

# Training Evidence: Summary Narrative

Overall, available research provides moderate support for the Training Standard of the Third Edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*<sup>™</sup>, meaning that the weight of existing evidence indicates benefits of practices that align with the Standard with no or very limited evidence of potential for adverse effects. Numerous studies have addressed this topic. With respect to clarifying support for this Standard, these studies as a group are of moderate methodological rigor. Studies address support for multiple different practices that align with the Standard and its associated Benchmarks and Enhancements (including both delivery of the recommended minimum two hours of pre-match training and the provision of additional training beyond this level) and have included multiple types of program models (community-, school-, and other site-based); findings are more limited with respect to range of backgrounds of mentors and youth considered.

**Extent of Evidence Base**  
High

**Favorability of Findings**  
Moderate

**Rigor of Methodology**  
Moderate

**Scope of Findings**  
Moderate

Systematic literature search and screening yielded 12 studies (each based on data from a distinct sample), that have examined variation in a practice related to the Training Standard of the Elements in relation to indicators of program effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and/or safety. These studies report findings that are pertinent to both Benchmarks (B.3.1 and B.3.2) and one of the five Enhancements (E.3.2) for this Standard.<sup>1</sup> (See the end of this document for the full text of the numbered Benchmarks and Enhancements referenced here.) Study findings primarily address outcomes related to program effectiveness (including those relating to mentoring relationship quality and length), although outcomes broadly relevant to issues of program efficiency and sustainability (e.g., mentor perceptions of program quality) also have received limited attention.

All of the studies were quantitative. Of these, 11 used a quasi-experimental design (Evidence Level 1B in DuBois, 2007), meaning that whether a practice was implemented or received was determined by factors other than random assignment; the remaining study (Brooks, 2011) was experimental in design and thus used random assignment to determine whether a practice was received (Evidence Level 1A). Several studies focused on the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) school-based and/or community-based mentoring programs. In an evaluation of BBBSA school-based mentoring programs that included 575 youth matched with 554 mentors through 10 different agencies (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, & Jucovy, 2007), separate measures of mentor reports of pre-match training received in an individual or group format (0-29 minutes, 30-59 minutes, 60 or more minutes) were each positively correlated with mentor report of match continuation into a second school year. Reported amount of pre-match individual training received was also predictive of mentors reporting higher levels of efficacy, or confidence, for mentoring before being matched and with mentor-reported closeness with the mentee, although not with mentee-reported relationship quality. In a survey of 131 BBBSA affiliates regarding their community-based mentoring programs (Wheeler & DuBois, 2009), whether a program was reported to provide at least two hours of pre-match volunteer orientation/training (B.3.1) was not associated significantly with average match length or 6- or 12-month match retention rates or with average youth or volunteer reports of mentoring relationship quality within the program, controlling for a number of other

variables (e.g., number of youth served, percentages of volunteers who were female, percentages of youth served receiving free or reduced lunch). In another survey study with 821 BBBSA mentors across eight sites (Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993), four programs that reported providing pre-match training to mentors (3 hours, on average; B.3.1) did not differ significantly from the remaining four programs that did not on program-level measures of mentoring relationship quality that were derived from mentor reports (average number of meetings, percentage of matches not meeting, percentage of matches not meeting because of loss of interest).

A study of 1,101 mentors from 98 one-to-one community- and school-based programs operated by BBBSA or other organizations (Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Arbretton, & Pepper, 2000) used mentor report data to examine the associations of hours of pre-match training received (none, less than 2 hours, 2 to 6 hours, more than 6 hours) with hours of face-to-face mentoring sessions, mentoring activities (separate indices of degree of engagement in social, academic, and job-related activities) and perceived mentoring relationship quality (separate measures of support and closeness). After controlling for demographic characteristics of mentors and youth (e.g., mentor/youth gender and mentor age and ethnicity) as well as measures of the ways in which pairs spend time together (e.g., time spent on the phone) and other program-related factors (e.g., community vs. school-based program, required commitment – short-term intensive, short-term non-intensive, or long-term), mentor report of the amount of pre-match training/orientation received predicted greater reports of feelings of closeness toward mentees, spending time with mentees, and engaging in social activities with mentees. The largest difference in reported levels of closeness with mentee were between those mentors reporting receiving less than 2 hours of pre-match training/orientation and those who reported attending 6 or more hours of this type of training (B.3.1).

In a study that included 1,310 youth in seven one-to-one mentoring programs (five BBBSA and two non-BBBSA) serving communities in the Washington State area (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013), having received early pre-match training (based on records maintained by programs for the study; 56% of the total sample; B.3.1) was found to predict a) the mentor's match being more likely to be intact after 12 months and to be meeting frequently (3 or more times a month), based on program records as well as b) at a 13-month follow-up, mentee reports of greater closeness, youth-centeredness, and growth/goal focus in the mentoring relationship, after controlling for youth demographic characteristics (gender, age, race/ethnicity), youth risk status, and program. Analyses further revealed that the association of pre-match training with the outcomes examined was relatively consistent across four subgroups of youth that were defined on the basis of youth having relatively high and/or low levels of individual or environmental risk factors.

Other studies have focused on non-BBBSA affiliated programs and agencies. For instance, in a study of a hospital-based career mentoring program that included 376 youth from disadvantaged backgrounds (ages 14-22) and 266 mentors in 13 sites (McClanahan, 1998), mentor reports of formal pre-match training hours (range: 0-5 hours) were positively associated with youth-reported match length, mentor-reported levels of engagements in career development as well as work-related and social activities with their mentees, but was not related to a youth-report measure of mentoring style (developmental vs. prescriptive) or to a youth-report measure of mentor support. In analyses of data from a randomized control evaluation of the Student Mentoring Program (Bernstein, Rappaport, Olsho, Hunt, & Levin, 2009), which included 32 school-based programs (with 1,272 youth assigned to receive mentoring and 1,301 youth assigned to a control group), average mentor reports of hours of pre-match training and orientation received (3.4 hours, on average, across all programs) did not exhibit an association with estimated program effects on youth outcomes, either with or without control for a range of other mentor and youth characteristics (e.g., percent mentors age 22 or below, percentages of youth at a given site with self-reported delinquent behaviors and scoring "not proficient" on standardized tests), mentoring relationships (e.g., percent lasting 6 months or longer), other aspects of program delivery (e.g., hours of pre-match mentor training/orientation), and the percent of the control group receiving mentoring. Outcomes included youth-report measures of pro-social behavior, scholastic efficacy/school bonding, future orientation, misconduct, and delinquency as well as days absent, grades in different subject areas, standardized test based assessments of proficiency in math

and reading/English Language Acquisition, truancy, misconduct, and delinquency obtained from school records).

Two meta-analyses also have tested for evidence of possible effects of pre-match training for mentors, one considering 55 evaluations of youth mentoring programs published through 1998 (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002) and the other 73 evaluations from 1999-2010 (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011).<sup>2</sup> Each meta-analysis found that estimated mentoring program effects on youth outcomes did not differ significantly based on whether programs appeared to have provided pre-match training to mentors.

The remaining studies focused primarily on outcomes for mentors and were based on relatively small samples taken from single programs. In a study with 78 mentors (Lewis, 2013), having received more extensive pre-match training (text materials augmented with short video segments as compared to text materials only; B.3.2) predicted greater understanding of mentoring concepts (higher scores on three of seven mentoring knowledge surveys). In another study of a school-based mentoring program (Garrett, 2013), 149 undergraduate students were recruited through a teacher education course (six sections) in a Southwestern university and received standard one to two hour(s) pre-match training. Mentors enrolled in two of six sections of the course also received an advanced training program, guided by principles described in Karcher (2012), whereas the remaining mentors (enrolled in four sections) continued with a standard cultural awareness program, as part of the course (E.3.2). After controlling for mentee's academic and behavioral risk status and mentor's characteristics (age, gender, and prior informal mentoring experience), it was found that mentors in the advanced training condition reported higher levels of mentoring self-efficacy or confidence following their training. However, mentors in both groups did not differ in their perceptions of program quality. Finally, in a study that compared outcomes for a sample of 37 mentors who were randomly assigned to receive either a one to 1.5 hour attachment-based training session or a 30 minute standard general communication training (B.3.2; Brooks, 2011), no differences were found on the outcome measures (mentor reports of mentoring skills, satisfaction with training, or closeness to the mentee assessed at post-intervention).

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# Standard 3: Training

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**Standard:** Train prospective mentors in the basic knowledge and skills needed to build an effective mentoring relationship.

## Benchmarks:

### *Mentor Training*

B.3.1 Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person training.

B.3.2 Mentor training includes the following topics, at a minimum:

- a. Program rules;
- b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentor/mentee relationship;
- c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles;
- d. Relationship development and maintenance;
- e. Ethical issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship;
- f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship; and
- g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.

## Enhancements:

### *Mentor Training*

E.3.1 Program uses evidence-based training materials.

E.3.2 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum.

E.3.3 Program addresses the following developmental topics in the training:

- a. Youth development process;
- b. Cultural, gender and economic issues; and
- c. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of children (e.g., children of prisoners, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.

E.3.4 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

### *Mentee Training*

E.3.5 Program provides training for the mentee and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:

- a. Program guidelines;
- b. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles;
- c. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles; and
- d. Parental/guardian involvement guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> When findings are pertinent to a particular Benchmark or Enhancement for this Standard, the number of the Benchmark or Enhancement is provided in parentheses. Please note that such references are provided regardless of whether the findings involved are consistent with (i.e., provide support for) the relevant Benchmark or Enhancement.

<sup>2</sup> The findings of these meta-analyses also are considered quasi-experimental because they are based on naturally-occurring variation across programs in whether or not the practice of interest (pre-match training) was incorporated into the design of the programs (DuBois, 2007).