Advantages:
- The use of adult mentors, due to single parent or no parent households
- Easily accessible programs (geographic circumstances)
- Operating multiple chemical addiction programs, Alcohol Awareness sessions, direct treatment and drug/alcohol screening tests and evaluations
- Serving high-risk youth and at-risk youth
- School and community-based approaches
- Staff well positioned to identify youth for the necessary services

Challenges:
- Participation is voluntary. Difficult in referring youth
- Continued funding
- Some youth arrested may not be residents of the region
- Waiting list
- Negative behavior of parents/legal guardians regarding matching youth with an adult mentor
- Unwillingness by youth and/or parents/guardians to accept mentoring referral

Recommendations:
- Match support
- Voluntary referrals
- To not accept youth who are a danger to themselves, mentors or staff
- Referrals due to mental health issues usually don’t work out well
- Use of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and case referral flowcharts
- Use mentoring as a wrap-around service
- Reduce recidivism, improve school attendance, minimize contact with juvenile criminal justice system, improve academic performance, pro-social engagement and employment preparation
- Information gathered at intake should be shared with the Youth/Teen Court jury
- Allow teen jury to ask questions to determine if mentoring would benefit the youth
- Deliberating jury should be allowed to make referrals
- Coordinator should complete all forms needed for a referral
Advantages:
- Voluntary participation
- Relationships built internally and externally with referral sources
- Permanency plan in place/long-term settings
- Either no waiting list or only a very short one
- Staff have very extensive information on the children

Challenges:
- Unsafe homes: family problems, mental health issues, aggression, significant medical issues
- Child Protective Services (CPS) doesn’t have a communication tracking system
- Staff continually change
- Youth lack technology — cell phones and/or computers
- Foster care youth may be transient and often AWOL
- Incomplete referral packets
- Overwhelmed foster parents
- Challenge to match older youth

Recommendations:
- One-on-one attention to the child
- Policy not to force a mentor onto a child/youth
- Embedded programs
- Refer all youth as soon as possible
- Longer duration of a match
- Give youth the opportunity to meet several potential mentors and let them choose
- Exclusive services for foster care youth
- Determine appropriate hearings (Review Hearings, Disposition Hearings, Adoption Hearings, etc.)
- Conduct intake interviews
- Formal referral guidelines
- Use social media to maintain contact and communication
Advantages:

- Relationship building during period of incarceration due to embedded mentor programs
- Contact within 24 hours of youth post-release
- Maintaining weekly contact to allow youth the opportunity to decide at any point to become actively involved with club and staff
- All youth are “referred,” thus exposed to activities

Challenges:

- Post-release youth may change their mind about participating
- Confidentiality issues make it difficult for staff to access information required in the membership application
- Difficult to help probation officers understand what youth are appropriate for referral to the Second Chance Program
- Misunderstanding by youth of mentoring culture and programs
- Parent information difficult to access
- Changes in placement

Recommendations:

- Use of embedded programs
- Make mentoring activities apart of the regularly scheduled programming at the detention facility
- Allow site coordinator to have access to detained youth outside of/ in addition to regularly scheduled activities
- Allow staff to be involved in regular probation meetings
Advantages:
- One-on-one services
- Self-referrals and voluntary participation have a greater degree of commitment
- Allowing youth to return and serve as a mentor
- Diverse staff. Using professionals in mental health, social work, community-based services, mentoring and juvenile justice experience
- Inclusion of mentoring approval forms into the intake paperwork
- Periodic presentations to inform youth of the services
- Placement considerations to ensure mentorship may continue post-release

Challenges:
- Non-motivated youth
- Maintaining the mentor/youth relationship
- Keeping current contact information for youth
- African-American young males seen as less interested to participate than other races/ethnicities
- A new intake may need to wait between nine and 10 weeks before referral may be made
- Youth may be excluded if they engage in disruptive behavior
- Parent refusal
- Youth may age out of the system before a match can be made

Recommendations:
- Relationships and trust grounded in research-based programming
- Housing the lead mentoring staff person inside the juvenile justice setting
- Use of a mentoring specialist and master mentor
- Word of mouth recruitment of youth
- Voluntary participation
- Appreciation of volunteers (mentors); showing them how important they are and how their work is appreciated
- Not excluding any youth based on criminal offense
- Relationship building prior to youth’s release
- Good communication between juvenile justice and mentoring program staff
- Sustainability plan to continue programs in the absence of grant funds
- Minimum of two years for grant funded programs to institutionalize and start gathering outcome data

Geography: Youth difficult to follow back to their community due to distance, time and financial constraints

Hard to recruit volunteer mentors

Limited activities youth may participate in while institutionalized

Orientation programs struggle to prepare mentors
Delinquency Courts

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SITE VISITS

Advantages:
- Multiple diverse formal and informal referral sources
- Referrals with a heavy emphasis on mental health
- Use of Juvenile Review Boards (JRB) operated throughout the city
- More personalized and time sensitive referrals due to only one referral source
- Embedded mentoring program
- Allowing parental referrals
- After-school oversight

- Discrepancy between boys and girls who are being diverted from the formal court to the Teen Court (Choctaw Tribe)
- Transportation issues
- Gang involvement

Recommendations:
- Voluntary referrals
- Mentoring as a wrap-around service
- Referring at the front end of the juvenile justice system
- To not match a youth who may be dangerous to themselves or others
- Use of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Allow youth to return as a volunteer
- Provide law-related education and development opportunities
- Use of adult and youth mentors
- Policy of “checking your colors” at the door in regard to gang colors
- Use of surveillance cameras

Challenges:
- Youth may become deeper involved with the juvenile justice system to include incarceration
- Involvement in other mandated support doesn’t allow for sufficient time to become involved in a structured mentor relationship
- Parents/guardians unwilling to accept referral
- Referrals with a dual diagnosis are often excluded if there are sexual, psychological or violent behaviors
- Unwilling and a lack of trained adult mentors
- Foster care youth awaiting decisions regarding reunification or termination of parental rights can’t be referred
**Advantages:**
- Close proximity of staff to courts and juvenile services center
- Referred youth may be walked immediately to an office in the court to complete intake
- Expedient initiation of services/contact with the youth within 24-72 hours
- Trusting relationships
- Strength-based and participant-driven vetting process
- Youth are given ample time to consider the commitment they are being asked to make
- Safety has been a non-issue
- Mentoring services may be court ordered
- Information sharing
- Services started between 14 and 30 days without a waiting list
- Small number of juveniles referred allows for concentrated relationships
- Shared respect and trust by all participants
- Setting a clear understanding that youth are from the same community

**Challenges:**
- Parents may refuse to transport youth/fail to support youth’s participation
- Change of placement can affect the capability to mentor youth
- Not enough mentors for one-on-one mentoring
- May be a waiting list
- Adversarial relationships between youth and probation staff
- Lack of mental preparedness of the youth
- Unrealistic goal setting
- Youth may live in an unsafe environment
- Geography. Difficult for youth to maintain residence in the same area during the mentoring process

**Recommendations:**
- House mentoring staff in the court
- Provide opportunities to engage the siblings of the referred youth
- Provide youth with information and resources for higher education
- Engage youth in new pro-social relationships and activities
- Allow youth to participate after the mentoring commitment
- Share critical information across systems (agencies)
- Allow youth to serve in a leadership capacity
- Require all referral sources to adhere to the same referral guidelines
- Involve a diverse community to demonstrate the community’s commitment to the youth
- Mentor/staff should have a background understanding of the juvenile justice system
- Reduce “turf issues” by allowing staff and probation officers to work as a team of equals
- Maintain a mentor relationship for between three and four years (until youth graduates from high school)
- Small residential facilities allow for critical insight in screening issues
- Mentor program should have a central figure (master mentor)
- Use mentors/staff who have made it a life goal to help juveniles