

Movement Makers

A report on the state of the youth mentoring workforce.

Executive Summary
January 2026

We share a common understanding that mentoring relationships have the power to help young people grow and mature, to support them as they navigate challenges, and to guide them as they reach for their dreams. And while we often thank the millions of volunteers who step up each year to serve as mentors in programs across America, we often don't reflect much on the dedicated professionals who work in thousands of nonprofits, schools, and other youth-serving institutions to coordinate these services and make the magic of mentoring happen every day. These mentoring professionals' expertise, skills, and consistency of support are critical to the delivery of high-quality, effective mentoring programs and, in turn, fuel the positive academic, social-emotional, and economic impacts that young people derive from mentoring.

In April and May of 2025, MENTOR conducted a first-of-its-kind survey focused on the experiences and career paths of the nation's mentoring professionals. We heard from over 1,000 individuals who work in mentoring programs across a variety of settings. The findings reported here focus on a final data set of 880 mentoring professionals who shared their thoughts about their jobs and ongoing efforts to build and maintain the mentoring movement in America.

Here we summarize the major findings and themes from this survey, focusing on both strengths and challenges facing the mentoring movement, as well as paths forward to better support the mentoring workforce. The full report is available on MENTOR's website at: <https://www.mentoring.org/resource/movement-makers/>

1. Mentoring professionals come from a wide variety of backgrounds and are hungry for professional development that can expand their skills and strengthen their mentoring work.

- We find that mentoring programs are fueled by a highly educated workforce, with 86 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher and 44 percent having a master's or doctorate degree. We also find they come from a diverse array of educational backgrounds, such as social sciences, education, humanities, STEM, and business.
- However, those educational backgrounds may not always fully prepare program staff for mentoring work. Sixty-one percent of our respondents indicated a strong interest in professional development, citing a desire to learn best practices and trends in mentoring, improve their job performance, and advance their career as key motivators.
- Newer mentoring professionals placed an emphasis on development opportunities that would help them progress on a career path in mentoring (e.g., strategies for stronger mentor recruitment or match support), while 63 percent of more established professionals expressed a desire to stay current with industry innovations and advancements to strengthen their professional impact.



- MENTOR is a leading source of professional development, with around half of our respondents noting that they had previously received training or coaching from MENTOR Affiliates or our national office. These services were highly valued, with MENTOR earning a high net promoter score of 50 percent (i.e., respondents said they were extremely likely to recommend MENTOR training to others).

2. The mentoring workforce risks considerable turnover and a diminishing capacity in the future, but there are several strategies that can increase retention of these professionals.

- Although job satisfaction is high among mentoring professionals, we do find cause for concern. One-in-three respondents indicated they were unsure or unlikely to continue working in the mentoring field long term.
- Critical factors potentially driving these individuals from the workforce include dissatisfaction with pay and benefits (55%), burnout and job stress (46%), a lack of career advancement opportunities (41%), and insufficient resources and support in their role (27%).

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- Even mentoring professionals who weren't considering leaving the movement noted several challenges they face in their own jobs and with their organizations:
 - Fifty-five percent of all mentoring professionals noted insufficient funds for mentoring activities.
 - Forty-one percent felt they were underpaid, 33 percent felt their program was understaffed for the number of youth they are serving.
 - Thirty-one percent felt that they lacked leadership within their program and opportunities for professional growth.
 - Despite these challenges, respondents noted several solutions that could support their work and professional futures:
 - Sixty-three percent indicated that increased access to professional development would positively influence them to stay in the mentoring workforce; this was especially influential for younger mentoring professionals (80%), professionals of color (68%), and those without a college degree (71%).
 - Almost half (49%) felt that increased pay and benefits would help them be more effective in their role.
 - Thirty-seven percent noted that increased staffing at their organization would enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring their program offers.
 - There is also work to be done building a sense of community among the mentoring workforce. While 60 percent indicated that they feel part of a broader "mentoring movement" in America, 40 percent did not, suggesting that more could be done to build professional identity in the mentoring field. Sixty-two percent of respondents expressed a desire to connect more with other mentoring professionals — this need was even greater among those new to mentoring work (77%).

3. The mentoring field faces several systemic and resource-related barriers that must be addressed to maximize the impact of these professionals.

- Mentoring professionals were quite clear about some challenges that they and their organizations are facing: 41 percent said their programs needed more community partnerships and engagement, 52 percent felt that their program needed more staff and volunteers to be effective, 43 percent were feeling overworked and supporting too many relationships, and of those who were considering leaving the field, a shocking 29 percent cited the current political climate as a factor in their dissatisfaction.
- Mentoring professionals are clearly concerned about the scale of their programs in relation to their funding and capacity levels. Sixty-eight percent felt their program needed increased funding to provide quality services, with 24 percent noting a need for more administrative support and almost 20 percent expressing a need for better software and tools to do their work more efficiently.



Recommendations and Calls to Action

Based on our findings, we conclude that the mentoring workforce is largely satisfied with the important work they do (97 percent indicated they are satisfied with their jobs) and deeply value the relationships they form with their colleagues and with their program's youth, families, and volunteers. Almost 90 percent said the impact they have on young people is the thing they enjoy most about their role.

But the findings here also suggest that the future of this workforce is tenuous, especially for those earlier in their careers, who often feel overworked, underpaid, and lacking in opportunities to advance along a career path within this field. MENTOR recommends the following actions in the years ahead to strengthen the mentoring workforce and ensure that the nation's mentoring programs can maximize their impact for youth and communities.



1. We must deepen public awareness of mentoring within all communities and bolster the public and philanthropic investment in high-quality mentoring services.

It is clear that mentoring professionals feel they are trying to do too much with insufficient resources and staffing and that an emphasis on program scale has likely diminished the quality of the services being offered to young people. This has resulted in burnout, frustration, and, for many, a desire to leave the mentoring movement. While increased financial investment can ensure that programs are adequately staffed, we also see a need for increased community partnerships and engagement, helping mentoring programs tap into human capital and local in-kind resources that can improve program quality. Enhanced public awareness campaigns and new efforts to build community-level coalitions will also help ensure these professionals have the investment and support they need.



2. Mentoring professionals should have increased opportunities to build their skills and find community and belonging within this movement.

Our survey respondents were quite clear that opportunities to learn, grow, and progress along a career path would greatly improve the chances that they stay in mentoring work. They desire increased connection with their peers and chances to learn best practices that can make them more effective in their roles. This is especially true for the younger members of the mentoring workforce — right now we risk losing the next generation of workers who will ensure that young people get the quality mentoring experiences they deserve.



3. We must invest in tools and infrastructure that help mentoring programs meet the demand in their communities and operate effectively at scale.

Our respondents expressed a desire for more tools and resources to do their work, as well as curricula, materials, and activities that can enhance mentor-mentee engagement. They are seeking opportunities to learn about emerging and best practices in mentoring, but also need to develop their fundraising, marketing, partnership building, and evaluation skills so that their programs are sustainable. In general, they express a desire to emphasize the quality of mentoring, not just the quantity.

MENTOR's work cuts across all of these calls to action. We are actively engaged in [professional development](#) and coaching, helping these professionals do their work better each and every day. We act as [a convener](#) and networking resource, elevating best practices and connecting professionals to one another and [to those who can invest](#) in and enhance their organizations. We provide evidence-based [tools and resources](#) that support the design of new programs and the [continuous improvement](#) of established services. And for 35 years, MENTOR has served as a leading voice in creating public awareness of the need for mentoring and [opportunities for citizens](#), organizations, and communities across the country to get involved. We encourage all Americans to engage with the mentoring movement and ensure that young people today, and for generations to come, have access to the mentors who can make their journey healthy, happy, and successful.

You can learn more about MENTOR's work at www.mentoring.org.

