Mentoring

Literature Review

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MENTORING

The concept of mentoring is commonly attributed to Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey,* which describes how Ulysses, when he set off to fight in the Trojan Wars, asked his trusted friend Mentor to care for his son Telmachus. Mentor took on the roles of friend, advisor, and supporter to Telmachus in his father's absence to prepare him to become king. According to the legend, the goddess Athena disguised herself as Mentor and cared for Telmachus during Ulysses' absence[1]. It is interesting that the majority of adults today who volunteer for formal mentoring programs are also women.

Mentoring programs have achieved extensive public recognition due to their remarkable success in increasing positive behaviours in youth and reducing negative behaviours[2]. Overall, youth participation in mentoring relationships improved important educational measures such as unexcused absences and better attitudes, yet it was difficult to attribute educational achievement to mentoring interventions. Mentoring also helped develop healthier behaviours (less drug and alcohol use), and improved social and behavioural outcomes such as better relationship with parents and peers[3]. Research on mentoring organizations links mentoring to crime prevention and other broader outcomes because youth development is the most effective strategy for preventing youth problems[4]. A basic assumption of mentoring is that the experience of a quality mentoring relationship in itself is a positive outcome for a young person at-risk[5].

Mentoring programs are used as a strategy for working with people across many fields such as education, employment and career preparation, drug rehabilitation, sports, and mental health[6]. Corporate or career mentoring occurs within businesses or places of employment, where an experienced, senior worker promotes one more junior. Academic mentoring occurs primarily between a professor and a graduate student. The primary outcome in these types of mentoring is transference of knowledge[7]. Formal mentoring of youth focuses on the mentoring relationship itself by helping youth with social problems through friendship and guidance[8].

One-to-One Mentoring

Adults who provide friendship, guidance, and support for children and youth outside their own families are called *mentors*[9]. Research has demonstrated that a one-to-one relationship between a child or youth and a caring supportive adult can lead to positive changes in the young person's life[10]. Youth mentoring, as in ideal relationship, has three key functions: (a) to carry out other duties while assuming the caregiving role, (b) to impart societal and cultural wisdom, and (c) to develop a long-term connection. Mentors provide support to youth by listening, being an advocate, sharing themselves, establishing structure, highlighting strengths, and making the experience unique and positive[11].

Research on community-based, one-to-one mentoring shows that mentored youth make measurable gains in school achievement, school attendance, and improved relationships with parents, teachers, and peers; develop a stronger sense of self-worth; and decrease their drug and alcohol use[12]. Mentors as role models promote positive outcomes by providing emotional support, positive feedback, and a steady, reliable presence in the

lives of youth[13]. One-on-one mentoring is the most common form of mentoring addressed in the literature—one-to-one, person-to-person, and typically by an older person to a younger person. Focusing on one child at a time; celebrating and respecting diversity; and providing programs designed by people who best know the child, including the parents, teachers, and the child him- or herself can encourage children to pursue their passions[14] . Embracing change, setting clear priorities, involving families, and making real-world connections to learning can help adults to keep children focused.

Informal Mentoring

The common vision of mentoring is of a formal, structured mentoring program, yet informal mentoring is much more common[15]. Natural or informal mentoring occurs within established, caring relationships, often within extended families or the child's existing support network, and is provided when someone reaches out to give support or offer direction[16]. Informal mentoring tends to be more authoritarian[17] because of the relationship of the mentor to the mentee.

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring is planned, intentional, and supported. It occurs when relationships are formalized by matching a youth with a mentor[18]. Volunteerism is a central component of formal mentoring [19]. The role of the mentor in formal mentoring is more egalitarian[20]. The mentor and mentee agree to meet regularly over a period of time to participate in recreational, social, cultural, educational or career-related activities. The intent of the relationships is to grow and learn through the mentor's example, support, and assistance[21].

Formal mentoring tends to be more broadly based and systematic by helping at-risk youth develop skills. The most effective mentoring occurs not only with the child, but also with others in the child's environment (parents, teachers, and service providers such as police, social workers, corrections officers, and medical professionals)[22];. Mentoring facilitates the transference of cherished values and cultural icons, the building of respect, and conformity with societal ideals[23].

Group Mentoring

Group mentors serve entire groups of youth[24], often in schools or youth organizations[25]. These organizations tend to have access to critical adults in children's lives such as teachers, youth workers, and others. Group mentoring appeals to youth who may be uncomfortable with meeting one-to-one with adults[26].

Group mentoring programs tend to attract mentors who do not apply to individual mentoring programs, due in part to the perceived safety and limited risk groups tend to provide. Groups tend to meet in schools or community centres, often during daylight or early evening hours, which make group mentoring attractive to older volunteers or those who live close to schools, churches or community centres. Individuals who volunteer for group mentoring, according to research, tend to be somewhat less educated, older, from

lower income levels and predominately female (79%). Because group mentoring attracts minorities and retirees at greater rates than one-to-one mentoring programs, they have the potential to recruit volunteers who may not otherwise become involved in one-to-one mentoring. They also appeal to volunteers who may be more comfortable meeting with children in groups in public settings such as schools, churches, or community centres. These volunteers indicate that they prefer group mentoring because of the structure, specific activities, and their concerns about intimacy and substantial time commitment for one-to-one mentoring.

Since group programs are also more likely to attract youth from ethnic and racial minority groups than one-to-one programs do, they tend to be particularly well suited for Aboriginal and Asian youth, who tend to respond well to group mentoring.

Although the nature of the relationship between the mentor and youth in groups tends not to be as strong on average, the vast majority of youth in these programs indicate that they did not desire an exclusive one-to-one relationship with their mentor. Instead, they were more interested in opportunities to interact with peers[27].

Peer Mentoring

Young people who are socially marginalized are far more likely to manifest physical and mental health problems. Students who have good friends in whom they can confide and with whom they share activities are more likely to have confidence in themselves, to be well adjusted at school, and to get along with their parents[28]. A peer-based network of support for isolated youth is important[29].

CASE FOR MENTORING

Societal changes have created a need for more mentors. Young people feel varying degrees of isolation, depression, rejection, loneliness, and poor self-worth, while at the same time extended families are smaller and there are more single parents and fewer strong local community networks. Because "caring relationships with extended family members, other adults and older peers provide a strong base for healthy development and a positive sense of self for all young people"[30], and because many families are no longer able to provide this support for youth, mentoring needs to be supported in the cultural context of society as a whole.

Relationships

According to Novotney (2000), one of the most potentially effective interventions for at-risk children is to offer a caring and responsible adult role model who can make a positive, lasting impression on the child. Critical to the success of mentoring programs is the participation of caring adult mentors[31]. Youth mentoring programs provide opportunities for adult volunteers to develop supportive relationships with at-risk youth to help them to become successful in childhood and throughout their adolescent years. The role modelling and emotional support that mentors offer helps young people to modify their undesirable behaviours and develop more positive social skills[32]. The

research suggested that youth who believe that their mentors value their interests and preferences show improvement in their behaviours and attitudes[33]. Successful mentors demonstrate respect for the youth they mentor[34] .

Why is mentoring needed? First, some features of contemporary society limit young people's access to adults, many youth in poor communities are becoming increasingly isolated, and the rates of divorce and resulting single parenting are high. Some communities have few institutes and activities to support youth and their families. Second, youth who have unsatisfactory relationships with their parents may develop fears and doubts about whether others will accept and support them—fears and doubts that a successful mentoring experience might reduce. Finally, even youth with strong relationships with their parents experience the typical stress of adolescence and may potentially benefit from the support of another caring and concerned adult[35]. Mentoring can play a significant role in combating the negative effects of alienation and social isolation that some children experience, especially those who live in communities and neighbourhoods characterized by high levels of unemployment and those who are prone to drug and alcohol abuse, experience pervasive antisocial attitudes, and live in poor-quality housing. Problems for youth are compounded when more than one risk factor is present in their lives. In addition to those mentioned, other risks include abuse and neglect, child poverty, parental substance abuse, corporal punishment, father absence, lack of male mentors, ineffectual education, and criminality[36].

Building Relationship with Caring Adult

A supportive adult is essential to helping children to succeed[37]. Efforts must be made to ensure that children and adolescents are raised in healthy families and communities and to ensure that policies and services help families to function effectively and support youth as they grow and develop. Young people who perceive high-quality relationships with their mentors experience the best results[38] as do youth in programs that place a high priority on the development of sustained relationships between youth and mentors[39].

Networking with Peers and Others

Adolescence is generally considered to span the ages of 11 to 21 and is characterized by significant changes in physical, cognitive, and social development. Peers are stronger sources of influence that parents as peer relationships become very important during this time, and the influence of friends is often considered more important than parental advice[40]. Sound arguments exist for children being connecting to families and siblings, but strong connections to peers can be problematic. Perry and Bard (2001) found that positive peer relations correlate strongly with higher violence and problem behaviours. Peer influence is significant to juvenile offenders who draw upon peer experiences to reduce the fear of negative sanctions[41]. The likelihood of antisocial or problem behaviour increases in youth who are exposed to other youth who exhibit antisocial behaviour.

Friendship/Fun

Relationships focused on developing trust and friendship are almost always more beneficial to the mentee and the mentor[42]. The emotional engagement of the youth is measured by the degree to which the youth enjoys the relationship. Youth who enjoy being with their mentors are more likely to show more improvement in behaviours and attitudes[43]. Group activities that provide opportunities for socializing, fun, and games in a safe and supportive environment are important[44].

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity. It has become a term to cover many aspects of successful adaptation and transformation by adapting to one's environment despite risk and difficulty[45] through coping processes, hardiness and a sense of coherence, and risk and protective factors. Risk factors give resilience meaning as youth endure and recover from adversity[46]. Programs that help to develop resiliency are part of the answer to preventing a multitude of problems, including teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency, and violence. Solutions to the problems of youth depend on a broader approach to addressing fundamental systemic problems associated with at-risk children, families, and communities[47].

All youths require caring adults to help them develop the resilience that they need to face the challenges of life. Many youth receive support and guidance through relationships with parents, relatives, neighbours, teachers, coaches, and others. Sadly, these types of informal mentors are not available to the majority of young people who have the greatest need because of their social isolation or unstable life situations[48].

Programs that encourage resiliency are part of the answer to problems that youth face. "Young people are naturally resilient, but if they do not have support, they lose their elasticity. Children need to learn how to stretch and bounce back, and as they stretch, they become stronger"[49]. Communities can help to develop resiliency in children by providing supportive social agencies and networks of affectionate relationships and by helping children to develop prosocial peer groups and an internal locus of control[50].

Resilience is exemplified by youth who possess certain qualities that do not allow them to succumb to school failure, substance abuse, mental health problems, or juvenile delinquency, although they may be subjected to undue stress and adversity. These children are protected by family, including extended tribal family, and by schools and their communities.

Skill Development and Competence

Resilience is related to outcomes such as the acquisition of social skills, emotional development, and academic achievement[51]. Judging the effectiveness of mentoring is difficult because outcomes such as self-esteem and problem-solving, decision-making and general life skills are hard to attribute to single interventions, yet there is a growing

body of research that has provided evidence of improvements in these areas for youth in mentoring relationships[52].

Youth development strategies include fostering a feeling and sense of connection, confidence, and character. Children need to develop cognitive competence through written and spoken language and analytic skills; an interest in learning; career or vocational competence; health and physical competence; personal social competence; and citizenship competence, which involves learning to value cultures and differences[53].

Perceptions of Self-Worth

Framing resilience within a belief system of commitment, control, and challenge allows youth to have confidence in their own capacity to master life's events. Having a sense of power instead of powerlessness and believing that life is a challenge instead of seeing it as a threat are attitudes that can help to moderate the negative effects of life's events by reconceptualizing them, thus helping youth to develop adaptive coping skills[54].

Adolescent well-being is also affected by whether they believe that they possess good qualities, like themselves, and feel loved and wanted. Those youth who practice spirituality, religion, and prayer; who do not work too many hours per week; and who physically look their age (not too young or too old) tend to experience lower levels of distress and to engage in less frequent risky behaviour[55].

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion involves ensuring that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected, and contributing members of society. It is also about closing physical, social, and economic distances that separate people. Social inclusion does not equate disability with pathology. It is being sensitive to cultural and gender differences. Social inclusion nurtures the talents of children so they are able to live a life that they value and so they can make a contribution that both they and others find worthwhile. Social inclusion allows someone the right and the support to make decisions that affect them. Additionally, making public spaces such as parks, libraries, housing, classrooms, and schools accessible and providing safe and secure housing and an the ability to earn an adequate income are true measures of inclusion.[56].

Protective factors such as self-esteem, family support, and community involvement protect youth against risks[57]. Additionally, social support from fathers and siblings is associated with a decrease in violence and externalizing problems, which indicates that positive family support may help to reduce violence[58].

Gender

Gender involves biological and sociological factors that are significant to children:
(a) Males are at a higher risk for most infectious diseases during childhood, including chronic ear infections, which can result in delayed speech and language acquisition[59];
(b) young men face difficult and troubled existences in today's society, and "society has

largely pursued ineffective strategies for care and restoration of young men at risk"[60]; (c) five out of six children diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are boys[61]; (d) research from Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States has shown that boys have the lowest scores on standardized measures of reading and verbal ability[62]; and (e) "failure in reading tops the list of self-esteem busting events in school boys' lives"[63].

Single mothers tend to abuse male children at a greater rate than they do female children [64]. "High incidence of child abuse and neglect by female caretakers points to a need for our social programs to teach anger management to women as assiduously as they do men suspected of domestic violence or child abuse"[65].

Additionally, males commit all but a small percentage of homicides, are more likely to be victims of violent crime, complete suicide at an alarming rate, and make up the majority of drug addicts and the homeless[66]. Boys also have higher rates of substance abuse[67] and are assaulted more often[68]. Suicide is now the leading cause of death among the young, and boys are four to six times more likely than girls to complete suicide[69], in part because boys use means that are more violent and more successful than do girls[70].

Females are more likely to cite personal or family reasons such as health, pregnancy, the need to care for a child, or issues at home as being problematic. "Females tend to assume more family obligations than males, regardless of ethnic background"[71]. Girls who become pregnant are more likely to drop out of high school, become single parents[72] rely upon public assistance, and be in prison[73]. More than one million teenagers become pregnant each year, which results in more than 500,000 children born to teenage mothers. Few teen mothers opt for adoption, which means that many pregnancies end in abortion or miscarriage[74]. Research has indicated that young inner-city women are less likely than men to expect to achieve high educational attainment and work in competitive, traditionally male occupations[75].

Socioeconomics (SES)

Poverty has a multiplicative and intergenerational effect because children born into poverty frequently experience health, educational, and social problems[76]. In Canada child poverty is a growing concern. One in four children live in poverty, and Canada ranks second among industrialized nations after the US in the number of children who live in poverty[77]. More than 40% of food bank users are children under the age of 18, yet they make up only a quarter of the population. Child poverty is closely linked to abuse, where children who live in poverty are seven times more likely to be maltreated and those at greatest risk have alcohol- and drug-addicted parents[78].

Single mothers in Canada represent 86% of all single parents and one third of Canadian mothers who were not living in poverty before divorce do so after. Canada ranks third in the rate of single-parent poverty[79]: "Women are more likely than men to be poor, and the rate of poverty for single mothers under the age of 25 is 93. 3%"[80]. Eighty percent of unmarried women who had a child before finishing high school live in poverty[81]. Children born to teenage mothers tend to struggle more because of health and economic

factors. There are higher incidences of teen pregnancy among poor young women of color[82]. Four out of 10 young women become pregnant during their teens, and nearly 80% are unmarried[83]. Teen mothers tend to have mothers who gave birth as adolescents and are more likely to have been sexually abused[84]

The concentration of poverty and inner-city joblessness, welfare dependency, single-parent families, out-migration of working families, and, in turn, limited occupational aspirations, poor school performance, and low self-esteem contribute to social problems in poor communities[85]. The research suggested that 18% of children live in homes where no parent is employed, and 28. 5% live in homes where no male is employed. This creates gaps in access to information about work and reduces the informal mentoring networks that are important for gaining employment[86]. Among the homeless, employment opportunities are limited and are often comprised of illegal and quasi-legal behaviours, including prostitution, scalping of event tickets, sales of nonmedicinal and medicinal drugs, theft, and break and entry[87].

Youth in Care

Research indicates that children in foster care tend to be more disengaged and exhibit more problem behaviours[88]. Studies also indicate that many infants and toddlers whose mothers are in prison tend to live in foster care[89]. Of the women in prison that Cunningham and Baker studied, the average age of their children was eight years. More than half were under six, and most of these women had more than one child (78%). Most of these children had open child-protection files, had no contact with their biological fathers, and were separated from their siblings while their mothers were in prison[90].

The research suggested that the majority of children in foster care are boys[91] and that more often it is boys in foster care who are born with fetal alcohol syndrome, narcotics additions, and AIDS[92]. Children in foster care are also at a greater risk of dropping out or being forced out of high school[93]. Studies on children excluded from school indicate that at the time of exclusion, 61% were not living with both natural parents, and 79% were in foster care[94].

Aboriginal Youth (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)

Aboriginals represent about 4. 4% of the total population of Canada, yet they have the lowest incomes, highest rates of poverty, poorest health, highest rates of dropping out of formal education, and highest rates of unemployment. Poverty, language or literacy barriers, racial discrimination, disability, inadequate child care, health concerns such as low birth weight, teen pregnancy, poor nutrition, poor oral hygiene, ear infections, low-quality general health and overall well-being, poor housing, and the struggle to attain adequate housing and safe water pose difficulties for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people[95]. The average age of the Aboriginal population is only 17. 3 years, and their life expectancy is much lower than that of the general population[96]. Aboriginal communities are plagued with substance abuse problems: Alcoholism mortality is 6. 3 times higher, and related illnesses such as cirrhosis of the liver are 3. 5 times higher. The homicide, suicide, and overall mortality rates are as much as 2. 6 times higher[97]. Aboriginal

children are nearly four times as likely to die from injuries, and they face significantly more childhood trauma (domestic violence, child abuse, forced separation, and associated homelessness) than the general population[98].

These factors have multiplicative and intergenerational effects because children born into poverty frequently experience health, educational, and social problems[99]. Severe hearing loss that results from chronic otitis media is the most common health problem that the Inuit and Aboriginals face[100]. Furthermore, 30% to 40% of Inuit children suffer severe hearing loss, compared to 5% to 6% for all First Nations children and 1% for non-Aboriginal children[101].

Residential schools changed the Aboriginal family dynamic[102]. Some Aboriginal adults have not healed from residential school experiences, which tends to contribute to the lack of role models in communities[103]. Historically, the concept of family in the Native culture included the entire village community as a whole sharing responsibility for food, shelter, transportation, and childcare[104].

Aboriginal women and girls are among the most victimized individuals in Canadian society. Although they make up less than 3% of the female population in Canada, Aboriginal women made up 50% of female inmates[105]. More than 25,000 children across Canada each year have a mother in prison[106], and the majority of these children are Aboriginal. “While women in general constitute a pronounced minority in the justice system, Aboriginal women are the most disproportionately represented group in both provincial and federal institutions”[107]. “Aboriginal women not only enter the justice system with more frequency than both non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men, but also enter it early in life” [108]. Of the Aboriginal women who were incarcerated, 55% had been arrested 1 to 3 times; 40%, 15 times or more; and 21%, 17 or more[109].

To fully understand their involvement in the criminal justice system, we must understand their experience. Alcohol abuse, unemployment, and poor living conditions are associated with arrests[110]. Of the women that Samuelson and Antony interviewed, nearly 90% had alcohol and drug problems, and 69% had experienced childhood violence, rape, and regular sexual abuse; had witnessed a murder; and had repeatedly watched their mothers being beaten. When they are incarcerated, these women face additional challenges that impede healing because prisons have severely inadequate facilities and programs, culture- and gender-biased assessment standards, and unsympathetic regimes and fail to acknowledge and treat the problems that precipitate incarceration[111]. The majority of young prostitutes in cities such as Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Regina are young First Nations and Aboriginal women whose victimization on the street is preceded by their victimization at home[112].

Mentor-like activities are closely connected to historical Aboriginal culture, yet because of the destruction of informal social and cultural systems that traditionally guided Aboriginal youth, the informal networks that once provided mentoring are no longer central to community life[113]. Although the term *mentor* is uncommon in Aboriginal communities, the core concept of adults’ providing friendship, guidance, and support to children and youth outside of their own immediate families is culturally ingrained[114].

Historically, Aboriginal mentoring was embedded in customary cultural practice. The entire society contributed to raising children and everyone had a role to play in teaching the young[115]. Group mentoring is considered an effective model for Aboriginal youth because groups are fundamental to Aboriginal culture. Through the complexity and interweaving of social circles, Aboriginal people can relate to each other[116].

Fostering resilience in Aboriginal youth is not a new concept. Aboriginal peoples have survived despite the adversity that they face from disease, war, colonialism, residential schools, and poverty[117]. Aboriginal ways of building self-worth or self-esteem foster resilience in youth. In traditional cultures there were four bases for self-esteem: (a) belonging, (b) mastery, (c) independence, and (d) generosity. These concepts inform mentoring in that respecting and caring for others and being cared for and about; being nurtured by role models who foster balance in spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical competence; placing high value on individual freedom and self-management; and giving to others and giving back to the community are all fundamental to First Nations peoples[118].

Immigrant and Refugee Youth

The nations from which immigrants are arriving in Canada have changed. Immigrants used to come primarily from European countries, with their structured governments and school systems, trained teachers, organized curriculum, and a tradition of compulsory schooling. Between 1996 and 1998, of the more than 230,000 immigrant children and youth who arrived in Canada, more than 50% came from Asia and the Pacific region and 20% from Africa and the Middle East. Many of today's immigrants come from nations without compulsory schooling and have never attended school, some are illiterate in their own language as well as in English, and many have severe reading limitations or have spent time in refugee camps[119]. These individuals are more likely to drop out of school and live in poverty[120]. For example, only 40% of immigrant children whose first language was other than English earned a high school diploma in one study in an urban Canadian school division between 1991 and 1996[121].

For young people who have experienced a major life change such as immigration, social support is extremely important[122]. Although most immigrant and refugee youth display a remarkable ability to integrate into Canadian culture, some have faced issues of acculturation, identity, and culture shock that have resulted in deep emotions, pain, sadness, loneliness, and frustration. Recent immigrant enjoy the freedom that the youth culture in Canada affords them, yet they also feel somewhat overwhelmed and alienated by consumerism and superficiality[123]. Many report being made fun of and laughed at because of their accents, and some experience racism, ostracism, or isolation[124] Sexuality. Although these youth have experienced major challenges such as feeling ostracized, being bullied, or having difficulties with schoolwork, most believe that their parents have experienced even more[125].

Immigrant and refugee youth often connect informally with those from their home countries who are already established in Canada. These people serve as guides by

introducing the youth to Canadian life, people, and customs[126]. Essentially, these peer mentors become cultural brokers for immigrants.

Changes in Residence

Frequent changes in residence and the mobility of the family are problematic for children[127]. Frequent residential mobility impacts families' capital, relationships with other parents, and connections to the community, which may in turn affect their children's behaviour. The number of elementary schools that they attend differentiate those who quit from those who graduate[128]. Each time students change schools, their odds of leaving school early increase by 30%; and 23% of those who change schools two or more times between Grades 8 and 12 do not graduate[129]. Children whose mothers are in prison also experience more residential disruptions, school changes, separation from siblings, foster care, or periods of time spent with inappropriate caregivers[130].

At-Risk Behaviours

Labelling can create stigmas that lead to self-fulfilling prophesies or place inappropriate attention on certain individuals. Children should not be described as at-risk just because they are the biological results of inadequate parenting or because they live on the margins of society. "Failing to acknowledge how discourses of risk may restrict the way in which issues of child and youth welfare are framed can reinforce ideological discussion that have, at best, short-term therapeutic benefits and potential long-term disadvantages"[131]. According to research, Canadian children with an early onset of antisocial behaviours have been found to experience a larger number of risk factors that disrupt many facets of their lives[132], including academic and social development. Key factors include being a young offender, living in foster care[133], being very disengaged, and having negative home and social or school-related issues such as poor relationships with peers and special educational needs[134].

Research has indicated that young people who are the most disadvantaged seem to benefit the most from mentoring[135]; yet far too many vulnerable Canadian children are being profoundly affected by negative life experiences such as poverty, poor parenting, violence, and racial prejudice. The results of these experiences include high rates of delinquency, unemployment, and school dropout[136].

At-risk youth normally do not have attachments to family or community, so there is little or no compulsion to respect or value themselves or others. These young people lack healthy relationships with adults, which are an important factor in a successful transition to adulthood. Many of these children do not have access to informal mentors because they have neither stable families nor homes in a neighbourhood with good social networks. Typically, disengaged youth tend not to participate in constructive social activities, which further limits their contact with positive adults[137]. Support from caring adults is critical to helping these youth to overcome challenges. One study of over 500 successful young adults from low socioeconomic or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds attributed their success to the support of an adult who cared[138]. Mentoring can be a primary intervention to prevent or address delinquency and an effective way to

provide assistance, promote school achievement, and help youth to avoid violence and abstain from drugs and alcohol.

Community and neighbourhood factors that contribute to at-risk behaviours include high levels of unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, pervasive antisocial attitudes, poor-quality housing, and other such factors that do not provide optimal environments for raising healthy children[139]. Many of these neighbourhoods have high crime rates; alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are readily available; antisocial values are evident; there is little availability of medical and mental health services; and educational services are inadequate[140]. Community factors that influence substance use, poverty, neighbourhood disorganization, and family dysfunction need to be considered to allow communities to reduce the problems that youth experience, including substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout, violence, and parents in jail or prison[141].

The warning signs of at-risk behaviour are often manifest in predictable ways and include

> being excluded [from school], entering a school midway through a year, having parents who are separating or divorcing, being in foster care, having siblings who are truant, becoming a loner, begin bullied, feeling pressure from exams, looking dishevelled, and becoming withdrawn.[142]

The commonalities of at-risk students include generally poor grades, negative relationships with teachers, and feelings of alienation from places that they see as unfair, boring, and a waste of time. They tend to act out a particular role in the culture of failure into which they find themselves cast and to live up to the low expectations of others and, indeed, of themselves[143].

Factors that help protect youth from engaging in risky behaviours and harmful health practices may also help them develop the ability to bounce back from adversity. Healthy youth who avoid risky behaviour are strongly connected to their families and feel understood, loved, wanted, and paid attention to. They do not have access at home to guns, cigarettes, and alcohol or illegal drugs. Their parents disapprove of their having intercourse and using contraception and have high expectations for high school and college completion[144].

Substance Abuse

Early adolescence is characterized by experimentation that can lead to abuse of substances such as alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and inhalants[145]. Participating in high-risk behaviours may result in pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, violence, criminal acts, addiction, overdosing, and risky behaviours. Adolescents cause one quarter of alcohol-related fatal motor vehicle accidents[146].

In the early 1960s adolescents were not often diagnosed with alcohol or drug dependence. Adults in treatment at that time often gave histories of drinking heavily during their teens, but did not report serious life problems until their late 20s and seldom reached treatment before their 30s or 40s. Today entire units of hospitals are devoted solely to the treatment

of adolescent alcoholics and drug addicts. Although this remarkable societal change reflects the improved availability of treatment, early intervention, and greater sensitivity to substance-related issues, it is also indicative of an earlier introduction to tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use among children and adolescents; the increased ease of access to these drugs; and the earlier onset and greater severity of addictive disorders among the young[147].

Drugs are not just an inner-city problem[148]; they are everywhere, and they are accessible. The largest increase in adolescent use of addictive substances occurs between the ages of 12 and 15. Thirteen-year-olds are three times more likely to know someone who sells or uses drugs than are twelve-year-olds. The gender gap in the use of illicit drugs has also been closing. Adolescent girls appear more vulnerable to developing substance dependencies, and White adolescent females show more severe drug use than do minority females[149].

Substance abuse is an obstacle that must be faced to meet the needs of children and adolescents with special needs that are associated with substance misuse, including but not limited to fetal alcohol syndrome and attention deficit hyperactive disorder[150]. Drug use can lead to criminal involvement to gain an income to purchase drugs (Lowe, 2002), and drug use and addiction are very high among young people who turn to prostitution. “One explanation for this is that substance abuse causes prostitution when youth turn to alcohol and drugs as a way of dealing with stressful life problems such as coping with prior physical and sexual abuse”[151].

It is important to also consider prevention strategies relative to drugs and alcohol, which include good social and problem-solving skills and a firm sense of identity. These help adolescents to resist peer pressure[152].

Crime

Canada has one of the highest youth-incarceration rates among Commonwealth countries[153]. Each year law enforcement detains more than two million juveniles; more than 25% are released without charges or are referred to other agencies. The others generally go to juvenile court and eventually return to their communities[154]. To make communities safer, they need to find ways to support and redirect youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system[155], particularly those who have been violently victimized, because there is such a strong link between violent victimization and violent offending[156]. Violent victimization is a warning signal for future violent offending among juvenile. The rates of violent victimization are twice as high for juveniles aged 12 to 17 as for adults aged 18 and older, and rates of simple assault victimization are three times higher[157]. Juveniles who have been victimized are 2. 4 times more likely than nonvictims to offend, and those who have offended are 5. 3 times more likely than nonoffenders to be victimized[158]. Policies and programs aimed at preventing violence may be most effective if they focus on those who have been victimized. Timeliness is important because the effect of violent victimization on offending appears to be strongest within a year after the victimization. Violent victimization is significantly less likely

among youth who reside in two-parent households and who have a higher socioeconomic status[159].

Schissel and Fedec (2001) identified family victimization as a major reason that young people become involved in prostitution:

> Abusive families normalize abusive treatment in the minds of the victimized youth, so that they are more likely to believe that strangers can abuse them as well. In an attempt to escape a home where parents do not seem to care or where long-term conflict occurs, some children may view the streets as their only option for survival as they seek to obtain food, shelter, and financial capital.[160]

Once youth are on the streets, criminal activity becomes a means of survival, and life on the streets is almost always violent and abusive; therefore these youth are at higher risk for victimization.

The most common age group for offenders who commit rape, robbery, and assault is 18 to 20, followed by juveniles aged 15 to 17. Arrest rates for murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault are higher for older teens than any other age group[161].

Offenders are attractive targets for crime because they can be victimized with little chance of legal consequences since they are unlikely to report victimization for fear of drawing attention to their own illegal behaviour. An individual's risk of criminal victimization depends on his or her exposure or proximity to offender populations. Exposure, in turn, depends on lifestyles and routines. Because individuals are most likely to interact with those who are similar to themselves, victimization risk is directly proportional to the number of characteristics shared with offenders. Offenders are more likely than nonoffenders to become victims because their lifestyle brings them into contact with other offenders. Offenders are also more likely than nonoffenders to use alcohol or illegal drugs, which lower their ability to protect themselves. Offenders tend to live in neighbourhoods characterized by high levels of population mobility, heterogeneity, and social disadvantage (poverty and unemployment), which increases their exposure to other offenders[162].

The best way to deal with youth crime is to prevent it—through community-based crime prevention and by addressing the social conditions associated with crime. The threat of sanctions is greater for individuals from higher-status backgrounds because they have more to lose and for those on the margins; "thus, poverty may lead to criminal behaviour regardless of threats of punishment"[163]. Yet "deterrence does not threaten many of those who live in impoverished conditions since these people have little or nothing to lose if apprehended by the law" [164].

For many children whose mothers are or have been incarcerated, the stage is set for a troubled adolescence. Many mothers see their children relive events from their own youth such as substance use, depression, survival crime, school dropout, early emancipation from adult care, exploitation by others, and early child bearing. More than 40% of the women in prison in Cunningham and Baker's (2004) study had been

separated from their own mothers, fathers, or both when they were children because of parent incarceration. These mothers, who are raising the next generation, have seen more than 50% of their own teenaged children in youth custody[165].

Young people who encounter the criminal justice system are more likely to discontinue school, which perpetuates the cycle of unemployment, poverty, and crime. The majority (up to 70%) of Canadian inmates have no more than eight years of school[166]. Although serious criminal activity is confined to a relatively small number of youth[167], the majority are male[168]. Of the small number of Canadian youth who do engage in serious and persistent criminal activity, the crimes that they commit are often very damaging to their victims and to society[169]. "Drug crimes are by far the most common, accounting for 83%"[170]. More than a third of the men and women in prison are dependent on drugs and alcohol, and very few inmates reported no use of substances during the six months before their arrest[171]. Many of those who inhabit the streets are involved in crime and drugs and associate with criminal peers[172].

Peer influence affects participation in criminal activity. Youth who associate with antisocial peers demonstrate aggressive-egocentric personality traits, fail to embrace positive social values, and are at highest risk for serious conduct disorders[173]. These youth tend to have severed attachments to parents and other adults. Most boys involved with gangs are fatherless, poor, and undereducated; live in a decaying neighbourhood; and are often an ethnic minority[174].

Female juvenile offenders who enter the youth justice system have a substantial number of needs and risks and are vulnerable because of a multiproblem profile of (a) extremely high rates of both physical and sexual abuse, (b) severe drug addition, (c) increasing high-school dropout rates and low levels of academic and employment achievement, and (d) chronic family dysfunction and abuse[175]. The vast majority of women in correctional systems have experienced childhood abuse and neglect[176]. Girls are negatively impacted in gender-specific ways, and although boys often express distress more physically than girls do, "boys act out, girls act in" [177]. For many, "the entrance to street life is motivated by the necessity to escape a combination of sexual, physical and/or psychological abuses in the parental home" [178].

Delinquency

Children with behavioural, emotional, or mental health problems such as antisocial personality or conduct disorders are more likely to become delinquent and suffer substance-abuse problems, suicidal ideologies, and depression[179]. More of these children have a history of conduct disorder, school or employment problems, antisocial peer associations, substance abuse, poor use of leisure time, dysfunctional personality/behaviour traits, antisocial attitudes and values, negative emotionality, and criminal or delinquent involvement[180]. Delinquency tends to be higher for males than females because adolescent boys are more likely than girls to engage in problem behaviour[181].

Interpersonal History

Far too many vulnerable Canadian children are being profoundly affected by negative life experiences such as poor parenting, poverty, violence, and racial prejudice. Many youth live in single-parent households and have been exposed to risk factors such as parental drug or alcohol use, friends who engage in delinquent behaviours, gang involvement, educational failure, or parents in jail or prison[182]. These children also lack protective factors such as clear standards and consistent discipline, a sense of social belonging, and realistically high parental expectations for achievement.

Parent involvement in religious activities has a profound effect on early-adult achievement for minority men; it reduces the odds of minority men being off track in early adulthood by 33%[183]. Spirituality and attendance at religious services are also factors in drug-use prevention. The less frequently that adolescents attend religious services, the more likely they are to smoke, drink, or use marijuana. Those who are optimistic about their futures and hope that they will be at least as successful as their parents and who are achieving scholastically close to their abilities are also less likely to have difficulties with drugs and alcohol[184].

Academics

Mentored youth have fewer school absences, more positive attitudes toward school, better relations with parents, and greater expectations for success[185]. School and family connectedness is improved by mentoring[186] .

Literacy

Being able to read is key to enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to be successful in school and later in life[187]. A study of youth who had completed the Head Start program found that their reading proficiency was positively correlated with psychological autonomy granted by parents, harmonious relationships with peers and teachers, scholastic motivation, emotional stability, and self-concept. Both the mother's and child's verbal abilities positively correlate with reading proficiency[188].

Attitudes and Interest

School routines favour well-behaved, academically solid students; but at-risk youth seldom fit this mould[189]. Academic proficiency in adolescence is most significant for minority men. Each unit of increase in academic proficiency reduces the odds of being off track by 54%. Doing well in school benefits minority men possibly because academic proficiency in early adolescence makes them more likely to receive positive attention and support from teachers[190].

Mentoring has been linked with reduced rates of school absenteeism and improved grades[191] and participation in extracurricular activities in high school has been associated with higher levels of educational attainment and occupational prestige at midlife[192].

MATCHING CONSIDERATIONS

Mentoring programs make decisions about which available adult volunteers to match with which child by using a number of criteria such as gender, ethnicity, and race[193]. Yet the research contended that the personal qualities of mentors are more important, such as effective communication skills, approachability, and enthusiasm[194].

Age

The average age of mentees is just under 12[195]. Mentoring programs often struggle to recruit mentors for older youth, especially those who have been involved in the criminal justice system, yet these are some of our youth in greatest need[196]. Volunteers for mentoring programs are generally between the ages of 22 and 49[197].

Gender

Volunteers recruited by mentoring programs are typically well-educated females. Statistics show that 60% of mentors who volunteer for one-to-one mentoring programs are female[198]. The data suggest that the perceptions of the benefits of mentoring differ between boys who are matched with female mentors and those who are matched with male mentors. Boys paired with female mentors reported that they liked their mentors and felt understood by them to the same degree as boys paired with male mentors. However, boys who were matched with male mentors reported greater benefits with respect to avoiding drugs and gangs than did boys matched with female mentors.[199] .

The most common match in a study of young offenders in Australia was between boys aged 13 and female mentors, which is consistent with mentor and mentee profiles from other countries. There was no evidence that a particular match type was more or less likely to be successful[200].

Race

Issues of matching youth and mentors by race are complex, both philosophically and practically[201]. Many practitioners believe that youth are best served by a mentor from the same race. However, 15% to 20% of adult volunteers are members of a racial minority, whereas 50% of children and youth who have applied for a mentor are from a racial minority[202].

Arguments in favour of same-race matching include the quality and effectiveness of the relationship, because shared-race mentors can play a critical role in helping youth learn to cope in society. Cultural identity and the shared responsibility of the minority community have larger social, political, and historical implications. Same-race and -gender matches allow mentees to closely identify with mentors because of the belief that they share common life experiences[203]. Minority youth invariably internalize racial attitudes of society at large and are vulnerable to restricted views of the possibilities in life and to low self-esteem. Some have argued that only a mentor with similar racial

backgrounds can fully understand these challenges, frame realistic solutions, and confirm traditional values[204].

The same-race argument contends that White, middle-class mentors may experience guilt and defensiveness because of the way that society has treated racial minorities. These mentors may try to “save” at-risk youth rather than develop a relationship built on trust and support. Minority youth may feel that White mentors are judging them according to stereotypes. Again, the argument that supports cultural matching suggests that culture is deeply ingrained and that a mentor who is not a member of a youth’s race will subconsciously impose his or her own cultural values on the youth. It also sends the message to the youth that there are not enough adults from their own race who can serve as mentors. Racial communities should foster solidarity and be responsible to one another[205]. Some research indicated that youth with mentors of difference races or ethnicities perceive less improvement from the mentor relationship, and same-race mentors reported that they understood their mentee better[206].

Mentors who belong to and are supported by the Aboriginal community can serve a vital role as cultural brokers between youth and families in Aboriginal communities and mainstream services[207]. Aboriginal mentors can serve as culturally appropriate points of contact who understand the role of family and family commitments, the importance of local Elders, and the subtleties of how people relate to each other[208].

Programs committed to same-race placements ultimately end up with long waiting lists until mentors become available[209] because more than half of the children waiting for mentors are from racial minorities, and the majority of people who volunteer to be mentors are White[210]. Arguments that support cross-race mentoring contend that although race may more quickly facilitate trust, it does not guarantee a successful mentoring match. The most important indicator of a good match is the quality of the relationship, which includes long-term commitment, trustworthiness, and mutual respect[211]. The relationship should exist not only between the mentor and the mentee, but also with his or her family to ensure success.

Research on 669 mentors in an international mentoring organization found that race is not central to the strength of the mentor-youth relationship[212]. The qualities of the mentor, rather than race, are most significant, such as personal skill, experience, common interests with the youth, and the capacity to provide support. Youth in cross-race matches are more likely to talk to mentors about problems, and they perceive mentors as providing more unconditional support. Rather than being a liability, arguments in support of cross-race matching suggest that these matches can be beneficial because they help to break down racial barriers by exposing youth and mentors to other cultures. They can also help to dismantle social barriers as people work together to try to improve the quality of life for youth.

Socioeconomic Status

Some studies found that socioeconomic status is more significant than race or gender in matching mentors to mentees because the social distance created by income stratification

can lead to misunderstandings about the young person's thoughts, problems, needs, and situations[213]. A recent study of youth being mentored in Edmonton, Alberta found that 80% were from impoverished families[214], whereas only 19% of the volunteer mentors earned less than $25,000 per year[215]. Other studies revealed that highly educated mentors who live in different communities from the youth provide significant support in expanding young people's social networks[216].

MENTORS

Recruiting

Recruiting mentors has always been one of the most challenging aspects of mentoring programs and the most significant barrier to success. A critical shortage of mentors creates a long waiting list of youth who need mentors. Mentoring programs are based on the concept of volunteerism, and because of the lengthy investment of time, the pool of potential mentors is small[217]. A large amount of time and effort is necessary to recruit potential volunteers. Approximately 5% of the people who inquire about mentoring actually becoming mentors, which is far fewer than the number of youth referred[218].

Although most programs try to recruit by gender and ethnicity whenever possible, they have particular difficulty in recruiting minority and male mentors; in some cases, small community-based organizations have had difficulty in recruiting mentors because they are competing for volunteers from other agencies[219]. Male mentors, especially minorities, are in high demand[220] and this situation is further exaggerated in minority communities where, because of the higher prevalence of social problems such as poverty, there is an even smaller pool of potential mentors[221]. Nearly all programs depend on word-of-mouth advertising from current staff members and mentors[222], and therefore recruiting should target personal contacts from businesses, churches, and fraternal and service organizations.

The research suggested that mentors should be recruited from two main populations: college students and older adults[223]. Strategies such as advertising, networking, and word of mouth are effective in increasing program awareness, outlining the selection criteria, and setting recruiting deadlines[224]. Once a volunteer expresses interest, organizations must be ready to act quickly and perform criminal records checks and other measures to ensure safety for children, yet keep potential mentors interested.

Recruitment and screening need to be culturally appropriate to increase the number of Aboriginal and minority mentors; the criteria must include people who have recovered from addictions or criminal activities and have relevant experiences to share[225]. With the lack of available mentors, the research recommended peer or group mentoring.

School-based programs tend to have relatively short wait lists of children needing mentors compared to community programs and they tend to be more attractive for older, retired individuals because schools and community centres seem safer places to mentor. Research suggests that mentors and youth of different races can have very strong, positive experiences in mentoring. While having race in common is not a precursor to a

good relationship, children in school-based mentoring programs sometimes prefer same race mentors because if the youth are pulled out of class by a mentor of a different race, the peers of the child may tease or ridicule the child. In one-to-one programs, mentors of different races tend not to be problematic[226].

Barriers to attracting volunteers include difficulties in finding low-income adults with the ability or motivation to volunteer. Many work more than one job and/or are struggling to raise their own families with limited resources. In rural areas, the need to travel long distances is problematic and makes it difficult for mentors to meet with mentees. Geographic distance also makes matches more expensive.

Screening

Because children and youth are vulnerable, particularly those who face social problems such as poverty or live in single-parent households, screening mentors is critical to protect youth[227] because it helps to protect children from adults who may take advantage of them[228]. Desirable characteristics of mentors might include commitment, availability, trustworthiness, maturity, communication skills, respect, financial stability, and civility[229]. These are determined through interviews, references, and financial and criminal record checks. Agencies or organizations that require background checks for all volunteers ensure a safer environment for the children[230].

Screening practices should focus on ensuring that the mentor is a safe adult (clean child-abuse clearances), guaranteeing that the mentor can commit to the expectations of the relationship, and ensuring that the mentor understands that the relationship must focus on building a friendship, not on transforming the youth[231]. In some organizations, screening can take as long as eight months to complete. Other programs take up to four months, which includes training, after which the volunteers are matched with a young person based on mutual interests, personal compatibility, and geographical proximity[232]. The length of the screening time causes many volunteers, particularly men, to lose interest[233].

Selecting

Youth chosen for mentoring programs are usually those who have no other natural mentors and who may be at risk because of poverty, substance abuse, or delinquent behaviours[234]. The criteria for selecting mentors should include shared interests, the mentor's attitudes and temperament, and the geographic proximity of the mentor; and the youth's special needs should be matched with the mentor's special talents.

Matching

Although the most common matching criteria are gender and race, most programs find it difficult to match both because pools of potential volunteers usually consist of White females, and youth who need mentors are usually male and from a racial minority[235].

The literature made a case for matching race and socioeconomic factors, yet recent evidence has supported the benefits of matching people with different characteristics or

experiences. Examples are cross-cultural mentors for new immigrants or in-school mentoring that accommodates large class sizes, a diversity of learning styles, and high and low achieving students. Additionally, cross-cultural mentoring can be an effective cultural bridge for new immigrants.

Most programs consider it important to match mentors and youth who have at least some similarities[236], and studies have suggested that almost all are committed to same-gender matches, and most prefer same-race matching. However, more important for a successful pairing and relationship than race, gender, or experience are the mentor's qualities and behaviours[237] because the mentor has the greatest responsibility for success. Respect for the mentee and a long-term commitment are also essential.

Whereas community-based programs tend to create matches based on shared race, gender, or interests, school-based programs do so less often[238], possibly because community programs usually have ongoing enrolment, but school-based programs are more term specific and thus more time sensitive. School programs tend to address school-related needs, and mentors are chosen based on their ability to address the needs rather than on other factors such as race and gender. Obtaining the parent's or guardian's acceptance of the match is crucial.

Personality types and gender are critical elements in matching. The preponderance of male youth and the shortage of male mentors create waiting lists.

Expectations

Relationships that work are more egalitarian and are committed to mutual learning and benefit. Mentoring is a relatively unstructured and informal activity[239]. Effective mentors maintain a steady presence in mentees' lives, respect their viewpoint, pay attention to the need for "fun," and get to know the mentees' families; but they do not become overinvolved, and they seek and use the help and advice of program staff[240]. Many who become mentors volunteer because they feel the need to give something back to the community and they have a sense of shared experience with the youth. Mentors work with youth because they enjoy the time that they spend with them, have children living at home, or feel that mentoring helps them to better understand their own children. Some mentors, primarily those in college communities, reported that they volunteer to determine whether they want to work with youth in their future careers[241].

Corporate-sponsored volunteers often want to make a difference in their community by giving back in return for support that they received when they were young. For college-age students, mentoring can strengthen a record for job applications, fulfill a college service requirement, earn credit, or allow them to apply what they are learning to the real world, learn new skills, become a friend to a young person, have fun, or make friends among their peers while networking with other mentors from diverse backgrounds. For older people, the motivation to mentor may include an interest in sharing experiences, interests, and knowledge; the desire to be part of a group and make new friends; the need to feel useful because they are making a contribution to their community; and the desire to have fun and leave a legacy for the younger generation[242]. Qualities considered

important in mentors are sincerity, trustworthiness, and a caring and welcoming demeanour[243].

Available Time

The research indicated that the benefits of mentoring are tied to the duration of the relationship[244]. Time is essential to building trust; therefore the length of commitment is important, as is the consistency of the mentor's involvement and commitment to the relationship. Relationships that are caring, respectful, and stable over time provide the greatest benefits to children.

The criteria that organizations use to define a quality mentoring relationship include its sustainability and functionality over 12 months [245]. Short-lived matches negatively impact a youth's feelings of rejection[246]. Younger, lower risk youth begin to show benefits after six months and more significant benefit after a year[247]. Relationships with younger children tend to last longer than with those who are older. The perceived value for the young person is the friendship and continuity that a mentor offers[248].

Frequency of Contact

Youth are likely to benefit most from a mentoring relationship if the mentors maintain frequent contact and get to know their families[249]. Some mentoring program models recommend that mentors and young people spend two to five hours together each week, usually on weekends, over a minimum period of 12 months (although the frequency is usually less once the relationship has become established). Most programs want people to be willing to donate at least two hours per week[250], but even students supported by a mentor for as little as one hour a week displayed and reported increased self-confidence, valuing of school, and participation in classroom tasks[251]. One study found even 30 minutes per week effective in an in-school mentoring program[252].

Duration of Relationship

According to Hartley (2004), mentoring relationships that last longer are more likely to have positive outcomes because the benefits of mentoring emerge over a relatively long period of time. Relationships that last a year or longer demonstrate the largest number of improvements[253]; other authors suggested that six months can be used as a benchmark for determining the level of closeness between mentors and mentees[254]. Regardless, the consensus is clear that the longer the relationship, the more beneficial it is to the youth.

Mentoring has positive outcomes for young offenders, but the length of the relationship is also important. All of the young offenders in a recent study of matches that lasted six months or more reported reduced offending, increased community involvement, improved self-esteem and communication skills, and more motivation[255]. Short-term relationships have the potential to harm young people[256], yet are more common with older adolescents or those who have experienced emotional, sexual, or physical abuse.

Exit Procedures

It is important to conduct private and confidential exit interviews to debrief the mentors, mentees, and staff on the mentoring relationship and to define the next steps[257].

Training

Programs should encourage ongoing training for volunteers in mentoring programs[258]. Training that helps mentors to understand diversity and respect values ensures better matches. Mentors' knowledge of the local social context can be helpful in establishing strong connections with mentees[259]. Training in cultural understanding is critical, especially when mentors are from a different race than that of their mentees[260] Jucovy. Inadequate mentor training contributes to the breakdown of mentoring relationships and leaves already vulnerable young people feeling abandoned[261]. Intensive training for mentors helps them to understand their role, not only to provide direct support, but also to acquire the means to help students recognize and take responsibility for developing their own talents[262].

Training in cultural understanding, especially for cross-race mentors, is important[263]. Mentors and mentees are likely to have some values that may conflict because they are of different ages and may be from different socioeconomic, ethnic, gender, and racial backgrounds. Mentors for Aboriginal youth should understand the legacy that the residential school experience has had on Indigenous people with regard to the loss of language, pride, spirit, culture, family, innocence, and sense of self. The intergenerational effects of residential schools significantly impact the ability of Aboriginal societies to continue to form social circles to benefit their members. Trainers should be sensitive to the fact that there is a great range in the level of participants' awareness of their own values. They must be sensitive to group dynamics and intercultural conflicts, not be too cautious in dealing with discomforts, not alienate people, be able to create a safe environment, and be clear about their own values and not impose them on others[264].

Roles and Responsibilities

Regardless of where adults live or how much money they make, there is no question that they need to become more involved in the lives of children: "Kids' lives depend upon more adults understanding"[265]. Implementing active programs that incorporate Elders, cultural resource people, and other adults into the lives of children are essential[266]. Building on a foundation of community-based partnerships can achieve the vision of helping young people and adults to work together toward a holistic approach grounded in the philosophy of helping adults learn to be allies to young people[267].

Limitations

Mentoring can do harm if mentors are critical, untrustworthy, inconsistent, or abusive[268]. Poorly chosen mentors can harm children's self-esteem and decrease their trust in adults if the program lacks the necessary infrastructure and practices, including screening,

training, and monitoring[269]. Additionally, short-term relationships also have the potential to harm young people[270].

Support

Quality mentoring produces significant, lasting, positive outcomes for youth. Mentoring fulfills the needs of the mentee, volunteer mentor, organization, and community[271]. Effective mentoring programs include positive relationships with adults, peers, and staff who are appropriately trained in program implementation[272]. Ongoing support is critical to ensure the success of mentoring relationships[273].

Weak program infrastructures are one of the reasons that so many matches fail. These programs do not provide adequate screening, training, or thoughtful matching. Programs with weak infrastructures often fail to adequately monitor matches, especially in the critical early stages of the mentoring relationship. New matches often encounter miscommunication and other problems that, if identified, can be appropriately addressed[274].

Programs must use effective practices to monitor and support matches and address problems that might arise. Cross-race matches may require additional attention to ensure that cultural differences do not interfere with the match relationship. Programs that offer the most intensive case management record greater average durations of mentoring relationships[275]. The research reported that in working with very high risk youth, consistent support from project staff both before and after being matched with youth is critical to guide mentors through the challenges that may arise[276]. Very clear plans that are overseen by a named case worker[277] help to identify family and personal problems and thus better address them with the youth. Moreover, the process of establishing trust takes time and patience[278], and effective programs strive to develop positive relationships with both adults and peers by providing staff who are appropriately trained and supported[279].

GOVERNMENT/ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Alberta's partnerships between mentoring agencies serve as a model for other provinces. The Alberta Mentoring Partnership, an Alberta-wide federation of mentoring agencies; the Calgary Youth Mentoring Coalition, a citywide partnership of mentoring agencies; Partners for Kids, a program that includes six Edmonton mentoring agencies; and Roots and Wings, composed of the Family Centre and Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton, are examples of collaborative efforts to make informed decisions on mentoring initiatives by providing services to children and families, training volunteers, and collaborating on strategies and goals[280].

It is important to recognize that services for children and families represent investments in the future of our society. The provincial scope of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership is key to its sustainability, and its serves as a model in the field[281]. The government must

ensure that policies and services are available to assist families in functioning effectively and to support youth as they grow and develop.

Funding sustainability is always an issue that Alberta's mentoring agencies face. Increased and long-term funding for mentoring models and programs that have proven to be successful should be built into policy frameworks to support mentoring. Maintaining healthy, long-lasting relationships with funders is critical. Yet the research asserted that this issue has not been satisfactorily addressed even with the creation of these partnerships[282]. Sustainability is not just about funding, because stakeholders also value mentorship programs through which community members can come together and do good work for families. The areas most suited for collaboration in mentoring programs are public awareness campaigns and the recruitment and training of volunteers[283], not funding.

"Some government leaders are prescribing mentoring as a low cost panacea for many of the challenges our society's youth are facing"[284] but although mentoring may be one way to address some of these challenges, to reach children, parents and significant others need to love and care for them, come to know them, attend to their needs, communicate that loving is important, and help them to deal with emotions[285]. The ultimate solution rests with efforts to ensure that children and adolescents are raised in healthy families and communities.

Protocol and community buy-in are essential to the success of any mentoring program for youth[286]. Community collaboration, career education, workforce readiness, conflict resolution, and violence prevention programs help protect at-risk youth, yet problems with youth programs often include interagency policies and external politics.

Basic core strategies such as mentoring, tutoring, service learning, and early childhood education are critical to develop healthy young people[287]. Mellor and Corrigan suggested that relational factors are also important. Cross-cultural and multicultural perspectives include creating a warm, affective climate; establishing clear and reciprocal rules in relation to rights, duties, and obligations; considering the whole child in relation to educational, emotional, and cultural needs; emphasizing and tolerating diversity; and varying organizations and input to maximize attention and interest.

A strong provincial strategy on mentoring is likely to support organizations and individuals who already work in the field, encourage local initiatives, and promote debate on mentoring, which also has the potential to increase the number of caring and supportive relationships between young people and adults who are not their parents and to help more young people make stronger connections to community networks, education, training and work structures. This strategy would also contribute to better understanding and stronger bonds between generations[288].

Many countries in the past two decades have instituted formal mentoring programs. The research suggested that this a result of the dramatic societal changes in Western family structures, socioeconomic status, and volunteerism (Hartley, 2004). Governments are recognizing the importance of research and policy literature that "promote and support a

broader concept of mentoring than has been evident . . . to date, and foster cross-fertilization of what is known about successful mentoring with other current developments and policy frameworks"[289]. Formal mentoring is a community function that reflects local needs. Clear national or provincial goals, funding guidelines, and benchmarks are needed to ensure that programs are of high quality and reach those most in need[290]: "High quality mentoring for young people builds on and enhances existing policy frameworks including those relating to community building, early intervention, school to work transition, careers advice for young people, and youth development"[291] Government's role in mentoring, among other responsibilities, is to support the key community role of mentoring, promote networking and partnerships, encourage vibrant debate about mentoring, provide resources and support for mentoring programs, and disseminate information[292]. Regional coalitions of mentorship providers are positioned between government, other funding bodies, and individual programs. These coalitions are responsible for promoting and supporting the local development of mentoring programs, providing a forum for discussion, and offering a range of services that includes program-coordinator training, mentor training, assistance with mentor matching, evaluation, advice, and support[293].

Models or Structures

Mentoring has been used as a strategy to enhance the academic and career outcomes for a range of young people[294]. The powerful potential of mentoring is increasingly being recognized, and mentoring programs have thus expanded. Yet good intentions are not enough; programs must also be supported by solid structures and effective practices [295]. Mentoring models that have proven to be effective include those in which government or private grant money supports nonprofit agencies and organizations with clearly defined goals. These agencies or organizations carefully assess the youth and volunteers to establish appropriate matches with the most opportunity for success, offer activities designed to enrich and enhance experiences for youth, and provide data to evaluate all aspects of the program[296]. Policy makers need to establish a clear definition of mentoring, with agreement among stakeholders on a definition that is inclusive but that clearly sets out the parameters for formal mentoring. Government agencies and organizations need to ensure that they are familiar with best practices[297]. Programs based on the traditional one-to-one model of mentoring, although they are tremendously successful with children in long-term matches, have not been able to reach all youth in need of mentoring. Volunteers are scarce, especially in poor neighbourhoods, and wait lists are long. Traditional programs rely heavily on parent referrals, yet youth whose parents are unaware of these programs or who do not fully understand what they have to offer may never be referred[298]. The ability of children from large families to participate in mentoring programs is also problematic because of transportation issues and the need to care for other children while one participates in a program[299].

Community-centered models that seek to determine what the community needs in terms of information and capacity building to produce effective interventions for youth are most successful[300]. Mentoring programs for Canadian Aboriginal children should consider both their community and culture[301], should be developed in collaboration with community members and should build on existing strengths and programs within the

community. Canadian research suggest that (a) mentors should be Aboriginal; (b) the programs must include the mentee's family, traditional values and culture, and adequate resources for sustainability, including transportation for mentors and youth and nurturing communication with parents, mentors, program coordinators, community leadership, and youth; and (c) the community must build on and sustain existing programs. The formation of a community advisory group for guidance and support is essential for success and sustainability, especially for programs that involve outside organizations[302].

"Formal mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve goals"[303]. In formal mentoring, the quality of the relationships is critical. Mentoring purposefully focuses on young people's social and learning development. Providing appropriate services to young people is the most effective means of addressing the problems of youth. "Mentoring has an important role in helping young people better understand the education, training and work options open to them, to maintain contact with education and training opportunities, and to find pathways to employment and economic and social participation"[304]. School-based programs that focus on direct assistance or skill development reach a new level when an emotional or social bond is formed. Mentoring differs from role modeling because, whereas role modeling focuses on how the role model is perceived, mentoring focuses on the actions of the mentor that impact or assist youth. Mentors are generally, but not exclusively, volunteers, an important factor that distinguishes mentoring from professional helping relationships (e. g. , teachers, guidance counsellors, social workers). The voluntary aspect is powerful because it signals that mentors give support and assistance willingly. There is also an inherent social and emotional aspect to mentoring. Most people take on volunteer work such as mentoring for altruistic reasons and personal satisfaction.

Mentoring is used in Saskatchewan to connect at-risk Aboriginal students with people who are willing to listen and provide physical and emotional safety: "Children can express themselves, make reparation, and have appropriate role models to help them learn about responsibility, responsible intimacy, and the nature of good parenting and to enable them to trust people in authority"[305]. Successful models such as these neutralize the stigma of being at risk by ensuring that youth feel valued and have the opportunity to be productive and influential.

Mentors who work with Aboriginal youth must have an appreciation for knowledge of Aboriginal language, culture, history, values, heritage, spiritual beliefs, and the social context[306]. Where possible, mentors should be First Nations people because there is a need for an increased number of Aboriginal role models. Outreach and intervention programs must also be culturally significant, because "street youth look for Aboriginal faces in helping agencies"[307].

Stakeholders

Governments should encourage and promote an enhanced role for business, employers, and philanthropic organizations in supporting the mentoring of young people[308]. Identifying key corporate and community advocates to promote the community's role in

mentoring young people, promoting local partnerships through community building that include mentoring young people, and exploring a more widespread culture of volunteer-friendly employers is important[309].

Best Practices

Mentoring programs provide children with emotional and practical support and guidance at many points in their lives, but not all programs are equally successful or valuable. The factors that make for good mentoring are becoming increasingly clear. Mentoring is most effective when it is seen as one of a range of youth services[310]. Partnerships and resources to support school-based mentoring programs and recognize the community's role in mentoring need to be acknowledge by funding programs, establishing strong and viable networks, and expanding the pool of mentors by drawing upon community members who are traditionally not likely to volunteer, but who have a lot to offer youth.

Factors related to positive outcomes include the presence of a number of both theoretical and empirically based practices, formation of strong relationships between mentors and mentees, ongoing training for mentors, structured activities for mentors and young people, mechanisms for support, and the involvement of parents[311]. The literature review identified a number of effective mentoring programs and key practices, including the following: (a) Staff members require that volunteers understand the demands of mentoring and have ways of determining whether the mentor will behave appropriately, (b) new mentors receive training in how to conduct the relationship and what to do if challenges arise, (c) young people are carefully matched with mentors, (d) staff members conduct ongoing training of mentors and supervision of relationships, (e) staff members enjoy the flexibility to modify programs to address the needs of mentors or youth[312]. This section highlights those applicable to Alberta.

The Faith Base Initiative for high-risk youth began in the late 1990s in 12 large US cities. Faith-based organizations with an inherent mission to serve those less fortunate recruited volunteers to mentor difficult-to-reach youth populations. This program was committed to three key goals: (a) a focus on high-risk youth characterized by those already involved in delinquent or violent activities or those considered to be heading for trouble, (b) mentoring and support for education or employment, and (c) collaboration with faith-based institutions, justice institutions, social service agencies, and law enforcement agencies[313].

Faith-based programs use less rigorous screening strategies than community-based models do to shorten the process and maintain volunteer interest. Most mentors in the faith-based mentoring initiative were primarily from Baptist congregations. Although the program attempted to match youth and mentors from the same communities, the program staff found that fewer than half of the mentors lived in the same neighbourhood in which their place of worship was located[314]. Faith-based volunteers found the practices of home visits and psychological testing intrusive and lengthy, and many dropped out while waiting for approval. Eliminating some of the screening criteria for the faith-based initiative decreased the length of the process to several weeks instead of several months, which sustained a higher portion of minority-male volunteers[315]. Congregations that

provided five to seven mentors typically had 600 to 700 members, so roughly 1% of the members volunteered. This is indicative of the size of the local religious community needed to support mentoring for high-risk youth. Typical of most mentoring programs, two thirds of the volunteers in the Faith-Based Initiative were female. Matching by race was also a preference for most sites, but matching youth and mentors from different Christian denominations was not an issue[316].

Another effective program was the Australian Mentoring for Young Offenders pilot program to explore the effectiveness of mentoring with young offenders referred through police or youth justice conferences. This mentorship model involved matching carefully screened and monitored adult volunteers with young people with the goal of developing friendships. The model included group outings for the young people and their mentors and a family support worker to assist the families of the young people involved. Mentoring proved to be an effective intervention for young offenders in reducing their offending behaviours and producing positive benefits for the youth and their families[317].

Jekielek et al. (2002) found that mentored youth with a prior history of committing major offences were significantly less likely than a control group to commit a major offence during the mentoring program year and up to two years after. The families of these young offenders noted changes in their attitudes and behaviour and improved family relationships, which they attributed to mentoring. The parents also reported that the time the young person spent with the mentor gave the parents more time to spend with their other children[318]. These findings underscore the need for and value of mentoring programs that provide opportunities for juvenile offenders to interact with caring adults[319].

Mentoring relationships positively influence some youth behaviour. Youth who are mentored are one third less likely to hit other people, engage in problem behaviours, and commit misdemeanours or felonies. Because of the support that these youth receive from mentors, parents, teachers, and others, they are also less likely to commit violent offences.

Cross-cultural mentoring has been a very effective “cultural bridge” for new immigrants[320] by breaking through the isolation that many experience. Peer mentoring is a suggested strategy for children who are not socially well integrated, including immigrant and refugee youth. Peers can help these children to lessen cultural barriers and address the isolation caused by racism and language issues[321] 5. A program at the University of Minnesota paired university students with high school students between the ages of 17 and 21 in a special school for new immigrants. Mentors received a small stipend and two university credits for mentoring and were asked to commit 100 hours to mentoring over the course of a semester. The purpose was to help new immigrants acquire basic academic skills such as writing a topic sentence and advanced skills[322]. Most peer mentors contributed far more than the 100-hour minimum, and several of the mentees went on to win state recognition at a history day competition. Several researchers[323] suggested that programs should be participatory, fun, and youth oriented. It is also important to offer food and music in working with youth.

Mentoring for female at-risk youth was most successful when it centred on physical activities and health education. These programs increased health knowledge, raised self-esteem, provided a better understanding of the role of physical activities in social growth and social relations, improved school attendance, and decreased discipline problems[324]. An important point to consider is the impact of parents' attendance at religious services on their children's behaviours. Furstenberg and Kmec (2000) identified four key factors that keep minority men on track: parents' church attendance, academic competence, parental investment, and private-school attendance. They suggested that informing parents in certain at-risk families about the benefits of their regular religious service attendance to their children would be extremely helpful.

The developmental assets framework builds the capacity of communities to support young people's healthy development as an integral part of societal prevention efforts[325]. To help a child learn and succeed, the child must be known. Children whose voices are not listened to, whose interests are a mystery, or whose family is excluded cannot be known[326]. Developing relationships with caring adults such as mentors is central to the success of youth and key to the developmental assets framework. The framework identifies 40 scientifically based experiences, relationships, opportunities, skills, and character traits that form a foundation for healthy child and adolescent development. It is grounded in the scientific literature on prevention, resilience, youth development, and protective factors that are considered important in promoting young people's healthy development. Factors widely referred to in research on substance use, violence, delinquency, and other public health issues and in funding and implementation are consistent with the framework of risk and protective factors widely used in substance use, violence, delinquency, and other public health research, funding, and implementation[327].

Bensen suggested that assessment of the number of development assets is a better predictor of substance abuse than are other demographic factors generally associated with young people at risk, such as those who live in poverty and/or are from single-parent families. When developmental assets accumulate in young people's lives, they are powerfully related to lower levels (and delayed onset) of multiple forms of substance use and other outcomes, regardless of young people's socioeconomic, family, or racial/ethnic background"[328].

Mentoring programs for Aboriginal youth identified connections to parents, communities, teachers, and schools as a major contributor to their resilience[329]. Aboriginal children are strongly impacted by humour; therefore, mentors who have a sense of humour are most effective[330]. Another important factor that the Aboriginal youth mentioned was feeling grounded and connected to tribal culture. Students who were doing well shared three positive characteristics: (a) a good self-concept, (b) a strong sense of direction, and (c) tenacity. Mentoring programs for Aboriginal youth help them to feel that they belong to a Native community and family; to appreciate the influences of Elders, grandparents, and parents; and offer a curriculum that includes Aboriginal history, language, and culture[331].

Integrating interventions for children by making connections between personal circumstances, institutional contexts, and social conditions connects mentoring programs

to other programs in communities with similar objectives. In an Australian study of mentors for Aboriginal children MacCallum and Vella (2006) determined that the youth who participated in mentoring programs increased their attendance, were absent less often, had improved self-esteem, and developed skills. The mentors learned about Aboriginal culture and youth issues and enhanced their own personal development and self-esteem. Schools and communities can benefit from an increased involvement of Aboriginal families in school, awareness of and access to high-profile Aboriginal role models, and positive contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families. Well-established personal relationships and a culture-friendly climate are likely to have a significant positive impact on Aboriginal people's use of services[332].

Rekindling the Spirit is an Aboriginal mentoring program aimed at addressing the needs of families with a history of violence, alcohol and drug abuse, offending behaviour, and child neglect. Its goal is to show that the Aboriginal culture can reconnect traumatized children to intergenerational care and guidance in a contemporary and relevant way. The program focuses on shaping a positive cultural identity for Aboriginal boys who are not attending school by pairing each boy with an Aboriginal mentor. This uses the Elder system to create positive and contemporary Aboriginal identities for young people in partnership with their communities and government agencies[333].

Key findings from studies of Aboriginal mentoring indicate sustained student attendance and more time spent in school. Strengthening the participation of Aboriginal students in school activities and opening communication between Aboriginal families, schools, and communities are also important. In many cases this mentoring program is the first formalized encounter between Aboriginal families and schools. Additionally, building connections to the broader community occurs as people from businesses, churches, service clubs, civic associations, sports clubs, and local councils became sources for mentoring[334].

Parents and the community must collaborate for children to be successful and avoid the behaviours that place them at risk. There is a diversity of opinion about the extent to which schools should be involved, but it makes sense that schools figure prominently in the solution. Adolescents must be supported in the classroom, at school, and in the community; and all must work together to promote successful youth[335]. In Saskatchewan a provincial task force created a vision to integrate a community-based school system in which schools would become core agencies linked with and equipped to deliver all services to children, including mentoring. The role of the school has changed in recent years to "encompass two key purposes—to educate children and youth and to support service delivery so schools become centres at the community level for the delivery of appropriate social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services for children and families"[336].

A similar initiative was developed in Australia with the Schools as Community Centres project. The purpose was to ensure integrated services for Aboriginal families by identifying gaps in service provision, encouraging families to access services, promoting community involvement, and linking families with education, health care, and community services[337].

A mentor advisor project was designed for a rural high school in Vermont to promote positive self-concept and school success for high school students at risk of experiencing emotional and behavioural disabilities. The project involves small groups of students (five or six) that are facilitated by an adult mentor. The mentors are volunteers from the school (teachers, special educators, counsellors, or related service personnel) who receive ongoing support and consultation, and the groups stay together with the same mentor for up to four years. As a student graduate, new students are added to the group. The students learn skills in the areas of collaboration, problem solving, conflict resolution, and self-appraisal. This project was designed in accordance with the Circle of Courage, Lahota Indian model, which emphasizes the values of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity[338].

Manitoba's Lost Prizes mentoring program is designed to reclaim at-risk, high-ability, talented high school dropouts. To address the needs of talented youth who become bored, discouraged, or alienated, three Manitoba school districts initiated this program in which educators and caregivers are encouraged to focus on talent spotting and offer at-risk students reasons and encouragement to develop talents[339]. The hope was to reconnect with these individuals to help them to complete school and find career direction. The key seemed to be in working with the students at an off-site location other than a school. The program demonstrated that troubled young people can reassess priorities, deal with problems, and generate alternatives. Lost Prizes partnered with entrepreneurs to provide training and philanthropic mentors for the youth. In most cases the business partners continued the mentoring relationship after the program ended[340].

Another Manitoba initiative, the Beginnings Project, recognized parents as the best possible guides for their children. It was designed to build self-concept and the literacy levels of at-risk students by developing the confidence and skills of their parents. Federal funding "hired" parents for significant educational positions such as tutoring, library duties, and recess monitoring to allow them to work in their youngsters' schools and become more self-assured role models. The parents were also urged to read to their children at home at night. The results were impressive: Home reading time improved, and the parents' literacy levels rose along with the youngsters' self-esteem[341].

Some programs, such as the one at the California State University Fresno, offer mentoring to curb social problems. It matches elementary education majors as mentors with at-risk youth, and they meet twice a week after school. Many children who would otherwise not receive mentoring have been served by this program. University students who major in education receive hands-on training in relationship building with at-risk children and offer these youngsters the time and attention, direction, and encouragement that they so desperately need[342].

The University of Winnipeg instituted a similar initiative with at-risk youth in a program that matches fourth-year university students with troubled youth. These students are enthusiastic, altruistic, have the pedagogical skills of preservice teachers, and are able to acquire specific background in the at-risk domain[343].

Community mobilization involves public will, power, capacity, and commitment by creating a normative culture in which residents are expected to contribute to young people's healthy development. Focusing on stimulating community passion, commitment, and capacity not only to strengthen formal prevention programs, but also to unite the whole community in supporting and contributing to all young people's healthy development is essential as communities develop a shared vision that unites multiple sectors, systems, policies, and leaders in dealing with political, ideological, religious, economic, and/or racial/ethnic differences.

Accountability

Mentoring programs must be built upon adequate infrastructure. Mentees' safety and the effectiveness of mentoring relationships depend upon volunteers' being carefully screened, well trained, and regularly monitored by professional staff. This results in a significant cost to manage volunteer mentors and administer mentoring programs[344]. Recommended strategies for accountability include adapting a set of benchmarks that are reviewed and updated over time and a mandatory set of standards for mentoring programs on the protection of children and young people[345]. Mentoring Australia suggests the following benchmarks: 1) Well defined mission statements and established operating principles. 2) Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee. 3) Establishment under the auspices of a recognized organization. 3) Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills. 4) Written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions. 5) Adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements. 6) Inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and sexuality as appropriate to the program. 7) Adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources. 8) Written administrative and program procedures. 9) Documented criteria which define eligibility for participation in the program. 10) Program evaluation and ongoing assessment. 11) A program plan that has input from stakeholders. 12) Risk management and confidentiality policies. 13) Use of generally accepted accounting practices and 14) A rationale for staffing arrangements based on the needs of all parties.[346].

Mentoring costs a considerable amount, yet the cost of not having appropriate services is staggering. Statistics on youth crime, illiteracy, dropouts, pregnancies, suicide, and other youth tragedies are only part of the cost of not providing adequate adult mentors for Canada's children and youth (Ferronato, 2001). The cost per participating youth in group programs is about $408, compared with $1030 for one-to-one programs (Herrera et al., 2002). Group mentoring seems to be less expensive and may reach youth who also want to interact with their peers and develop personal and social skills.

Key Indicators

The infrastructure to support the development of programs that successfully build relationships between mentors and youth is necessary. Programs must be able to recruit, screen, and train mentors; match them with youth; and monitor the matches to identify and resolve problems as they arise[347]. Mentoring organizations in Canada have developed program standards for effective practice through years of experience. These organizations regularly review programs to ensure that they meet the standards and,

where they are not in compliance, to take action to align their practices with the standards[348].

Outcomes

This review of the literature supports the notion that well-developed mentorship programs create solid relationships between mentors and youth that improve the youth's attitudes toward school, behaviour, and school performance and instil hope for the future. Research has shown that youth involved in mentoring programs are less likely to start using drugs (46%) and alcohol (27%), especially minority and Aboriginal youth; are less likely to hit someone[349]; have improved attitudes toward completing work; and have improved peer and family relationships[350]. Key elements of effective mentoring relationships included frequent meetings between the mentor and mentee over a sustained period of time to build trust and a close, supportive relationship[351].

Evaluation

Mentoring should be evaluated as a vital component of social services. Conducting program outcome evaluations on a regular basis ensures that the intended impact of the mentoring program is being achieved. Outcome evaluations measure actual changes in the participants' attitudes, behaviour, knowledge, or skills and the effectiveness of the relationships, and describe the participants' characteristics[352]. Yet it is important to remember that mentoring is generally only one intervention for youth among several others, such as job placement and training, special education, classroom tutoring, peer-group support, psychological counselling, medical assistance; therefore it is difficult to evaluate the power of mentoring alone[353].

Asking essential questions is important to researching and evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs, such as (a) what are the perceived benefits of the mentoring relationship to both youth and mentors? (b) how does mentoring affect school attendance, performance, retention, or involvement in delinquent behaviours? (c) what are the risk factors that youth face, and how does mentoring affect these factors? (d) what are the characteristics of successful matches? and (e) how are successful mentoring projects structured? Because the mentor is vital to the success of the relationship, in addition to the program's gathering data about the youth, it is important that it collect demographic information on the mentors, including their motivation for mentoring and reasons for terminating their involvement[354].

Jucovy (2002b) warned that evaluations should not be so

> focused on the data and theories and all the elements of the business of mentoring that they lose sight of the central fact that mentoring is about the experience of the individual child or youth with his or her individual mentor. Everything is about that one-to-one relationship and each relationship is between a unique child or youth and a unique adult.[355]

Governments, communities, and families must ensure that children are properly cared for in society, have positive adult mentors (whether formal or informal) in their lives, and are raised in safe, nurturing families. If this is not possible, then neighbourhoods, communities, and government agencies must intervene. The children of women who are serving prison terms are a poignant example in the literature. By changing policies and strategies, these children could be ensured safe placements with nurturing caregivers while their mothers serve prison terms, thus significantly reducing future problems that these children might encounter and future problems to society as a whole. More than 83% of the women with custody of minor children had no time to make arrangements for caregivers for their children when they were taken into custody. Consequently, they hastily made arrangements with neighbours, partners, and distant relatives to care for their children while they were in prison. Protocols among police, courts, and child protection authorities could ensure that the suitability of all caregiver arrangements is monitored[356].

The concept that it takes a village to raise a child is indeed a theme that resurfaced over and over in this literature review. All members of society must ensure that children are healthy, safe, secure, and nurtured for our society as a whole to thrive.

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