Monitoring and Support Evidence: Summary Narrative

Overall, available research provides moderate support for the Monitoring and Support Standard of the Third Edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, 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 several different practices that align with the Standard and its associated Benchmarks and Enhancements (including post-match training and individual supervision of mentors by program staff) 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

A systematic literature search revealed 18 studies, based on data from 13 distinct samples,[i] that examined variation in a practice related to the Monitoring and Support Standard of the Elements in relation to indicators of a program's effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and/or safety. These studies report findings that are pertinent to four of the five Benchmarks (B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.3, and B.5.5) and two of the three Enhancements (E.5.2 and E.5.3) for this Standard.[ii] (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 duration), although outcomes broadly relevant to issues of program efficiency and sustainability (e.g., mentor satisfaction) also have received limited attention.

All but one of the 18 studies was quantitative and 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. Several studies were based on data from the same randomized control evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) school-based mentoring program, which included 1,139 youth in grades 4 to 9 and programs operated by 10 different BBBSA affiliates. These investigations variously have found a) greater mentor-reported feelings of closeness toward their mentees and likelihood of match continuation into a second school year when the mentor reported having received individual post-match training (B.5.5; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, & Jucovy, 2007); b) program reports of whether or not time during mentoring sessions was spent on structured activities (E.5.2) to be unrelated to whether the mentor-mentee relationship was intact at follow-up in the spring semester of the first academic year, controlling for youth/mentor demographic and other variables (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012); c) program reports of using volunteer recognition as a support strategy (E.5.3) to be predictive of mentees reporting greater feelings of closeness toward their mentors, controlling for various mentee, mentor, and match characteristics (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2013); and d) more

favorable program effects on several youth outcomes in "high communication" programs (mentors in such programs reported relatively more frequent contact with program staff) both for youth mentored by adults (youth-reported global self-worth and teacher-reported classroom misbehavior, serious school misconduct, and positive classroom affect) and those mentored by high school students (teacher-reported social acceptance, assertiveness, positive classroom affect, classroom effort, and school preparedness) (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, & Jucovy, 2008).

Several other studies also have examined monitoring and support practices within BBBSA programs. In a survey of 131 BBBSA affiliate agencies regarding their community-based mentoring programs (Wheeler & DuBois, 2009), various program practices relating to monitoring and support were examined in relation to the following outcomes: 6- and 12-month match retention and average match length as assessed by agency records and 3-month relationship quality as reported by the volunteer and by the youth. Report of providing agency-sponsored activities for mentor-youth matches targeted toward different age, gender, and other groups (E.5.2) exhibited a "substantively important" but non-significant association with a greater rate of 12-month match retention, controlling for two of a larger set of program variables that also showed an association with this outcome (i.e., percentage of volunteers who were ages 18-25 and number of youth served). In addition, providing matches with a list of possible activities (E5.2) was associated with longer average match length and greater rates of 6- and 12-month match retention and providing activity suggestions for specific age groups was positively associated with both match retention measures, controlling again for program variables that showed an association with the relevant outcome. Other practices relating to monitoring and support, including whether or not post-match training opportunities and sharing sessions for mentors were offered by the program, did not exhibit associations with any of the outcome measures in similar analyses.

In a study that included seven one-to-one, volunteer-based mentoring programs, five of which were BBBSA community-based programs (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013), several practices relating to monitoring and support, all assessed via records maintained by programs – specifically whether the mentor attended ongoing (post-match) training and whether the mentor, mentee, and parent each received regular match support (defined as 70% of months or more in each case) – were examined as predictors of the following outcomes: frequent mentor-mentee meetings (three or more times per month) and mentoring relationship lasting at least 12 months, each assessed via program records, and mentoring relationship quality as reported by youth (i.e., indices of goal or growth focus and developmental centeredness, respectively, in the relationship and mentee feelings of closeness toward the mentor). All analyses controlled for youth's gender, age, race/ethnicity, and risk status group as well as for program. A mentor having received ongoing training (B.5.5) was found to predict greater likelihood of the mentoring relationship being intact after one year as well as higher scores on all the measures of mentoring relationship quality. Mentors receiving regular support from staff predicted greater likelihood of the relationship reaching at least one year and frequent mentor-youth meetings; youth and parents receiving regular staff support each predicted frequent mentor-youth meetings. Analyses further revealed that associations of the program practices and outcomes examined were 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.

In further research with BBBSA programs, a total of 821 volunteers were surveyed from eight programs (Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993). Mentors who reported that their caseworkers had initiated contact with them, in comparison to those did not report caseworker-initiated contact, were more likely to report meeting with their mentees and were less likely to report match closure due to a loss of interest. In a study of 113 volunteers in the community-based mentoring programs of seven BBBSA agencies that explored the relationship between mentor-reported frequency of contact with a BBBSA case manager (every two weeks, once a month, every three months) and mentor-reported number of hours of face to face contact with mentees, no significant correlation was found (Stevens, 2014). Finally, in a study exploring the experiences of 1,101 mentors in 98 school-based and community-based mentoring programs of BBBSA and other organizations (Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Arbreton, & Pepper, 2000), a

mentor report measure of the combined level of post-match training and other contact with program staff was found to predict greater reported hours of face-to-face mentoring sessions, but not measures of mentoring activity (separate indices of engagement in social, academic, or job-related activities) or perceived mentoring relationship quality (separate measures of support and closeness), in analyses that controlled 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).

Turning to research involving a broader range of programs, in a randomized control evaluation involving 32 school-affiliated mentoring programs funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Student Mentoring Program (Bernstein, Rappaport, Olsho, Hunt, & Levin, 2009), of which approximately two-thirds were operated by non-profit/community-based organizations and the remainder were operated by schools themselves, site-level analyzes examined the average mentor-reported number of hours of supervision received from program staff as a predictor of program effects on a range of outcomes, specifically average youth-reports of prosocial behavior, scholastic efficacy/school bonding, future orientation, misconduct, and delinquency as well as school records-based measures of absences, grades in math, English, science, and social studies, standardized test based assessments of proficiency in math and reading/English Language Acquisition, and truancy, misconduct, and delinquency, controlling 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. Average hours of ongoing supervision was predictive of weaker (less favorable) program impacts on four of the outcomes (prosocial behavior, grades in social studies and math, and delinquent behavior based on school records) and was unrelated to program impacts on the remaining outcome measures. In analyses that did not include the controls, the above noted findings remained significant for two of the four outcomes (prosocial behavior and social studies grades) and findings for other outcomes remained non-significant.

A study of 1,197 mentoring programs across the nation that were focused on serving youth referred from the juvenile justice system (Miller, Barnes, Miller, & McKinnon, 2013) found that program report of providing special training to mentors in relation to working with youth from juvenile justice settings (B.5.5) was positively correlated with program report of the percentage of mentees meeting or exceeding the program goals, controlling for a range of other program characteristics (e.g., years in operation, percent male and percent African American served, whether mentoring was facility-based).

In a study of the 266 mentors surveyed from 13 sites of the Hospital Youth Mentoring Program (McClanahan, 1998), the reported frequency of attendance at mentor support meetings was positively associated with youth reported match length, mentor-reported levels of engagement in career development as well as work-related and social activities with their mentees, although not with youth-reported mentor support, input in the relationship, or mentoring style (developmental vs. prescriptive) or with mentor-reported engagement in work activities with their mentees; reported frequency of interaction with program staff was associated with greater reported engagement in career development and social activities, but was not associated with the other outcomes.

Several further of the identified studies were meta-analyses of evaluations of youth mentoring program effectiveness. One focused on mentoring for juvenile delinquency prevention (Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols, 2014), one focused on mentoring for youth with mental health concerns (Meyerson, 2013), and two were comprehensive in nature, including evaluations published through 1998 (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002) and from 1999-2010 (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorne & Valentine, 2011), respectively.[iii] These syntheses have variously found that estimated mentoring program effects on youth outcomes were stronger (DuBois et al., 2002) or did not differ significantly (DuBois et al., 2011; Meyerson, 2013) when programs could be discerned to have included ongoing (post-match) training

for mentors (B.5.5); were stronger (DuBois et al., 2002) or did not differ significantly (DuBois et al., 2011, Tolan et al., 2014) when procedures appear to have been in place to monitor fidelity of program implementation (B.5.2); did not differ significantly as a function of whether programs appear to have provided supervision of mentoring relationships (DuBois et al., 2002) or whether procedures were in place to recognize mentors (E.5.3) (DuBois et al., 2011); and were stronger (DuBois et al. 2002; Meyerson, 2013) or did not differ significantly (DuBois et al., 2011) when opportunities were provided for parental involvement.

In another smaller, quantitative study, mentor satisfaction ratings from five volunteers who completed an individualized volunteer-child training program were compared to a group of 33 volunteers who completed a group version of the training program (Lahmba, 2010). Participants in the group condition received information about Child-Directed Interaction (CDI) skills. Participants in the individual condition received enhancements to the original training that consisted of advice from a graduate student with Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) experience and in-vivo coaching of the implementation of those skills at different stages of the training sessions (B.5.3). Findings indicated no significant difference in volunteer reported satisfaction between the two types of training sessions.

Finally, in a qualitative study that included 90-minute interviews with volunteer mentors regarding their experiences in a school-based mentoring program (Raley, 2006), one of the identified themes was that mentors experienced both post-match training sessions and ongoing day-to-day support from a site-coordinator as practices that fostered supportive relationships among volunteers.

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Standard 5: Monitoring and Support

Standard: Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and support mentors with ongoing advice, problemsolving support and training opportunities for the duration of the relationship.

Benchmarks:

B.5.1 Program contacts the mentor and mentee at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and monthly thereafter.

B.5.2 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee contact, including, at minimum, date, length and nature of contact.

B.5.3 Program provides mentors with access to at least two types of resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others; publications; Web-based resources; experienced mentors; available social service referrals) to help mentors negotiate challenges in the mentoring relationships as they arise.

B.5.4 Program follows evidenced-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from the mentor and mentee about the relationship and uses scientifically-tested relationship assessment tools.

B.5.5 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

Enhancements:

E.5.1 Program has quarterly contact with a key person in the mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian or teacher) for the duration of the match.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for mentors and their mentees, and/or offers information about activities that mentors and mentees might wish to participate in together.

E.5.3 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the relationship, prior to match closure.

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[i] The number of distinct samples is lower than the number of eligible studies because in some instances multiple studies have analyzed data from the same sample.

[ii] 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.

[iii] 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 practices of interest were incorporated into the design of the programs (DuBois, 2007). It also should be noted that there is some overlap in the evaluations that served as the basis for these meta-analyses.