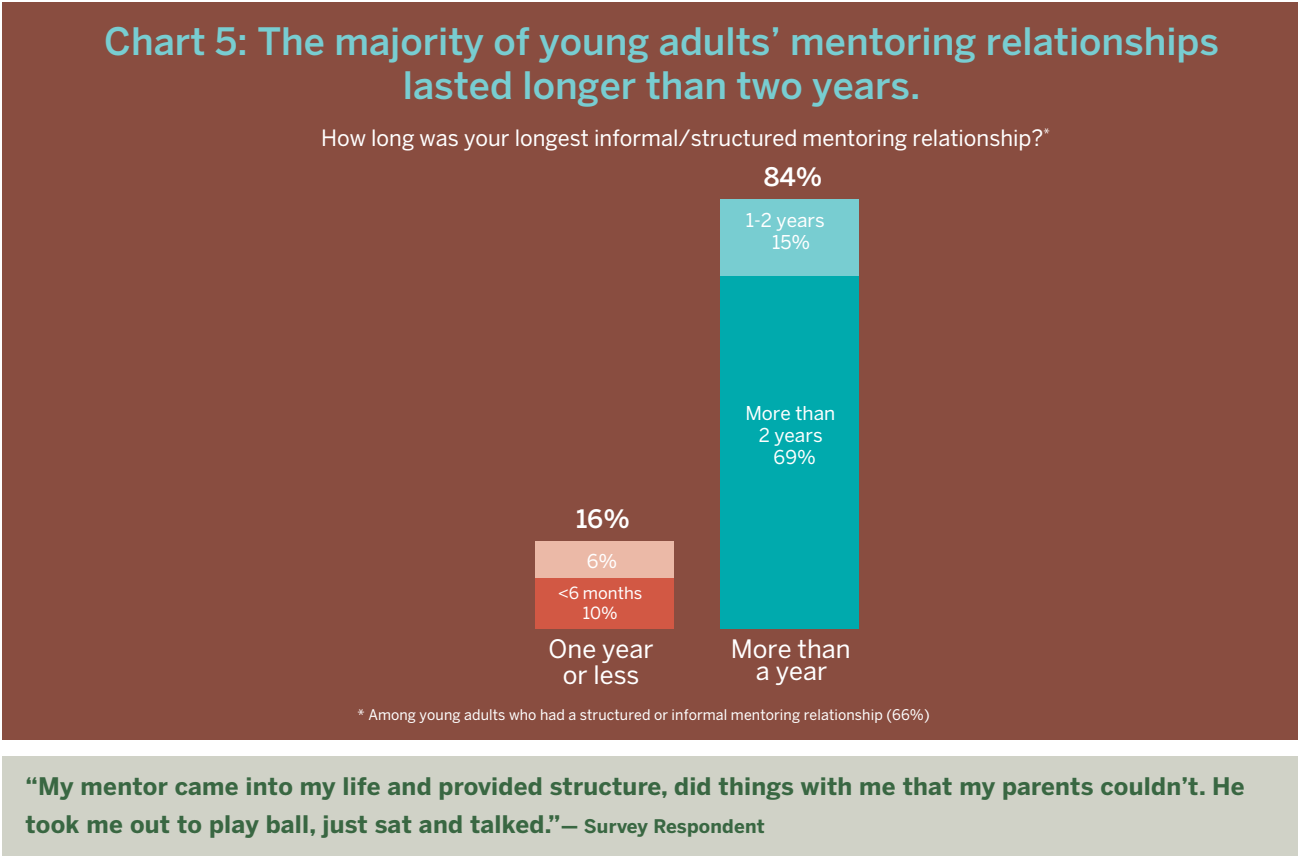
The research shows that the longer a mentoring relationship lasts, the greater the positive outcomes and the more lasting the benefits for young people.⁴⁷ Once mentoring relationships are initially established, mentors (and mentees) are willing to put in more time

than suggested. One survey respondent offered that his mentor “helped me when I needed a friend to guide me. We have grown into a friendship, and I believe she will always be here for me.” However, ending a mentoring relationship prematurely can have detrimental effects.⁴⁸ A recent analysis of a study of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) revealed that positive outcomes for young people in mentoring relationships are directly correlated with the length of the relationship, as time makes it stronger.⁴⁹ The analysis noted that the most visible benefits were apparent when the relationship lasted for one year or more. On the other hand, relationships that ended within three months actually showed *declines* in youth outcomes. Likewise, research shows that when mentoring relationships of any length of time terminate unexpectedly, the results can have a detrimental effect on the child.⁵⁰

Our survey confirmed that the length of a mentoring relationship matters, both in structured and informal mentoring relationships. The majority of young adults’ mentoring relationships lasted more than two

years. Further, informal relationships tend to be more enduring. Of the youth surveyed, 84 percent had informal relationships that lasted more than a year; 71 percent lasted more than two years. More than half (53 percent) of youth surveyed had a formal mentoring relationship that lasted more than a year, and one in three (29 percent) lasted for more than two years. Young people with longer mentoring relationships also report better outcomes than youth with shorter mentoring relationships: higher educational aspirations (86 percent of young adults in relationships of more than a year versus 77 percent of those in relationships of a year or less always planned to enroll in and

graduate from college), sports participation (77 percent versus 70), leadership positions (61 percent versus 50), and regular volunteering (61 percent versus 53). Youth satisfaction in structured mentoring relationships also doubled when comparing relationships of less than a year to more than a year (33 percent of young adults found their structured mentoring relationship very helpful if it lasted for less than a year, versus 67 percent when the relationship lasted for more than a year), confirming the notion that longer relationships tend to be more impactful. (For more information on the relationships between the length of a mentoring relationships and youth satisfaction, see Charts 6 and 7.)



INSIGHT AREA 2: The Value of Mentors

This national survey finds that young adults who had mentors (regardless of whether those mentors were through formal or informal mentoring programs) speak

highly of their relationships. They report appreciation toward their mentors for helping them stay on track in school and make good choices, and for providing consistent support. Further, and in alignment with

research, the longer the relationship lasts, the more helpful the mentor/mentee relationship is considered by the youth.⁵¹

In fact, strong majorities of survey respondents report their mentoring relationships were “somewhat helpful,” “fairly helpful,” or “very helpful,” including nine in 10 (90 percent) reporting these positive relationships for informal mentoring relationships, and eight in 10 (79 percent) for structured ones. Respondents point to the importance of a signifying characteristic of a mentoring relationship, particularly informal mentoring, that is, the mentor is not the parent of the young adult. One survey respondent offered, “My mentor came into my life and provided structure, did things with me that my parents couldn’t. He took me out to play ball, just sat and talked with me, and kept me from doing other things, like being in the streets.” Another said, “Often it is uncomfortable to go to a parent about topics such as friendships, relationships, and drinking, but it is easier to talk to a trusted adult other than a parent.” This is not to say that inadequate parenting is the reason a child needs a mentor. Rather, research suggests that one of the most powerful ways that mentors bring about change is by improving the parent-youth relationship.⁵² The same is true of teacher-youth relationships.⁵³ Although the benefits of parental involvement in youth mentoring are not clear, nor are there universally practiced best practices for involving family to strengthen mentoring relationships, it is well-known and accepted that parental involvement, encouragement, and consistency in communication are essential for positive child development.⁵⁴ If we use this as a starting point, it

“Often it is uncomfortable to go to a parent about topics such as friendships, relationships, and drinking, but it is easier to talk to a trusted adult other than a parent.” — Survey Respondent

follows that parental interaction with other stakeholders in their children’s lives can increase the positive influence of all adults on youth.⁵⁵

Young Adults in Structured and Informal

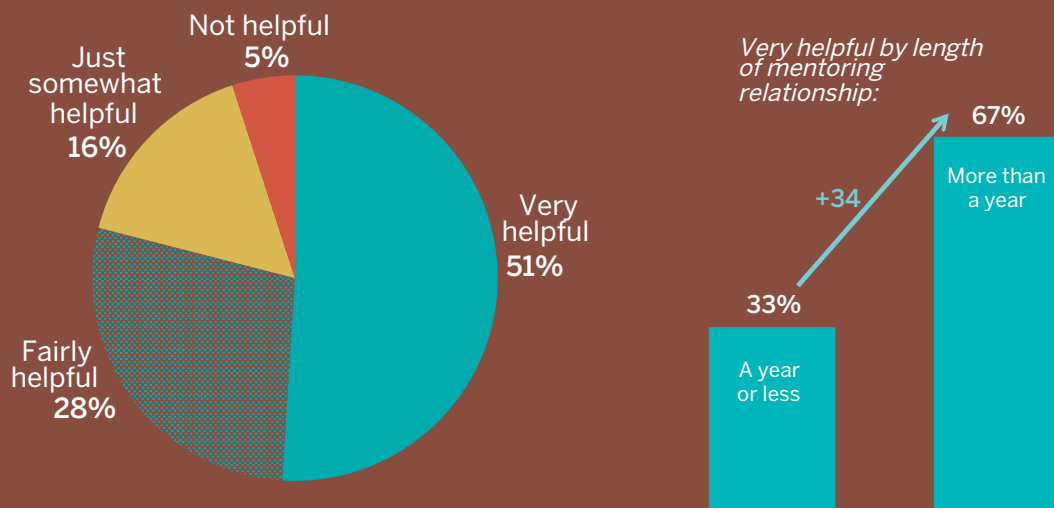
Mentoring Relationships Provided Varied Reasons for Their Satisfaction

Although young adults overwhelmingly find their mentoring relationships to be at least “somewhat helpful,” they find them to be helpful for different reasons depending on the type of mentoring relationship. (See “Defining Our Terms” for additional information on “formal/structured” and “informal/unstructured” relationships on page 13). Formal and informal (or “naturally occurring”) mentors each contribute to the overall maturation of youth, but with an emphasis on different developmental categories. Those reporting a satisfaction with formal relationships tend to report greater academic benefits, whereas mentees in informal relationships report more benefits related to personal development. Nearly all young adults who had formal mentoring relationships (95 percent) found these experiences to be “helpful,” including more than half (51 percent) who found the relationship to be “very helpful.” Support for youth in formal mentoring relationships comes in the form of advice about school, help with school issues and/or schoolwork, help through life problems, assistance in getting a job, help choosing a career, assistance in getting into college, and more. The most commonly reported impression of the form of support they receive from their mentors in structured programs was advice about school, help with school issues, and assistance with schoolwork. One survey respondent said, “They mentored me to stay in school and helped me make mature decisions...I wouldn’t have graduated without the help I received from my [mentor].”

Informal mentoring relationships may also develop naturally from previous relationships. These naturally occurring mentors often belong to the same community as their mentee and are more likely to have similar cultural and social contexts, including familial connections. Consequently, natural mentors may possess particular strengths allowing them to form a strong, close, and supportive bond with a young person because of shared cultural practices and understandings.⁵⁶

Chart 6: A large majority of those who had structured mentoring relationships found them helpful. Those in longer relationships even more so.

How helpful were your relationships with your mentors in a structured program?*



* Among young adults who participated in structured programs (15% of all youth)

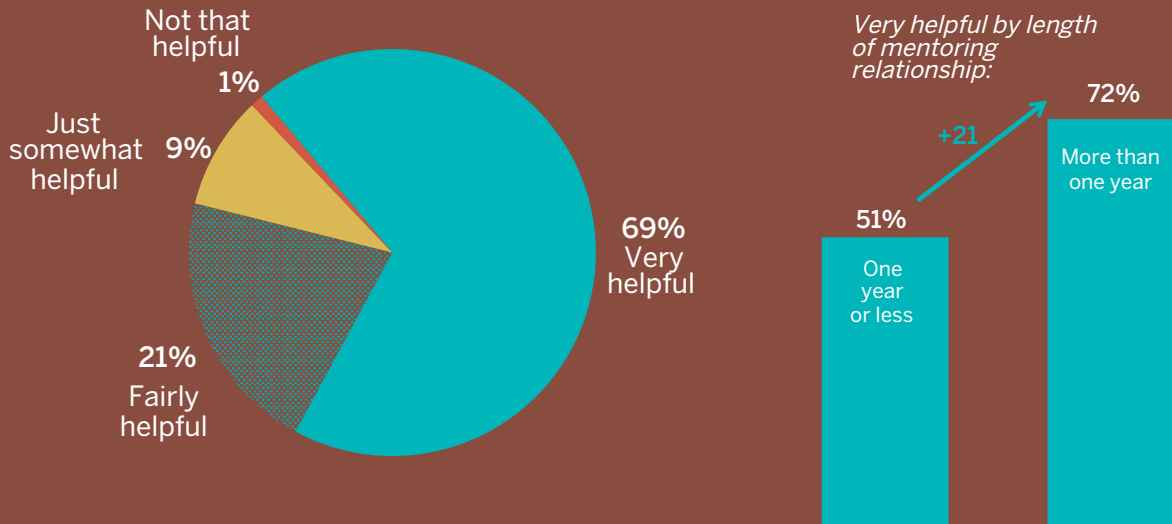
Nearly all youth in informal mentoring relationships (99 percent) say their experience was “helpful,” including seven in 10 (69 percent) reporting it as “very helpful.” Mentees in informal mentoring relationships report their mentors provided advice and encouragement for them to make good choices; were always there for them and were someone to talk to; looked out for, cared about, supported, and offered guidance to them; encouraged and helped them to stay in and eventually finish school; taught them how to make the right decisions and follow the right path; and motivated mentees to be better, inspiring them, and making young adults who they are today. Reflecting on her mentoring experience, one survey respondent said, “[having] positive role models in the community, particularly role models who were teachers, has helped me to get where I am today. I wouldn’t be pursuing a teaching career had I not had mentoring experiences growing up.” The most commonly offered impression from mentees on their informal mentoring experience is the encouragement they receive to

make good choices. Mentees also commonly report that their mentor was always there for them.

The survey showed that mentors, structured and naturally occurring, are recruited from a variety of sources. Young people can have more than one mentor, and large proportions of young adults said their informal mentoring relationships included a family member other than a parent (46 percent), a teacher (44 percent) or a friend of the family (35 percent). Less frequently, informal mentors are a coach (20 percent), a religious or youth group leader (20 percent), a counselor (16 percent), or a neighbor (10 percent). Structured mentoring relationships are most common through school (55 percent), community programs (21 percent), church or religious organizations (16 percent), and other groups/organizations (11 percent). Mentees report about the same levels of helpfulness from their mentoring relationships regardless of where they found their mentor. Rather, the research shows that effective mentoring relationships occur when the

Chart 7: Young adults also found their informal mentoring relationships overwhelmingly helpful.

How helpful were your informal mentoring relationships?*



* Among young adults who had informal mentors (62%)

mentor and mentee establish goals and objectives, create an emotional bond and/or connection, and build trust. It is important that the mentor fosters support for the youth, meets the youth's expectations, places the needs of the youth first, honors the commitment to the relationship, commits to a collaborative rather than prescriptive approach, and attends actively to nurturing the youth's development through both psychosocial and instrumental forms of support such as active listening.⁵⁷ In quality, structured mentoring relationships, the goals and purpose of mentors should be clearly outlined so that they can see the progress made in their mentees and feel that they are contributing their time and talents in a productive manner.⁵⁸

Mentees Want to Serve as Mentors

When asked, mentors can and do report benefits from participating in a mentoring relationship with a young person. For example, one study shows that both high school mentors and adult mentors report increases in their interpersonal and personal skills as well as

increases in leadership ability, knowledge about youth development, interest in social issues, and respect for other cultures and religions.⁵⁹ Perhaps the highest endorsement of an experience is a willingness to pay it forward.

The last survey completed by MENTOR in 2005 asked adults to identify the three most important reasons for becoming a mentor. Eight in 10 (82 percent) reported "wanting to help young people succeed" or "wanting to make a difference in someone's life" (76 percent).⁶⁰ Our 2013 survey confirms the notion that young people want to engage in the positive experience of mentoring, with more than three-quarters of all respondents reporting they were interested in mentoring. Those who had had a mentor were even more likely to report an interest in becoming a mentor, with nearly nine in ten of those who were mentored reporting an interest in being a mentor. In addition to confirming the value of mentoring, this desire to become a mentor also strengthens the earlier finding that mentoring is linked with higher rates of leadership and volunteering, and it creates a larger

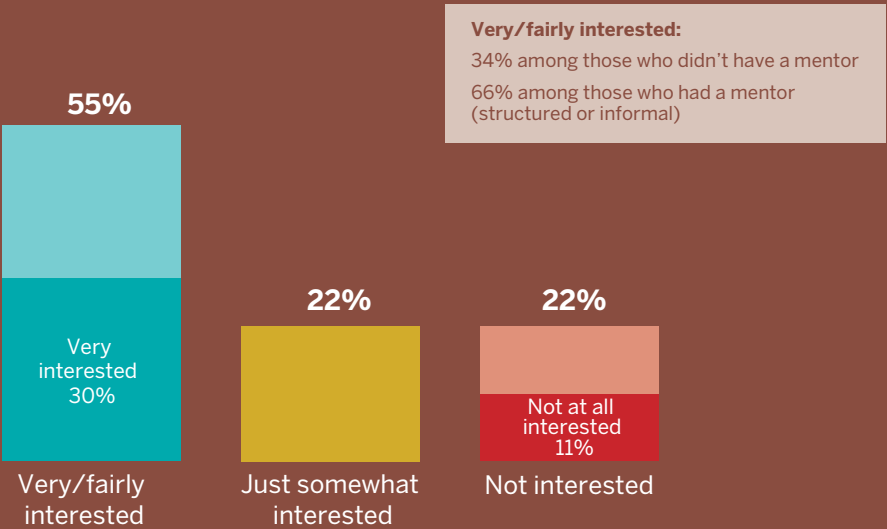
prospective group of future mentors to be activated. Youth who are formally mentored can also serve as mentors in the future, potentially helping to increase access for at-risk youth to natural and structured mentoring relationships. Young people's interest in mentoring indicates both a positive endorsement of mentoring as well as a powerful indication of its broader youth and community development outcomes.

On behalf of the National Research Council, the Committee on Community-Levels Programs for Youth

synthesized much of the research on preconditions for successful youth development.⁶¹ This research identifies a set of personal and social assets that facilitate physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social development. Several of these assets have clear linkages with civic engagement and social capital. Thus, although there is little research formally linking civic engagement programs with positive youth development outcomes, there are strong theoretical expectations that successful civic engagement programs will, in fact, promote youth development more generally.

Chart 8: Many young adults are interested in becoming mentors themselves, especially those with first-hand experience of having been mentored.

How interested are you in becoming a mentor to a young person either now or at some point in your adult life?



* Among young adults who had informal mentors (62%)

“Growing up, I often wished there was someone older that cared enough about me to spend time listening to my problems or what I was struggling with or even just what was going on in my life.”

—Survey respondent

INSIGHT AREA 3: The Availability of Mentors

The research shows, and the voices of young people confirm, that mentoring matters. Encouragingly, an

estimated 4.5 million young people are in a structured mentoring relationship today, an increase from the estimate of 300,000 from the early 1990s (during the period when the National Mentoring Partnership was founded).⁶² Yet, millions more young people —

particularly at-risk youth — do not have access to supportive mentoring relationships that could help keep them on or return them to a path to success. One mentee shared, “Growing up, I often wished there was someone older that cared enough about me to spend time listening to my problems or what I was struggling with or even just what was going on in my life.” In our

survey, more than one in three young people report he or she never had an adult mentor while growing up (34 percent of all youth, or 37 percent for at-risk youth). As mentioned earlier in the report, that means today in America, approximately 16 million youth, including nine million at-risk youth, never had a mentor of any kind.

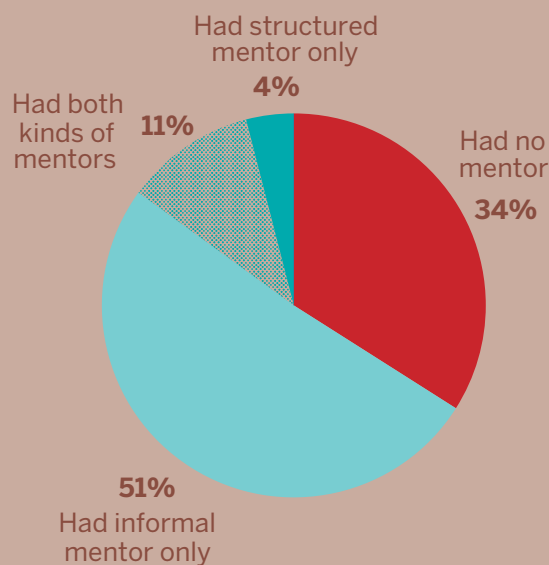
DEFINING THE MENTORING GAP

Approximately 16 million youth, including nine million at-risk youth, never had a mentor of any kind.

An estimated 4.5 million at-risk youth are in a structured mentoring relationship. These estimates were calculated based on our nationally-representative survey of 18-21-year-olds' perspectives on their experiences with mentoring relationships while they were ages 8 to 18 and a research-based risk screen, which was then applied to 2012 U.S. Census data (the most recent available). While the field of mentoring has reported gaps in the past, due to different methodologies, the estimates in this report are not meant to serve as a comparison because of differing methodologies but are meant to give the most accurate picture of how the mentoring needs of young people are presently being met. Please see Appendix 2 for additional information on this calculation and previously reported mentoring gaps.

Chart 9: One in three young adults did not have a mentor of any kind while they were growing up.

At any time between ages eight and 18, did you have an adult mentor?
(All young adults)



At-Risk Youth Need and Want Mentors the Most

All young people can benefit from the positive effects of a mentoring relationship, but at-risk youth need and want mentors the most. Research shows that certain populations are more likely than others to become at-risk — and therefore in greater need of the benefits that a quality mentoring relationship can provide. These groups include: youth in and aging out of foster care, low-income youth, youth from single parent homes, children of veterans, youth that identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer), children of incarcerated parents, immigrants or children of immigrants, youth who are off track to graduate or at risk of becoming so, as well as youth involved with the criminal justice system. Each of these populations has unique, and sometimes intersecting, challenges that mentoring can — and does — help address. For example, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, YMCA, National 4-H Council, Goodwill, Concerned Black Men National, and other programs have added structured mentoring as a part of the services they offer. Likewise, some programs such as Friends of the Children provide long-term wraparound supports, including mentoring, to children with multiple risk factors. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has prioritized mentoring as a key tool and supports initiatives that assist in the development and maturity of community programs providing mentoring services to high-risk populations. OJJDP also funds Building Understanding (BUDS) which places volunteers 21 years or older with at-risk children and teenagers ages nine to 17 to reduce child and teenage crime and violence.⁶³ Likewise, national service and volunteer programs have dedicated their efforts to improve the lives of young people.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, for example, has long supported mentoring through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and more recently, the Social Innovation Fund. Last year, national service members mentored more than 830,000 children and youth, providing stability and support during a critical

time in these young people's lives.⁶⁴ John J. Dilulio, Jr., Frederic Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religious and Civil Society, University of Pennsylvania, and former Director, White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, explains that mentoring can be a powerful intervention strategy for youth most in need: "Over the last decade, progress has been made to increase mentoring, including for more than 100,000 children of prisoners. But we have a large mentoring gap that needs to be closed to fulfill the promise of millions of America's most vulnerable children."

Our survey confirms an inverse relationship between the number of risk factors an individual has and the likelihood that the individual has an informal mentor. At-risk youth are also much less likely to report having had a naturally occurring mentoring relationship (57 percent of at-risk youth had a naturally occurring mentor versus 67 percent of those not at risk). As these youth are less likely to have naturally occurring mentors, their mentors will most likely need to come through a formal mentoring program. At-risk young people are more likely to miss classes, be suspended or expelled from school, fail classes, and/or be required to repeat a grade, as well as be more likely to get in trouble with the law than peers without risk factors. These challenges can result from a variety of causes, including homelessness, having a child as a teenager, being the child of a teenage parent, or having a parent or guardian who spent time in jail. For instance, one at-risk youth recalls a time when his "mother was in and out of jail and [he] was being bounced around from one house to another." He states that "all [he] wanted or [needed] was to feel wanted and needed." Stressful environmental conditions hinder young people's ability to focus on academics and other crucial factors in order to become successful adults, and place more pressure on them than their peers who are not at risk. For these reasons and more, mentors have a profound ability to support at-risk youth on their paths to adulthood.

The number of risk factors associated with an individual is directly related to the likelihood that person will want a mentor. At-risk youth are more likely to report

“I [remember when] my mother was in and out of jail and I was being bounced around from one house to another... All I wanted or needed was to feel wanted and needed.”—Survey respondent

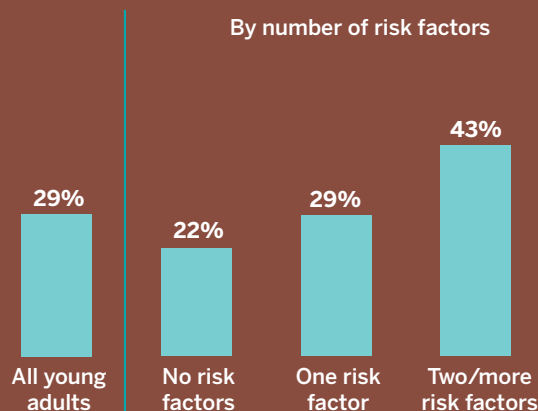
never having had a mentor of any kind (37 percent for at-risk youth versus 31 percent of those not at risk) and about as likely to report wanting a mentor (52 percent of at-risk youth versus 51 percent overall) as their peers who are not at risk. Further, the more risk factors respondents report, the more likely they are to have wished they had a mentor while growing up. When compared by risk factors, 43 percent of respondents with two or more risk factors, 29 percent with one risk factor, and 22 percent with no risk factors, can recall a time between the ages of 8 and 18 when they did not have, but wished they had had an adult mentor. One survey respondent who wished for a mentor growing up said, “My mother, sister, and I moved into a small bedroom at my grandparents’ house when I was a high school senior. My mother worked three jobs and was never home, and my grandparents were too old to watch

after my pre-teen sister. Most of the responsibility fell on me.”

Many youth, especially at-risk youth, report wanting a mentor when prompted to think about their lives in retrospect. Nearly half of all young adults (46 percent) report that now that they are older, looking back, they can think of at least one time in their lives between the ages of eight and 18 when they wanted a mentor and didn’t have one, even if they did have a mentor at some other point in their lives. Likewise, for at-risk youth, 52 percent report that in retrospect they would have benefited from having a mentor. These rates are even higher for respondents with two or more risk factors. Nearly six in 10 (59 percent) say that looking back, they could think of a time between the ages of 8 and 18 when they did not have a mentor but could have benefitted from having one.

Chart 10: The more risk factors a youth has, the more likely they are to say they wished they had a mentor.

I recall a time between ages eight and 18 when I did not have an adult mentor but wished I had one to whom I could turn for guidance and support:



“A student’s ABCs — attendance, behavior, and course performance in English and Math — are highly predictive of his or her likelihood to graduate from high school and go on to succeed in college. These ABCs can also signal early signs of trouble that a student is falling off the graduation path. A high quality mentoring relationship can be a game changer for these students.”

—Dr. Robert Balfanz, Director of the Everyone Graduates Center at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University

Mentoring for Students with Early Warning Signs of High School Dropout

There are many different circumstances that might put a child at risk of not reaching productive adulthood. Research shows that high school graduation is directly linked to a litany of positive outcomes. High school graduates are more likely to be employed and make higher wages.⁶⁵ High school graduation is also linked to other positive outcomes, including higher rates of voting and volunteering⁶⁶, better health and longer life expectancy⁶⁷, and lower rates of criminal behavior and use of social services.⁶⁸ Despite the many favorable outcomes of earning a high school diploma, high school dropout persists as a circumstance that prevents many youth from reaching productive adulthood. Attendance, behavior, and course performance, (also known as the “ABCs”) are “early warning indicators” that are in fact stronger predictors of a student’s likelihood to graduate from high school than other factors, including demographics or test scores. However, students who display the early warning signs of dropping out are much less likely to graduate from high school and experience the benefits listed above.⁶⁹ Due to the the significance of a high school diploma in today’s economy, and the predictive power of the ABCs, survey respondents who reported experiencing these off-track indicators in high school could provide important insights into mentoring’s role as a prevention and intervention strategy.

Trends emerged when evaluating respondents who report they regularly missed a full day of classes in school, were suspended or expelled from school, were required to repeat a grade, or failed two or more classes. Survey respondents with these “ABC indicators” could

have benefit from the presence of a caring adult in their lives, yet they are 10 percentage points less likely to have an informal mentor than those without these risks (56 percent versus 66 percent). The combination of the absence of a widespread presence of naturally occurring supports for at-risk youth with the burgeoning codified research on the predictive power of early warning indicators, programs, funders, and government agencies have begun to take a more targeted approach to provide preventions and interventions against these indicators. Increasingly, mentoring is successfully used in many schools across the country to address early warning indicators. In some communities, as students signal early and often that they need help, mentors are mobilized as part of the “second shift” of adults into the



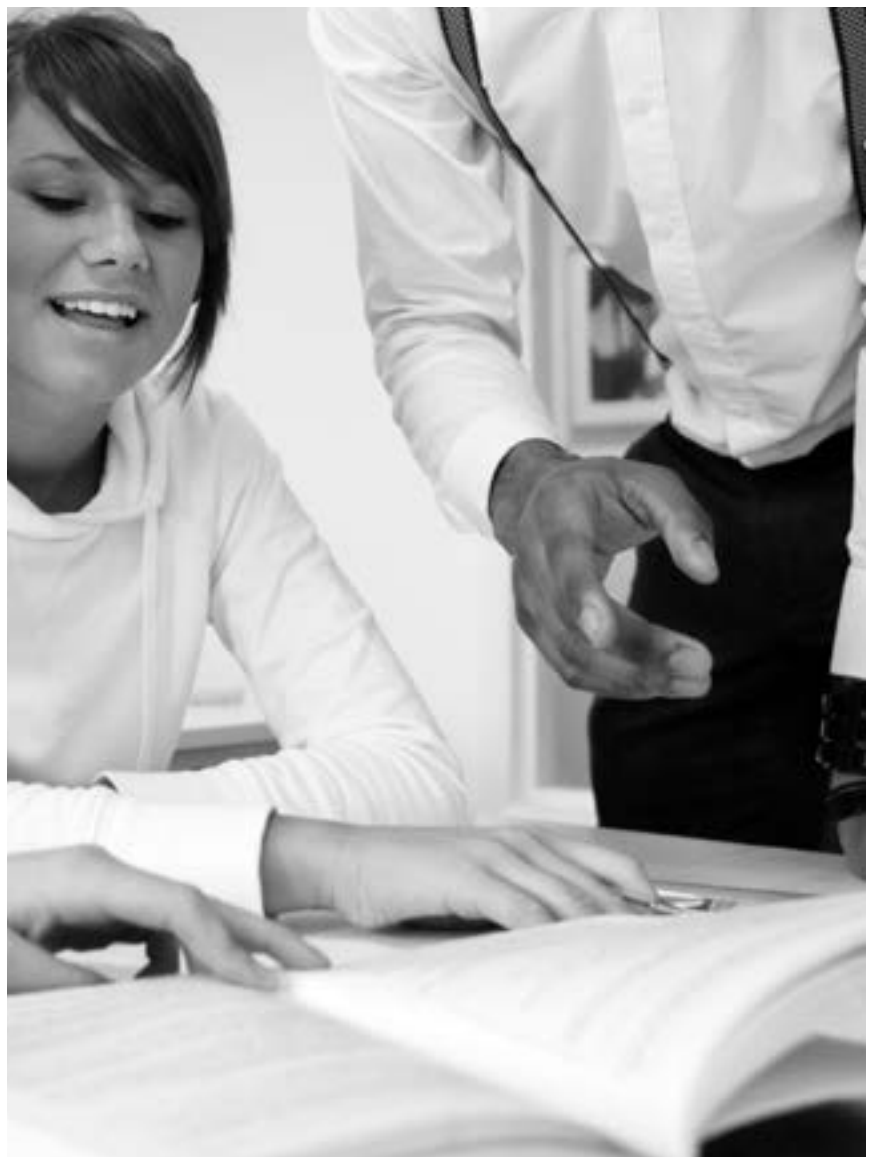
“If I had gotten an adult mentor from sixth grade to sophomore year, I would have a different life by now for sure. I ended up with more mistakes which have had their lasting consequences and left me with regrets.” —Survey respondent

school and school day to give students the supports they need.⁷⁰ Dr. Robert Balfanz, Director of the Everyone Graduates Center at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, explains, “A high quality mentoring relationship can be a game changer for these students. We’ve seen how sustained supports from adults serving in schools as ‘success coaches’ for off-track students, and intensive wraparound supports for the highest-need students, can turn around lives and help turn around schools.”

The survey confirms this trend in the field and revealed encouraging news about the field’s efforts to provide structured mentoring relationships to these students. Young people with these off-track indicators are more

likely to have a structured mentor than youth without these risk factors (21 percent versus 11 percent). One survey respondent shared the power of early interventions: “If I had gotten an adult mentor from sixth grade to sophomore year, I would have a different life by now for sure. I ended up with more mistakes which have had their lasting consequences and left me with regrets.” Despite the encouraging trend that youth with these indicators are more likely to receive a structured mentor than youth without these risk factors, a large gap remains. In all, approximately four in five (79 percent) youth with these off-track indicators do not have a structured mentor.

Paths Forward



Paths Forward

The results are in and the message is clear: the presence of a mentor is critical to the future success of America's youth and to society overall. Unfortunately, too often, these vital relationships are left to chance. Too many young people—including nearly nine million at-risk youth—do not have access to a mentoring relationship. While the mentoring field has expanded and gained incredible momentum in the last 20 years, more must be done to meet the needs that young people have defined. Mentoring can, and should, be integrated into holistic approaches to drive achievement and increase opportunity at school, home, and in the workforce. Fortunately, governments, businesses, nonprofits, and young people themselves endorse and value mentoring as an important asset in a young person's life. Together, these stakeholders have the opportunity to create a nation where all our youth have access to a quality mentoring relationship—with benefits to young people, their communities, and our country. The recommendations that follow, which are guided by the voices of young people as well as a rich body of research and robust field of practice, provide paths forward to close the mentoring gap.

Utilize Mentoring to Address National Challenges

Mentoring, a proven tool and a needed asset, produces more engaged citizens and stronger leaders, better schools, and healthier and stronger economies and communities. When integrated into other national initiatives, mentoring strengthens efforts to reduce poverty, truancy, drug abuse and violence while promoting healthy decision-making, positive behaviors, and strong futures. Already, mentoring has been connected to core outcomes for our country's youth, including educational attainment, poverty alleviation, and juvenile justice. Past efforts should be revisited and adapted, current efforts strengthened and new opportunities identified. Opportunity Nation, a growing national movement of 275 organizations, has identified mentoring as a pillar of a shared plan to increase opportunity to ensure that our young people's future

is not pre-determined by their zip code; the coalition advocates for mentoring across multiple fronts, including by encouraging employers to “connect young adults to meaningful employment, mentoring, education, internships, and training opportunities.”⁷¹ Likewise, Middle School Matters and the Grad Nation campaigns have identified quality mentoring as a key lever to improve the middle grades and reach the national goal of 90 percent high school graduation rates by 2020. Similarly, at the state and local level, leaders should work to integrate mentoring into their communities' specific goals. As at the national level, when mentoring is integrated with other research-based reforms and interventions, high school dropout rates fall, college completion rates rise, economic mobility increases, and ultimately, the economy strengthens

In addition to more intentionally integrating mentoring in efforts that address our nation's most pressing problems, the successes of mentoring should also be celebrated. Partners can shine a spotlight on successes, best practices, and case studies. These “hope spots” can serve as examples that others can also engage in this quality work. Many national partners, including those in the media, are already working to raise public awareness about quality mentoring. For example, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen initiative and NBC's Education Nation have already included mentoring in their programming. Likewise, the Corporation for National and Community Service, Harvard School of Public Health, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United Way Worldwide, and MENTOR collaborate to promote mentoring throughout January, which is National Mentoring Month.⁷² These initiatives should be celebrated and expanded.

Ensure that Young People Most in Need of a Quality Mentoring Relationship Get One

A mentor provides critical guidance to a young person on his or her path toward productive adulthood. These important relationships should not be left to chance. Stakeholders from multiple sectors, including nonprofits, education, business, government, and

philanthropy, should work to define supply-and-demand driven solutions to close the mentoring gap. Systems that identify the children most in need of a mentor, determine their mentoring needs, and match them to quality mentors could dramatically improve the lives of children, the culture of schools, and the fabric of communities. In addition to meeting these children's needs, these targeted interventions could have lower costs and better outcomes (in comparison to methods that are designed without an eye toward early interventions to meet specific needs, and therefore may be provided to large numbers of students who are not at risk, have risk factors that are not addressed by the interventions, or not provided to those who need it most). For example, in the education space, as early as elementary school, students' attendance, behavior and course performance in reading and in math can signal likelihood to drop out from high school. Quality mentoring can help address these early warning indicators of potential dropout, keep students on track and save schools' precious educational dollars in comparison to more costly dropout recovery strategies. Additionally, school systems in cities such as St. Louis and New York provide examples of data-driven public-private partnerships that have demonstrated quality mentoring can be applied at scale to decrease truancy.

Children who could most benefit from a mentor, but are least likely to have one, should be prioritized, including children of incarcerated parents, in foster care, or with other risk factors that jeopardize their path toward high school graduation, college enrollment, career, and life success. At the local systems level, we should look to replicate models such as NYC Success Mentors where structured, targeted, and integrated mentoring support for students has helped reclaim thousands of school days. And at the national policy level, efforts that once provided mentors to 100,000 of the more than two million children with an incarcerated parent should be reinstated and scaled, and Congress should pass the Foster Care Mentoring Act (last introduced in the 112th Congress in 2011-2012), which looked to provide a much needed sense of permanency and support to

young people facing some of the most challenging and frequent transitions.

Expand Local, State, and Federal Policies that Advance Quality Mentoring

Public policies at the local, state, and federal level can be expanded to advance quality mentoring.

Local and State Policies

Every community can work to better align its unique mentoring needs with its local assets. To most effectively do this work, community leaders can adopt best practices that have already been tested and proven at the federal level and in other states, including by integrating mentoring into the strategies of state agencies that promote education, youth development, and community service. Governors, state agencies, mayors, and other leaders should examine their current portfolios for opportunities to close the mentoring gap. For example, they could develop interagency task forces, launch competitive grants, and promote quality mentoring through dedicated dollars that achieve education, service and volunteering, and juvenile justice goals.

When looking to state and local models, *Mentoring Partnerships* across the country work to advocate for and implement policies that gain public employee release time to engage in mentoring, raise revenues to support mentoring, and administer state mentoring grant programs. In Washington and Indiana, license plate campaigns generate financial support for mentoring. In Massachusetts, a competitive line item in the state budget supports mentoring and is administered by the Mass Mentoring Partnership. States have also helped drive costs savings and operational efficiencies for quality mentoring programs such as offering free background checks for mentors. In cities such as Jacksonville, Tulsa, and Pittsburgh, mayors have used their platforms to lead city-wide mentor recruitment campaigns and drive public-private coordination in expanding mentoring opportunities for young people.

Federal Policies

Given the return on investment and savings to taxpayers from quality mentoring programs, federal policies and funds should promote the implementation of evidence-based practices. These policies can promote quality through competitive grants and expand access through interagency collaboration.

In order to ensure quality and increase the number of children served, competitive grants could be designed by federal agencies that require quality mentoring as a qualification, or reward it as a preference. Funding competitions at agencies including the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Corporation for National and Community Service, which already support mentoring, could spur innovation, advance research, and support the scale of programs that work. These grants could help to meet a single agency's goals, or bridge agency priorities. The Federal Mentoring Council, an interagency task force, should reassemble to create a coordinated agenda to address the mentoring needs of today's youth.⁷³ This collaborative should also work with the Task Force on Expanding National Service (established in July 2013 and led by the White House Domestic Policy Council and Corporation for National and Community Service) to develop strategies to expand national service to meet national mentoring needs.

In addition to agency-designed competitive grants and interagency collaboration, Congress should work to ensure that the FY 2014 budget includes \$90 million for the Youth Mentoring program at the U.S. Department of Justice, and expand access to funds for long-unfunded mentoring programs at other agencies. Despite the evidence that quality mentoring works and needs persist, recent reductions such as the FY 2010 elimination of the U.S. Department of Education's Mentoring Programs grant, a federal program that specifically focused on providing mentors for children facing a wide range of issues, have caused the early termination of existing grantee projects. Other significant sources of funding for mentoring that have been discontinued include the Mentoring Children of



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Prisoners program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (discontinued in 2010) and the Safe and Drug Free Schools program (discontinued in 2011).⁷⁴ New and current federal funds should be highly leveraged for maximum impact. Public funds can attract and magnify private sector investment through matching requirements or incentives. Regulations for funding should also promote the implementation of evidence-based practices to achieve specific outcomes. For example, the Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act (introduced in August 2013) would establish a national competitive grant program to combat the nation's high school dropout rate and better prepare off track middle school students for a productive transition to high school by utilizing mentors as "success coaches."⁷⁵ Another example, the FOCUS (Fund for Future Opportunities and Outcomes) Act (introduced in November 2013) would use revenues from corporate civil and criminal penalties to support evidence-based youth mentoring programs as one of three planks of ensuring future U.S. global competitiveness and leadership.⁷⁶

Ensure All Structured Mentoring is Quality Mentoring

The mentoring field has codified quality youth mentoring through the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™], yet the broad interpretation of “mentoring” in public policies and funding programs can lead to inconsistent quality and ultimately, uneven results. MENTOR’s National Quality Mentoring System supports programs to more deeply implement the *Elements* by defining processes for quality assessment and continuous improvement. Facilitated by *Mentoring Partnerships* (third party intermediary organizations who are well-equipped to serve in a quality assurance role), the National Quality Mentoring System provides an ongoing opportunity to recognize and support quality mentoring programs. A corresponding demand for quality from major stakeholders, including the philanthropic sector, parents and youth, will result in a deeper focus on quality assessment and continuous improvement, and deepen the impact of mentoring programs. In addition to the promotion of quality mentoring systems, champions can support quality mentoring through the funding of evidence-based programs, the support of professional development of program personnel, and the investment in capacity building.

Support and Increase Private Sector Engagement in Mentoring

Given the combination of financial and human resources (including a pool of potential mentors) and its business interest in the development of the current and future workforce, the private sector is uniquely positioned to strengthen the social fabric of communities by supporting mentoring. Many national, regional, and local private sector companies already champion this important work, developing strategies in close collaboration with partners and informed by the evidence base. These leaders start mentoring initiatives, offer employees paid time off to volunteer, and financially support external mentoring programs. Many

companies’ executives lead by example, volunteering as mentors through quality mentoring programs. They also encourage employee participation as mentors, establish mentoring-friendly policies, and set realistic expectations for personnel and corporate mentoring goals. In return for these investments, corporations see increased employee productivity, improved morale and retention of employees, and improved public image and community relations.⁷⁷ Initiatives like the Corporate Mentoring Challenge, originally launched by First Lady Michelle Obama at the 2011 National Mentoring Summit convened by MENTOR, offer leverage points for greater recognition of exemplary models of engagement in mentoring and provide roadmaps for replication. These national, state, and local efforts should be tested, celebrated, replicated, and scaled. Other developing efforts like the *Pathways to Employment* Ad Council Campaign, are focused on encouraging the private sector to develop untapped potential and create opportunities by connecting with young adults who are disconnected or at risk of being disconnected from work and school, with mentoring encouraged as a best practice ingrained in internships and jobs.

Facilitate Connections Between Research and Practice

The mentoring field has an increasingly robust research and practice base. These two communities should be more closely integrated, aligned, and informed by one another in order to most efficiently and effectively meet young people’s needs. Practitioners, through participating in quality assurance efforts such as the National Quality Mentoring System, have the opportunity to more deeply apply evidence-based practice to their work. The OJJDP funded National Mentoring Resource Center, being developed by MENTOR, can provide opportunities for programs to learn how to more effectively incorporate research-based practices into their work. Efforts such as the Center for Evidence Based Mentoring, a partnership between MENTOR and the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and the Center for Interdisciplinary Mentoring

Research at Portland State University, which sponsors the yearly Summer Institute on Youth Mentoring, provide robust opportunities for researchers and practitioners to engage in ongoing dialogue with one another.

Other leading national organizations have also identified mentoring in their research-based toolkits to drive student outcomes. For example, the Middle School Matters “Field Guide” (a collection of research principles and practices to inform the work of schools serving students in the middle grades developed by leading researchers across the country)⁷⁸, the Grad Nation “Community Guidebook,” (a research-based toolkit for communities working to raise graduation rates and better support children and youth from birth through college)⁷⁹, and United Way Worldwide’s “Solving the High School Graduation Crisis: Identifying and Using School Feeder Patterns in Your Community”⁸⁰ include mentoring approaches and tools that all communities can incorporate at any stage in their work. These tools should be leveraged by local communities, as well as continuously improved and informed by the most cutting edge lessons from research and practices.

Explore Innovations to Close the Mentoring Gap

In order to close the mentoring gap, additional adult mentors must join the effort to meet the needs of young people and additional funds must be raised. A few cutting-edge innovations may have the potential to dramatically increase the supply of adult mentors. For example, technology can be leveraged to enhance communication in mentoring relationships and break down physical and geographic barriers. Early lessons learned in harnessing technology include a need for monitoring for safety and the use of age appropriate curriculum and guidance to ensure responsibilities are met online and that the relationship is supported. Leading pioneers in this work, including iMentor,

have demonstrated that evidence-based practices of mentoring can and must be translated to a mentoring program leveraging technology in order to achieve intended outcomes. Youth-initiated mentoring, which has been extensively evaluated in the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program⁸¹, encourages the idea that youth can develop the skills to tap adults already in their lives to serve as mentors. While this specific model has been targeted to young adults, there is also increasing research around what skills make young people “mentor magnets” and how to help youth intentionally develop these skills.⁸² In addition to using innovations to increase the supply of mentors, innovations in funding must also be explored.

New and innovative funding strategies can also support the growth of the mentoring field. Beyond the public and private sector funding outlined earlier, additional support could be generated through individual crowd-funding as well as initiatives such as Kickstarter. Other macro public financing innovations, including Social Impact Bonds, which work within a “pay for success” model, are being applied in the areas of early childhood and criminal justice system involvement and offer relevance and possibility for future application to the funding of mentoring programs. In addition to innovative responses to increasing the supply of mentors and funding, innovations in how existing mentoring programs collaborate may also hold promise for meeting the mentoring gap. Programs that cater to different age groups have collaborated to create a continuum of mentoring support as the match matures, thereby extending the longitude of the mentoring relationship. Supporting the expansion of such efforts holds promise for ensuring that the mentoring needs of young people continue to be met beyond particular program structures such as an age range or settings. Such a strategy also allows programs to apply complimentary expertise and structure to support the match as it develops.

Conclusion

Young people told us, and the research confirms: mentoring relationships matter. As children and adolescents navigate their journey to adulthood, those with mentors are more likely to engage, volunteer, and lead. They are more likely to dream of and go to college. But, with one in three young people reaching age 19 without ever having a mentor of any kind, we know these important connections are too often left to chance. This mentoring gap has consequences to young people, their communities, and our country — and the mentoring effect has powerful benefits. The presence or absence of a consistent, caring adult could mean the difference between a young person thriving as a student or dropping out, contributing as a citizen or engaging in unproductive behavior, pursuing one's dreams or disengaging from society. In a country dedicated to ensuring that where a child starts in life does not determine how far he or she will climb, we must close this mentoring gap, and ensure all children have the mentoring supports they need to grow, thrive, and succeed.

Appendix 1: Survey Methodology

On behalf of MENTOR and Civic Enterprises, Hart Research Associates undertook a nationally representative survey among young adults to learn about their experiences with mentoring while growing up, their perspectives on the value of mentoring, and their views on the need for more mentoring. A total of 1,109 young adults ages 18 to 21 participated in this survey in July and August of 2013. To reach out broadly to this highly mobile and technologically savvy group, young adults were contacted and interviewed in three ways: by telephone (including both landline and cell phone interviews), online, and through in-person interviews at various locations around the United States. The in-person interviews were conducted with 102 “at-risk” young adults, who tend to be more difficult to reach using traditional survey methods such as online and telephone interviews. To reach this highly mobile group, researchers conducted the in-person interviews at 10 diverse locations in four regions across the United States. Young adults qualified as “at risk” if they were neither enrolled in school nor working, or reported that they experienced at least one risk factor growing up such as having an incarcerated parent, school expulsion, or getting into trouble with the law. None of the “at-risk” young adults interviewed in-person completed a college degree. Slight weights were applied to ensure that the sample matched characteristics of young adults in the United States. We are confident that the survey sample, once weighted, represents a true national sample of young adults ages 18 to 21.

Appendix 2: Defining the Mentoring Gap

Previously, the mentor field has estimated a 15 million “mentoring gap.” This number, and the methodology behind it, was developed using a separate and distinct methodology than the number reported within this report. As the methodologies are distinct (including the age of the youth population assessed, the assessment of formal and informal mentors, etc.) and the circumstances are different (population growth, etc.), the gap numbers are not meant to be compared or used to assess progress over time.

In an effort to understand the state of mentoring while using a transparent and repeatable methodology, MENTOR commissioned this nationally representative survey based on the perspectives of 18-21 year-olds on their experience with mentoring relationships while they were ages 8-18. It partnered with Civic Enterprises and Hart Research Associates to develop the survey that included a research-based risk screen, as determined by reporting at least one of seven risk factors, and/or being “disconnected” from school and work, and applied these findings to the 2012 U.S. Census (the most recent available).

The 2013 survey found that 52 percent of young people could be considered “at risk.” This aligns with previous research that found 50 percent of the population was “low risk” (versus 25 percent moderate risk, 15 percent high risk, and 10 percent very high risk).⁸³ This previous screen included the following risk factors in their assessment: performing poorly in school and dropping out; engaging in substance abuse; having sex at an early age; and engaging in delinquent behavior.

Applying our 2013 survey findings to 2012 Census Data (the most recent available), it can be estimated that 24 million young people (ages 8-18) are at-risk. The survey also found that approximately one in three — or 34 percent — of young people (ages 8-18) and 37 percent of at-risk young people report they never had a mentor of any kind. Applying these survey findings to U.S. Census data, it can be estimated that approximately 4.5 million at-risk youth (or 19 percent of at-risk youth) are in a structured mentoring relationship, but 16 million youth, including nine million at-risk youth, never had a mentor of any kind. MENTOR hopes to track this gap over time, and will do so by tracking the proportion of 8-18-year-olds who have/do not have a mentor. It is also important to note that the use of population figures means a dependence on the population at a given time, so the report gap could grow in the future as a result of population growth, even if the same or a larger share of youth have a mentor.

To provide a bit of history on the previous gap number, the 15 million mentoring gap was developed through a multi-step process over more than a decade. First, in

1990, researcher Joy Dryfoos estimated that roughly half of all young people (ages 10 to 17) could be designated as at-risk. She defined four activities as high-risk behaviors: delinquency, substance abuse, early childbearing, and school failure. In 2002, the MENTOR research team then applied the at-risk percentage to the 2000 U.S. Census, estimating that 17.6 million young people could be considered at-risk and could therefore benefit from a mentoring relationship. Then, the MENTOR research team conducted a survey of adults and found that roughly

1.2 percent of all adults reported mentoring one person through a formal program. At the time, this translated to approximately 2.5 million adults — and therefore 2.5 million young people engaged in formal, one-on-one mentoring relationships. The 15 million mentoring gap was determined by comparing this estimated need (17.6 million at risk young people) to the supply of mentors (2.5 million). This could be translated to one in seven (or 14 percent) of at risk-youth in a structured mentoring relationship.

The Mentoring Gap				
	All 8–18 year olds*		At-risk 8-18 year olds**	
		45,760,000		23,800,000
Never had a mentor of any kind***	34%	15,560,000	37%	8,810,000
Had a mentor of any kind	66%	30,200,000	63%	14,990,000
Had a structured mentor	15%	6,860,000	19%	4,520,000
* Source: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for the United States, States, and Puerto Rico Commonwealth: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2012 http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2012_PEPSYASEX&prodType=table				
** An estimated 52% of the 8-18 year old population is considered “at-risk” based on methodology from the 2013 MENTOR survey. 52% was then applied to the overall 8-18year old population based on U.S. Census data.				
*** The estimated portion of 8-18 year olds, applied to U.S. Census data.				

Appendix 3: About MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership is the unifying champion for expanding quality mentoring for America’s young people. MENTOR’s goal is to help young people by generating and driving the investment of time and money into high impact mentoring programs and promoting quality mentoring through the development and delivery of mentoring program standards, cutting-edge research and state-of-the-art tools. MENTOR accomplishes this work in partnership with a national *Mentoring Partnership* Network. *Mentoring Partnerships* are non-partisan, public-private organizations that galvanize local, statewide or regional mentoring movements, and provide the leadership and infrastructure necessary to create a

favorable mentoring climate. In addition to *Mentoring Partnerships*, MENTOR engages a wide variety of stakeholders from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to ensure that all young people receive crucial support through mentoring relationships to thrive at home, in school, and ultimately in their careers.

MENTOR’s accomplishments have been numerous and extensive, including successfully advocating for hundreds of millions of dollars for mentoring across the country, creating and operating the only national online Volunteer Referral System for adults who want to volunteer as mentors and for those looking for mentoring programs for young people, establishing evidence-based national standards for quality mentoring programs, publishing the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, and more.⁸⁴

Acknowledgements

MENTOR, together with Civic Enterprises and Hart Research Associates, would like to give special thanks to everyone who worked to create this report, including MENTOR's committed funders, especially Willem Kooyker, Chairman of the Board, and AT&T, which provided restricted grant support for this report. We would like to thank the entire report team, including the MENTOR Board and Staff, especially David Shapiro, President and CEO, Tammy Tai, Chief Program Officer and Diane Quest, Director of Marketing and Communications; Hart Research Associates, including Geoff Garin, President of Hart Research Associates; Abigail Davenport, Partner; and Dr. Corrie Hunt, Senior Analyst; the Civic Enterprises team including Lily Rubino, 2012–13 fellow; Caitlin-Marie Ward, Rita Morency, and Deepica Singh, 2013 fellows; Megan Walker, former chief of staff; and Kathleen McMahon, chief of staff. Our thanks to Don Gura Graphic Design for the report creative and Lani Sinclair for her proofreading services.

Our utmost thanks to the community of supporters who made this report possible. Our sincerest gratitude to Dr. John Dilulio, Frederic Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religion, and Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania and Joseph Tierney, Executive Director of Penn's Fox Leadership Program for their ongoing guidance throughout this project as well as to Dr. David L. DuBois, a professor in the Division of Community Health Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, for informing the survey and Dr. Jean Rhodes, Frank L. Boyden Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, for her overall input in strengthening the survey instrument and report.

Our gratitude for their support of the mentoring field to Dr. Robert Balfanz, Director of the Everyone Graduates Center at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University; Melody Barnes, Chair,

Aspen Forum for Community Solutions, and former Director of the Domestic Policy Council and Assistant to President Obama; Dr. Anthony Carnevale, Director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; Dr. Betty Molina Morgan, 2010 American Association of School Administrators "National Superintendent of the Year"; Alma J. Powell, chair of America's Promise Alliance, Mark Edwards, Executive Director, Opportunity Nation; and Dr. Robert Putnam, Malkin Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and author of *Bowling Alone*.

Our sincerest appreciation to the entire team at America's Promise Alliance for supporting this work, especially to Esther Berg, John Gomperts, David Park, Colleen Wilber, Bill Wright, and Jon Zaff, and for the leadership of General Colin and Mrs. Alma Powell who work to ensure all children and youth have a caring adult in their lives. Thank you also to the *Mentoring Partnerships*, national partners, and the thousands of mentoring programs across the country for the work they do every day to improve the lives of young people. Our gratitude to the Mentoring Partnership of Southwest Pennsylvania and Kristan Allen for their communications support. Special appreciation to the Mass Mentoring Partnership and Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada for inspiring us with their pioneering use of the terms "The Mentor Effect" and "The Mentoring Effect," respectively. Most of all, our sincerest gratitude to the more than 1,000 young people who participated in the national survey. They shared their thoughts and reflections with courage and honesty.

Finally, no acknowledgement of any MENTOR undertaking would be complete without expressing our gratitude to co-founders Geoffrey T. Boisi and Raymond G. Chambers. These leaders recognized the promise inside every young person when matched with a mentor and sparked a mentoring movement that has resulted in so many young people finding connection where they otherwise might have only found isolation.

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