

# ISSUE BRIEF

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## Quality Mentoring Makes a Lifelong Difference

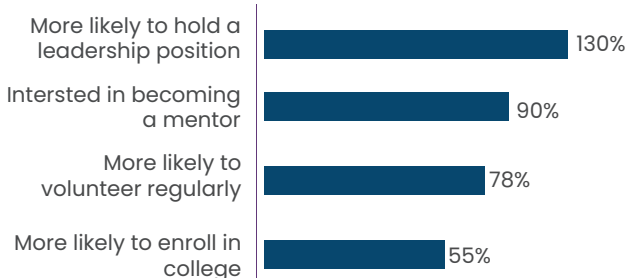
**Children thrive when they are surrounded by stable, consistent and meaningful relationships with caring adults.** Research shows that a quality mentoring relationship can have a resoundingly positive impact on young people's lives. Youth with quality mentoring experience better educational, vocational and psychosocial outcomes than their unmentored peers.<sup>1</sup> For all its benefits, unfortunately, one in three young people will grow up without ever having a positive mentor.<sup>2</sup>

Barriers such as limited networks, issues of equity, poverty, under-resourced schools and communities increase mentoring needs. In the end, the youth that could benefit most from a mentor often may not have access. Additional mentors are greatly needed, and innovation in existing mentoring programs can help close the mentoring gap.<sup>3</sup>

### What is the Impact of Mentoring?

**Mentoring has a profound impact on children's health, education and the greater community.** At its root, mentoring provides young people with a positive role model to connect with for personal, social and economic growth. Young adults who are at-risk that have a mentor are 130% more likely to hold a leadership position, 78% more likely to volunteer regularly, and 55% more likely to enroll in college.<sup>4</sup>

#### Percentage trends of young adults who were at-risk but received a mentor:



Source: MENTOR. The National Mentoring Partnership



**Health.** Mentoring provides social connection and relationships, which positively influences mental and physical health conditions. Researchers have found that social disconnection can be as harmful as other risk factors such as obesity and smoking.<sup>5</sup> Safe and nurturing relationships improve children's social and behavioral capacities.<sup>6</sup>

**Education.** Mentoring positively impacts at-risk youth by affecting two early warning indicators. Students that meet with their mentors regularly are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college compared to those who do not have a mentor. Youth with mentors are more likely to set higher education goals and enroll in higher education, compared to individuals with no mentor. Long-term mentoring relationships are associated with higher educational aspirations and attainment.<sup>7</sup>



**Nationally, 1 in 3 young people will grow up without a mentor.**

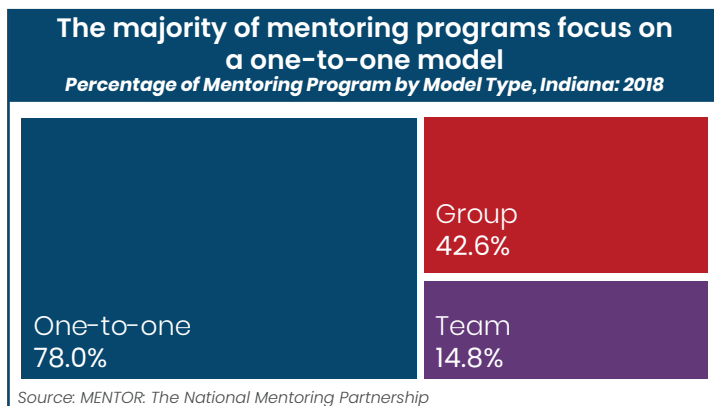
**Community.** Mentoring is associated with higher rates of leadership, volunteering and civic activities. Typically, mentees want to serve as future mentors and are empowered to contribute to their community. Mentoring provides an opportunity for learning, growth and opportunities to contribute to the greater community for both the mentor and the mentee.<sup>8</sup>

## What is Quality Mentoring?

**Mentors are caring, nonparent adults who provide youth with support and guidance and may include family members, neighbors, religious leaders, teachers and coaches.** Mentors can be formed through formal programs that strive to create trusting relationships between young people and non-parental adults.<sup>9</sup> Common mentoring models include one-to-one, school-based, community-based and e-mentoring.<sup>10</sup>

### However, not all mentoring is created equal.

Although 92.3% of Indiana parents say their child has a caring adult in their school, neighborhood or community, this does not indicate a quality mentoring relationship.<sup>11</sup> Quality mentoring includes upholding standards in recruitment, screening, training, matching and initiating, monitoring and support, and closure of the relationship. When implemented, quality mentoring improves match commitment length, resources available for mentor training, program design and staff development.<sup>12</sup> Quality programs are associated with a longer mentoring relationship length, when compared to mentoring programs that are not high quality.<sup>13</sup>



**The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring is a research-informed and practitioner-approved publication including standards for creating and sustaining quality mentoring.** The standards ensure mentoring is offered in a responsible way that meets the needs of both youth and volunteers while placing participants' safety, program effectiveness and positive outcomes at the forefront. When aligned with the Elements of Effective Practice, mentoring is an evidence-based tool that can help children develop self-esteem, increase prosocial behaviors and resist risky behaviors.

Youth mentoring programs that meet quality standards are added to The Mentoring Connector, a free publicly-searchable referral database. This service is designed to help quality youth mentoring programs across the US recruit volunteer mentors.<sup>14</sup> Indiana currently has 54 approved programs in the Mentoring Connector database.<sup>15</sup>

## Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring

Recruitment	When recruiting mentors, communicate clearly the program objectives and outcomes.
Screening	Ensure the volunteer has the time, commitment and personal qualities to ensure the relationship will be consistent.
Training	To ensure the relationship is safe and effective, training should provide the knowledge, skills and attitude needed.
Matching and Initiating	Matching should ensure that all characteristics of the mentee and mentor are considered and aligned.
Monitoring and Support	Monitoring and supporting matches address changes that might need to occur during the relationship. This may include ongoing advice, problem-solving, training and access to resources.
Closure	Mentors and mentees should be able to share their personal experiences with each other to ensure positive outcomes when ending the relationship.

*Source: MENTOR. The National Mentoring Partnership*

## What are the Current Equity Challenges?

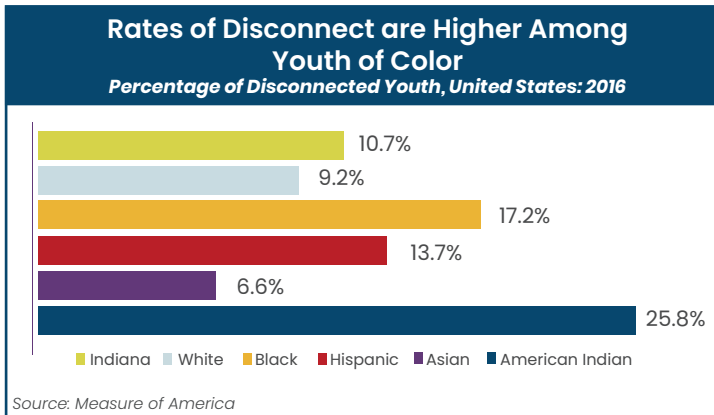
**Mentoring can address critical societal challenges and serve as a tool to drive greater equity for vulnerable and marginalized populations.**

Vulnerable groups are more likely to report never having had a mentor of any kind and report a desire to want a mentor. Vulnerable groups include boys and young men of color, youth in foster care, immigrant youth, LGBTQ+ youth, children of incarcerated parents and youth experiencing trauma. Each of these groups has unique challenges that mentoring can help address.<sup>16</sup>

**Boys and Young Men of Color:** Research indicates that boys and young men of color are disproportionately disconnected from caring, non-parental adults. Among disconnected youth of color ages 16-17, 36% of black youth do not live with their parents, 12% of black youth live in institutionalized group quarters, and 44% of American Indians live in poverty. Disproportionate incarceration rates in black communities and families is one reason these youth may be living with adults other than their parents.<sup>17</sup>

Young people that have a relationship with one stable trusted person are more likely to graduate from high school due to their increased access to available community assets and support systems. Nationally, percentages of disconnected youth, defined as teens and young adults between 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working, are higher among youth of color. Black youth (17.2%), Native Americans (25.8%), and Latinos (13.7%) are significantly more disconnected than their white (9.2%) and Asian American (6.6%) peers.

Mentors that enter relationships with disproportionately affected youth are better able to serve if they can perceive and deal with social, political and economic oppression in society. When recruiting mentors, programs should also attempt to include men of color, as a first encounter with someone who is like themselves can be more effective in recruiting a target audience.<sup>18</sup>



**Foster Care:** Children in foster care face adversity in various ways, including chronic disruptions in school and living situations, abandonment, and exposure to violence. During 2017, the state of Indiana had 31,042 children in foster care, which was an increase of 38.1% from 2012.<sup>19</sup>

Mentoring helps to lessen the impact of early adversity by filling a relational void and providing a foster child with consistent meaningful interactions. Youth in foster care that experience positive relationships with mentors can build upon these healthy relationships to create new ones in the future. Youth with mentors are more likely to experience positive outcomes, such as less physical fighting, less suicidal ideation, and an increased participation in higher education.<sup>20</sup>

**Immigrant Youth:** Immigrant youth experience a range of issues, including adjusting to a new culture, retaining their heritage, discrimination, discontinuity in education, mental health disorders and language acquisition. Immigrant families represent a growing population in Indiana; and in 2016, 12% of Indiana children lived in immigrant families.<sup>21</sup>

Mentoring programs that target first-generation immigrant youth can be especially beneficial if they offer opportunities to increase competency in language and learning about the new country's culture. Research indicates that working with the whole family helps to bridge the cultural gap between the outside world and the family itself. Mentors can serve as "cultural and school system ambassadors" or parents of immigrant and refugee youth while also serving as "cultural translators" that facilitate integration into the new country.<sup>22</sup>

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Others (LGBTQ+):** LGBTQ+ youth face unique risks, including bullying, physical and verbal harassment, and feelings of being unsafe in school settings due to their gender identity/expression and/or sexual orientation. For example, Indiana high school students who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual were more than three times as likely to experience physical dating violence, defined as being physically hurt on purpose by someone they were dating, in the past year (26.5%) as heterosexual students (7.3%).<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, when LGBTQ+ youth experience family rejection, they are at an elevated risk to attempt suicide, experience depression and use illegal drugs.

Research shows that mentoring reduces feelings of distress. Mentoring programs can improve the quality of relationships within family and peer networks, while also deterring mentee engagement in self-destructive behaviors.<sup>24</sup>

**Children of Incarcerated Parents:** Children of incarcerated parents are at an increased risk of experiencing poverty, disruption in the family, and a sense of shame due to the stigma others may associate with the imprisonment of the parent.<sup>25</sup>

Between 2016 and 2017, an estimated 153,694 (10.0%) of Indiana children had a parent or guardian that served time in jail.<sup>26</sup> For Indiana high school students in 2018, 34.5% of black students had a parent who served time in jail, compared to 22.9% of Hispanic students and 18.9% of white students.<sup>27</sup> The National Survey of Children's Health lists parental incarceration as one of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which is higher among Hoosiers than for the United States. It also has a stronger association with negative child behavior outcomes than parental separation and divorce.<sup>28</sup>

Research indicates mentoring children of incarcerated parents can improve academic, behavioral and psychological outcomes. Additionally, when the mentor integrates himself or herself within a support network, such as a caseworker and another caregiver, the full potential of the mentor-mentee relationship can be achieved.<sup>29</sup>

**Trauma:** Violence and trauma, especially trauma stemming from systemic inequality, has a dramatic impact on young people's lives. Youth experiencing trauma may feel unsafe, angry and powerless.<sup>30</sup>

ACEs are stressful or traumatic events occurring in childhood and are used to assess the long-term impact that abuse and household dysfunction has on later-life health. Nearly half, 47.3%, of Hoosier youth have experienced one or more ACEs. Compared to peers nationally, Hoosier youth have a higher prevalence in eight out of nine ACEs as measured by the National Survey of Children's Health. When the number of ACEs increases, there is a greater likelihood of negative well-being outcomes.<sup>31</sup>

Researchers have demonstrated that children with a higher ACE score may be experiencing toxic stress, defined as, "severe, frequent or prolonged trauma without the adequate support needed from trusted adults." Mentoring can be an avenue for children to develop resilience, which is a learned group of behaviors ranging from self-regulation and self-confidence to developing prosocial behaviors and healthy relationships with others.<sup>32</sup> However, mentors need resources and support to acknowledge the complex emotional reactions that their mentees are experiencing while they also advocate for their mentees well-being and provide support in the wake of trauma.<sup>33</sup>



**Mentors need resources and support to acknowledge the complex emotional reactions that their mentees are experiencing.**

## What Solutions are Possible?

### Individuals

- ✓ **Serve as a mentor.** Volunteer by being a mentor through a quality mentoring program.
- ✓ **Provide a consistent relationship.** Build and maintain a trusting relationship with youth through consistency to enhance overall outcomes.

### Organizations and Communities

- ✓ **Work in community.** Work across all sectors to maximize resources and build momentum to support local mentoring programs and organizations.
- ✓ **Engage in continuous improvement.** Commit to continuously enhance and implement mentoring standards to improve the overall quality of the mentoring program.
- ✓ **Support and increase private sector engagement.** Collaborate with the private sector to help identify services and resources to expand mentoring programs.

### Leaders and Policy Makers

- ✓ **Close the gap for vulnerable populations.** Expand local, state and federal public outreach and policies that advance quality mentoring and close the mentoring gap for vulnerable groups.
- ✓ **Promote the implementation of evidence-based practices.** Leaders can ensure that mentoring programs are implementing the highest quality mentoring to ensure the relationships have a positive impact on youth.

## What Resources are Available?

**MENTOR Indiana**, a strategic initiative of the Indiana Youth Institute, serves as a unifying catalyst for quality youth mentoring and is focused on being a valuable resource and creating impact. As a state affiliate of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, MENTOR Indiana facilitates community collaboration, engagement and investment in mentoring through public awareness and advocacy. Using the Mentoring Connector, individuals can easily search for programs in the community.  
[www.iyi.org/mentor-indiana](http://www.iyi.org/mentor-indiana)

**MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership** is a champion for expanding quality and quantity of mentoring across the United States. MENTOR engages all sectors to ensure youth have the support they need to succeed. MENTOR provides way for youth to find a mentor and it provides agencies with program resources and research to improve their mentoring program.  
[www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

**The National Mentoring Resource Center** strengthens mentoring programs by improving the quality and effectiveness through the increased use of evidence-based practices and sharing practitioner innovations. Training, technical assistance and resources such as tools and program curriculum make the National Mentoring Resource Center a reliable and supportive resource for mentoring programs.  
[www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org)

**The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring** provides evidence-based research and practice for mentoring programs. The site offers an opportunity to engage in dialogue with others about mentoring. It also provides *Mentoring in the News* to see current impacts of mentoring throughout the U.S.  
[www.evidencebasedmentoring.org](http://www.evidencebasedmentoring.org)

## IYI RESOURCES

The **Indiana KIDS COUNT® Data Book** is the premier data resource on Hoosier youth. Developed with you in mind, it provides an in-depth profile on child well-being across the four key areas of Family and Community, Health, Economic Well-Being and Education.

Submit a **Custom Data Request**. Curious about a youth issue? Do you need data for a grant application, report or presentation? **We are here to help!** We work with you to get the data and research you need.



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Indiana Youth Institute

603 E Washington Street, Suite 800  
Indianapolis, IN 46024  
317-396-2700 | 800-343-7060  
[www.IYI.org](http://www.IYI.org)