# Executive Summary for *Examining Youth Mentoring Services across America*

In 2016, MENTOR and its affiliates led the largest data collection effort in almost 20 years to examine the prevalence and practices of youth mentoring programs across America. The effort had had three major goals:

Better understand the structure, services, and challenges of mentoring programs so that MENTOR and its affiliates could provide them with appropriate professional development, training, and technical assistance

Identify who programs are serving and the groups of adults that are stepping up to mentor youth in programs so that we might boost mentor recruitment and ensure that youth with the most needs are being served adequately

Provide MENTOR with a baseline understanding of the field that we can monitor for trends and use to inform a growth strategy

In the end, the national survey captured information on:

• 1,271 mentoring agencies and 1,451 distinct mentoring programs

• 413,237 youth served by 193,823 mentors and supported by 10,804 staff members

• The services, practices, settings, goals, challenges, and financial resources of these programs

## Mentoring programs reported two most common challenges:
# Mentor Recruitment & Fundraising

## Who Provides Mentoring?

79% of youth mentoring agencies are nonprofits, 9% are K12 schools or districts, 3% are government agencies, 3% are higher education institutions, and the remaining 6% are religious institutions, for-profits, healthcare facilities, and others.

### MENTOR'S influence on programming

- 36% of mentoring agencies received technical assistance or training from a MENTOR affiliate
- 21% received assistance from MENTOR's national office
- 7.5% received assistance through the National Mentoring Resource Center (operated by MENTOR)
- 50% of agencies use the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™ in their work.

### Agencies using the Elements ran programs that were:

- More likely to require longer match commitments
- Have longer average match length (20 months for Elements users vs. 16 for those that did not), as well as a shorter waitlist of youth waiting for a match
- Less likely to have challenges around mentor training, program design, fundraising, developing partnerships, and providing staff development
- Less likely to offer no training to mentors and more likely to offer more than 3 hours of pre-match training

### What Do Mentoring Programs Look Like in Practice?

- Mentoring pairs or groups are most likely to meet weekly for a total of 2-3 hours a month
- 78% of all matches met their minimum length expectation, but…
- About one-third of programs struggle to get half of their matches to their minimum duration, which research tells us limits the impact of programs and may even harm youth with a negative experience

## Program Reach (% of youth served)

- **34% of youth are served by a One-to-One model**
- **35% by a Group model**
- **12% by Blends of One-to-One and Group**
- **7% by Cross-Age Peer models**
- **3% by E-mentoring programs**
- **9% by other models**

### The average program has grown in size and diversified in its goals over the last 20 years
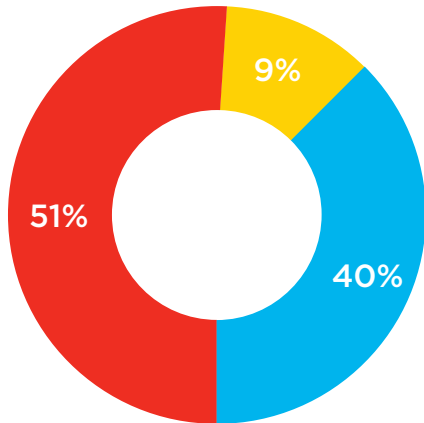
- The average program serves 285 youth, a dramatic increase compared to prior surveys
- Today, only 44% of programs reported that "providing a caring adult relationship" was a top 4 goal of their program (100% said this in a 1999 survey, 77% did in 2011). This highlights a major shift in the field towards using mentoring in targeted ways and expecting mentoring to produce meaningful outcomes beyond just the personal value of the relationship itself.Other common program goals include:
  - Life and social skills (54% of all programs)
  - General youth development (51%)
  - Academic enrichment (36%)
  - Career exploration (26%)
  - Leadership development (20%)
  - College access (17%)

## How are Mentoring Programs Funded and Staffed?

### Program staffing has remained stable over time, but is much more reliant on volunteers

- The average program has 7.45 FTE on staff, but only 4.1 are paid employees
- 3.35 FTE are volunteer staff (two decades ago, the average program only had 1.6 volunteer staff members)
- 59% of programs have fewer than 3 staff members, which can lead to issues with meeting the demand and sustainability

## Program funding is stable in recent years, but limited and potentially precarious for many



- **The average program budget is $153,465**
- **However, 51% of programs have a budget under $50,000 (two-thirds of programs are under $100,000)**
- **Only 9% of programs have a budget above $500,000**
- **40% of all programs have a budget that falls in between**

| Sources of Funding for Mentoring Programs |
|---|
| • Private foundation grants – 14% |
| • Fundraising events – 14% |
| • Individual donations – 12% |
| • Business and corporate donations – 11% |
| • Federal/state/local government – 21% (9%/8%/4%) |

## We get what we pay for in the mentoring field

Based on estimates in this survey, the average cost-per-youth-served across all programs is $1,695 a year. This is virtually identical to prior estimates (adjusted for inflation).

However, the survey data suggests a trend that:

- As the percentage of higher-needs youth in a program increases, so does the average cost
- As the cost-per-youth increases, programs offer more quality services, including:
    - More pre- and post-match training
    - More match support
    - Longer expectations for match length
- Most importantly, as program costs increased, so did the percentage of matches meeting their minimum length. Increases in funding lead to better mentors and stronger mentoring relationships, without which, programs have little chance of producing results.

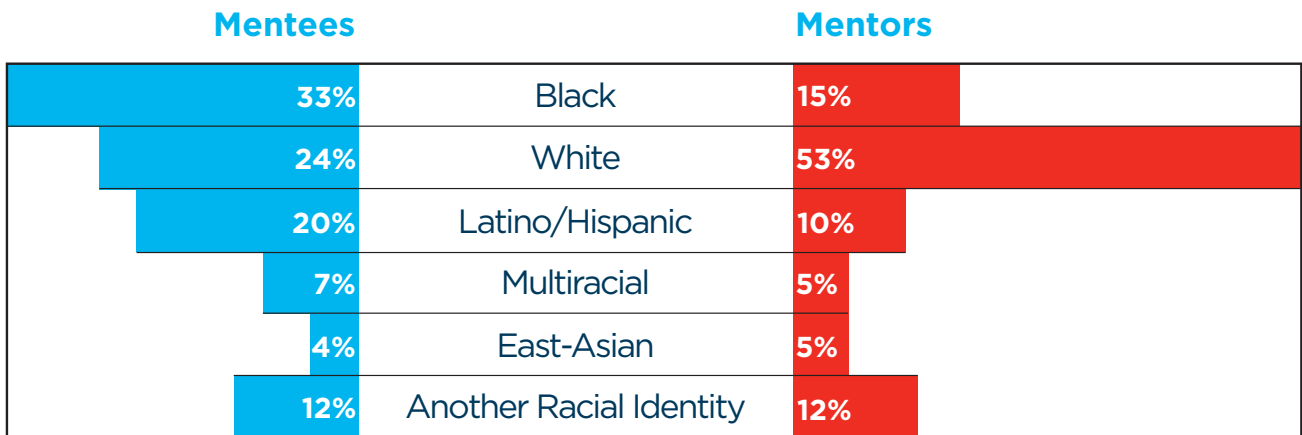## Who Participates in Mentoring and How are They Supported?

### Mentors and youth differ in some key ways

**Mentors by Gender**
- **60% women**
- **38% men**
- **2% transgender or gender neutral**

**Youth by Gender**
- **52% girls**
- **47% boys**
- **1% transgender or gender neutral**

| Mentees | | Mentors |
|---|---|---|
| 33% | Black | 15% |
| 24% | White | 53% |
| 20% | Latino/Hispanic | 10% |
| 7% | Multiracial | 5% |
| 4% | East-Asian | 5% |
| 12% | Another Racial Identity | 12% |

**Boys are 25% more likely to be on a waiting list**

## Top 5 Mentor Subgroups
**(minimum estimates)**

- Employees of corporate partners – 20%
- Young professionals – 19%
- College students – 13%
- Members of affinity groups – 9%
- Retired persons – 9%

## Top 5 Youth Subgroups
**(minimum estimates)**

- Low income – 51%
- Academically at-risk – 36%
- Single parent household – 27%
- First generation to go to college – 14%
- Incarcerated parents or family members – 8%

## Main Conclusions

- Youth mentoring programs are increasingly diverse across ages, models, and intended outcomes, suggesting that while mentoring is increasing in relevance and application, there is no "cookie-cutter" approach to delivering mentoring relationships.

- Though it has grown in scope and diversity, the mentoring field is still relatively grassroots and therefore challenging to scale. The typical mentoring program has a small staff, limited funds, and is often overly dependent on financial support from a small number of sources.

- Programs are increasingly addressing critical societal challenges, which requires more complex mentoring models. This has placed strain on programs since funding levels have remained essentially flat for two decades. As this report illustrates, we "get what we pay for" with mentoring in terms of the quality of programs and delivering for the highest risk youth. Investment levels must be proportionate to the "who" and "what" of programs.

- In spite of meaningful increases in markers of program quality over time, there are still too many mentoring programs struggling to meet quality standards in terms of training, match support, and duration.

## Paths Forward

This report not only seeks to inform but also offers actionable information for programs, funders, policymakers, researchers, and other key stakeholders in meeting the mentoring needs of our young people.

**The need to more closely examine programs serving high percentages of higher risk youth -** We need to continue to understand more about the effective practices of these more focused programs to produce training and technical assistance materials that can bring more of this work to vulnerable youth that need it the most.

**The need to invest more in evaluation of programs and continue to create accessible tools and guidance -** For stability and continued growth, the field must continue to build quality evidence of impact, both short and long-term. This report found that too many programs lack the funds and in-house capacity to evaluate their impact with the rigor that would hold up to scrutiny. Since service provision is the number one priority, investments in mentoring must dually prioritize evaluation efforts. It is a high-leverage investment strategy that meets short-term needs while also delivering long-term gains for the broader field, as well as the individual program.

**The need to better support and integrate "informal" mentors -** with a focus on the potential for recruiting more representative mentors – We are committed to determining ways to support the organically occurring mentoring in our communities and better connect it to structured programs when mutually beneficial. This must happen in conjunction with continued support for structured mentoring programs, particularly for youth with multiple risk factors as past research shows they are less likely to be met with informal mentors.

**The promotion of mentoring as a tool for social justice and driving greater equity –** At MENTOR, we see these relationships as not only a form of critical support for individual young people, but also a powerful force for improving communities, changing systems of injustice, addressing inequality, and driving greater connection, understanding, and unity.