The Mentoring to Succeed Act

The Mentoring to Succeed Act authorizes funds for school districts, local governments, and community-based non-profit organizations to create or expand school-based mentoring to support students who are at-risk while intentionally combining trauma-informed training for mentors and supporting career exploration and workforce development goals for students. Students in middle school and high school benefit from developing cognitive and social-emotional skills that can prepare them for high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. School-based mentoring programs are critical to supporting a student’s social-emotional development and allows mentors to build connections with students, families, and school personnel while fostering academic achievement and success.

Summary

The Mentoring to Succeed Act is centered on providing middle school and high-school students who are at-risk, due to a number of factors, a relationship-centric approach that allows them to develop social-emotional skills while preparing them for future education and the workforce. School-based mentoring programs can increase the positive relationships students have in their lives, while also boosting factors that can lead to educational success, such as improved relationships with teachers and staff, improved feelings of academic competence, and greater access and use of other supports, such as tutoring, counseling, and postsecondary planning. The Mentoring to Succeed Act implements prevention and intervention strategies in schools that can improve academic achievement, expand positive relationships, reduce drop-out rates and chronic absenteeism, increase student engagement in school, and encourage students to identify and set educational and career goals.

The bill would allow school districts, local government—alone or in partnership with community-based non-profit organizations—to access funding to establish, expand or support school-based mentoring programs for at-risk students by:

- Matching middle and high school students who are at-risk—as defined as a student who is failing academically, is pregnant or a parent, chronically absent, a gang member, in foster care, has come into contact with the juvenile justice system, has an incarcerated parent, is an English language learner or has experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—with mentors.
- Implementing quality mentoring services that ensure that mentors are screened, trained on trauma-informed practices, youth engagement, and cultural competency, and are provided ongoing support and technical assistance throughout their mentoring relationship.
- Developing the workforce readiness skills of students and encouraging them to participate in community service activities allowing them to identify goals for education and career exploration in coordination with their mentor, families, and school personnel.
- Prioritizing funding for school districts or local governments that serve youth with the greatest needs living in high-poverty, high crime areas, rural areas or who attend schools with high rates of community violence.
• Fostering interagency coordination on best practices and technical assistance to best support mentors who are matched with students.

**Key Talking Points**

- The legislation was crafted to provide a positive youth development response to communities who are experiencing high rates of violence. Quality, evidence-based mentoring has the ability to increase protective factors in a student’s life like supporting engagement in school, improving social-emotional outcomes, and promoting a positive sense of self. Mentors can also help young people find positive ways to address stress and conflict.

- Under the Mentoring to Succeed Act, local school districts, governments, and community-based non-profit organizations can determine how to structure school-based mentoring programs to be responsive to the needs of their students. Funds can be used to screen, match, and train mentors, to hire staff to support a school-based mentoring program, to facilitate activities like field trips and career exploration activities, and to conduct program evaluation.

- Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor. Mentors can also prepare their mentees for professional careers and assist with their workplace skills by helping set career goals and introduce students to resources or organizations.

- Awardees of these funds must demonstrate a commitment to quality mentoring practices when serving students to best support academic, personal, and professional growth.

**Congressional Co-Sponsors**

The bill was introduced in the Senate during the 115th Congress by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) co-sponsored the bill.

MENTOR and its partners are working with interested House offices for a potential introduction of the companion bill.

**Supporters**

During the 115th Congress, MENTOR was joined by partners in supporting The Mentoring to Succeed Act, including (alphabetically):

- After-School All-Stars
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago
- The City of Chicago
- Chicago Urban League
- College Mentors for Kids
- Girls Inc.
- Innovate Springfield
- Instituto Del Program Latino
- MENTOR Illinois
- National CARES Mentoring Movement
- National Disability Mentoring Coalition
- Sisters Circle
The Mentoring to Succeed Act

- Spark
- Union League Boys & Girls Clubs
- Youth Guidance
- The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago.

Questions
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