TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROFILE
Examining the Referral Stage for Mentoring High-Risk Youth
In Six Different Juvenile Justice Settings
Dependency Court, Delinquency Court, Juvenile Detention, Juvenile Corrections,
Juvenile Probation and Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs

Juvenile Corrections and Mentoring
THE REFERRAL STAGE

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Juvenile Corrections is considered to be a high-security residential facility that provides for the long-term and safe custody of juveniles who have been adjudicated (i.e. sentenced) by the court for having committed a felony or multiple misdemeanors. In most cases, a youth’s time in a Juvenile Corrections setting is long term (months to years) because they have been adjudicated by the court system as having committed a crime. Juvenile Corrections may be publicly or privately funded and operated. The continuum of services provided to youth in Juvenile Corrections is determined by state statute and, at a minimum, should include services, such as treatment plans, that address immediate and/or acute needs in the educational, mental, physical, emotional and social development of juveniles.

Mentoring Program Description
Mentoring involves a non-parental adult who plays an important role in promoting healthy development for youth. There are many mentoring models and even more programmatic differences within the different mentoring models. The goal of mentoring programs is to provide youth with positive adult contact and, thereby, reduce risk factors (e.g., early antisocial behavior, alienation, lack of commitment to school) by enhancing protective factors (e.g., healthy beliefs, opportunities for involvement, and social and material reinforcement for appropriate behavior). Mentors provide youth with personal connectedness, supervision and guidance, skills training, career or cultural enrichment opportunities, a knowledge of spirituality and values and, perhaps most importantly, goals and hope for the future.

Geographic and Demographic Characteristics
On average, most states only operate between two (2) and three (3) Juvenile Corrections facilities that are typically located in rural geographic regions of that state. Juvenile Corrections facilities are generally gender specific. The minimum and maximum ages of youth served in Juvenile Corrections are guided by statute. Typical minimum and maximum ages are 10 and 18 years respectively, although some states are now defining juveniles as anyone as old as 23. Some facilities only house the high-end criminal youth, such as murderers and sex offenders. Offenses that youth in corrections are charged with range from property crimes (e.g. burglary, auto theft, drug possession and selling) to person-on-person crimes (e.g. assault, sex offenses and murder).
Possible Challenges Facing Youth Involved with Juvenile Corrections

The overarching goal of mentoring youth in the juvenile justice system is to build and strengthen youth assets. When dealing with youth in this setting, one should be cognizant of potential challenges:

**Individual**
- Conduct disorders (authority conflict/rebellious/stubborn/disruptive/antisocial)
- General delinquency involvement
- Mental health issues (including substance abuse)
- Unmet medical and dental needs

**Family**
- Mental disorders/antisocial parents
- Family history of problem behavior/criminal involvement
- Family poverty/low family socioeconomic status
- Family violence (child maltreatment, partner violence, conflict)
- Family stress
- Parent criminality
- Parental use of physical punishment/harsh and/or erratic discipline practices
- Poor parental supervision (control, monitoring, and child management)
- Poor parent-child relations or communication

**School**
- Poor school attendance
- Poor school performance; academic failure
- Learning disorders
What is the difference between a detention center and a correctional center?

In the process of conducting initial contacts for potential site visits, project staff learned that there was some confusion among mentoring programs about the difference between Juvenile Detention and Juvenile Corrections’ settings.

- Detention is used primarily for juveniles who are awaiting action of the court or transfer to a Juvenile Corrections facility.
- The average length of stay in detention is usually less than 21 days with the majority of youth staying 72 hours or less.
- Some detention centers have specialized programs so that juveniles may stay as long as six months, serving a sentence that the judge has imposed.
- Juvenile Corrections centers house juveniles who have been committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice by a judge. These youth have been found to have committed a felony or multiple misdemeanors.
- Unless committed by the judge on a determinate commitment, juveniles cannot remain in a Juvenile Corrections center longer than 36 months on an indeterminate commitment (term imposed after conviction for a crime which does not state a specific period of time or release date, but a range of time only, such as “between five and 10 years”).

Who refers youth in Juvenile Corrections to mentoring?

- For corrections settings where a mentoring program is embedded and is part of the facility’s programmatic offerings, the process for making referrals for mentoring during incarceration was in most cases handled by a Facility Classification Team (or Treatment Team). These teams generally included an MSW, licensed clinical mental health counselors, master’s level clinician, a juvenile probation and parole officer, a residential supervisor, treatment supervisor, reentry caseworker, unit supervisor, and case management supervisor. In optimal circumstances, the team would also include a master mentor or mentor specialist (titles varied by location). Additionally, the team would include mentoring as a component of the youth’s Individual Service Plan (ISP).
- Other programs operated on the belief that all youth are good candidates for a mentor, presented mentoring program information to all youth and then operated on a self-referral process where the youth would request to participate in the program. The program coordinator/mentoring specialist would then identify a match and oversee the mentoring relationship.
- For embedded programs being managed by the corrections setting, involvement of corrections facility staff in providing and/or supporting mentoring or other services ended with the youth’s release from that facility based on potential liability issues of having staff leaving the facility to work with youth in the community.
- The processes for making referrals for mentoring post-incarceration included mentoring program staff:
  - Discussing the needs and circumstances of detained youth with the Classification/Treatment Team throughout the youth’s incarceration and/or following an Individual Service Plan (ISP) developed by the team when the youth enters into the setting.
  - Ensuring the youth’s accessibility to a mentor post-release; then beginning the mentoring process at least six (6) weeks before release to the community (some locations preferred.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS continued

longer mentoring access prior to release; a Big Brothers Big Sisters program in Anchorage preferred 16 weeks).

- Identifying predominant support persons in the youth’s life, particularly in connection with other risk factors for the youth.

What is an embedded program and how is it important to a successful mentoring program in a Juvenile Corrections setting?

- An embedded mentoring program functions completely within the Juvenile Corrections facility. Mentoring staff have office space in the facility, participate in staff meetings, interact with youth in programmatic settings and are viewed as important members of the team by line staff, as well as facility leadership.

- The embedded mentoring programs provided daily group sessions that lasted between one and two hours per session for all incarcerated youth.

- Curricula were used that focus on character/leadership, education/career, health/life skills, the arts and sports/fitness/recreation.

- In most settings, professionally trained mentoring staff delivered the one-to-one, group and team-based mentoring services during and post-incarceration. The aforementioned was deemed ideal and appeared to be most successful. Other programs operated with volunteer mentors who sometimes found that they could not handle the multiple challenges presented by an incarcerated youth.

How are strong relationships formed between Juvenile Corrections settings and mentoring programs?

- Staff with the local mentoring program approached leadership at the corrections facility about operating an embedded mentoring program in the facility. Sometimes, approval for program involvement had to be garnered from the state level leadership who oversee the entire state’s corrections program (e.g. Indiana Department of Corrections).

- The primary mentoring program staff should have a solid understanding of the juvenile justice system in general, the function of Juvenile Corrections and the type of at-risk/high-risk youth served in this setting in order to lend credibility to their discussions with facility leadership about implementing a program.

- Mentoring program staff should be included in training provided by the corrections facility related to working with youth in a secure setting.

Are non-embedded mentoring programs successful in working with Juvenile Corrections youth?

- A non-embedded mentoring program suffers from the lack of regular presence and interaction among mentoring staff and facility staff and leadership, as well as with the detained youth. These programs are shown not to be as valued or understood by corrections staff and youth as those programs that are embedded.
In general, Juvenile Corrections facilities are regionally located in states, so a youth may be many miles from their home community while incarcerated, complicating the development and maintenance of a mentoring relationship in the youth’s home area.

The characteristics of juvenile justice involved youth also pose a challenge in that these youth have struggled to find success in other interpersonal relationships and in school, community-based youth serving programs, etc.

Some juvenile justice involved youth have a harder time developing the kinds of relationships necessary for mentoring to be effective, i.e. developing trust, making a commitment, etc.

One-to-one mentoring post-release should typically be one hour each week and should take place at various safe locations in the community.

The one-to-one mentoring match commitment should be for at least one year.

Are there any statutory requirements related to mentoring?

Related to the mentoring program, there were no statutory requirements to be met either during or post-incarceration.
WHAT’S WORKING:
Examples of Effective Strategies

Embedded Mentoring Program
- Mentoring program activities were embedded in the program schedule at the corrections facility. As a result, all youth incarcerated there were “referred” to the mentoring program. This situation ensured that all youth had the opportunity to be exposed to mentoring activities.
- Since the mentoring program was embedded in the corrections facility, there was an opportunity for mentoring staff to build relationships with detained youth during their incarceration. This relationship building during incarceration helped the youth:
  - Begin to make a connection with the mentoring program and its staff before their release from corrections.
  - Be more likely to have an interest in being referred to and participating in post-incarceration mentoring.
  - Have a sufficient period of mentoring services before release, which would subsequently help the youth during their reentry to the community.
- Offering mentoring programming inside the corrections facility provided youth with an opportunity to understand what services they might receive from the mentoring program after their release from detention.
- Having the mentoring program embedded at the Juvenile Corrections facility allowed the mentoring program staff to build relationships and trust with juvenile justice staff that contributed to the level of information available to the mentoring program about the issues and needs of detained youth prior to their release.

Post-Release
Mentoring staff contacting detained youth within 24 hours of their release from confinement supported the maintenance of an ongoing connection with these youth post-release.
The long-term nature of the Juvenile Corrections setting provides a more favorable time period for implementing a formal mentoring program. The findings suggested that mentoring in these settings is often provided by community- or evidence-based mentoring programs with experience in conducting effective mentoring and coordinating matches. However, with the Juvenile Corrections setting, one is confronted with some of the more challenging, high-risk youth anywhere in the juvenile justice system. These are youth who have committed felonies or multiple misdemeanors, youth who typically have a violent or substance abusing history and youth who often have mental health problems.

**Challenge #1:** Due to confidentiality requirements, mentoring program staff often found it difficult to access information required by the mentoring program, including parent contact information, until after the youth’s discharge from corrections.

**Action Step** – An expectation should be set by mentoring staff for youth indicating an interest in participating in post-incarceration mentoring services to provide contact information for his/her parent(s)/caregiver(s) as soon as possible.

**Challenge #2:** Despite the relationship building that takes place while youth are incarcerated, after release from corrections the young person could change his/her mind about participating in the post-incarceration mentoring program.

**Action Step** – An investment by mentoring program staff in building relationships with the youth’s parent(s)/caregiver(s), both during and after the youth’s incarceration, may serve to provide a support system for encouraging the youth’s ongoing participation in mentoring. In addition, making a mentoring match at least six (6) months before discharge increases the likelihood of the relationship sustaining upon reentry to community.

**Challenge #3:** Changes in the young person’s placement can negatively affect the ability of the mentoring program to continue to serve these youth post-incarceration.

**Action Step** – There is likely little that may be done to anticipate or mitigate the impact of this situation.

**Challenge #4:** Poor parent/child relationships at times kept parent(s) from supporting the young person’s participation in mentoring programming post-incarceration.

**Action Step #4** – Mentoring programming for youth involved in the juvenile justice system may be most effective when accompanied by parenting education and support services. These services may be offered as either part of the mentoring program or as a referral for service.
**TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Adjudicated** — a court ruling of guilt or innocence.

**At-Risk and High-Risk Youth** — The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) defines “at-risk” youth as those with high levels of risk in their family, home, communities and social environments to such a degree that it could lead to educational failure, dropping out of school or involvement in juvenile delinquency and gang-related offenses. OJJDP defines “high-risk” youth as those with present or past juvenile justice involvement.

**Caretaker or Physical Custodian** — a person who has physical custody but not legal custody of a youth, such as a foster parent, placement facility or relative without legal custody.

**Dual Adjudicatory** — a Delinquency Court designation for an abused, neglected or dependent youth who is also a delinquent youth and vice versa.

**Embedded Program** — a program that is housed inside the juvenile justice setting either by being developed by the juvenile justice setting or by being implemented by an outside mentoring program.

**Individual Service Plan (ISP)** — a focused plan for addressing any number of issues that a youth may have. Generally, a similar term is commonly used in public education to aid youth with learning difficulties. While the same may be true in Juvenile Corrections, the ISP may include issues for staff to consider when working with the youth in any program.

**Juvenile** — a youth under the age of majority. The recommended age is usually eighteen (18) and younger.

**Legal Guardian** — an adult who is not the biological parent, or a state or licensed children and youth agency, who has been given legal authority by a court to provide care and custody of a child/youth.

**Needs Assessment** — one tool in the Structured Decision-Making process. It identifies the offender’s specific needs and provides part of the foundation for the case plan.

**Petition** — the document that specifies the violation of law and state statute number described in the affidavit that the youth is alleged to have committed. A probable cause statement or affidavit, usually filed by the police, accompanies the petition.

**Pre-Adjudication** — the period between arrest and a court ruling on guilt or innocence.

**Wrap-Around Services** — a method of service delivery highlighted by commitment to create services on a “one youth at a time” basis to support normalized and inclusive options for the youth with complex needs. Wrap-around interventions create a youth and family team composed of the people who know the youth best to design an individualized plan.
TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

OJJDP Research Report on Referring High Risk Youth for Mentoring Services – Full Report

OJJDP Research Report on Referring High Risk Youth for Mentoring Services – Executive Summary

Juvenile Justice Journal on Referring High Risk Youth for Mentoring Services – Special Edition

Memorandums of Understanding Six Resource Guides for Developing MOUs for Juvenile Justice and Mentoring Services

PowerPoint Presentations for Six Juvenile Justice Settings and Mentoring

Six Technical Assistance Profiles: Examining the Referral Stage for Mentoring High-Risk Youth

MENTOR’s Elements of Effective Practice For Mentoring™, Third Edition

MENTOR’s Elements of Effective Practice For Mentoring™ Toolkit – Juvenile Justice Section

For free, downloadable versions of these resources, visit:

MENTOR at http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/Researching_the_Referral_STAGE/

Global Youth Justice at http://www.globalyouthjustice.org/Mentoring.html;

and

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska
Anchorage, AK
http://www.bbbsak.org

Goodwill Industries of Northern New England
Portland, ME
http://www.goodwillinne.org

Northeastern Center
Kendallville, IN
http://www.necmh.org/body.cfm?lvl1=servic&lvl2=latino

The Kennedy Center of Louisiana
Shreveport, LA
http://www.weallwinn.com

Global Youth Justice Website – Mentoring High Risk Youth Resources
http://www.globalyouthjustice.org/Mentoring.html

National Partnership for Juvenile Services – Mentoring High Risk Youth Resources
http://www[npjs.org/]

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
http://www.mentoring.org/

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Mentoring Resources
http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/mentoring.html

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Model Program Guide/Mentoring
http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/progTypesMentoring.aspx

Administration for Children, Youth and Families,
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/acyf/

State-by-State Listing of Legislation and Statutes Regarding Juveniles
NOTES
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