MENTORING FOR PREVENTING AND REDUCING DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR AMONG YOUTH

National Mentoring Resource Center Research Review

Stephanie Hawkins, RTI International, Michael J. Karcher, University of Texas San Antonio, Kelly Stewart and David L. DuBois, University of Illinois at Chicago

Summary

February 2020

This review examines research as it relates to mentoring as a prevention strategy for delinquent behavior. The appeal of mentoring as a delinquent behavior prevention strategy is understandable given its relatively low cost and ability to capitalize on the resources of local communities and caring individuals. The review is organized around four topics:

1. The overall contributions of mentoring to reducing or preventing delinquent behavior.

2. Factors that may condition or shape the extent to which mentoring has effects on delinquent behavior.

3. Processes that may be involved in accounting for the effects of mentoring on delinquent behavior.

4. The extent to which approaches to mentoring focused on preventing or reducing delinquent behavior have reached intended youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by settings.

Research on the effectiveness of mentoring for preventing or reducing delinquent behavior found mentoring relationships, both those that are provided through programs and those that are naturally occurring, appear more likely than not to contribute, on net, to lower levels of delinquent behavior.

Research suggests, but does not definitively identify, several factors that may influence the effectiveness of mentoring for preventing or reducing delinquent behavior. One possibility is that prior involvement in the courts may lead youth to resist rather than to receive mentors whom they may view as an extension of an unpleasant justice system. However, both "mattering" (defined as being noticed, needed, and an object of concern, as well as the perception of being acknowledged and relevant to others), and strengthening of core indicators of positive development, and "thriving" (e.g., skills for setting and pursuing goals) appear to be processes through which mentoring may be able to help prevent or reduce delinquent behavior. When assessing the reach, quality, and sustainability of mentoring initiatives to prevent or reduce delinquent behavior, there remains work to be done. Mentoring services directed toward preventing or reducing future delinquent behavior and engaging youth in these services have proved only partially successful and, as such, there is a substantial unmet need for mentoring directed toward these goals. Limitations pertaining to the organizational capacity of juvenile justice settings and mentoring programs and their degree of coordination with one another appear to be important barriers.

Insights for practice based on currently available knowledge are appended to this review.

INTRODUCTION

Historical and Contemporary Context

Matching young people with adult mentors is one of the oldest strategies employed in community-based interventions designed to prevent youth problem behaviors and promote positive youth development.[1] Early in the twentieth century, concern for the welfare of youth whose behavior brought them into contact with the court system provided much of the impetus for the emergence of what would become the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.[2] Roots of youth mentoring also are evident in the juvenile justice system, with the nation's first juvenile court in Chicago established in 1899 where probation officers were assigned to provide guidance and support to youth who were detained.[2] The appeal of mentoring for the prevention of delinquent behavior is understandable given its low cost and ability to capitalize on the resources of local communities and caring individuals. With this background in mind, it is useful to briefly consider the contemporary context of delinquent behavior, particularly as relates to juvenile justice system involvement, and utilization of mentoring as a prevention strategy for these outcomes.

> The appeal of mentoring for the **prevention of delinquent behavior** is understandable given its **low cost** and ability to capitalize on the resources of **local communities** and **caring individuals**.

Since reaching a peak in the mid-1990s, the juvenile arrest rate in the United States has declined fairly steadily to a level in 2017 — 2.4 arrests per 100,000 youth ages 10–17 — that is only one-third of its earlier high watermark.[i][3] From 2008 through 2017, the number of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts in the United States similarly declined 59 percent. Yet delinquent behavior continues to be a source of concern for a number of reasons. These include the reality that negative encounters with the justice system are not equally distributed in the United States, with disproportionately high rates of incarceration for African-Americans and those with the fewest resources (e.g., the poor).[4] Such patterns are especially concerning in view of evidence that involvement in the juvenile justice system itself can have iatrogenic (i.e., unintended harmful) effects, such as increased likelihood of involvement in the penal system in adulthood.[5] Engaging in delinquent behavior, furthermore, whether brought to the attention of the juvenile justice system or not, appears to increase youth risk for negative outcomes (e.g., depression), thus potentially increasing likelihood of continued or intensified conduct problems in a vicious cycle.[6] It is the recognition that involvement in the juvenile justice system can have a negative impact on a young person's life that led to the proliferation of diversion programs in recent years. Some diversion programs are pretrial or predisposition, which means that youths are diverted away from juvenile justice system processing from the outset, whereas others begin only after formal adjudication. In these latter cases, youths are diverted away from detention or incarceration, but are still formally processed.[7] Mentoring is among the main community-based strategies that have been used in diversion programs.[8]

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i   The data being referenced are for the period of 1980 through 2017.

The historical connection between mentoring and juvenile delinquency remains prominent today. Founded in 1974, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is the chief component of the federal government in the United States charged with enacting programs and other initiatives aimed at decreasing levels of delinquent behavior. Two years after its founding, OJJDP's Special Emphasis branch provided $10 million in funding for the development of diversion programs.[7] In fiscal year 2017, youth mentoring was one of OJJDP's primary strategies for decreasing delinquency, with $60.7 million awarded in FY 2017 through its Mentoring Opportunities for Youth initiative to support and strengthen youth mentoring programs nationwide. Interestingly, though, only a minority of programs in a recent national survey identified top outcome goals directly related to delinquency prevention (juvenile justice/re-entry 3.65 percent; violence prevention 5.24 percent).[9] Many programs may see reductions in delinquent behavior as a more distal and indirect objective rather than as a more immediate or primary point of emphasis. Programs, for example, commonly target factors protecting against delinquent behavior, such as academic enrichment (36.46 percent), life skills/social skills 53.89 percent), and providing a caring adult relationship (44.25 percent).[9] Also important to note is that there are large numbers of adults both within the justice system, such as law enforcement officers and staff of juvenile detention facilities, and outside of it in varied contexts, such as youth sports, schools, and after-school programs, who regularly assume more informal mentoring roles in the lives of youth who have already exhibited or are at risk for involvement in delinquent behavior.[10, 11]

Overview of this Review

This review takes stock of the research that addresses the potential for mentoring to serve as a strategy for preventing and reducing delinquent behavior (as defined below). The review focuses on the following four questions:

1. What are the effects of mentoring on delinquent behavior among youth?

2. What factors condition or shape the effects of mentoring on delinquent behavior?

3. What intervening processes are most important for linking mentoring to beneficial effects on delinquent behavior?

4. To what extent have efforts to provide mentoring to youth with preventing or reducing delinquent behavior as a priority outcome reached and engaged the intended youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by host organizations and settings?

The scope of the review was limited to mentoring as defined by the National Mentoring Resource Center (i.e., relationships and activities that take place between youth [i.e., mentees] and older or more experienced persons [i.e., mentors] who are acting in a nonprofessional helping capacity — whether through a program or more informally — to provide support that has its aim or realistic potential benefitting one or more areas of the young person's development; for further detail,

see [What is Mentoring?](#)). This definition excludes services and supports that are offered in formal professional roles by those with advanced education or training (e.g., social work, counseling) as well as those that are exclusively or predominantly didactic in orientation (e.g., structured curriculum).

The review's scope was further limited to studies examining mentoring in relation to delinquent or other clearly serious antisocial behavior[ii] and/or juvenile justice system involvement (e.g., arrest). Studies that examined effects of mentoring received during childhood or adolescence on relevant adult outcomes such as arrests or incarceration also were included. Studies were excluded, however, if the behaviors assessed would not typically be considered serious (e.g., minor forms of classroom misbehavior). Studies focused on mentoring in relation to substance use or misuse as well as mentoring for youth during reentry from juvenile justice-related confinement also were excluded as separate NMRC reviews address these topics.[12, 13]

Using a prevention framework,[14] the review focuses on studies of mentoring as a means to primary prevention (in this context, preventing delinquent behavior and juvenile justice system involvement before it ever occurs), secondary prevention (in this context, keeping initial, infrequent, and/or relatively less serious delinquent behavior and/or juvenile justice system involvement from becoming recurrent, more extensive, and/or problematic), and tertiary prevention (in this context, reducing the longer-term complications of delinquent behavior and/or juvenile justice system involvement for outcomes later in development, such as adult arrest). Using the above-described criteria, a systematic literature search was conducted to identify journal articles, book chapters, and other types of documents that reported findings pertinent to one or more of the review's four organizing questions. Search strategies included (a) using a set of relevant keywords to search PubMed, Proquest Dissertations and Theses, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar; (b) outreach to a listserv on youth mentoring research and practice as well as members of the NMRC Research Board; and c) examination of research referenced in broader treatments of mentoring and delinquent behavior, such as chapters on this topic in different editions of the *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* and a recent synthesis of OJJDP-sponsored research on mentoring. The search was inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative research.

As a final point of introduction, readers of this review are encouraged to keep in mind that behavior labeled as delinquent or antisocial behavior is best viewed within context. A contextual perspective calls attention to the reality that rates of delinquent behavior, the extent to which they are detected by different measures (e.g., official arrest records), the consequences with which they are associated (e.g., diversion vs. confinement), and the seriousness with which they are viewed within society all can be influenced by a broad range of current and historical influences that are outside a youth's control.

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ii   OJJDP's definition of delinquent behavior as a performance measure is similarly limited to criminal acts, such as offenses against persons or property. In view of the potential for mentoring to relate differentially to youth involvement in delinquent (i.e., unlawful) and other antisocial behavior, the distinction between the two types of behavior is taken into account throughout the review to the extent possible.

1. What Is the Effectiveness of Mentoring for Preventing or Reducing Delinquent Behavior?

BACKGROUND

Sociological theories of delinquent behavior call attention to the reality that some youth, especially those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, perceive conventional pathways for achieving widely valued outcomes (e.g., educational attainment as a means of securing monetary success) to not be viable for them.[15, 16] Such youth then may be more disposed to engage in delinquent behavior both as an alternative means to securing valued life outcomes and for other reasons, such as rebellion against cultural norms or expectations for behavior. From this perspective, mentoring relationships may be useful for both preventing and curbing existing delinquent behavior because they provide youth with a basis for greater hope and optimism that they can achieve conventional goals, such as success in school, and that they matter to society as individuals.

From this perspective, mentoring relationships may be useful for both **preventing** and **curbing existing delinquent behavior** because they provide youth with a basis for **greater hope** and **optimism** that they can achieve **conventional goals**, such as **success in school**, and that **they matter to society as individuals**.

Other theories and frameworks suggest additional reasons that mentoring could help youth avoid involvement in delinquent behavior. Blechman and Bopp,[17] for example, draw on Host Provocation theory to identify three ways in which mentoring may prevent re-offending: "(a) increase external controls by helping parents and teachers with supervision; (b) strengthen internal controls by promoting attachment bonds, self-regulation, and prosocial values; (c) reduce exposure to antisocial provocations, such as deviant peers, drugs and alcohol, violent mass media, through immersion in prosocial activities" (p. 457).

Considerable research is in line with the preceding possibilities. There is evidence, for example, that mentoring program participation can stimulate both improved educational expectations[18] and hopeful expectations more generally[19] as well as gains in direct contributors to educational attainment, such as school attendance and grades.[20] Mentoring also has a demonstrated potential to strengthen a range of other well-established protective factors against delinquent behavior. These include both individual and environmental assets, such as self-control,[21, 22] social competence,[23] and stronger relationships with parents and other adults (e.g., teachers).[24, 25] Related research links mentoring to improvements in the "5 Cs" of positive youth development (i.e., confidence, caring, competence, connectedness, and character)[26, 27] as well as various indicators of youth thriving, such as having a motivating passion or interest ("spark") and the skills for effectively setting and pursuing goals,[28, 29] all of which to varying degrees have been linked to less involvement in problem or delinquent behavior. Taken as a whole, these varied lines of theory and research point toward a potential for mentoring to serve as a source of social capital that increases youths' perceived and actual prospects for achieving valued life outcomes through conventional pathways, thereby reducing prospects for delinquent behavior.

The same theory and research, however, also point toward potential limits in the capacity of mentoring, received either through a program or under more naturally occurring circumstances, to prevent or reduce delinquent behavior. Time constraints, boundaries on relationships set by programs, and a range of contextual risk factors (e.g., household poverty, community violence), for example, may hinder the ability of mentors to prevent or ameliorate youth involvement in delinquent behavior. One strategy suggested for countering these types of potential limitations is to design mentoring programs to be more directly responsive to various types of challenges that may be encountered by participating youth in their communities, such as through specialized mentor training and support for collective involvement of mentors and mentees in social-political activism.[30,31] It should be noted, however, that only one of the programs evaluated in studies identified for this section of the review[32] appears to be a strong exemplar of this type of approach (this study's findings are most relevant to processes through which mentoring may affect the likelihood of delinquent behavior and thus are discussed in the later section of this review addressing that topic).

RESEARCH

Primary prevention. Tolan and colleagues[33] used the technique of meta-analysis to synthesize findings from randomized control trials (experimental) as well as quasi-experimentaliii evaluations of the effects of mentoring programs on delinquent behavior that were available through 2011. This review is considered here under primary prevention because it focused on "studies that involved youth who were involved in the mentoring program being evaluated because they were 'at risk' for juvenile delinquency" due to either individual (e.g., school failure) or environmental (e.g., living in a neighborhood with a high crime rate) characteristics; youth in the priority populations for programs thus had not necessarily already exhibited delinquent behavior or come into contact with the juvenile justice system (although this clearly is the case by design for some of the programs). Results indicated that, on average, mentoring program participation was of significant benefit for reducing delinquent behavior (25 studies) as assessed by measures which included standardized self- and teacher-report scales as well as arrest and court records. The size of this benefit (referred to as an "effect size" in research studies) was small in magnitude; furthermore, there was substantial variability in findings across studies, a point that will be returned to when considering factors that may condition (moderate) effects of mentoring on delinquent behavior. The review's findings were sufficiently strong, however, for an independent assessment conducted by CrimeSolutions.gov to rate mentoring as "effective" for "reducing delinquency outcomes."

Other individual studies not included in the review by Tolan and colleagues (e.g., because they have been published only recently) also are relevant to primary prevention of delinquent behavior through mentoring (see Table 1 for information regarding selected examples of these studies). Illustratively, a randomized control trial (RCT) of the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) community-based mentoring (CBM) program involving approximately 600 youth did not find evidence of an effect on the likelihood of youth report of arrest or juvenile detention over a 13-month period, although benefits in the form of reduction of less serious conduct problems were evident based on parent reports.[34] Several studies also have reported associations between naturally occurring mentoring

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iii   In quasi-experimental studies, there are groups of individuals who do and do not participate in the intervention being studied (e.g. mentoring program), but the individuals are not assigned randomly (by chance) to one or the other group as in a randomized control trial.

relationships (not considered in the Tolan and colleagues review) and lower levels of delinquent behavior. Although these findings are correlational in nature and thus not definitive evidence of a causal benefit of natural mentoring for delinquent behavior, their relative consistency is nonetheless notable. Directly in line with this research, the National Guard Youth Challenge program includes a youth-nominated mentoring component in which the participating older adolescents (who are designated at risk due to factors such as school dropout, but without any requisite involvement with the justice system) recruit mentors from their existing social networks (excluding immediate family members). As summarized in Table 1, Schwartz and colleagues found that youth-initiated mentoring relationships established and supported through this program that lasted at least 21 months were associated with reduced likelihood of conviction for an offense at a 36-month follow-up.[35]

Secondary prevention. Another systematic review, published in 2007,[36] focused on mentoring in relation to youth re-offending after an initial arrest and thus is most germane to considerations of secondary prevention. The authors concluded that the most methodologically rigorous studies did not suggest that mentoring was responsible for a statistically significant reduction in re-offending. There are, however, a number of rigorous studies published since the time of this review that point to a potential for mentoring to be of value in secondary prevention. These include a RCT evaluation of the Reading for Life diversion program, which found statistically significant declines in rates of rearrest and number of arrests for a two-year period following participation in the program.[62] These program impacts were most evident for relatively serious felony offenses compared to misdemeanors. Similarly, an evaluation of the Campus Corps program, which utilizes undergraduate students as mentors for adolescents who for the most part have already come into contact with the juvenile justice system, found that program participants reported significantly less delinquent behavior at a post-test relative to a comparison group of nonparticipants.[63] An evaluation of the Arches Transformative Mentoring program provides a final and most recent example.[64] This program uses a group mentoring format, interactive journaling curriculum, and mentors who are known as "credible messengers" because they share similar backgrounds of justice system involvement with the youth who are served by the program. The evaluation found evidence that involvement in the program led to significantly reduced felony reconvictions at 12- and 24-month assessments for participating young persons, although comparable benefits were not apparent for other outcomes (e.g., overall arrests).

Long-term follow-up into adulthood (tertiary prevention). As with outcomes in other areas, there appears to be a potential for effects of mentoring programs on delinquent behavior to erode relatively quickly after program participation has ended. In a large-scale RCT of the BBBS school-based mentoring program, for example, the program group experienced reduced likelihood of teacher-reported serious misconduct in school (e.g., suspension) at the end of the school year, although this benefit was no longer evident at a follow-up assessment in the fall of the subsequent school year when the mentoring relationships of most youth in the program group were no longer active.[18] This does not augur well for finding rigorous evidence of effects of mentoring on outcomes related to delinquency extending into adulthood. Yet the findings of the small number of studies that have looked at this question suggest that this possibility should not be ruled out (see Table 1). Most notably, a follow-up of the RCT evaluation of the Communities in Schools school-based mentoring

program found that those assigned to receive the program were significantly less likely to have been arrested by age 21 based on court records.[67] In comparison, a follow-up of the landmark Public/Private Ventures RCT of the BBBS CBM program showed that arrest rates did not differ significantly between those assigned to receive the program and members of the control group.[37] It should be noted that a portion of those in the control group did end up receiving BBBS mentoring after the 18-month time frame of the original study, a reality which speaks to the complexities of this type of research.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Mentoring relationships, both as provided through programs and naturally occurring, have a well-established potential to contribute to reduced delinquent behavior and juvenile justice system involvement among youth; estimated benefits are typically small in magnitude, however, and are not evident consistently across studies (potentially, as discussed in the next sections of this review, due to factors such as differences in programs and in the background characteristics of participating youth).

2. Evidence is consistent with potential benefits of mentoring program participation both (a) among those who are at-risk for, but not yet demonstrating, delinquent behavior or having juvenile justice system involvement (primary prevention); and (b) for youth who have already exhibited initial delinquent behavior or having justice system involvement (e.g., reduced likelihood of rearrest; secondary prevention). Again, though, findings for both types of prevention are variable and most consistent with a demonstrated potential for impact rather benefits that are realized on a consistent basis.

3. The available evidence is not sufficient in scope or consistency to support even a preliminary conclusion regarding typical benefits of mentoring for longer-term outcomes, such as arrest during adulthood (tertiary prevention); it does appear, however, that these may be possible.

2. What Factors Influence the Effectiveness of Mentoring for Preventing or Reducing Delinquent Behavior?

BACKGROUND

Understanding the conditions under which mentoring to prevent or reduce delinquency may be more or less effective, or how program effects may vary as a function of unique youth or mentor characteristics, is critical to effectively reaching youth at risk for starting or continuing delinquent activities. It is also useful to consider the way that program goals, curricular content, records of mentoring interactions and activities, as well as the general degree of adult-imposed structure and focus all factor into outcomes, as was revealed in multiple recent studies. The research literature has consistently found youth engaged in or at-risk for later delinquent activity to show less favorable attitudes toward authority and greater general resistance to compliance with adult directives (including, potentially, those of mentors) compared to youth at lower risk; thus, examining these program and contextual factors is important. The degree of imposed structure or centrality of adult-

selected goals for programs (e.g., mentoring that explicitly includes social skills training) may be reacted to differently by youth with fewer negative prior experiences with adults, and may pose a challenge to program implementation fidelity, thereby affecting program effectiveness and long-term outcomes.

RESEARCH

Beyond the overall main estimated benefits of youth mentoring program participation on delinquency and aggression for youth at risk for such behaviors reported by Tolan and colleagues,[33] their meta-analytic study also identified several moderating factors associated with differences in estimated benefits of mentoring on delinquency influencing how mentoring program participation reduces or prevents later delinquency, misconduct, or criminality. The study did not find benefits to differ according to levels of youth risk, either individual (e.g., behavioral, academic) or environmental (e.g., living in poorly resourced communities). Rather, it found more evidence that both mentors' characteristics and the program's interaction focus moderated outcomes. Specifically, greater benefits accrued to youth when mentors' primary motivation to mentor was for the purpose of their own professional development, and when programs prioritized mentors providing advocacy and emotional support. However, a significant concern of the authors was the absence of information on the actual interactions that took place, noting that what programs espouse is sometimes confounded with youth characteristics and also may not correspond with what actually happens in relationships. Therefore, this section of the review considers how select youth and adult characteristics may moderate program impacts and how each also may be shaped by the nature of program activities.

Characteristics of mentees. In the meta-analysis of Tolan and colleagues neither gender nor mentee risk characteristics moderated program effectiveness; thus, this review does not discuss sex differences in outcomes, even though sex differences appear in multiple studies. For example, when rates of arrest and conviction are used as the outcome variables, the benefits of mentoring typically favor boys in the mentoring condition. It is important to note that boys engage in higher rates of crime than girls overall, making variation in crime between mentees and control groups among boys more likely to be found. In none of these studies were the benefits of mentoring program participation significantly different in nature or direction by sex — the size of the benefits was simply somewhat larger.

Prior meta-analyses[23, 20] that did not restrict their focus to programs serving only youth at risk for delinquent behavior (as done by Tolan and colleagues) have found that those at greater individual or environmental risk appeared to benefit more from mentoring. Even though some studies, like the 35-year follow-up of the Buddy System,[54] have found those at greater risk (i.e., prior arrests) initially benefitted more, Tolan and colleagues did not find risk to consistently moderate outcomes for this population of youth. However, looking at outcomes in secondary prevention mentoring programs, that target populations of youth involved in the court system or at risk for delinquency, reveals some evidence for the opposite pattern (i.e., that youth at greater risk benefit less from mentoring); namely, when skills-focused programs are delivered through mentoring relationships in order to prevent problem behavior, those entering programs with more developmental assets and who have prior support from adults may benefit the most. It may be that the specific environmental risk of experiencing insufficiently trusting, reliable, and supportive adult relationships at home, in school,

or in one's community prior to program enrollment can make it harder for youth to forge the close bond with mentors needed to collaboratively engage in goal-directed mentoring. Adverse childhood experiences can make youth more resistant to adult authority and, understandably, more reluctant to take the interpersonal risks necessary to engage in trusting relationships with adults that could divert or disrupt a pattern of misbehavior and prevent criminal activity.[38]

Youth who present to programs with more indicators of **positive youth development (PYD)** and of **youth thriving**, may be **best prepared** to take advantage of mentors specifically trained to **further coach specific developmental skills** as a way to **reduce susceptibility** to later delinquent behavior.

Youth who present to programs with more indicators of positive youth development (PYD) and of youth thriving, may be best prepared to take advantage of mentors specifically trained to further coach specific developmental skills as a way to reduce susceptibility to later delinquent behavior. Illustratively, one study of the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive approach[29] found partial support for a model in which mentor support for youth thriving was linked to reduced problem behavior (a composite measure of delinquent behavior and less serious conduct problems) over a 15-month period, but only for those who entered the program reporting higher levels of prior support from adults. The indirect effect of the goal-focused mentor training and activities operated through increased overall adult support for thriving, which was linked to increased indicators of thriving (e.g., growth mindset, goal pursuit skills) that predicted lower problem behaviors in the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive condition. Although there were no main effects differentiating the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive and the standard BBBS approach at the 15-month follow-up, tests of indirect effect revealed a greater reduction in delinquency and conduct problems among youth in the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive condition, but only among a subsample (38% of the youth) who viewed the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive activities as either helpful or fun. The authors point out that "higher initial youth reported levels of support from adults . . . predicted greater likelihood of positive engagement" (p. 1487), which means only those youth familiar with receipt of adult support were able to take advantage of it from mentors.

This finding supports a view called the Matthew Effect, which holds that in prevention programming often it is the rich who get richer.[39] Those youth who were unfamiliar with the practice of utilizing adults' support were less able to take advantage of support from mentors and the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive activities. The readiness of mentees to receive and build on informational encounters may be shaped by their prior experiences of support from adults. The finding is similar to that of the landmark RCT of the BBBS CBM study introduced earlier in that it was those with the least supportive and most challenging interpersonal histories who benefited the least from the program,[40] it seems, because they were more likely to quit or were less willing to trust the mentor. Another example of this is that mentees with no arrest or prior court involvement benefited more than mentees with prior arrests in the My Life Mentoring program,[68] which also used "a purposeful advocacy and teaching approach" (p. 9).

It is important to note the opposite phenomenon as well, wherein youth who are least at-risk for later delinquency may be negatively influenced by participating in mentoring programs that are intended

to benefit those already engaged in delinquent behavior. One of the earliest lessons to be learned about the use of mentoring to prevent delinquent behaviors, comes from the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study, and specifically the longitudinal research, which was summarized by McCord.[41] Long-term negative effects were discovered, which McCord and colleagues linked to participation in one element of the program: repeated participation by some youth in relatively unsupervised summer camps. Despite whatever good might have come from time spent with the caring counselor or mentor-type adult, for those who ended up at the summer camp, their program participation became a breeding ground for deviant behavior (i.e., "deviancy training"), which seemed to secure their position on a trajectory toward later crime.

The effects of deviancy training in mentoring programs also are found in the 35-year follow-up evaluation of the Buddy System mentoring program.[54] For girls not previously engaged in the legal system, the program introduced them to peer groups that seemed to profoundly increase their likelihood of selecting a later partner who was or would become court involved. The researcher expected and found that among those in the study who had prior arrests, the rates of arrest in adulthood were much larger (75 percent) for controls than program participants (55 percent). For women who entered the study without prior arrests, the rates of arrest in adulthood for women in the Buddy System (29 percent) were much higher than those in the control group (10 percent). For them, the authors suspected, the association with more deviant peers in the program altered their peer affiliation practices with negative long-term consequences for who were to later marry or cohabitate with a partner who had an arrest record. It is important to point out, however, that in other studies of mentoring programs that did not target youth at designated risk for later criminality, the group setting did not seem to yield negative long-term effects.

Mentor characteristics. Both the Tolan et al.[33] and DuBois et al.[20] meta-analyses reveal evidence of the value of teaching and advocacy as program priorities or program approaches. But it is important to keep in mind that meta-analyses of differences in outcomes across programs do not tell us whether being matched with an individual mentor who has teaching experience or who tends to use advocacy as a mentoring approach is more or less valuable to youth. Nor does Tolan et al.'s finding that programs which emphasize providing emotional support reveal whether mentors who are emotionally supportive are more effective than those mentors who are not. Those meta-analyses reveal the value of overall program goals, training, or hiring priorities related to mentors. Knowing whether mentors engaging in advocacy, teaching, or being emotionally supportive is helpful requires match-level analyses of actual processes within rather than between programs.

One study of mentor characteristics and mentoring interactions within the Youth Advocate Program (YAP), revealed how the same mentor characteristics can contribute in different ways (directly or indirectly; positively or negatively) to a program's effectiveness in reducing delinquency.[66] This study focused on similarity between mentor and mentee in terms of educational experience. YAP as an organization has long held that part of their effectiveness comes from employing advocates as mentors who are racially, culturally, and socioeconomically similar to the youth they serve and their families. Therefore, when working with youth from families with adults tending to have very limited educational attainment or success, the value of hiring advocates with prior teaching experience or advocates with higher levels of educational achievement than those of the families of the youth they

serve may come into conflict with the goal of cultural similarity. Yet the program also holds that a primary goal of the mentor is advocating for the youth's success in school, work, and neighborhood settings, and assisting them in learning how to be successful in these settings. This approach reflects an increasingly argued view that mentoring programs need to help position youth to better navigate important systems, develop skills to overcome challenging structural and systemic conditions, and even become participants in systems to transform these systems. Thus, this study examined the value of hiring advocates who themselves were skilled in these systems. Analyses revealed that both the education level of the advocates and the advocates having prior teaching experience were moderately strong predictors of declines in mentees' delinquency. But before extrapolating this finding to mean that teacher-type mentors are effective by taking an academic and problem-solving approach with court involved mentees, consider that individual mentor characteristics are not synonymous with actual mentoring interpersonal interactions, which are discussed as mediating processes in the following section. In conclusion, there are some basic takeaways from the consideration of unique characteristics of mentors and mentees that may influence program outcomes, but none stand as an independent factor that is divorced from the nature of the program, which type of youth it recruits, and what its staff hold as its primary mechanism of change.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Increased association with court-involved peers through mentoring program participation can pose barriers to the effective use of mentoring programs to prevent or reduce later problem behaviors, especially among those least at risk to begin with, who otherwise seem most likely to benefit from such programs.

2. Prior involvement with the court system by youth, and their having negative prior experiences with adults or not having previously felt supported by adults, may lead such youth to resist rather than welcome the support of mentors, thereby lessening mentors' effectiveness, especially when using activities targeting developmental assets and skills.

3. Mentors with teaching experience or advanced levels of education may provide unique benefits, but it seems this occurs not through acting like teachers or eschewing play over educational activities, which further underscores the complex interplay that can occur between background characteristics of both mentors and mentees on program outcomes.

3. What Pathways Are Important in Linking Mentoring to the Reductions in or the Prevention of Delinquent Behavior?

BACKGROUND

An important question remains in the mentoring field as it relates to mentoring and its relationship to delinquent behavior: *To the extent that a mentoring program or relationship prevents or reduces delinquent behavior, what are the processes through which this occurs?* Mentoring programs and relationships, in theory, may help set in motion a myriad of psychological and/or behavioral processes that in turn impact youths' level of involvement in delinquent behavior. Prevention

research supports seven key benefits to focusing on the intervening processes that link prevention efforts to outcomes.[42] In the case of this research review, intervening processes are the pathways that connect the characteristics or behaviors of the mentor to the intervening process and then the pathway from that intervening process to lower levels of delinquent behavior.[iv]

1. It provides a check on whether mentoring efforts changed any of the intervening processes it was thought to impact.

2. It can identify successful and unsuccessful mentoring program components.

3. It can highlight whether or not the measurement used to assess process change is reliable or valid enough to detect changes.

4. It provides findings on proximal outcomes when the impact of mentoring on delinquent behavior may not be realized within the timeframe of the study.

5. It increases understanding of the mechanisms underlying changes in the outcome.

6. It facilitates the test of the theories upon which mentoring programs are based.

7. It contributes to knowledge of best practices if effective and ineffective components can be identified and disseminated with the mentoring field.

The delinquency literature is replete with examples of the important role of examining intervening processes (e.g., mediators). A recent study concluded that the relationship between gang affiliation and delinquency in the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) sample was mediated by particular types of antisocial forms of cognition.[43] Similarly, Sampson and Wilson offer the theory that a cognitive landscape that accepts offending is a mediator between neighborhood disadvantage and delinquency.[44] Last, there is evidence that perceived personal discrimination may be an important mediator of the effects of concentrated disadvantage and racial isolation on delinquency.[45] This possibility suggests supporting youth in coping with experienced discrimination as a potential mechanism through which mentoring could contribute to reduced delinquent behavior.[46]

RESEARCH

Research with natural mentors have provided the most insight into the intervening processes that link mentoring to the beneficial effects on delinquent behavior. One study found support for improvements in school attachment as a pathway through which school-based natural mentoring relationships may reduce adolescent reports of violence-related behavior.

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iv   We recognize that pathways originating with mentoring program involvement or relationship characteristics could end in greater levels of delinquent behavior, but for ease of presentation our phrasing here and elsewhere emphasizes the more expected salutary pathways ending in lower levels of delinquent behavior.

Mentoring interactions. The Youth Advocate Program (YAP) study that examined the relative benefit of the timing of advocates and youth working together on problem-solving versus friendship-building and playful interactions (using structural models controlling for mentee age, sex, and starting levels of misconduct) found that time spent playing, but only later in the match (months three through four) predicted reductions in delinquency, while problem-focused conversations later in the match predicted increases in misconduct over time.[66] Considering that the YAP advocates need to form a connection or bond with their mentees, and that the match will spend up to 20 hours a week together, it is easy to see why an "all work and no play" approach could easily backfire. Indeed, in this study, time spent in play, particularly later in the relationship, was a stronger predictor of declines in misconduct than were teaching, advocacy, and problem-focused conversations.

But these benefits of playful interactions, however, varied as a function of advocates' educational background characteristics noted earlier. Later in the match, advocates with teaching experience were *less likely* to focus on academics and problems which further benefitted youth, whereas advocates with more education were less likely to engage in play and thereby acted in ways that dampened program benefits. So, there were direct benefits of having mentors with these characteristics, but these mentor characteristics also predisposed them to engage interpersonally in both helpful and unhelpful ways, thereby also indirectly affecting outcomes. Although the more educated advocates brought something that was helpful to their youth, it was not a tendency to value playing in their matches. Similarly, mentors with teaching experience also brought something helpful, but it was not an increased tendency to teach (i.e., to take on a problem-focused or teaching role). In this study with court involved youth, after getting to know the youth, it was important to be willing to play.

The importance of a balance between work and play in preventing misconduct (i.e., later arrest) also was found with youth not explicitly at-risk at the start of the program or court involved, wherein this balance contributed to the experience of feeling known by the mentor. In the 10-year follow-up of the Communities in Schools RCT of school-based mentoring, the effect of the mentoring program on likelihood of later arrest was moderated by specific mentoring activities.[67] Data from weekly activity logs revealed that the more time mentors spent learning about the mentee the lower the likelihood of a later arrest. In contrast, having a mentor with a problem-focus was linked to higher likelihood of arrest. In effect, the mentors' focus on academic problems was itself problematic (controlling for starting levels of misbehavior, grades, attendance, sex, and age), but more so when there had been minimal time spent learning about the mentee and when, perhaps as a result of this, the mentee felt like they didn't matter to the mentor. Indeed, in matches that spent little to no time getting to know each other, high levels of problem-focused conversations predicted a 15 percent greater likelihood of arrest when mentees felt they mattered little to their mentors. When youth reported feeling they did matter to their mentors, time spent in problem-focused conversations was unrelated to later arrest.

> Data from weekly activity logs revealed that the **more time** mentors spent **learning about the mentee** the **lower the likelihood** of a later arrest.

Changes in youth attributes. In line with the research just described, a study of natural mentoring relationships using data from the Add Health Study50 also found support for "mattering"— defined

as being noticed, needed, and an object of concern, as well as the perception of being acknowledged and relevant to others — as a process through which natural mentors may help lessen delinquent behavior during the transition to adulthood. There is also research support for a role of the "5 C" indicators of positive youth development (PYD) and indicators of youth thriving, both referenced earlier in this review, as mechanisms of change linking program-supported mentoring through the BBBS CBM program to reduced susceptibility to delinquent behavior.[27, 29] One of these studies,[29] described previously, found support for a model in which mentor support for youth thriving was linked to reduced problem behavior (one of two indicators of which was a measure of delinquent behavior) over a 15-month period via links with increased overall adult support for thriving and, in turn, enhanced thriving (e.g., growth mindset, goal pursuit).

Social justice–oriented mentoring. In a notable example of a program adopting a social justice lens that included a mentoring component, Zimmerman and colleagues reported on the evaluation of the Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES) program.[32] As described by the authors, "YES applies empowerment theory to an after-school program for middle school students. YES is an active learning curriculum designed to help youth gain confidence in themselves, think critically about their community, and work with adults to create positive community change" (p. 20). Findings indicated no significant benefits of assignment to participate in YES on a measure of delinquent behavior (or other outcomes). However, the "dose" of YES activities received by youth was linked to lower youth-reported delinquent behavior at post-test; this association involved improvement in psychological empowerment as a go-between (mediator) between YES dosage and delinquent behavior. The concept of psychological empowerment included measures for leadership efficacy, civic efficacy, and self-esteem.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Regardless of the youth's background, mentoring time spent in playful interactions may help buttress the efforts by mentors to establish the trust needed to help their mentees address problems in their lives.

2. The ideal timing of mentors' efforts to get to know the mentee or engage in play may vary depending on the youth's readiness to receive support from their adult mentors, with some needing it early to communicate that they matter to the mentor whereas other mentees may start ready to see the mentor as someone offering specific important life lessons.

3. Evidence suggests that mentoring relationships can contribute to lower levels of delinquent behavior among youth, in part, by mentors taking time to get to know their mentees and developing authentic relationships whereby mentees believe their importance in the lives of their mentors.

4. Although limited in scope, available evidence is consistent with a potential for program-established mentoring relationships with volunteers to contribute to lower levels of delinquent behavior by enhancing personal skills and assets that are important for positive development and thriving and by taking a social justice approach to mentoring.

4. To What Extent Have Mentoring Initiatives to Prevent or Reduce Delinquent Behavior Reached and Engaged Youth, Been Implemented with High Quality, and Been Adopted and Sustained?

BACKGROUND

Reach and engagement. The prevention framework utilized in this review points to the importance of reaching and engaging both youth who may be at risk for, but not already engaged in, delinquent behavior or have come into contact with the juvenile justice system (primary prevention) and those already exhibiting some of this type of behavior and/or having had some juvenile justice system involvement (secondary prevention). A tertiary prevention perspective also suggests the value of reaching and engaging older youth given the increased potential this may offer for utilizing mentoring to reduce the potential for outcomes such as arrests during the transition to adulthood. Each of these aims could potentially require different strategies, making multipronged efforts at reach and engagement most useful in supporting overall aims of reducing and preventing delinquent behavior. Illustratively, whereas approaches such as diversion may be instrumental as an avenue for reaching youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system, other strategies oriented toward outreach through youths' natural ecologies (e.g., schools) may be critical for engaging youth prior to any system involvement. The degree to which youth, once reached, are successfully engaged in receiving mentoring programs and relationships is a further key consideration. Underscoring the importance of this concern, several of the evaluations referenced in this review were only able to uncover evidence of benefits for delinquent behavior when analyses took into account actual levels of mentoring (or related program activities) received [29, 32, 53, 47] and, in one instance, also whether youth were positively engaged by the activities involved.[29]

Fidelity and quality of implementation. A robust body of research underscores the importance of the fidelity and quality of program implementation for the effectiveness of prevention programs,[48] including youth mentoring programs.[23] In line with these findings, the extent to which mentoring programs focused on reducing or preventing delinquent behavior are able to be implemented successfully is likely to be significant in determining the level of benefits that they confer to participating youth. Improvements in implementation, furthermore, are dependent on a sound understanding of factors that account for variation in levels and quality of program implementation.[46] Many of these facilitators and barriers may be tied to challenges and opportunities that are especially likely to be encountered in efforts to use mentoring for purposes of delinquent behavior prevention or reduction. Consider, for example, that community resources often are lower at schools, communities, and neighborhoods where delinquent behavior is more prevalent, and with this come barriers to systematic implementation of programs. Clearly, too, the juvenile justice system may present its own opportunities and challenges as a setting for implementation. Potential opportunities include leveraging existing activities, such as detention and probation, for purposes of mentoring through strategies such as staff training. Possible challenges include limitations in the capacity of juvenile justice entities to effectively implement their own mentoring initiatives as well as a relative lack of coordination and referral linkages with established mentoring programs in the broader community.

Adopting and sustaining mentoring programs to reduce or prevent delinquent behavior. The prospect of achieving a measurable overall positive impact on rates of delinquent behavior and related outcomes (e.g., juvenile justice system involvement) through mentoring programs and strategies logically hinges, in significant part, on the extent to which they are adopted and put into place on a relatively broad scale. This is likely to be the case not only with respect to geography (e.g., urban and rural settings), but also different types of host organizations that are apt to be best positioned for contributing to different types of aims (e.g., primary prevention versus recidivism prevention) as well as reach and engagement of different types of youth (e.g., younger and older, male and female, varying racial and ethnic minority backgrounds). Also important may be the extent to which such programs and initiatives are able to be sustained over time. In line with this possibility, a national survey of mentoring programs[49] found that the number of years a program had been in operation was predictive of a greater reported percentage of mentees referred to the program from juvenile justice settings meeting or exceeding the goals set for them. Potential explanations for this finding could relate to the degree to which more established programs are successful with reaching and engaging youth and/or maintaining a high quality of implementation. Thus, although these varying sets of factors have been discussed separately here, the potential for important interactions and interdependencies within and across these areas should be kept in mind.

RESEARCH

Available research includes attention to factors involved with the provision of mentoring to populations of youth who for the most part demonstrate risk factors for delinquent behavior, but have not yet begun to engage to a notable degree in this type of behavior. Other findings address similar considerations of adoption, reach, and implementation for mentoring programs and strategies directed toward youth who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Some research, too, has looked at the provision of mentoring for older youth, including those with histories of engaging in delinquent behavior and/or having been involved in the juvenile justice system, with an eye at least in part toward forestalling similar behavior and justice system involvement during adulthood. These results map roughly onto the aims of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention as used in this review and highlights from each are summarized below. It bears noting, as well, that the long-standing support of OJJDP for mentoring programs directed toward youth involved in or at-risk for delinquent behavior and juvenile justice system involvement (summarized earlier in this review) has quite arguably resulted in greater reach of mentoring to these populations, not to mention potentially enhanced quality of implementation. However, the authors of this review are not aware of any research that has examined these contributions.

Youth with risk for delinquent behavior and juvenile justice system involvement. A national survey of 18- to 21-year-olds undertaken on behalf of MENTOR[50] found that among those designated as "at-risk" (several indicators of which are established risk factors for delinquent behavior and/or juvenile justice system involvement[v]), 37 percent reported that they never had a mentor of any kind

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v   At-risk youth were defined as those who were disconnected (out of school and out of work) and/or one or more of seven risk factors. The latter factors included engaging in delinquent behavior (as indexed by a report of getting into trouble with the law; 13 percent of the overall sample) as well as other factors associated with greater delinquent behavior (e.g., incarcerated parent, poor school performance).

while growing up. Notably, the greater the number of risk factors reported, the more likely young persons were to recall a time when they did not have, but wished they had had an adult mentor (43 percent of respondents with two or more risk factors compared to 22 percent with no risk factors).[48]

Along with these indications of limited reach of mentoring efforts for youth susceptible to delinquent behavior, available findings also point to challenges with implementing and engaging such youth in program practices oriented toward delinquent behavior prevention. The previously referenced study of the Step-It-Up-2-Thrive model,[29] for example, nearly 4 in 10 of the youth assigned to receive the model (38.8 percent) reported positive engagement (doing the activity and finding it fun or helpful) with none of its six core components; likewise, only about one in four (22.4 percent) reported positive engagement with all six. Positive engagement in at least three of the six components, which as noted previously was predictive of less problem behavior at post-test, was found to vary considerably across the 10 BBBS agencies involved in this research, thus suggesting a program or organizational level influence. In line with this possibility, the Mentoring Enhancement Demonstration Program (see Table 1) evaluation reported that implementation for the teaching and advocacy practices studies in this research appeared to be hampered by organizational factors such as staff turnover and lack of adequate opportunities for staff professional development and training. Organizational resource constraints, furthermore, were highlighted as a barrier to sustaining the new practices beyond the time frame of the research. In line with the foregoing findings, a recent synthesis of OJJDP-funded research on youth mentoring (most of which has been focused on youth at-risk for delinquent behavior and juvenile justice system involvement) found "abundant evidence of challenges involved with program implementation." Salient difficulties included challenges of attempting to introduce (and evaluate) potential enhancements into existing mentoring programs as well as limited success of programs in providing youth with mentoring relationships that were sustained over intended minimum periods of time.

Youth who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system. A fairly recent national survey[51] found that about 6 in 10 juvenile justice settings reported provided mentoring to youth internally through their own "embedded" programs or services and/or referred youth to external mentoring programs. Approximately equal numbers reported each of these approaches. Approximately 40 percent of mentoring programs surveyed in the same research reported that at least 10 percent of the youth they served were referred by the juvenile justice system. It is not possible from these numbers to glean the overall extent to which mentoring programs and services are reaching youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Further findings from the same research point to considerable challenges with adoption, reach, and implementation of mentoring services for youth with juvenile justice system involvement. Among the justice settings not using or referring youth to mentoring, the most common barrier cited (50.6 percent) was lack of access to mentoring programs. More than one-third (38.6 percent) of juvenile justice settings, furthermore, reported that only between 0 and 25 percent of the youth they referred

> Notably, the **greater the number of risk factors reported**, the **more likely** young persons were to recall a time when they **did not have**, but wished they had had **an adult mentor** (**43%** of respondents with **two or more risk factors** compared to **22%** with no risk factors)

to outside programs were ultimately matched with a mentor. For their part, mentoring programs most commonly cited lack of mentor availability as a barrier to providing services to referred youth (49.8 percent), although a substantial portion (26.7 percent) also reported that refusal/lack of acceptance of the referral on the part of the youth or family was an issue. At the same time, there is also some evidence that when youth with juvenile justice system involvement are able to be engaged with mentoring, this can be beneficial for their overall engagement with recommended supports. In this research, court-referred adolescent males (77 percent Black) were ten times more likely to remain in the targeted community-based intervention if they utilized the mentoring component during the initial six months.[69]

CONCLUSIONS

1. Mentoring has considerable reach as an intervention strategy both for youth susceptible to delinquent behavior and those who have already come into contact with the justice system for offenses; yet there is also clearly a substantial unmet need for mentoring within both of these populations that remains to be addressed, part of which appears to be attributable to limited coordination or collaboration between juvenile justice settings and mentoring programs.

2. Implementing mentoring services directed toward preventing or reducing future delinquent behavior and engaging youth in these services has proved only partially successful; limitations in organizational capacity appear to be among the most influential barriers to implementation and engagement both within and outside of the juvenile justice system.

3. There is limited but intriguing evidence that efforts to engage justice system–involved youth in mentoring, when successful, can help to sustain their overall engagement with court-recommended services.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(Mike Garringer, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership)

It seems clear from the research evidence reviewed in the previous pages that volunteer mentors can be effective in both the initial prevention of delinquent and criminal behavior by youth and in efforts to prevent recidivism and deeper involvement for those who may already have some involvement. But this body of research also hints at some factors that programs doing work in this space may want to consider to maximize their results.

1. **IT MAY BE USEFUL TO LIMIT THE TYPES OF YOUTH WHO ARE REFERRED TO OR SERVED BY MENTORING PROGRAMS, PARTICULARLY IF THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.**

   There are several hints in the research described previously that serving delinquent youth can be challenging and that these youth can often bring mindsets, trauma histories, and other personal circumstances to the mentoring relationship that can make it hard for them to engage effectively with a mentor. As noted in the previous pages, these youth may have a history of abuse or exploitation by adults that leaves them not only questioning (or rejecting) adult authority, but also adult offers of support (or even claims of supportive intent). These are young people who may have been previously let down by many adults in their lives, including adults who promised to keep them safe, and may reject new offers of support due to such offers going unfulfilled in the past. It is also noted that these youth may often see mentors referred to them by a court as being representative of a justice system that, in their estimation, is questionable in moral intent if not exploitative of or adversarial to their community. And given the co-incidence of delinquency with other concerns, such as mental health challenges, which can inhibit the development of a good mentoring relationship, programs may wish to take some time at the referral stage to learn more about the attitudes, mindsets, and emotional barriers that may get in the way of some youth benefitting from the program. Those youth can be referred to more appropriate services and can always come back to mentoring at a future point where they would be more amenable to the experience. Trying to serve youth who simply don't want to or can't be served by a volunteer mentoring may explain, in part, some of the variance in findings noted in the main review.

   The review also hints, however, at some strengths that these same youth can bring to the table that might also influence who is accepted into the program. Several of the studies mentioned note that youth who had access to other caring adults or more indicators of positive youth development in their personal histories and current circumstances seemed more likely to benefit from mentoring. The review even notes the "Matthew Effect," in which services like mentoring mostly help those who are in a position to be helped by way of some notable strengths lacking in other potential recipients of the service. And while it's true that this can result in "the rich getting richer" and leaving lower-asset peers behind, the reality is that not every program is for every young person. If high percentages of a programs' participants are a poor fit for what a mentor offers — either because of negative attitudes that will be a barrier or a lack of other supportive adults that can reinforce the work with the mentor —

then programs are more than justified in applying more rigorous criteria to who they serve. It certainly beats failing in the mission. Thus, programs working in the delinquency space are encouraged to prioritize serving youth who seem open to a relationship and have some level of additional adult support and life stability to build on. Youth who don't fit this profile can be referred to other services that can be effective with their needs and what they will respond to. Which begs a similar, yet related point . . .

2. CONSIDER ALIGNING SERVICES MORE WITH ESTABLISHED RECIDIVISM AND OFFENDER REHABILITATION MODELS.

In 2018, the National Mentoring Resource Center's *Reflections on Research* podcast featured an interview with noted criminologist Dr. Edward Latessa. Latessa had just finished a large evaluation of mentoring for youth on parole and probation in the state of Ohio that had referred youth to local mentoring programs with the aim of reducing their recidivism and ongoing engagement in the juvenile justice system. Unfortunately, the evaluation showed no positive impact on recidivism rates at any of the sites compared to control groups, and even though these youth were deeper in their delinquent and criminal involvement than the youth discussed here in this review, it did beg the question as to whether community-based mentoring was an effective approach for preventing recidivism in general and cast some doubt on its ability to prevent worsening of behavior and consequences.

But Latessa noted that mentoring programs do something very well that almost all other juvenile justice intervention struggle with mightily: the caring relationship. What they didn't do so well, in his opinion, was integrate their services into an established offender rehabilitation framework — in particular, the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model. This model, which has substantial research evidence[vi] supporting its effectiveness in guiding appropriate interventions that reduce recidivism, is built around three core principles:

1. Risk principle: Match the level of service to the offender's risk to re-offend (the more likely to re-offend, the more the service is needed and with more intensity).

2. Need principle: Assess criminogenic needs and target them in treatment (in other words, what are the real-life reasons that might lead to criminal behavior).

3. Responsivity principle: Maximize the offender's ability to learn from a rehabilitative intervention by providing cognitive behavioral treatment and tailoring the intervention to the learning style, motivation, abilities, and strengths of the offender (essentially meeting each person's needs through targeted change talk and in accordance with their unique learning styles).

Latessa pointed out that the mentoring programs in his study did not match the level of service (e.g., the amount or frequency of mentoring) to the likelihood of re-offending, nor did the mentoring tend to incorporate cognitive behavioral principles by which trained mentors

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vi   Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2006). *The psychology of criminal conduct (4th ed.). Newark, NJ: LexisNexis.*

would use specific activities and conversations to try and influence thinking patterns and decision-making of mentees. And probably most discouraging is that the mentoring was often provided in isolation, with not nearly enough attention paid to those criminogenic factors that might lead someone to reoffend even if they were getting great mentoring. These programs, to Latessa's point, put all their eggs in the relationship basket and ignored much of what we know about preventing worsening delinquent and criminal behavior through programmatic services.

This is not to say that mentoring programs looking to prevent or reduce delinquency and criminality in young people need to start viewing mentees as serious offenders and responding accordingly — remember, the youth in the Ohio study were much further along in their behaviors and system involvement than the youth being discussed in this review. But it does mean that if mentoring programs, especially those working with youth who are already minimally engaged in criminal behavior, want to influence recidivism rates they may want to pay attention to frameworks like the RNR and ask how much their services align with what we know about working with youth in the juvenile justice system. If neither their mentors nor the other organizations working with the youth are attending to the things outlined in that framework, success may be limited.

For what it's worth, the RNR model has its critics, and alternative approaches, such as the "Good Lives Model," or GLM, have grown in prominence.[vii] The GLM model is more strengths-based than the deficit-driven RNR and argues that the best way of supporting individuals in avoiding criminality is to build up strengths and start with the positives that all people possess. So there are several frameworks that may influence the mentoring provided delinquent youth and some are likely to be a better fit than others. What is clear is that ignoring these research-supported frameworks to offer only a generic "wise friend" type mentoring relationship might ignore critical components of helping that young person.

Programs are encouraged, especially in cases where youth are being referred to their services in lieu of deeper court or justice system involvement, to ask if there has been any formal assessment of the youth's needs or likelihood for re-offending. Models like the RNR start with a very comprehensive assessment that tries to determine the youth's risk, needs, and responsiveness keys. Those types of assessments can be a gold mine of information for programs and service providers in how to best meet the needs of a young person.

3. IF YOU WANT THIS WORK TO BE FUN, IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING.

As noted above, one of the big factors in how well mentoring works for delinquent youth is their openness to the experience and how the relationship feels from their perspective. If the mentor is viewed as a liaison of an unpleasant justice system, or as someone who will break promises, it can be almost impossible to reach a reticent youth. The research reviewed here pointed to several examples of how youth can reject such offers of support. But there are certain approaches mentors can take that might be more effective than others. The YAP

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vii   Ward, T., Mann, R., & Gannon, T. (2007). The good lives model of offender rehabilitation: Clinical implications. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 12*, 87–107.

study noted in the evidence review offers an interesting example of this. That study analyzed the amount of time matches spent on either problem-focused, "serious" conversations (e.g., adherence to the court-mandated treatment plan) or on more relational and playful activities (e.g., shooting hoops, cooking a meal, talking about fun topics, etc.). Matches that engaged in more fun, playful activities produced better results with youth misconduct, but only when that play was most prominent toward the end of the match. Those who engaged in play early on, likely in an attempt to build rapport and trust, and saved those tougher conversations for later were associated with increased misconduct.

Mentors are almost always told to spend some time learning about their mentee and building trust through more playful interactions up front, and those are still important steps in most mentoring relationships. And the mentors here who saved play for later in the relationship still did spend some time getting to know their mentees and having a laugh at the beginning of the relationship. But what they didn't do was ignore the reason for their time together: helping that youth adhere to their court-mandated treatment plan and getting them on a positive track which would end their engagement in misbehavior. They had serious work to do together and they made sure that their mentee knew it. These mentors dove into the task at hand (and one can imagine them explicitly looking to improve those criminogenic factors), using the hard work of the program, rather than play, as the context for getting to know each other. Over time, these mentors sprinkled in more and more "play" activities to the point that by the end of their relationships, they were maintaining what they had built by checking in, but were no longer doing the messy hard work of figuring out paths forward for the mentee. This allowed them to focus on fun and play in a way that solidified their bond and kept them from rehashing the same areas for improvement. Unfortunately, some mentors never increased that play ratio and the evaluation results suggest that this led to some negative perceptions of the relationship. One can see how talking about the same old challenges and problems after so many months together would make mentees perhaps feel worse about themselves and the relationship. These mentors were less effective in keeping their mentees from further trouble.

One doesn't automatically think of "fun activities" when conceptualizing a program for delinquent youth. But studies like YAP are a good reminder that mentoring relationships, even ones with a serious criminal justice reason for being and related goals, are still human relationships. And the second they become more of a drag than a value to the recipients, the more likely they are to start failing. Mentors in these programs may overcome those rejection tendencies and earn mentee trust by getting down to business and saving the bulk of the fun times together for the later stages of the relationship.

4. CONSIDER ADOPTING A "CRITICAL MENTORING" APPROACH TO MORE EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE YOUTH.

As noted in the review and earlier in this section, juvenile justice-focused mentoring programs can often struggle with getting youth buy-in. One of the main barriers in this regard is that youth from seriously disadvantaged communities may feel a sense of hopelessness about their situations and that their communities critically lack resources that can help them avoid delinquency (e.g., adequate employment opportunities, safe public spaces, strong educational

institutions, stable housing, etc.). In fact, it's hard to argue that youth in many communities in this country are incorrect in noticing the uphill battle in front of them due to a lack of resources and supports.

But a new strain of thought within the mentoring movement has started to shift this dynamic and gives young people a reason to embrace the role of a mentor in their lives. Critical mentoring, a term coined by Dr. Torie Weiston-Serdan, is a form of mentoring that emphasizes youth empowerment and the development of critical consciousness — a deep understanding about the history of a community in relation to one's self, and ongoing analysis of the many influences, both positive and negative, that have led to the current circumstances a person finds themselves in. In this form of mentoring, youth are encouraged to not only grow as individuals and strive for personal achievement, but are also taught to view the world through a critical lens and are, in turn, empowered to make meaningful changes in their community through the help of mentors and other caring adults. Rather than teaching youth to succeed in spite of their circumstances, this critical mentoring approach empowers them to identify community issues and find solutions that change those circumstances for future generations. In this way, youth are empowered to not only improve themselves through mentoring, but also improve their communities and start addressing root causes in service of future generations.

> In this form of mentoring, youth are **encouraged** to not only **grow as individuals** and strive for **personal achievement**, but are also taught to view the world through a **critical lens** and are, in turn, **empowered** to make **meaningful changes** in their community through the help of **mentors** and **other caring adults**.

This critical mentoring concept exists within a larger general movement within mentoring toward embracing diversity and inclusion and ensuring that mentoring is working in culturally relevant and respectful ways with communities of color and communities of poverty. Unfortunately, in many of these communities youth mentoring programs are often seen, fairly or unfairly, as "helicoptering" in to "save" youth, with an assumption that the community itself lacks assets or motivation. While it's true that mentoring programs bring new and different social capital into the lives of youth who might never have gained it otherwise, the programs these days are paying much more attention to how they build on strengths and how they build up the whole community, not just individual youth.

One can see how this approach might be appealing to a young person who has assumed that they have limited opportunities to make meaningful, lasting change in the world. Critical approaches to mentoring have the ability to inspire young people to not only work on their own issues, but to then translate their personal growth into growth for their community. Programs looking to disrupt cycles of delinquency might do well to incorporate these principles and make the case to youth that they have the ability to not only change themselves but also change the reality of their community and leave a better space for future young people to thrive.

5. **CLARIFY THE TYPES OF DELINQUENCY OUTCOMES THAT MAKE SENSE FOR YOUR PROGRAM.**

As noted in the background of this review, programs working in this space have a history of being all over the place with regards to the measures and metrics they use, with little consistency in terms of how they define and measure delinquency or its consequences. Even within a simple idea like "criminal involvement" there are myriad ways of measuring youth behavior and program impact. Is the program focused on primary prevention of keeping youth from ever having criminal involvement? Or is the emphasis keeping that involvement from getting worse? And how is "involvement" defined? Being arrested? Being tried? Convicted? For that matter, how is "worse" defined? Is the goal no re-offending at all? Re-offending less? Not committing more serious offenses (e.g., moving from misdemeanors to felonies)?

The answers to some of these questions have implications for how services are designed and who is recruited as mentors. But they also have implications for what data is collected and how success is measured. One NMRC Program Review highlighted an evaluation of a program focused on recidivism prevention (Reading for Life, noted in the evidence review here) that did a great job of talking about how the program settled on the delinquency outcomes that made sense for them. This was especially tricky given the many, many statuses that youth could be tagged with in the justice system. Practitioners may want to look at the data collection and measures section of the evaluation report as well as the discussion of this in the Insights for Practitioners developed by the NMRC. Asking and discussing questions such as these can also help programs promise the right delinquency and recidivism outcomes:

- How do we define delinquency? What behaviors are contained within that definition? What about juvenile justice "involvement" specifically? What is contained within that involvement?

- Are our mentors and services better positioned to focus on preventing the start of delinquent behaviors or stepping in after those behaviors have started?

- How would we define recidivism for our program? Would we want to keep youth from . . .

  » Any ongoing law enforcement contact?

  » Being detained but not arrested? Arrested? Arrested but not charged? Charged? Charged but not convicted? Convicted only? What is the specific status we want to prevent?

- What about status offences or a warrant being issued for failure to check in with probation or following a court order? Do those count?

- Does it matter if the reoffending is for lesser crimes? For example, if our youth have some criminal involvement, but it's for minor things and misdemeanors rather than felonies or violent crimes, is that "success"? Or is our goal the elimination of all delinquent behavior? What's realistic for our youth and our services?

- What kind of time frame would we consider "success"? How long after the mentoring services start or end would we hope to see ongoing reductions in misbehavior?

- Do we have access to the data we need through courts or other systems or would we need to rely on self-reports? If not, how can we get it? Does it come in formats that align with the decisions made in the questions above?

These questions will have profound influence on what data programs collect and how they define success. There are no right answers, but practitioners should simply note that evaluating delinquency outcomes is often complicated and involves nuances such as these that can influence whether a program can claim to have "worked" or not.

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TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF SELECTED STUDIES OF EFFECTS OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROGRAMS ON DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR AND RELATED OUTCOMES

Outcome key: ✚ Favorable effect ▬ Unfavorable effect ✘ No effect or nonsignificant finding DB = Delinquent behavior

MEN = Mentoring program or naturally occurring mentoring relationship

PRIMARY PREVENTION						
Type of Mentoring			**Study Methods & Findings**			
Name	Structure	Processes/ Activities	Methodology	Question 1: Effect of mentoring on delinquent behavior (DB)	Question 2: Factors conditioning or shaping effects of mentoring on DB?	Question 3: Intervening processes linking mentoring to lower DB?
Naturally occurring mentoring[52]	*Goal:* N/A *Setting:* Varies *Duration:* Varies *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Any adult age 18–24 other than the youths' parent or stepparent who youth reports has made a positive difference in their lives since age 14 *Mentees:* Adolescents		*Design:* Observational with four waves of data collection: 2 years (wave 2), 6 years (wave 3), and 14 years following initial assessment (Wave 4) *Sample:* Adolescents with an average age of 15.8 *Mentoring:* Presence and type of mentor measured with one 1 item at Wave 3 *Potential Mediators:* Youth report 11-item scale of mattering at Waves 1 and 2. *Outcomes:* Youth-report scale of DB at Wave 1 (15 items) Wave 2 (14 items) and Wave 3 (16 items). Youth report eight-item scale of dangerous DB at Wave 3	✘ DB ✚ Dangerous DB		✚ MEN → (+) Mattering→ (-) DB and (-) Dangerousness
Naturally occurring mentoring[32]	*Goal:* N/A *Setting:* Varies *Duration:* Varies *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* An adult 25 years or older identified by teen as a mentor (other than immediate family members) *Mentees:* Urban adolescents who were in their first year of high school in 1994, and who had eighth grade GPAs of 3.0 and below		*Design:* Observational, cross-sectional *Sample:* 770 adolescents *Mentoring:* Structured face-to-face interviews were used to assess youth report of having a mentor (one item) *Outcomes:* Single-item measures of Nonviolent DB and Violent DB	✚ Nonviolent DB ✘ Violent DB		

PRIMARY PREVENTION						
Type of Mentoring			**Study Methods & Findings**			
Name	**Structure**	**Processes/ Activities**	**Methodology**	**Question 1: Effect of mentoring on delinquent behavior (DB)**	**Question 2: Factors conditioning or shaping effects of mentoring on DB?**	**Question 3: Intervening processes linking mentoring to lower DB?**
Big Brother Big Sisters[29]	*Goal:* Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth *Setting:* Community *Duration:* One-year commitment with potential for longer *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Adult community volunteers *Mentees:* Youth ages 6–18	Parents submit an application and a team decides if the child qualifies. Parents are involved throughout the process, provide information about their child's strengths and needs, ask their child about their outings and share their child's progress with program staff, and participate in training on child safety. Mentors commit for 12 months, meeting one to four times a month for an average of three to five hours. They complete a formal application, reference checks, in-person interviews, orientation, and a training	*Design:* RCT with measures at baseline (T1) and 15 months after follow-up (T2) *Sample:* 806 youth ages 10–16 *Mentoring:* Participating in all six thriving promotion activities ("Step it up to Thrive") versus standard services *Potential Mediator:* Three-item youth report of enhanced support for thriving from adults *Outcome:* Twenty-seven-item self-report scale of PB that includes a 22-item DB scale, and a 22-item/ 4 domain scale of youth thriving	✗Thriving condition → Problem Behavior		✚ Positive engagement with the activities → (+) enhanced support for thriving from adults → (+) personal resources for thriving and (-) Problem Behavior
Naturally occurring mentoring[53]	*Goal:* Reduce risk behavior among youth, especially in the context of school *Setting:* School *Duration:* N/A *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Teachers or other adults at school who the youth reports cares about them, tells them they do a good job, listens to what they have to say, believes them to be a success, or listens to them when they have something to say *Mentees:* High school students		*Design:* Observational (T1 & T2 one year later) *Sample:* 3,320 students from 65 high schools across 8 states, average age 14.8 *Mentoring:* Five-item youth report of whether they have a mentor at school *Potential Mediators:* Four-item self-report scale of school attachment (T1) *Outcome:* Four-item self-report scale of violence perpetration (T2).	✚Violence Perpetration		✚ MEN → (+) School Attachment → (-) Violence Perpetration

Type of Mentoring			Study Methods & Findings			
Name	Structure	Processes/ Activities	Methodology	Question 1: Effect of mentoring on delinquent behavior (DB)	Question 2: Factors conditioning or shaping effects of mentoring on DB?	Question 3: Intervening processes linking mentoring to lower DB?
Mentor Sweden[54]	*Goal:* Promote social, emotional, and academic development for the purpose of preventing substance abuse in low-risk youth *Setting:* Community *Duration:* One year *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Adult volunteers *Mentees:* All 14-year-olds in program schools with a self-reported need for more adult contacts	Mentor Sweden staff meet with parents and mentors at the program onset, and with mentor-mentee pairs before, during, and after the program. Mentors undergo a criminal records check, take a two-day course on program aims and mentoring principles, and are offered supervision by program director or psychologist. Mentor/mentee pairs are matched on gender interests. They meet for two to five hours at least every two weeks and are free to meet as they see fit, but they are given eight "assignments" as suggestions. They are also given 2000 SEK (~280 USD) to spend during their meetings.	*Design:* RCT (T1 and T2 12 months later) *Sample:* 128 14-year olds (65 in treatment group) in Sweden *Mentoring:* Mentoring versus control condition *Potential Moderator:* Time measured as length of intervention *Outcome:* Forty-item scale of youth-report DB (T1 and T2)	✘DB		✘Time → MEN
The Mentoring Enhancement Demonstration Program (MEDP)[45]			*Design:* RCT *Sample:* 2,165 youth, just over half were female. The average age was 12.4. Thirty programs across 13 states participated. *Mentoring:* Enhancement versus no enhancement *Outcomes:* Stopped by police or arrests, onset of person-offenses, onset of property offences, and referral to a juvenile court	✘Stopped by police or arrested ✘Person offenses—onset ✘Person offenses—frequency ✘Property offenses—onset ✘Property offenses—frequency ✚Referral to juvenile court		

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Type of Mentoring			Study Methods & Findings			
Name	Structure	Processes/ Activities	Methodology	Question 1: Effect of mentoring on delinquent behavior (DB)	Question 2: Factors conditioning or shaping effects of mentoring on DB?	Question 3: Intervening processes linking mentoring to lower DB?
The Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES) program[32]	*Goal:* Engage middle school youth to promote positive community change and enhance positive development using an empowerment framework *Setting:* School *Duration:* Academic year *Format:* Group *Mentors:* Paid after-school teachers *Mentees:* Middle school youth in two Michigan counties: Flint and Genesee	YES incorporates empowerment theory and helps youth build skills and interpersonal confidence through designing and implementing a community change project using photovoice. The curriculum provides structured lesson plans that are culturally responsive. The curriculum is organized around six units: Youth as Leaders, Learning About Our Community, Improving Our Community, Building Intergenerational Partnerships, Planning for Change, and Action and Reflection	*Design:* Modified random assignment. Youth were randomly assigned at schools where 12 or more youth consented. Schools with fewer than 12 youth were assigned to program or control. Participants completed a pretest and post-test 1 to 70 days after program completion. *Sample:* 367 middle school youth across 13 schools (249 YES participants and 118 regular after-school program youth) ages 11–16 (M = 12.71, SD = 0.91) 60% female *Mentoring:* YES Program versus regular after-school programing *Potential Mediators:* Dose received measured by mentee reports of activities participated in, and dose delivered measured by mentor reports of activities delivered *Outcomes:* DB measured using eight items adapted from the Child Behavior Checklist	✘DB		✚ Dose received → (-) DB ✘ Dose delivered → DB

SECONDARY PREVENTION						
Program				**Evaluation**		
Name	Structure	Processes/ Activities	Methodology	Question 1: What is the effect of mentoring on DB?	Question 2: What factors condition or shape the effects of mentoring on DB?	Question 3: What intervening processes are important for linking mentoring to lower DB?
The Young Women Leaders Program[55]	*Goal:* preventing delinquency and related negative outcomes in adolescent girls identified as at-risk *Setting:* Community *Duration:* Up to three years, mentees receive a new mentor each year *Format:* One-to-one and group *Mentors:* College women who commit five hours a week for the academic year *Mentees:* Seventh to ninth grade girls at risk for delinquency	Mentoring pairs meets for at least four hours a month one-on-one to do mutually agreed upon activities. Pairs meet two hours a week after school in groups of 8–10 mentees, their mentors, and a facilitator for connection, homework time, introduction of skills, working on service projects, and group discussion of problematic topics. All pairs attend structured activities once a semester on the college campus and most groups have sleepovers or play days.	*Design:* Quasi-experimental and randomized (true randomization did not occur year one, five-year follow-up) *Sample:* 165 youth *Mentoring:* Examined outcome based on dosage *Outcomes:* Youth report two-item DB subscale			✚MEN dose → (-) DB
The Buddy System[56]	*Goal:* Prevent juvenile offending *Setting:* Hawaii (urban and rural) *Duration:* Approximately one year *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Paid adults recruited from the same neighborhoods as mentees. Mentors served three mentees each *Mentees:* Adolescents ages 11–17 referred for problems such as truancy, aggression, and low academic performance	Clinical psychology students supervised mentors Pairs met every week. Mentors had a small monthly allowance to spend on fun activities. These activities were contingent on good behaviors.	*Design:* RCT 35 year follow-up *Sample:* 475 adults; 295 participants (62.1%) in the Buddy System and 180 (37.9%) from the randomly assigned no-treatment control group *Mentoring:* Study records of mentoring versus control youths *Potential Moderators:*[viii,ix] Program records of whether the youth was arrested before referral, and their gender *Outcome:* Court records of arrests		✗Arrest rate for participants with no arrest before referral ✗Arrest rate for participants with arrests before referral ✗Arrests for women with no arrests before referral ✗Arrests for women with no arrests before referral	

viii   Since one-tailed tests were used in these analyses, a significance testing cutoff of p < .025 was used.

ix   Analyses testing a mentoring program or relationship effect at different levels of the potential moderator were reported without a test of the moderator (i.e., whether the mentoring - outcome association was statistically different across levels of the potential moderator)

SECONDARY PREVENTION

	Program		Evaluation			
Name	**Structure**	**Processes/ Activities**	**Methodology**	**Question 1: What is the effect of mentoring on DB?**	**Question 2: What factors condition or shape the effects of mentoring on DB?**	**Question 3: What intervening processes are important for linking mentoring to lower DB?**
Campus Corps[57]	**Goal:** Prevent deeper engagement with the juvenile justice system, school dropouts, and serious behavioral health problems **Setting:** College campus **Duration:** Twelve weeks **Format:** Combination one-to-one and group **Mentors:** Undergraduate students in a three-semester service-learning course **Mentees:** High risk youth ages 11–18, mostly recruited from probation and office of the District Attorney. Youth deeply involved in the juvenile justice system are not included	Each mentor is assigned a "mentor family" (groups of four or five other pairs) and supervised by more experienced mentors and graduate students trained in therapeutic interventions and systemic thinking. Each week includes a four-hour meeting where mentors and mentees walk on campus, work on individualized career planning, have family dinners, or engage in other prosocial activities.	**Design:** QED, pre- and post-test **Sample:** 382 youth (n = 286 in Campus Corps; n = 136 comparison referred after program was full) **Mentoring:** Mentoring versus "treatment as usual" **Outcome:** Single youth-report open-ended truancy item, 13-item youth report scale of DB and substance use	+ DB and Substance use + Truancy		

SECONDARY PREVENTION						
Program			**Evaluation**			
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SFUSD's Mentoring for Success program: Project Arrive initiative[58]	**Goal:** Address the needs of youth at risk of dropping out of school **Setting:** School **Duration:** Academic Year **Format:** Group **Mentors:** Volunteer school staff (counselors, advisers, principles, other staff) or community partners (employees of local nonprofits). **Mentees:** At risk K–12 students in the San Francisco school district	Two co-mentors met weekly with groups of six to eight students during school hours for 50-minute sessions. A full-time program coordinator conducts a four-hour training for mentors, assists with recruiting and enrolling students, meets monthly with mentoring teams, provides match and logistical support, and serves as a liaison between each school and the district's student support programs office. Mentors receive a binder with program procedures, contact information, and curricular materials, and access to a website with activities that address common adolescent issues. Mentors select activities or work with their mentees to develop activities and discuss topics in line with overall program goals.	**Design:** QED with data collected at five time points: pre-intervention plus the end of fall and spring semester for two years **Sample:** 1,219 68 youth who finished the program (n = 240 Project Arrive, n = 983 comparison) **Mentoring:** Project arrive compared to demographically similar students. **Outcome:** Truancy data was collected from school administrative records and arrests records were collected from the juvenile probation department.	✖Ninth grade arrests ✚Eighth grade, 10th grade, or any year ✚Truancy		
Promoter Pathway Program[59]	[Information about this program and study can be found on CrimeSolutions.gov](#)			➖Getting into a fight ✖Carrying a weapon ✖Incarceration		
Coaching for Communities[60]	[Information about this program and study can be found on CrimeSolutions.gov](#)			✖Volume of offending ✚Variety of offending		

SECONDARY PREVENTION

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Operation Peacekeeper[61]	[Information about this program and study can be found on CrimeSolutions.gov](https://CrimeSolutions.gov)			✚Gun homicides in Stockton, Calif.		
National Guard Youth Challenge[35]	*Goal:* Improve educational and behavioral outcomes for youth who have dropped out of high school *Setting:* Community *Duration:* One year or longer *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Youth nominate their own mentor *Mentees:* Sixteen-to-eighteen-year-old unemployed high school dropouts who are disconnected from meaningful direction in life but not heavily involved in the justice system	The mentoring phase of the National Guard Youth Challenge is the third phase of the 17-month program. Youth nominate mentors in phase two and staff initiate the relationship and check in with youth and mentors monthly. Mentors are meant to help maintain the attitudes and behaviors learned in the earlier phases of the program.	*Design:* Nonexperimental mixed methods *Sample:* 722 youth in the treatment group *Mentoring:* Duration of mentoring relationship at 38-month follow-up, re-estimated using propensity scores based on baseline characteristics of youth *Outcome:* Self-reported convictions	✚Convictions		
Comprehensive Homicide Initiative[62]	[Information about this program and study can be found on CrimeSolutions.gov](https://CrimeSolutions.gov)			✚Number of homicides		
The Girls Circle[63]	*Goal:* Address gender-specific risks, needs, and strengths of girls in the juvenile justice system *Setting:* Community *Duration:* Eight to ten weeks *Format:* Group *Mentors:* Varies *Mentees:* Girls ages 9–18	Based on the relational-cultural theory of female psychology Uses motivational interviewing	*Design:* RCT, pre/posttest *Sample:* 168 youth (112 treatment and 56 control) *Mentoring:* Potential *Moderator:* Dosage as number of days attended *Outcomes:* The Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department provided court records of recidivism, including probation violation, delinquency petition, arrest, and any event (i.e., petition or arrests)	✖Recidivism		

SECONDARY PREVENTION

Program			Evaluation			
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Reading for Life[64]	*Goal:* Provide an alternative to court prosecution for first- and second-time juvenile offenders; reduce recidivism through moral development and character education *Setting:* Community *Duration:* Ten weeks *Format:* Group *Mentors:* Adult volunteer mentors *Mentees:* Nonviolent, often first-time offenders	Youth are placed in groups of up to five based on reading ability with two mentors. Volunteers undergo an initial practical and theoretical training, with ongoing training and supervision quarterly. and spend twelve weeks shadowing experience mentors before leading groups. Groups select a novel from a list and 60-minute sessions involve oral readings, journaling, and discussion. Through this they learn about Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas's seven virtues. Groups also choose a one-day community service project that coincides with themes from their novel. The program ends with a final presentation for youths' parents, mentors, and staff.	*Design:* RCT, measured yearly for four years *Sample:* Nonviolent offenders ages 11–18 (n = 194 treatment; n = 214 controls) *Mentoring:* Randomly assigned to mentoring or 25 hours community service *Outcome:* Counts for arrests, misdemeanors, and felonies	✚Arrests ✚ Misdemeanor offenses ✚Felony offenses		
Campus Connections[65]	*Goal:* Reduce the depth of a youth's entry into the juvenile justice system by providing opportunities to expunge charges and avoid adjudication *Setting:* College campuses *Duration:* Twelve weeks *Format:* One-to-one and group *Mentors:* College students *Mentees:* Youth at risk for future delinquency, 10–18 years old, and residing in Larimer County, Colorado	Pairs meet one day a week, for four hours, for 12 weeks on the university campus. They participate in a community of about 25 other pairs and for activities such as exploring campus during 30-minute weekly walks, getting homework help for an hour each week, eating dinner together, and participating in two hours of prosocial activities like sports or cooking.	*Design:* Qualitative *Sample:* 87 first-time offending youth age 11–18 (M = 15) *Mentoring:* All youth participated in Campus Connections *Outcome:* Youth described changes they experienced through their involvement with the program in 16 to 32-minute interviews			76% of youth felt they had gained a positive influence in avoiding delinquency Many youths reported staying out of trouble out of concern that they would disappoint their mentor

SECONDARY PREVENTION

Program			Evaluation			
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The Arches Transformative Mentoring program (Arches)[66]	*Goal:* Reduce recidivism *Setting:* Community *Program:* Unnamed *Duration:* Forty-eight lessons over 6–12 months *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Paid adult "credible messengers," meaning those with backgrounds and characteristics similar to the populations they serve *Mentees:* Youth on juvenile probation in NYC	Intensive group mentoring sessions using an Interactive Journaling curriculum based on cognitive behavioral therapy principles. Groups meet in two one-hour sessions a week. A full-time program coordinator organizes activities. Sites employ one lead mentor and two to three part-time mentors. Participants receive stipend of up to $800 for participating in sessions. Sites also provide group meals.	*Design:* QED, 12(T1) and 24(T2) months following probation *Sample:* n = 279 arches participants, n = 682 control youth on probation and not enrolled in Arches *Mentoring:* Arches participants versus matched controls *Outcome:* Arrests, Felony Arrests, Reconvictions, and Felony Reconvictions were collected from Department of Probation records	✚Arrests T1 Arrests T2 ✖ Felony arrests T1 ✚ Felony arrests T2 ✚Reconvictions T1 ✚Reconvictions T2 ✚Felony reconvictions T1 ✚Felony reconvictions T2		
Six separate mentoring programs across the state of Ohio: David's Challenge, Inc; Community for New Direction; Sunlight Village Network, Inc.; Youth Advocate Program; Catholic Charities Community Services of Summit County; I Dream Academy[67]			*Design:* QED, youth matched on risk, gender, and age *Sample:* Two samples; parole youth who participated in mentoring services (*n* = 190) versus parole youth who did not (n = 234), and probation youth who participated in mentoring services (n = 100) versus probation youth who did not (n = 1,121). Age of the probation sample ranged from 12 to 19 (m = 15.41, *SD* = 1.47) and was 80.7% male. For the parole sample, ages ranged from 13 to 21 (m = 17.64, *SD* = 1.31), with 94.8% of the sample male *Mentoring:* Youth who participated in mentoring versus those who did not. *Potential Mediators:* Relationship quality was measured with the Dual Role Relationship Inventory-Revised (DRI-R) the Youth Mentoring Survey (YMS), and program satisfaction was measured with the Perceived Program Effectiveness (PPE) scale *Outcome:* Recidivism was measured as a new offence or revocation of parole/probation	✖MEN → Recidivism (Parole and Probation)	✖MEN X Risk Level → No impact recidivism	✖ Relationship Quality → Recidivism (Parole and Probation) ▬ Youth satisfaction with mentor → Recidivism

SECONDARY PREVENTION						
Program			**Evaluation**			
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Youth Advocacy Programs[68]	*Goal:* Reduce misconduct and recidivism and increase engagement in school or employment *Setting:* Community *Program:* Unnamed *Duration:* Four to six months *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Paid adults *Mentees:* Youth referred by the courts as diversion from incarceration	YAP referrals come from juvenile justice, child welfare, and behavioral health agencies under a "no reject – no eject" referral policy. YAP provides wraparound services in a process that begins with a strength-based family assessment. Staff meets with the family to introduce the program, learn about the family, complete four assessment tools, and address any immediate safety concerns. A team of formal service and informal supports (e.g., family members, pastors) is gathered to identify the family's needs and strengths, to develop a plan to meet these needs, and to develop a thorough safety plan. Advocate mentors and youth ideally meet for at least 7.5 hours per week, and sometimes meet up to 30 hours per week. They implement Individual Treatment Plans that are developed with each family.	*Design:* Recurrent institutional cycle (RIC) design for pre-post-test and cross-cohort comparisons; within-group 12-month follow-up. *Sample:* 163 youth *Mentoring:* 15–20 hours a week for three to four months. *Outcome:* Self-reported criminal disposition (truancies, misdemeanors and felonies) at 12-month follow-up	**+**Serious disposition at one-year follow-up		

SECONDARY PREVENTION

	Program			Evaluation			
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Mentoring Toward College Enhancement for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta[69]	*Goal:* Improve social, emotional, and cognitive development, through a focus on improved attitudes about the self, others, and academic achievement *Setting:* Community *Duration:* One-year minimum commitment *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* College students *Mentees:* A focus on youth from high-risk backgrounds	An additional layer to community mentoring that involves structured activities based on a specialized curriculum delivered through activity guides, workshops, and seminars.	*Design:* RCT *Sample:* 450 matches, youth were from high risk backgrounds, 9 to 15 years old (mean = 11.5 years), and 48% male, 52% female *Mentoring:* Mentoring towards college versus regular mentoring program *Potential Moderator:* Gender *Outcome:* Aggressive behavior measured with a four-item self-report scale (e.g., got into a serious physical fight); school DB was measured with a three-item self-report scale; Variety of DB was measured with a score indexing 11 self-report DBs	✗ No difference between regular mentoring and enhancements for any outcome (i.e., Aggressive Behavior, School DB, Variety of DB)	✚ Enhancement Condition X Gender -> (-) Aggressive Behavior and Variety of DB, but not school DB	

TERTIARY PREVENTION

	Program			Evaluation		
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Communities in Schools (2019)[70]	*Goal:* Promote academic skills and socioemotional development *Setting:* Nineteen public schools in Texas *Duration:* One school-year program, and 10-year follow-up. *Format:* One-on-one *Mentors:* Adult volunteers *Mentees:* Youth grades 5–12, with more girls (67%) and divided across high school (44%), middle school (31%), and elementary school (25%).	All students participated in CIS support services (including tutoring, small group counseling, etc.) and but half were randomly assigned to meet with a mentor in addition. The number of mentoring meetings ranged from 0 to 31, with an average of 8.	*Design:* RCT, relative efficacy study comparing standard of care (Communities in Schools services) to standard of care plus assignment to mentoring program. *Sample:* 463 mostly Latinx *Mentoring:* Individual, hour-long meetings, range of academic activities, play, and conversation. *Potential Moderator:* Problem-focused conversations and mattering reported by the mentee *Outcome:* Record of arrest from San Antonio court records, codes as any or no arrest by age 21	✚Arrest	✖Problem-focused conversations ✖ Low mattering reported by mentee ✚Time spent getting to know the mentee	
My Life Mentoring,[71]	*Goal:* Enhance the understanding and application of self-determination skills to improve transition outcomes for youth in foster care *Setting:* School or community *Duration:* [[TK?]] *Format:* One-to-one and group *Mentors:* Adults with training to work with youth, occasionally MSW students *Mentees:* 293 foster youth averaged 17 years of age, approximately half were female, and half were Caucasian, and all were in the custody of the Oregon DHS. The average length of placement in foster care was six years, with 42% enrolled in independent living programs and nearly 60% having a special education disability.	Youth meet weekly with mentors for 60–90 minutes, typically during unscheduled class periods, or out of school time. Youth learn to apply skills in the domains of achievement, partnership development, and self-regulation by following a small number of systematic steps. Mentors help youth learn skills by rehearsing strategies, practicing activities necessary for goal achievement, cheering youth progress, and occasionally challenging the youth to take action. Mentors introduce skills as problems arise.	*Design:* A blocked, randomized design relative efficacy RCT comparing "community as usual" (CUA) to CUA plus mentoring. *Sample:* Treatment (*n* = 144) and control group (*n* = 149) *Mentoring:* My Life participants versus youth with traditional transition services *Potential Moderators:* Gender, developmental disability, youth receives special education services, baseline delinquency (one year before treatment) *Outcome:* Criminal justice involvement (CJI), defined as past year trouble with the law, and/or self-reported arrests or convictions and/or self-reported days incarcerated or on probation	✖Criminal Justice Involvement	✚ MEN X Gender → (-) CJI for males in intervention group, no effect for females ✖MEN X Special education → no impact on CJI ✚ MEN X Developmental Disability (DD) → (-) criminal justice involvement for youth without a DD no effect for youth with a DD ✖MEN X Baseline delinquency → no impact on CJI	

TERTIARY PREVENTION						
Program			**Evaluation**			
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YES Mentoring Program[72]	*Goal:* Increase positive outcomes and reduce negative outcomes for court-referred adolescent male Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS); provide an adult for guidance and stability during a high-crisis time *Setting:* Community- based *Duration:* One month to three years or more *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Adults matched on demographics *Mentees:* PINS referred from the Brooklyn County Family Court. Youth are required to attend but face no real consequences for nonattendance.	Mentors often reach out to the youth, visit their home, and provide a bridge between their home life and the community. Some PINS received additional services in times of crisis, such as home visits, counseling, family meetings, phone consultations, and educational consultations.	*Design:* Observational, measures at six months, twelve months, two years, three years, and four years after the start of the intervention *Sample:* Seventy-nine court-referred adolescent boys (mean age = 14.28; SD = 1.37) *Mentoring:* Number of times met with mentor tallied by mentee and mentor *Outcome:* Dropping out of the program or being arrested measured at each interval	✗Arrests or dropping out of the program		

TERTIARY PREVENTION

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Spotlight Serious Offender Services[73]	*Goal:* Provide support-based services and deter gang involvement and justice-system re-involvement through probation supervision and surveillance checks *Setting:* Community *Duration:* Varies; average time just over two years *Format:* One-to-one *Mentors:* Mentors are paid community corrections employees, who have training in cognitive behavioral assessment and intervention techniques. Mentors have university degrees or some post-secondary training and are usually from a racial minority group. *Mentees:* High-risk gang-involved young male offenders	Spotlight provides support-based services, which include mentorship activities and probation counselling, coupled with client-specific programming and some family-based rehabilitation services. The program consists of an area director, four supervising probation officers, four street mentors, an intensive support and supervision worker, administrative support staff, and one part-time contract family therapist. The probation officers and street mentors carry caseloads of 15 youth each. Mentors have some latitude as to whether they report such things as minor curfew violations. Activities included sporting and recreational outings, going to Winnipeg Harvest and a sweat lodge, and camping.	*Design:* QED *Sample:* Twelve-to-nineteen-year olds with an average age of 16, about ⅔ were aboriginal offenders *Mentoring:* Mentor youth versus control youth matched with PSM undergoing different treatment or released without supervision requirement *Outcome:* Time to re-offense, court convictions and crime severity (medium, low, high) from official records	➕Time to re-offense ➕New conviction ➕High severity offence		