# PEER MENTORING

SUPPLEMENT TO THE

## *ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE FOR MENTORING*

May 2020

**MENTOR**

MENTOR is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. Our mission is to expand the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships nationwide. Potential is equally distributed; opportunity is not. A major driver of healthy development and opportunity is who you know and who's in your corner. Thirty years ago, MENTOR was created to expand that opportunity for young people by building a youth mentoring field and movement, serving as the expert and go-to resource on quality mentoring. The result is a more than 10-time increase in young people in structured mentoring relationships, from hundreds of thousands to millions. Today, we activate a movement across sectors that is diverse and broad and seeps into every aspect of daily life. We are connecting and fueling opportunity for young people everywhere they are from schools to workplaces and beyond.

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# INTRODUCTION

**When one thinks of a mentor, we are often drawn to images of a wiser, older (sometimes much older) adult passing on wisdom and skills to a younger protégé— the college professor encouraging a promising undergrad, a master craftsman teaching a lifetime of skills to an apprentice, the "last Jedi" passing on his knowledge of The Force to a new pupil. And while most mentoring relationships involve a hierarchical structure and an imbalance of experience, knowledge, or skill, there is a type of mentoring that approaches these relationships from a slightly different perspective: peer mentoring.**

There is a long history of using peer-led interventions to support the healthy development of young people from their early childhood through their adolescent years and into young adulthood and the world of work.[1-4] These programs — which come in an almost infinite variety of peer coaching, peer leadership, and peer helping — often make use of socioecological approaches that postulate that young people may be motivated to positively change or adapt their behavior and attitudes in relation to the social context around them and that their fellow peers might actually, in some cases, be better suited to influence their future thoughts and actions than adults.

This desire to use youth themselves as the deliverers of services, interventions, and key messages to other youth has certainly spread to the world of mentoring in the last few decades. In addition to building on that youth's social ecology, these programs are also appealing because they offer the potential for having a dual impact in which mentees benefit from what mentors are offering, while the

youth serving in the mentor role also experience a range of positive outcomes. The use of older peers as mentors often also reduces the need for elaborate and costly volunteer recruitment activities compared to most mentoring efforts, as schools, camps, clubs, and other settings offer a fairly "captive" potential audience of mentors to recruit from.

These peer mentoring programs have grown in scope and stature in the mentoring field over the last few decades. A 2017 report by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership found that about 7 percent of the nation's mentoring programs (out of a sample of over 1,400 programs) identified as being a cross-age peer model (meaning that mentors were slightly older youth than the mentees). That same report found that about 7 percent of the nation's mentors were high school age youth, with another 13 percent being college age (although it is possible that many of these college mentors were volunteering in programs that were not technically near peer mentoring programs). Peer mentoring programs also seem to report some of the cost efficiencies noted here as they were the least expensive program model according to that survey, with an estimated average cost per youth of $1,170 per year.[5]

## DEFINING PEER MENTORING

While peer mentoring programs have been popular for many years, they also represent a type of mentoring model that is easily misunderstood. Given that there are many, many varieties of peer-led programming offered in schools and other contexts, there can be some definitional misunderstanding about what constitutes actual peer mentoring.

For the purposes of this review, we defined peer mentoring as *a model of mentoring service delivery in which an older adolescent or child is matched in an explicit mentoring relationship with one or more younger peers.* The age differential noted here is often a critical aspect of the program and how it achieves results, which is why the terms cross-age or near peer are often appended to these descriptions (although it's worth recognizing that we did review literature on models where mentors and mentees were often the same age, for example in Tindall[6]).

The most common models deployed in the field, by far, are those that involve high school or middle school youth mentoring elementary students, undergraduates in higher education mentoring high school students, or college upper classmen mentoring freshmen as they enter higher education institutions. See the literature review section later in this introduction for a more detailed breakdown of the types of mentor-mentee configurations we identified in the literature. But the most prominent programs historically working in this space — such as Big Brothers Big Sisters' High School Bigs program[7] — are most often those utilizing high school mentors to mentor freshmen, middle schoolers, or older elementary students.

Given that there are a wide variety of similar peer programs, which at first glance can look a lot like peer mentoring, it's worth noting some of the distinguishing factors that differentiate peer mentoring from other peer-led interventions:

- The first thing to note is the **primacy of the mentoring relationship itself** to the achievement of outcomes. While peers may be good at simply teaching skills to other kids, or delivering key messages about topics like healthy behaviors, peer mentoring programs are different because the relationships formed between mentors and younger participants are intentionally built and offer the context in which the benefits of the program are realized. A peer tutor may do a good job of building an academic skill for a mentee, but a peer mentor may go well beyond that simple achievement by using the context of the relationship to help the mentee grow developmentally, in addition to learning skills, and may be a more salient role model because of the proximity in age — older enough to be someone to look up to, but young enough to be relatable and a true friend. Additionally, by focusing on the relationship as the primary point of the program, these programs avoid becoming deficit-based or focused solely on youth "problems." While these programs certainly achieve laudable results, they do so by forming a relationship that in and of itself has tremendous value to the participants when done well. Readers are encouraged to explore the "Program Design Considerations" chapter for a more detailed explanation of why the relationship needs to be the central component of these programs.

and facilitate their growth as a person. While this is more often true in programs where the mentees are middle school age or younger, it's worth noting that even programs focused on youth transitioning into college and career also have some aspect of helping the mentee develop as a person, beyond any desired academic or vocational goals. For the mentors, having that age gap allows them to experience feelings of being supportive to the development of another person and fosters development around leadership self-efficacy, independence, empathy and caring, self-esteem and confidence, and positive contribution to an external cause or goal.

• In most programs, **a minimum of a two-year age gap between mentor and mentee** seems to be a critical aspect of the change mechanisms driven by mentor-mentee interactions. As mentioned previously, there are peer programs in which mentors and youth are roughly the same ages and, in these circumstances, there is often some aspect of the mentors' lived experience that differentiates them from the mentees and affords them that "wiser" mentor role (examples include possessing certain skills or having overcome specific challenges, such as substance abuse). Those "same-age" programs can be quite successful if designed with intentionality, but the vast majority of peer mentoring programs do have some age gap. It's also worth noting that age is a bit of a proxy here for a developmental gap — certainly it is possible for youth of different ages to have similar levels of maturity or other markers of their personal development. Thus, the "two years" recommended here mostly serves as a shorthand way of noting that there should be developmental differences which influence how participants are changed by the mentoring experience. As noted above, this gap allows the mentor to "pull" the mentee up the "developmental ladder"[8]

• Most programs offer a **minimum of 10 or so mentor-mentee meetings** that allow for relationship initiation, progression, and closure. Although there are peer mentoring programs that take place in shorter timeframes, most peer mentoring programs last several months if not a full school or calendar year (see the "Program Design Considerations" chapter for further discussion about maximizing meetings within the structure of a school calendar). Because the mentoring relationship is central to the work of the program, these relationships inherently need time to get started, build trust and rapport, engage in meaningful activities and reflection, and ultimately to say goodbye and process the gains achieved through this series of interactions. When programs are delivered over just a few meetings, these processes become too fleeting or don't happen at all. And as with all mentoring, there has to be some intentionality of matching so that mentors are meeting with the same youth or group of youth each time. In the absence of that kind of match, these programs simply have youth of various ages doing activities together. That may have value, but it's not mentoring.

The other definitional detail worth noting here, is that we have extended the age range of programs reviewed to inform this publication to include programs where the mentors were undergraduates in college (or equivalent ages) working with high school age youth. We included these programs because they feature a "near-peer" structure, they make use of that developmental age gap to spur growth in the younger participant, and because mentors are still young enough themselves to reap some of the developmental benefits that we see for older adolescents who serve as mentors. We excluded programs where the mentors were in graduate school or equivalent ages as those simply qualify as typical adult-led mentoring programs. Thus, our emphasis here is on programs where both mentor and mentee are young people and there is room for both of them to develop and grow as a result of the experience.

That being said, **the recommendations in this guide will be most helpful to programs working in contexts where both mentors and mentees are youth in the K–12 age range.** While studies on programs focused on the transition to college were helpful in building our understanding of the full scope of peer mentoring, and why slightly older youth make appealing role models and guides for other youth, we ultimately focused on programs working with youth prior to young adulthood. Peer mentoring programs we examined generally fell into two categories: youth development focused and college transition focused. The following table highlights some key similarities and differences.

| PROGRAM FEATURE | K–12 DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS | COLLEGE TRANSITION FOCUS |
|---|---|---|
| Age of Mentors | Middle or High School | College Upperclassmen |
| Age of Mentees | Middle or Elementary School | High School Seniors or College Freshmen |
| Setting | K–12 School or Other Site | College Campus |
| Match Structure | One-to-one or Group | Primarily One-to-one |
| Common Focus or Outcome | Social inclusion, school connectedness, leadership development, academic skills, behavior modification, healthy lifestyles, managing peer relationships | Adjustment to campus life, utilization of campus resources, commitment to major/career path, social inclusion, information sharing |
| Training and Adult Supervision | Extensive: significant work with mentors on developing and implementing activities; high level of supervision | Light training: activities largely up to each match to determine; minimal supervision by program leadership |
| Use of Curriculum or Activity Guide | Extensive: most interactions are semi- or fully prescribed | Rarely, although some programs offered suggestions/icebreakers |
| Description of Mentor Role | Role model, credible messenger, friend, teacher of new skills | Information hub, coach, friend, sounding board |
| Mentor Benefit | Growth as leader, self-confidence, academic credit, prosocial engagement | Friendship, satisfaction of helping another avoid common challenges |

While these college-age programs shared many commonalities with their younger-age counterparts — for example, both types require mentors to select and engage in fun and meaningful activities with mentees — the authors ultimately concluded that they operated under some different mechanisms and utilized much looser structures than did programs serving K–12 youth. College transition programs focused almost exclusively on helping mentees adjust to the academic rigors of college and the navigation of campus life and institutions. Mentors were largely focused on transfer of knowledge, not learning or growing together, and their main role was often to pass on tips and lessons learned about how to succeed in college or within a specific course of study. While elements of this do mirror some programs for younger adolescents (for example, programs supporting the transition into ninth grade, such as Peer Group Connection[9]), these programs often looked rather different in terms of their practices and implementation. College transition programs offered lighter training and supervision of mentors, they did not involve the same complexities of scheduling and implementation as did programs set in K–12 schools, and they placed far less emphasis on the benefits gained by the mentor. Programs for younger children demonstrated a wide range of outcomes and goals, whereas college peer programs almost exclusively focused on mentee persistence through freshman year and adherence to a major or field of study.

*Because programs serving younger adolescents were more complicated in terms of practices, and relied more on the actions of adults to prepare and supervise participants, we ultimately focused our recommendations on these models.* However, programs serving college-age mentees may also find value in these recommendations, especially those related to the training, preparation, and supervision of mentors. Please see the Literature Search and Review section below for further discussion about the research on both college transition mentoring and the more developmental programming offered to younger participants.

## DEVELOPING THIS PUBLICATION

This product represents the sixth topic in MENTOR's series of Supplements to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*™, and for each of these we have followed a similar development process, as detailed below.

### Literature Search and Review

As with all *Elements* publications, this work is grounded in the research literature available on the topic. For this publication, we built on the literature search conducted in 2017 by Drs. Michael Karcher and Josh Berger for their seminal evidence review on cross-age peer mentoring[2] for the National Mentoring Resource Center, which summarized the available evidence on one-to-one match variants of peer mentoring programs (excluding group and other models). We re-reviewed all of the articles identified for that publication and supplemented that collection with a fresh search of the ProQuest and PsychInfo databases for new articles published since 2017 and older articles on group peer programs. This collection of articles was further supplemented with the inclusion of "gray" literature, such as program manuals, training guides for peer mentors, annual reports from relevant programs, and other implementation content. Our project Working Group members (see below for details) also contributed their internal and external evaluation reports and operational materials to help further our understanding of what these programs tend to look like in action.

## General Process for Supplement Development

1. Literature search and review
2. Synthesis of findings/themes
3. Formation of a Working Group of practitioners (and other research experts)
4. Draft initial recommendations within EEPM framework
5. Obtain several rounds of feedback from the Working Group
6. Create "Practice in Action" snapshots from real-life programs
7. Finalize the recommendations and write the justification
8. Obtain feedback on the justifications and final product
9. Disseminate and develop trainings on the Supplement

## Description of the Literature Reviewed

At the end of our search process, we had identified well over 500 initial articles and other resources that seemed to be related to peer mentoring. A quick scan of these promptly eliminated several hundred entries that were clearly out of scope: evaluations of adult-to-adult peer mentoring models, mentoring for much older "mentees" in workplaces and the upper echelons of higher education, and programs that did not seem to have a mentoring component in spite of that tag being applied in the database in which we found them.

In the end, we settled on a list of **304 articles, book chapters, reports, and other materials** that we

considered our set for formal review. Of these, 32 of the resources were deemed to be out of scope upon further review, most often because they involved programs in which mentors were primarily adults or did not contain any activities we could identify as being mentoring-focused. For another 23 articles, we were unable to locate a copy of the full content for review and those results are not included below.

The following breakdown will help readers get a sense of the qualities and characteristics of the remaining **249 resources** we examined to inform this publication:

- **Of the articles, 190 were about specific real-life programs**, at least in part. The remaining articles consisted of theoretical papers or literature summaries about peer mentoring, studies of natural mentoring relationships, or general technical assistance guidance documents for practitioners. It's also worth noting that several program models were represented more than once in the literature (for example, we reviewed eight articles and reports on the Peer Group Connection program model alone). A total of **155 unique programs** were ultimately represented in our review.

- For these unique programs, the breakdown of settings is as follows:
  - **52** programs were set in **higher education** settings
  - **69** programs were set in **K–12 schools**, either during or after school
  - **17** programs were set in other **site-based locations**, such as nonprofits, juvenile detention centers, and places of employment
  - **9** were primarily **online** programs
  - **8** programs primarily had matches meet out in the **community**

- In terms of who served as mentors, the breakdown is as follows (note that some programs used a blend of age ranges in the mentor role):

  - **55** programs used **college students** specifically as mentors (almost all of these were programs serving other college students, but eight of them were serving high school or middle school students)

  - **22** programs used **other young adults** who were not in college (or it was unclear if they were) as mentors

  - **59** programs used **high school students** as mentors

  - **12** programs used **middle school students** as mentors

  - **10** programs used **elementary students** as mentors (exclusively to other elementary students)

By far, the most common configurations we noted in the literature involved high school juniors and seniors mentoring incoming freshmen at the high school, or college upperclassmen mentoring incoming freshmen in higher education settings.

- **Of the articles, 178 were evaluations of the outcomes of programs or examinations of participants within programs.** These evaluations were essentially evenly split between quantitative studies that measured outcomes for program participants and quantitative studies that analyzed perceptions of participant experiences.

- In terms of the **outcomes** examined in these studies, which reflected the main goals of the programs, we noted the following groupings:

  - **118** studies examined **academic outcomes**

  - **29** studies examined youth **behavioral improvement**

  - **21** studies examined **career-related outcomes**

  - **11** studies examined outcomes related to helping youth manage or cope with **physical or intellectual disabilities**

  - **3** studies examined outcomes related to **juvenile delinquency and criminality**

  - **28** studies examined **health outcomes**

  - **16** studies examined outcomes best described as being **focused on positive youth development**

  - **74** studies examined outcomes related to **social skills and positive peer interactions**

Looking across all of these studies and program descriptions, some clear patterns emerge. Peer mentoring programs tend to be focused on issues related to academic performance or school transitions or challenges youth are facing managing their behavior or interacting positively with their peers. Not surprisingly, they tend to be housed in schools or other institutional settings that allow for easier meetings and frequent interactions. Many of these programs involved connecting youth to others who shared a common trait, such as an illness, or who had just traveled a path the mentee was about to go down, such as heading into freshman year at a new school. These programs also tend to utilize peers that are relatively close in age. We noted very few programs where the mentees were significantly younger than their mentors.

Beyond these summative descriptions of peer mentoring programs, the next section more thoroughly examines the types of outcomes these programs demonstrated they could achieve and the factors that facilitated or restricted those outcomes. It's worth noting that many of the studies we examined did not produce the expected results, although we did not code the articles for

achievement of outcomes or measures of positive impact, such as effect size. In general, it was a mixed bag of successful programs and ones still trying to demonstrate meaningful impact. But there is plenty of evidence that these programs can achieve a wide variety of outcomes for both mentees and mentors.

## Benefits of Peer Mentoring

**Benefits for mentees are found in a wide range of developmental, social, and academic outcomes.**

The peer mentoring literature is such that it captures a wide range of ages of potential mentees, with this review including programs serving those entering first grade[10, 11] to programs for mentees in college or late adolescence. And as the age of youth served as mentees increased in the literature, the range of outcomes also grew, and the peer mentoring "programs" became more frequently "components" within larger programs. This is reflected in one trend observed by Dr. Jean Rhodes in her forthcoming book, Older and Wiser, in which mentors work alongside clinicians or others helping professionals in an "embedded" supporting role. One study by Black et al (2006)[12] embedded peer mentors in health care services providing postnatal treatment of adolescent mothers to help prevent a second pregnancy, and found the preventive effect most strong for matches with "dosage" approaching our threshold criteria of 10 meetings, suggesting that when peer mentoring is embedded within other programs and given sufficient time for real relationships to form, program outcomes often increase. Yet it is fair to say the diversity of uses of peer mentoring as a core or supplemental service is both a strength and a limitation to our understanding of when it is used most effectively and efficiently.

The wide range of both uses of "peer mentors" and program outcomes may be because peer support is viewed by researchers and laypeople alike as providing unique leverage for influencing change. The number of studies that used peer mentors to influence health behaviors,[1, 13] support and foster inclusion among youth with disabilities,[14, 15, 16, 17] or to prevent high-risk behaviors and crime[18, 19, 20, 21] reflects a sizeable subgroup of the studies found. It also demonstrates the widely held view of the potential benefits of peer mentoring as a supplemental component or as the key ingredient of effective programs for youth. Several studies have even tested whether behavioral changes (e.g., diet, physical activity) are better coached and encouraged by peers than teachers,[22] and examined the relative benefits of electronic (email, text, and video) versus face-to-face peer mentoring.[23] This literature is too small to make definitive recommendations, but it suggests the research is moving in a useful direction that will allow for the more efficient use of peer mentoring as a resource for addressing this wide variety of goals.

Even though this review focuses on developmental approaches to cross-age peer mentoring (drawing a sometimes hard-to-define line between peer mentoring and peer leadership, education, and tutoring), the outcomes addressed by many programs in this review can appear more instrumental or goal-focused than relational and developmental. For example, this review includes several peer mentoring programs that were excluded from prior reviews of cross-age peer mentoring[2] for omitting information in their reports on the program elements related to mentoring relationship development, which was used as a criteria for determining whether a given peer program found in the literature was truly mentoring or might instead reflect peer education, tutoring, or coaching. More recent work on many of these programs has incorporated relationship

development program components, and yet still many of the articles reviewed in this study continue to lack detailed information on how mentors are trained, as well as how, where, and when time for mentor-mentee-relationship formation occurs in a specific program.

In contrast to these very focused, instructionally based, and outcome-specific uses of peer mentoring in community settings, a majority of the articles we reviewed focused on school engagement and academic success. **Connectedness to school** and **school engagement or retention** is reported as a benefit of peer mentoring across the developmental spectrum. The majority of peer mentoring programs we reviewed took place in schools, perhaps, as stated earlier, because schools afford ready access to older peers to serve as mentors and so are most easily set up there. But the literature reviews and logical models described in these studies make clear it is because peers are viewed as socialization facilitators and peer influencers. Indeed, most consistently, cross-age peer mentoring has been found to have positive effects on increasing **social support, social acceptance, connectedness** to peers, teachers, and staff, and belonging at all school levels,[2, 11, 24, 25, 26, 27] and in higher education settings to foster belonging and **persistence** for women, racial/ethnic minority, and first-generation students. [28, 29, 30, 31, 32]

While the benefits on educational outcomes and academic achievement are certainly present in the literature, they are not reported as consistently as these social connection outcomes, and are more common in higher education peer mentoring studies.[25, 33-43]. Also more common in the higher education setting, a number of programs employ undergraduates to serve as mentors to incoming freshman, sometimes making contact with the mentees before they graduate high school, with

the specific goal of facilitating the **transition to college** and increasing actual **enrollment rates**,[23, 44] as well as to ensure **retention** from year to year in postsecondary settings.[45]

### Benefits for mentors stand out as key programmatic goals and considerations.

Another common focus of research on peer mentoring, which makes it somewhat unique from other literatures in the field of mentoring, is the common focus on, reference to, or concern with outcomes for the mentors. In one multistudy review of outcomes for mentors (both secondary and postsecondary level), the most common outcomes were **shifts in identity,** more **positive views of helping**, generally, and of the kinds of individuals mentored, as well as increased **social support** from the other peer mentors.[46] Several studies in secondary school settings have also reported improvements in **grades** or broader **academic achievement, connectedness to school**, and **self-esteem**, as well as **social skills** and leadership development.[11, 25, 35, 47-50] In community workplace settings, disconnected late adolescents serving as peer mentors have reported increased **community engagement** and a s**ense of giving back**, which was seen as having benefits for society, schools, and other institutions.[43]

### Benefits for the setting, schools, or institutions are likely to occur but are not well understood.

Less systematic attention has been paid to the benefits to the larger setting following the implementation of a peer mentoring program, such as its effects setting-wide on **peer support, peer culture**, or **school climate**, though it has been observed[43,51] — this seems to be because most studies focus on outcomes for participants alone. It is easy to extrapolate from the findings of many reviewed studies, particularly at the postsecondary

level, of benefits to the larger community or institution from increases in participants' retention and persistence toward **completion of planned academic degrees**[45] but such programs may also influence students' **relationships with teachers and staff**.[47, 52]

A focused search through abstracts in peer-reviewed journals containing both "peer mentoring" and "school climate" generated eight studies (including three dissertations), suggesting peer mentoring programs may reduce **rates of victimization** and increase attendance by lessening **bullying, cyberbullying**, and **social exclusion** by students in middle and high schools, perhaps particularly for girls,[53] such as has been used schoolwide in England.[54] (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #1** for an example of how mentors in one program work collaboratively with school counselors to enhance the overall culture and climate of the school.)

## The Clear Need for Structural Supports in Peer Mentoring Programs

**Not all evaluations we looked at found positive outcomes, but their findings are instructive.**

Disappointing findings regarding peer mentoring emerged from one of the most rigorous studies of school-based mentoring, in which peer mentoring was one of two primary approaches. In that study, led by Herrera et al. (2007),[55] the analysis of the High School Bigs peer mentoring program specifically yielded evidence of just one positive main effect (mentees' social acceptance). Whether the absence of the types of positive effects reported for those mentored by adults is largely a consequence of the great diversity in peer program quality and inconsistency in delivery of the program is hard to know for sure, but analysis of outcomes

linked to specific program practices and to mentor characteristics reveal that for many mentees there were positive outcomes for those whose peer mentors received adequate training and support.[7, 56]

Benefits of cross-age and near-peer mentoring seem to vary as a function of participant characteristics, and similarly negative or null findings in the literature also seem tied to participant characteristics, such as individuals' motivation to participate and volitional choice. Many of these reveal opportunities for increased support, training, or focused recruitment. For example, in one study of college peer mentoring, the benefits accrued primarily to mentees who started the program with more secure attachments.[57] Another study of college peer mentoring found that mentors with an avoidant attachment style were less supportive, but that these negative effects could be mitigated by programmatic efforts to boost mentors efficacy, such as through training and support.[58] In such programs, adaptations in training and support may help extend benefits to those who tend not to benefit. Yet, in some programs, particularly those that are part of required coursework, being put in a mentor or mentee role is not optional, and resentment, disinterest, or other aversion to program participation may dampen overall impact estimates.[59] Recent research has highlighted that whether participation is mandatory or voluntary can have a major impact on how youth perceive the value of the program and the degree to which they positively engage in the activities offered.[25]

**Peer mentors need more support given that their programs operate differently than programs with adult mentors.**

This is discussed further in the next chapter, "Program Design Considerations," but there are many ways in which running peer mentoring

programs requires a different approach to mentor supervision and monitoring than does the typical adult-with-youth mentoring program, both in schools or community settings. A primary support identified by Herrera et al. (2008)[7] was the need to prevent inconsistency in mentor's attendance. This was a concern voiced by the majority of the experts on our Working Group, who also noted the importance of preventing experiences of abandonment by mentors among mentees.[60] In fact, when searching for academic outcomes using the term "attendance" and "peer mentoring" we found most references were to the frequently reported strong correlation between mentor's attendance in the program and their mentees' outcomes. Inconsistency can result from teenage and college-age mentors' motivations fading or changing across the school year, but also in response to unforeseen rival opportunities for extracurricular, employment, or social opportunities later in the year.[61] Program staff (as well as mentors' parents/teachers) can help mentors more realistically assess their motivations and forecast upcoming commitments in initial recruitment and training, but also can address attrition through effective program activities and ongoing training and support.[62]

Providing ongoing training and focused, relevant, but flexible activities seems critical to effective peer mentoring at all levels. A comparison of peer and adult mentors in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program revealed that perceptions of program quality were related to the amount of training in youth and relationship development they received, as well as the number of hours mentors received.[63] Teenage mentors spent more time in casual conversation about personal issues with their mentees than did adults (who focused more on goal-directed activities and conversations). Ironically, however, while engaging in such relational

conversations was positively linked to match quality for teens, it was negatively related to perceptions of program quality. So one element of training that teen mentors seem to need is about the value of such conversations for building strong relationships to bolster mentor efficacy around relationship building.[52, 64, 65] They also, perhaps, need activities that foster such interactions in relevant or interesting ways, or training in how to effectively seize opportunities for such conversations when doing planned activities with mentees.[66] Yet too much training also may decrease mentor's motivation to continue mentoring in the future for teens,[63] unless the training is part of a larger incentive program, such as being part of a high school class like in the Peer Group Connection program.[67] These topics around training content and connection to match activities are discussed in more detail in the "Justification" chapter of this resource.

Even postsecondary peer mentoring programs need to ensure ongoing training and monitoring is provided, because while programs in higher education settings seem more explicitly focused on school integration and academic support, peer mentors in college are also sought for social and emotional support. Multiple studies of postsecondary peer mentoring referenced one model[68] describing the social support functions mentors can provide undergraduates, including for psychological or emotional support, goal-setting and career path decision-making help, academic subject knowledge support, and their presence as a role model. Two studies[58, 69] suggest peer mentors are consistently turned to for all of these. And given findings described above about the way mentor and mentee characteristics can influence mentoring benefits but program support and training may mitigate the effect of participant characteristics,[39] programs in higher education settings would be well

advised to provide ongoing support and training to maximize potential benefits. (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #2** for further discussion about developmental relationships and why mentors of all ages can benefit from being trained in some of these core principles of a developmental approach, regardless of the outcomes the program is aiming for.)

**These programs require more planning, coordination, and monitoring than most other models.**

What is clear from primary studies like that of Herrera, as well as through conversations with principals, teachers, and leading practitioners like those in our Working Group, is that peer programs require much more structure and support than other types of mentoring, and that administrative buy-in is critical.[51] In our review, peer mentoring programs at all education levels varied greatly in the degree of documentation provided on their program practices, but at all levels there are good examples of programs with manualized training, both in how to establish the mentoring relationship and in how to successfully lead mentoring activities in their matches. At the secondary level, for teens working with primary grade mentees,[67, 70-77] many programs have well-documented materials to guide consistent implementation, including program manuals with guidance on program setup, delivery, and evaluation, along with a curriculum, mentor training guides, and mentor handbooks. Were future program evaluations and research on peer mentoring to include similarly clear documentation of program practices, goals, and their attention to relationship development components, it could greatly enhance the ability of practitioners and researchers alike to draw more clear conclusions about to what extent peer mentoring delivers, as promised by so many. (**See Practice in Action**

**Snapshot #3** for a great example of how one program trains mentors on their activity curriculum and its relationship to program goals.)

**Forming a Working Group of Practitioners and Other Researchers**

While the literature on peer mentoring was certainly diverse and illuminating, we also wanted to ensure that our recommendations ultimately resonated with the types of practitioners who do work in the peer mentoring space. So, to that end, we formed a Working Group of leading practitioners and researchers who could contribute practice suggestions and review and refine the recommendations we ultimately drafted.

The representatives of this group are detailed below and examples of their work are mentioned throughout this publication and included in the **"Practice in Action Snapshots"** chapter at the end of this guide. These snapshots illustrate what many of the recommendations included here can look like in real-world examples and settings and further highlight effective practices.

This Working Group met a total of five times between February and April 2020. Their main roles were to share what they felt were key successes and challenges experienced by their programs and to review the iterative drafts of the recommendations ultimately included in this resource. Thus, the recommendations for group mentoring here represent a very intentional blending of the best available research evidence and cutting-edge wisdom from the experiences of leading service providers working in the peer mentoring space. The authors thank this Working Group for their incredibly meaningful and insightful contributions to this work.

## Josh Berger
## Belldegrun Center for Innovative Leadership

The Belldegrun Center for Innovative Leadership (BCIL) prepares community members to engage with real-world challenges and explore solutions within and beyond the classroom. Providing a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular offerings, BCIL connects Brentwood School to the surrounding Los Angeles community, cultivating innovative problem solvers, courageous risk takers, effective managers, adept communicators, and inspired community builders.

One facet of BCIL involves its peer mentoring programs through which older students are trained to mentor younger peers in areas related to leadership, academic, and socioemotional development. Through various peer mentoring structures, consistent outreach meetings take place in one-to-one and group outreach formats, reaching our entire K–12 community.

## Carolyn Trager Kliman
## City Year

City Year helps students and schools succeed. Diverse teams of City Year AmeriCorps members provide support to students, classrooms, and the whole school, helping to ensure that students in systemically under-resourced schools receive a high-quality education that prepares them with the skills and mindsets to thrive and contribute to their community. A 2015 study shows that schools that partner with City Year were up to two-to-three times more likely to improve on math and English assessments.

A proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network, City Year is supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service, local school districts, and private philanthropy. City Year partners with public schools in 29 communities across the United States and through international affiliates in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Learn more at www.cityyear.org or on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

## Margo Ross
## Center for Supportive Schools

Founded in 1979, the Center for Supportive Schools (CSS) helps schools become places where students want to be. We partner with schools in three areas: developing all students into leaders; empowering teachers to collaborate with each other and with students; and engaging entire school communities to improve how learning happens. CSS's impact can be seen in the experiences of 425,000 students across 500 schools. Peer Group Connection (PGC) is CSS's seminal peer leadership and mentoring program that taps into the power of older students to create nurturing environments for younger students. Results consistently demonstrate that PGC improves students' academic, social, and emotional skills, resulting in significantly lower dropout rates, improved grades, fewer discipline referrals, and avoidance of high-risk behaviors.

### Jamie Johnson
## Boy With a Ball

Boy With a Ball (BWAB) is an international youth, family and community development organization that betters cities by reaching and equipping young people to turn and transform their communities. Boy With a Ball's Velocity cross-age mentoring program is an evidence-based, high-impact cross-age mentoring program in which high school students in at-risk communities are trained and guided to be mentors to middle school students. Leveraging the power of developmental mentoring relationships, students cultivate connectedness, self-esteem, identity, and academic skills, enabling them to become successful students and influential leaders in their communities. Boy With A Ball partners with and uses a curriculum developed by the University of Texas–San Antonio's Dr. Michael Karcher.

### Maryse Richards & Cynthia Onyeka
## Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth

The Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth (S.L.I.Y.) project was a cross-age peer mentoring program in which high school youth from severely disadvantaged communities in Chicago had the opportunity to mentor younger peers over the course of one year. This program, funded by the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and managed by Loyola University Chicago, began in late 2014 and served four communities, three of which were mostly African-American and one of which was mostly Latinx. The overarching goals of this project were to foster positive youth development and reduce negative outcomes related to violence exposure among African-American and Latinx youth from low-income, urban neighborhoods. By providing constructive spaces for peers at different developmental stages to learn from each other on a long-term basis, S.L.I.Y. strived to capitalize on the value of culturally relevant peer influence in order to help lower rates of youth violence and increase prosocial influences.



### April Montoya & Leah Galvin
## Friends First

FRIENDS FIRST is more than 25 years old and has been dedicated to educating and mentoring teens to make positive life choices and develop healthy relationships. Our vision is to empower teens with the knowledge, skills set, and mentoring needed to lead healthy and successful lives. We are investing in this mission through our in-school STARS peer mentoring program, which is a 26-week program that pairs a younger student with an older student mentor and focuses on the core elements of self-awareness, future focus, and MentorLife®, facilitating Project AIM. It's a positive youth development program that encourages youth to articulate their personal goals and provides parent education workshops and community events. Our students and communities are equipped through our programs with a strong sense of character, competence, confidence, community, and compassion in their pursuit of healthy relationships and rewarding futures.

### Carlo Kriekels
**YESS Institute**

The YESS classroom is a daily, credited class and peer-to-peer mentoring model for underserved middle and high school students. The class provides socioemotional learning and leadership skill development in disenfranchised communities. Student mentors and mentees are recruited for the program and paired based on shared interests and cultural experiences. They work together one-on-one and in small peer groups for an entire academic year on the YESS Institute's socioemotional learning curriculum, Road to Success. YESS also offers postsecondary preparation and family advocate programs. As we support our students on their Road to Success, we envision them becoming caring and productive members of their community.

### Donnovan Karber
**Christian Association of Youth Mentoring**

The Christian Association of Youth Mentoring helps nonprofits and churches start and grow safe, effective, and sustainable mentoring programs. Our vision is to strengthen communities by connecting generations.

### Felicia Medellin
**College Advising Corps**

College Advising Corps wants to help transform individual lives, families, communities, and school systems. We believe that every student deserves the opportunity to enter and complete postsecondary education. We are committed to increasing the number of qualified low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students who benefit from college.

### Terri Sullivan
**Search Institute**

Search Institute is a nonprofit organization that partners with schools, youth programs, community coalitions, and other organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity.

### Laura Batt
**Sea Research Foundation**

Sea Research Foundation, Inc., (SRF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education, and research. SRF operates Mystic Aquarium — one of America's premier nonprofit marine science research and education institutions, and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. STEM Mentoring is SRF's national group mentoring program for youth ages 6–10. The program matches small groups of youth with adult and/or cross-age peer mentors for fun, hands-on activities about STEM, with a particular focus on conservation.

## TIPS FOR USING THIS SUPPLEMENT

This Supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* will be most useful to those starting peer mentoring programs, especially those working with K–12 youth, as well as to those who are looking to strengthen their existing services. The recommendations included in the next chapter's section, Recruitment through Closure, offer research- and practice-informed recommendations that should help peer mentoring programs implement effective services beyond just adhering to the generic practices suggested in the original EEPM. We encourage those who are building programs from scratch to also focus on the program design considerations provided at the beginning of the next chapter, as those major themes and considerations were clearly the most prominent factors in program success (or struggle) in both the literature we read and in the opinion of our Working Group of experts.

If you are not familiar with the structure and content of the original *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, we encourage you to review the baseline practices suggested in that resource so that you can better understand the additional recommendations

of this resource. The recommendations for peer mentoring offered here are slotted into the original framework of the EEPM so that practitioners can clearly see where peer models require more attention or different approaches to traditional one-to-one programs. Where possible, we have noted when certain recommendations are more or less applicable to certain peer mentoring programs based on their setting, ages of participants, goals and activities, or other specific features. But in general, the colored recommendations will provide critical advice to peer mentoring programs working with K–12 youth.

For those who want to go deeper in their understanding of peer mentoring practices, there is a "Justification and Discussion" chapter that highlights key themes and associated practices for managing a successful peer mentoring program. This section discusses the recommendations in more detail and offers examples from the research and literature reviewed that support the suggested practices. And as noted above, the "Practice in Action Snapshots" provide further examples of real-world application of these practices.

Programs are always encouraged to implement as many of the core Benchmarks and Enhancements of the EEPM as possible. There is always room to improve or strengthen the delivery of any program. But we feel that following the recommendations here will be helpful to any mentoring program that is:

• Using young people in the mentor role

• Thinking about how both mentors and mentees can both grow developmentally as individuals from the experience

• Hoping to use peer-to-peer interactions to achieve specific goals and supplement the messages and encouragement of supportive adults

MENTOR hopes these recommendations help peer mentoring programs improve their services and provide youth with meaningful experiences that help them discover who they are and build a successful future. One of the most compelling themes from across all of the research reviewed for this project is that these programs can be powerful ways of structuring layers of support for young people. We saw many examples of programs where not only mentees mentored by a near peer, but where that mentor was also mentored by an even older adolescent, who was in turn mentored by a range of adults responsible for the program This kind of "layered mentoring" approach, in which youth have the opportunity to both give and receive support, can be a powerful way to not only support the participating individuals but to build a culture of caring, support, and positive growth that can influence the environment of an entire school or institution. When young people are supported to lead, as these programs offer, amazing things can happen. MENTOR hopes that peer mentoring models continue to thrive and that this resource can help define and promote their quality programming.

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# PROGRAM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR PEER PROGRAMS TO SUPPLEMENT THE EEPM

**The following pages detail the recommendations for peer mentoring programs that emerged from the work of this project. Here we include two types of recommendations:**

• **Program Design and Development Considerations** – These represent major themes and considerations for program design and implementation. Programs will need to consider these factors in how they structure and maintain services to maximize their effectiveness and avoid common challenges expressed by experienced practitioners.

• **Recommendations for Practice** – These recommendations provide additional guidance and nuance for peer mentoring programs beyond the standard *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. These recommendations highlight ways in which peer mentoring programs might refine or enhance their day-to-day practices to maximize program success. These brief practice recommendations are described in much more detail in the Justification chapter that follows.

As always, these recommendations should be viewed through the lens of the theory of change of any given program — the activities, goals, and desired outcomes the program has for youth participants and the specific ways in which the actions of mentors and staff lead to those outcomes. Depending on the focus of the program, and the way services are delivered, there still may be other practices that would influence program efficacy. For example, peer programs using a group model may want to also consult the recently completed Supplement on Group Mentoring

Practices to ensure that their understanding of practices relevant to their work is as comprehensive as possible. Thus, the recommendations below should be viewed and implemented through the lens of a program's specific local circumstances and objectives.

## PROGRAM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Peer mentoring programs that are currently in the planning and development stages, as well as those looking to revamp existing services, should consider the program design elements noted here. All of these topics were noted research we reviewed and in the conversations with the project's Working Group about key program features and common challenges.

### The relationship needs to be the primary focus.

This may sound obvious, but by definition — and this is an important operational distinction — the key program element that differentiates peer mentoring programs from a host of other peer interventions (e.g., peer counseling, peer helping, peer tutoring, peer leadership, peer coaching, peer support programs) is that the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is considered the primary mechanism of change in the program. In fact, if a peer mentoring program's logic model does not include something about the development of a close, trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee as a central mediator or mechanism by which the program achieves its intended outcomes, then it is likely not a peer mentoring program in practice. Of course, almost all peer mentoring programs use some kind of planned curriculum or suggested set of activities that are intended to produce specific outcomes in mentees and mentors, such as knowledge about some topic,

skill-building, or reflection. A peer program that only requires these outcomes in order to be considered successful, or that can achieve these outcomes in a variety of ways without the establishment of a mentor-mentee connection of some type, should not be characterized as a mentoring program.

Curiously, while mentoring requires the establishment of a relationship between mentors and mentees, research evidence suggests that the presence of planned activities (ideally ones logically related to the espoused program goals) is essential to bolstering mentors' feelings of self-efficacy or belief in their ability to establish a mentor-mentee bond. Research suggests that peer mentors need structure to hold or frame their meetings with mentee interactions.[1] Furthermore, the absence of planned activities may create a lack of clarity around roles and what they are to do (whether or not the mentors have been effectively trained in the value of relationship development in mentoring) and can leave them feeling frustrated and the match stuck in neutral.

But, and herein lies the rub, the role of peer mentors should not be simply delivering curriculum content or leading prescribed activities. Their job is to form a real relationship, a mutually rewarding friendship, with another student or group of students. When program leaders provide an activity structure, they create the context and vehicle for relationship development. Despite this definitional and conceptual cornerstone of peer mentoring, there were many examples in the literature of programs where there was very little focus on the development of a relationship between mentors and mentees, even though the authors used the term mentoring or mentors in their program descriptions (for example, see Tout, Pancini, & McCormack, 2013[2]; Castleman & Page, 2015[3]; or Sharpe, Abrahams,

and Fotou, 2017[4]). Without rapport-building activities, mentors and mentees may not have ample opportunities to learn about each other, find connection points, and grow to value each other and their relationship.[5] Thus, if practitioners turn peer mentors into tutors or teachers or lecturers, and only provide them a set of curriculum activities without the supplemental support for cultivating, identifying, and discussing the relationships that can develop between match members, they are missing a critically important opportunity. Developing a close, positive mentoring relationship along with interacting in the context of curriculum activities provides the context for achieving the greatest and, potentially, longest lasting impact on mentees.

Some strategies that peer mentoring programs can use to assist their matches in achieving the goal of having a close, positive mentoring relationship include:

- Giving them additional activities to do that are simply about the building of their relationship and nothing else.[6]

- Ensuring they have time dedicated to just getting to know each other and for sharing important events in their lives, not only early on but throughout the program cycle as well.

- Encouraging them to name and reflect on the quality (and positive and negative characteristics) of their relationship.

In peer mentoring, program outcomes are achieved when mentors and mentees like and value each other and feel they have developed something special and different from what each has with others in the program and school or community. Knowing that relationships are an important goal of the program in and of themselves can provide mentors and mentees with a reason to buy into the content

of the program, especially when they perceive the educational or entertainment value of the program activities to be questionable.

## Always think about the potential for dual impact in cross-age peer programs.

Because peer mentors are also youth themselves, peer programs, especially cross-age ones, should structure their services to provide mentors with ample opportunities to grow and change. These programs are excellent contexts for building leadership skills[1, 6] and helping older youth to "come out of their shell" — fostering their confidence through meaningful contribution,[7] enhancing their self-esteem,[8, 9, 10] building communication skills,[11, 12] and supporting their positive identity development,[13, 14] particularly as it relates to their academic[15] and social identities.[16] A program's theory of change and logic model should articulate clear and measurable outcomes for peer mentors, explaining how serving in this role can support their development, in addition to that of their mentee.

## Youth leadership is an essential change agent.

One of the best ways of helping peer mentors with their personal development is to give them a large role in the conceptualization and management of the program itself. In the literature, we noted several examples of programs that used mentors to help design program activities, give feedback on program activities, and suggest improvements, and even participate in key practices such as leading mentor training or planning group outings and celebration events.[7, 17–20] Many programs even used a tiered system of participation, where younger students started as mentees, later served as mentors, and then, moved up into "student leader" positions[1] that included leading activities, observing

matches, and essentially, running the program.[21, 22] This model not only gives youth a developmentally aligned pathway to deepen their involvement in the program over time, but it also frees up adult leaders to focus on big-picture program management tasks and provide meaningful oversight of the program.

## Adult leadership and engagement are key to short- and long-term success.

One of the most common challenges faced by peer mentoring programs, particularly those housed in educational settings, was the consistent engagement of adult site leaders or school liaisons. These programs persistently demonstrated a need for program champions — adults in the school system who could secure buy-in from decision-makers and generate access to facilities and resources that would allow the program to thrive.[1, 23] Ultimately, school or district leaders, such as principles or superintendents, must be engaged with the program, especially in instances that involve the collaboration of two or more campuses in the implementation of the program. When these leaders were not engaged in the program, research suggests the potential for sustainability challenges, such as inadequate funding, limitations on physical space for the program, or reduced access to school resources to support mentor-mentee activities.[24, 25] (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #4** for an example of how one program managed to tackle the logistics of delivering their model in partner schools.)

The need for strong adult engagement with the program also trickled down to the school counselors and teachers who were often most directly responsible for implementing the program.[26] Unfortunately, these programs are often assigned to already busy school staff who are suddenly faced with running the program, often unenthusiastically and with predictably negative results.[24] But even

in well-planned programs, program coordinators and school liaisons were instrumental in managing seemingly mundane program operations. For example, if mentors were not also students or participants at the school or site hosting the peer mentoring program, then the school or site liaison played an important role in ensuring that the visiting mentors were welcomed on campus.[5] Regardless of whether the program was scheduled during the school day, during lunch, or after school, mentees needed to know the procedures, times, and locations of mentoring meetings. In addition, the school or site liaison and the program coordinator needed to make sure that matches had access to adequate space and materials in order to conduct activities.[24] So even though these types of programs can be largely youth-led, it is important to remember, as noted in the Introduction of this resource, that adults play an important role in their success, and need to champion the cause and curate the experiences of mentors and mentees.[26] (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #5** for additional information on the importance of engaged coordinators or program leaders.)

## Carefully select peer mentors by avoiding common participation challenges.

Although many peer mentoring programs expect that, as noted above, mentors grow and develop just as much as mentees, we found a general trend in the literature that programs would often recruit "high-achiever" youth to fill the role. After all, these youth are already doing well academically, and may have demonstrated their leadership skills and reliability in other school roles, so one would expect that they might be ideal role models. However, there are several challenges that have emerged when using high-achieving students in the mentor role. Most common are scheduling conflicts, as these students often have a variety of other extracurricular and

academic responsibilities and events that conflict with the meeting times of the program.[27] These mentors may also struggle to give their mentees their full attention, because they are focused on their own activities and goals. And academically struggling mentees might have a harder time viewing a high achieving student as an achievable role model — they may feel that being paired with a student who is excelling only highlights their challenges. And those high-achieving mentors might not be able to understand or empathize with the experiences of a mentee who finds school difficult.

Programs should recruit a diverse pool of mentors, including youth who may be disconnected from school or who could use an opportunity to build a stronger identity.[9] If program leadership wants to involve high-achieving students, then during recruitment they should stress program requirements and mentor commitment, and help teens anticipate and discuss potential scheduling conflict to ensure that they will be able to participate as needed. And regardless of mentors' prior academic success, the literature we reviewed suggests that the best peer mentors are those who are "other oriented," who genuinely care about helping others and forming relationships, and who can participate fully in their roles and responsibilities.[25]

## Be cautious when offering incentives to mentors.

One of the challenges reported in peer mentoring programs was a result providing incentives to mentors. It was quite common in the literature to see models where mentors were participants in a human development or social services class, and were offered course credit or some other incentive or enticement for participating as mentors. While there is nothing inherently wrong with offering peer

mentors incentives for their participation, several mentoring programs reported that participation of mentors dropped off significantly once they received their incentive.[27] Specifically, in cases where the mentoring "class" was offered earlier in the school year, participation tended to drop off after mentors had received their course credit or grade for the class. This trend suggests that many peer mentors in these programs were primarily motivated by simply getting the course credit or being able to list this activity on a college application — once they had those things taken care of, their interest in seeing their mentee and being engaged in the program tended to fade. Thus, if peer mentoring programs utilize incentives, they should structure incentives in a way that rewards full participation in the program and prevents mentors from disengaging from the program and their mentees after their personal goals have been met.[25]

## Anticipate challenges of the school setting.

Peer mentoring programs situated in schools consistently reported several operational challenges. Most prominent were **challenges related to the school year and schedule itself**. Participant recruitment and activity planning can eat up a large chunk of the beginning of the school year, and final testing and year-end activities can truncate the end of the program, and in between are a host of holiday breaks, field trips, and various in-service days that can disrupt the meeting schedule for matches.[27] All of this means that programs need to plan their activities and goals knowing that they will have limited meeting times throughout the year and that most, if not all, of their matches will be less than one-year relationships. Thus, they should plan a focused number of activities that can be accomplished within a limited school-year calendar, and with enough flexibility that outcomes can still

be achieved, even if participants miss a few sessions here and there. The good news is that we saw examples in the literature of successful programs where matches only met a dozen times or fewer and still reported positive mentee outcomes (for example, Smith & Holloman[28] or Clarke-Midura, et al., 2018[29]). But in general, peer mentoring programs will want to maximize the number of meetings and focus the work that mentors and mentees do in the limited time they will be together.

There were other school-site challenges noted in the literature that highlighted the need for administrative commitment and support in the planning and execution of these programs. Among these challenges were those related to **transporting mentors to the mentees' school** or site (or other arrangements where one or both participants needed to travel to the meeting site), **challenges finding the right time in the school day for matches to meet**[1], and **challenges with matches having access to adequate space and resources for meetings**.[24] When matches are grouped too closely together, they have trouble engaging in meaningful personal conversations and can be easily distracted by other pairs and their friends. Making sure that peer mentors have all the materials, and physical space, they need to lead activities is a key to success in these programs. Coordination among program and school staff around these logistical issues ensures that mentors and mentees are productive in their relatively limited time together — this includes the procedures for how the school wants to manage having visiting mentors enter, arrive, and depart campus, which can eat into the time matches have together if the process is too cumbersome. Programs that are currently under development should note that the time to secure administrative commitment to the program is before a program starts, and an agreement to

provide these resources should be negotiated with administrators and agreed to in writing. This is also a good time to secure **approval to access data needed for evaluation**, since the program is likely to be collecting outcome data from both mentors and mentees, as well as teachers, parents, and other informants.

## Peer mentors need extensive training (and support) to take on what is essentially an adult role.

The role of a mentor is most often associated with adults at the older end of the age spectrum — those who have gained key insights and experience over the years who are now positioned to pass that wisdom on to a new generation. But in cross-age peer mentoring programs, young people themselves volunteer to step into that "wise and older" role, somewhat prematurely. Teens work in what Vygotsky called their "zone of proximal development," which is that zone of competencies just beyond what an individual can demonstrate independently. Though these competencies — in this case, emotional autonomy, leadership, the ability to lead and guide others — will be performed independently by these peer mentors sometime in the future, at this point in their lives, for them to perform these roles effectively they need considerable scaffolding and external support. This is why a high level of program support — training, monitoring, and match support — is both necessary and sufficient for most teens to be able to serve effectively as "older and wiser" mentors.[24, 25, 27, 30]

As these competencies do not come naturally to most youth, they will need significant training to be comfortable and competent in this role. The Recommendations that follow later under Standard 3 offer a wealth of advice on both training topics and delivery, especially the importance of clarifying the mentor role, helping mentors understand how to work with the adults running the program, their role in leading activities with their mentee, and subtle communication skills, including giving positive feedback, active listening, and nonverbal communication. Role-playing and other training activities that allow peer mentors to practice handling specific scenarios may be particularly impactful in training peer mentors.

The overall amount of training may also matter, as the standard two hours suggested in the standard *Elements* is unlikely to be sufficient for the topics and learning activities described above. One of the strongest studies on peer mentoring[27] found that "the amount of training received [by high school age mentors] was more consistently associated with match success than it was for adults." While there may have been other factors that explained part of that finding (e.g., mentors' internal motivation to participate influencing both training completion and the effort in the match) both teen mentors and the youth they served felt their relationships were stronger and more satisfying as the amount of peer mentor training increased. Thus, programs are encouraged to really take the time needed for preparing these youth for their role from the beginning.

Peer mentors can also benefit from (and need) increased levels of programmatic support and adult supervision compared to that required, on average, for adult mentors. These additional program practices may be fairly easy for most peer mentoring programs to provide — assuming that they have adequate staffing — since the majority of the cross-age peer mentoring programs are site- or school-based programs. Additional structure and oversight are easier when staff are co-located with match meetings, which makes it easier to observe

matches in action, compared to community-based programs. Research suggests that one of the stronger practices for successful peer mentoring is real-time supervision of matches, in which program staff can step in to assist any matches or groups that are struggling with an activity, that are not focusing on the planned activity, or that are having behavioral or relationship challenges. Because peer mentors may not know how to handle a variety of scenarios or challenges, or may make mistakes in how they interact with their mentees, it is important that at least one staff member is free to keep an eye on matches and offer support and corrective instruction as needed.[24] A best practice reported in the literature was to have the monitoring and support role be the primary duty of at least one adult staff member, and specifically, to have this role filled by someone who is not the adult responsible for leading group activities or managing general program operations.[25]

## Consider focusing the program on key transition points or on topics where a peer's influence may be more powerful than that of adults.

We noted many examples in the literature of programs working at key transition points in kids' lives: the transition into middle school, high school,[23, 31–34] or college,[35–40] aging out of foster care,[41] entering the world of work,[42] recently emigrating to a new country,[43] and youth dealing with illnesses,[44] disabilities,[45] or health concerns.[46, 47] Peer mentors may be particularly helpful in sharing their experiences and key advice for navigating these transitions and easing anxiety about new experiences. Peer mentors seem especially well-suited to helping mentees develop greater competency in their social and emotional skills, as well as build their confidence. The combination of one-to-one peer mentoring with group social activities may be a particularly potent combination for helping mentees learn and practice social skills in an accepting environment that can improve their sense of belonging and social competence.

We also noted examples of programs, such as those promoting healthier behaviors and attitudes, which found the influence of a peer, especially a slightly older one, to be more impactful than adult voices of support.[28] It may be that mentees may be especially influenced by a respected near peer who serves as a more immediate role model than a much older mentor might. But in general, peer programs seem well-suited to helping youth overcome big hurdles or transition points.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Note: The structure presented below uses the original language from the *Elements of Effective Practice* (4th Edition) as the framework for making additional peer mentoring recommendations. Readers should be aware that some of that language may need to be modified to reference a peer model rather than the implied one-to-one model. Peer mentoring programs can find their specific recommendations in the colored, numbered Recommendations throughout the framework below.

## STANDARD 1 – RECRUITMENT

### BENCHMARKS:
### Mentor Recruitment

B.1.1 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.

**Recommendation 1:** Program includes recruitment messages to prospective peer mentors about the fact that they will be mentoring a mentee who is a child or adolescent.

**Recommendation 2:** Program includes recruitment messages to prospective peer mentors about the importance of considering competing demands on their time, if they volunteer to participate in the program.

**Recommendation 3:** Program clarifies in recruitment messages the roles and responsibilities of a peer mentor.

B.1.2 Program utilizes recruitment strategies that build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring.

B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

**Recommendation 4:** Program prioritizes the recruitment of individuals who:

　　a. Can benefit from being a mentor in the program.

　　b. Have positive attitudes toward youth.

　　c. Are comfortable in initiating conversations with peers.

　　d. Have a history or interest in society, community, and helping others (they may have formal volunteering or babysitting experience).

　　e. Are at least two years older than the target age of the mentees.

　　f. Have previous experience as a mentee, ideally within the program, especially if the program is using a curriculum and new mentors would have confidence in how to do the activities.

B.1.4 Program encourages mentors to assist with recruitment efforts by providing them with resources to ask individuals they know, who meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to be a mentor.

**Recommendation 5:** Program asks currently enrolled peer mentors or gathers testimonials from former peer mentors to assist in school- or site-based recruitment strategies.

B.1.5 Program trains and encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves, when relevant.

**Recommendation 6:** Program encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate peer mentors for themselves from within their school or from older siblings or neighbors.

MENTEE AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN RECRUITMENT

B.1.6* Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

**Recommendation 7:** Program communicates to parents or caregivers that their child will participate in a peer mentoring relationship with a near-aged peer as their mentor.

**Recommendation 8:** Program communicates to parents or caregivers how peer mentors are screened, matched, trained, monitored, and supported, including highlighting the safety practices employed by the program.

**Recommendation 9:** Program describes how mentees are expected to participate in the program with a positive and respectful attitude, because they may be close in age to their mentor, so that mentees and families can set realistic expectations and assess their fit with the program.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

**Recommendation 10:** Program recruits mentees who are diverse in their behaviors, abilities, interests, and backgrounds.

### School or Site Recruitment

New B.1.8: Mentoring program provides recruitment information to the host school (or site) about the eligibility criteria for accepting mentors and mentees in the program, as well as the time, effort, space, resources, staffing, and supports needed to successfully host or execute the peer mentoring program.

### ENHANCEMENTS

### Mentor Recruitment

E.1.1* Program communicates to mentors about how mentoring and volunteering can benefit them.

**Recommendation 11:** Program utilizes messages related to personal growth, accomplishments, and résumé building opportunities for peer mentors.

E.1.2 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.

E.1.3* Program uses multiple strategies to recruit mentors (e.g., direct ask, social media, traditional methods of mass communication, presentations, referrals) on an ongoing basis.

**Recommendation 12:** Program considers giving course credit to peer mentors, especially if doing so helps provide more opportunities for training and support, and sustains their involvement in the program to fulfill their initial commitment.

### Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

E.1.4 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.

E.1.5 Program encourages mentees to recruit other peers to be mentees whose needs match the services offered by the program, when relevant.

## STANDARD 2 – SCREENING

### BENCHMARKS

### Mentor Screening

B.2.1* Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

**Recommendation 13:** Program screens prospective peer mentors for:

a. Potentially benefiting from being a mentor in the program.

b. Having positive attitudes toward youth.

c. Being comfortable in initiating conversations with peers.

d. Having a history or interest in society, community, and helping others (they may have formal volunteering or babysitting experience).

e. Being ideally at least two years older than the target age of the mentees (or having life experiences that differentiate them from mentees in ways relevant to the program model).

f. Likely schedule conflicts or transportation challenges.

B.2.2 Prospective mentors complete a written application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

**Recommendation 14:** Program interviews prospective peer mentors about:

a. Their experience, comfort, and confidence with managing the challenges that can emerge when supervising younger peers who may appear to be disinterested, be uncooperative, or misbehave at times, with training and support.

b.  Their openness to asking for help.

c. Their motivation for volunteering to be a mentor in this program, in particular.

d. Their hopes about the program.

e How they would handle possible challenges they may face with their mentee.

f. How they would minimize their time socializing with same-aged peer mentors who are also serving as mentors in the program.

g Their questions and concerns they may have about the program.

B.2.4 Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on prospective adult mentors, including searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries and, when relevant, driving records.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.2.5 Program conducts reference check interviews with multiple adults who know an applicant (ideally, both personal and professional references) that include questions to help assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

**Recommendation 15:** Program interviews or requests letters of reference from peers, parents, teachers, or other adults who know the prospective peer mentor well.

B.2.6 Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

B.2.7 Prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program.

## Mentee Screening

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

**Recommendation 16:** Program assesses whether or not prospective mentees would benefit from having a mentor who is a peer, and would be able to fully participate in a peer mentoring program.

**Recommendation 17:** Program recruits mentees who are diverse in their behaviors, abilities, interests, and backgrounds.

B.2.9 Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application or referral form.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring program, depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.2.10 Parent(s)/guardian(s) provide informed permission for their child to participate.

B.2.11 Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

**Recommendation 18:** Program assesses during the screening process whether prospective mentees may have scheduling challenges or conflicts currently or in the future that would hinder their full attendance at mentoring meetings, and screen out those who may not consistently meet with their mentor or may terminate their relationship prematurely.

B.2.12 Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by the mentoring program.

## ENHANCEMENTS

## Mentor Screening

E.2.1 Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.2 Program conducts at least one home visit of each prospective mentor, especially when the match may be meeting in the mentor's home.

**Recommendation 19:** Program observes (or requests observations from other adults who know the prospective mentors well) prospective peer mentors in the school environment or after-school program setting to directly view the quality of their relationships with peers and school staff members.

E.2.3 Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults living in the home of prospective mentors, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries, when the match may meet in mentors' homes.

**Recommendation 20:** Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults present during mentoring program meetings, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries.

E.2.4 School-based programs assess mentors' interest in maintaining contact with their mentees during the summer months (following the close of the academic school year) and offer assistance to matches in maintaining contact.

E.2.5* Programs that utilize adult mentors prioritize accepting mentor applicants who are older than college age.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.6* Program uses evidence-based screening tools and practices to identify individuals who have attitudes and beliefs that support safe and effective mentoring relationships.

**Recommendation 21:** Program screens mentors using evidence-based measures to assess their attitudes toward youth, interest in helping others, and commitment to their mentoring program.

### Mentee Screening

E.2.7* Mentees complete an application (either written or verbally).

E.2.8* Mentees provide written assent agreeing to participate in their mentoring program.

## STANDARD 3 – TRAINING

### BENCHMARKS

### Mentor Training

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

**Recommendation 22:** Program provides more than two hours of pre-match mentor training, because of the increased training demands on preparing effective peer mentors, who are, by definition, youth or young adults, and who need to learn additional information about being a mentor to a peer.

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics:

a. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, and match termination).

**Recommendation 23:** Program trains peer mentors on site-specific attendance, arrival, and departure protocols.

**Recommendation 24:** Program trains peer mentors on providing feedback both on program activities and their relationship with their mentee.

b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentee, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship.

**Recommendation 25:** Program trains mentors on realistic expectations related to mentoring a close-aged younger peer, including discussing their hopes and concerns with them, given the fact that many teenagers haven't had experience being responsible for the safety or well-being of younger peers.

c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles.

**Recommendation 26:** Program provides peer mentors with additional training about roles and boundaries, specifically about not being a peer friend to their mentees. Training topics should include out-of-program contacts; romantic relationships between mentors and mentees; inappropriate conversation topics with their mentee or in the presence of mentees; and being a role model at all times in the building, because mentees are always watching mentors.

**Recommendation 27:** Program trains peer mentors on how to deliver program activities with fidelity and enthusiasm, especially in programs where mentors are expected to utilize a curriculum or help build specific skills in mentees, including how to facilitate participant interactions and ensure a positive group experience when leading activities and conversations.

**Recommendation 28:** Program trains peer mentors on how to focus on their mentee and minimize their time socializing with same-aged peers who are also serving as mentors in the program.

  d. Relationship development and maintenance.

**Recommendation 29:** Program trains peer mentors on how to manage the challenges that can emerge when supervising younger peers who may appear to be disinterested, be uncooperative, or misbehave at times.

**Recommendation 30:** Program trains peer mentors about the importance of acknowledging that it can be difficult to maintain attention on their mentee when they feel drawn to interacting with their same-age peers in the program, especially during challenging times when their mentees most need consistent attention, presence, and availability from the mentor.

**Recommendation 31:** Program provides peer mentors with additional training about both the value of prioritizing and strategies for developing an effective mentoring relationship (e.g., active listening and reflection), especially when the mentoring program includes structured, planned activities.

**Recommendation 32:** Program trains peer mentors on:

  a. The importance of preparing and doing activities with their mentees.

  b. The relationship between specific activities and program goals.

  c. Instructions on how to facilitate positive experiences and conduct activities with their mentees (either individually or in groups).

  d. How to build their relationships while doing activities together.

  e. Ethical and safety issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship.

**Recommendation 33:** Program clarifies policies and procedures with peer mentors regarding how to handle conflicts, disclosures, and disciplinary issues with mentees, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.

  f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.

  g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.

  h. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of youth (e.g., children with an incarcerated parent, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.

**Recommendation 34:** Program trains mentor to understand the challenges that their mentee may be facing, including potentially having a history of exposure to trauma.

    i. Initiating the mentoring relationship.

    j. Developing an effective, positive relationship with mentee's family, if relevant.

B.3.3* Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

    a. Appropriate physical contact

    b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g., who to contact, when to contact)

    c. Relationship monitoring requirements (e.g., response time, frequency, schedule)

    d. Approved activities

    e. Mandatory reporting requirements associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, and suicidality and homicidality

**Recommendation 35:** Program trains peer mentors on their policies and procedures related to talking to program staff about issues related to the personal health and safety of their mentee (e.g., suspected child abuse or neglect; suicidality and homicidality; being the victim of bullying; bullying peers; mentee's substance use).

    f. Confidentiality and anonymity

**Recommendation 36:** Program trains peer mentors regarding the increased complexities associated with maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs, especially if the mentor and mentee attend the same school or have shared friends.

g. Digital and social media use

h. Overnight visits and out of town travel

i. Money spent on mentee and mentoring activities

j. Transportation

k. Emergency and crisis situation procedures

l. Health and medical care

m. Discipline

n. Substance use

o. Firearms and weapons

p. Inclusion of others in match meetings (e.g., siblings, mentee's friends)

q. Photo and image use

r. Evaluation and use of data

s. Grievance procedures

t. Other program relevant topics

B.3.4 Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.

## ENHANCEMENTS

### Mentor Training

E.3.1 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.

**Recommendation 37:** Program requires more than two hours of pre-match training to peer mentors related to curriculum implementation, if mentors are expected to utilize a curriculum or help build specific skills in mentees.

E.3.2 Program addresses the following post-match training* topics:

a. How developmental functioning may affect the mentoring relationship

b. How culture, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee may affect the mentoring relationship

c. Topics tailored to the needs and characteristics of the mentee

d. Closure procedures

E.3.3 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability to be a mentor and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

## Mentee Training

E.3.4* Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics:

a. Purpose of mentoring

b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)

**Recommendation 38:** Program clarifies policies and procedures with mentees regarding how to handle conflicts and other disciplinary issues between their child and his or her peer mentor, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.

c. Mentees' goals for mentoring

d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles

e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles

**Recommendation 39:** Program trains mentees about how to participate in the program, including having a positive and respectful attitude and how to provide feedback to their mentor about what they like and dislike about the program, the mentor, and their interactions to help the mentee learn to be a self-advocate.

f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships

g. Initiating the mentoring relationship

h. Procedures for effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.5* Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

**Recommendation 40:** Program trains mentees regarding the increased complexity of maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs, especially if the mentor and mentee attend the same school or have shared friends.

## Parent or Guardian Training

E.3.6* Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:

a. Purpose of mentoring

b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)

**Recommendation 41:** Program clarifies policies and procedures with parents or guardians regarding how to handle conflicts and other disciplinary issues between their child and his or her peer mentor, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.

    c. Parents' and mentees' goals for mentoring

    d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles

    e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles

**Recommendation 42:** Program trains parents about how their child is expected to participate in the program — including having a positive and respectful attitude — and asks parents to communicate with their child to provide feedback to their mentor about what he or she likes and dislikes about the program, the mentor, and their interactions to help the child learn to be an advocate for her or himself.

    f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships

    g. Initiating the mentoring relationship

    h. Developing an effective, working relationship with your child's mentor

    i. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.7* Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

**Recommendation 43:** Program trains parents or guardians regarding the increased complexity of maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs, especially if the mentor and mentee attend the same school or have shared friends.

## STANDARD 4 – MATCHING

### BENCHMARKS

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

**Recommendation 44:** Program considers the prior relationship and behavioral history of peer mentors and mentees (e.g., bullies or victims of bullying, enemies, romantically involved, family friends, have engaged in aggressive or risky behaviors) when making match decisions.

**Recommendation 45:** Program does not schedule multiple mentors or mentees who engage in risky health or aggressive behaviors to meet in the same room at the same time.

**Recommendation 46:** Program matches mentors and mentees based upon extracurricular or vocational interests.

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

B.4.3 Program staff member should be on site and/ or present during the initial match meeting of the mentor and mentee, and, when relevant, parent or guardian.

B.4.4* Mentor, mentee, a program staff member, and, when relevant, the mentee's parent or guardian, meet in person to sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements (e.g., frequency, intensity, and duration of match meetings; roles of each person involved in the mentoring relationship; frequency of contact with program), and risk management policies.

## ENHANCEMENTS

E.4.1 Programs match mentee with a mentor who is at least three years older than the mentee.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors. This enhancement is superseded by Recommendations 4.e. and 13.e.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another, and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

**Recommendation 47:** Program uses a meet-and-greet group matching event where mentees and prospective peer mentors can meet and interact with one another, and can provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

E.4.3 Program provides an opportunity for the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide feedback about the mentor selected by the program, prior to the initiation meeting.

E.4.4 Initial match meeting occurs at the home of the mentee with the program staff member present, if the mentor will be picking up the mentee at the mentee's home for match meetings.

E.4.5 Program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentor with background information about prospective mentee; remind mentor of confidentiality; discuss potential opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring proposed mentee).

E.4.6 Program staff member prepares mentee and his or her parents or guardians for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentee and parent(s) with background information about selected mentor; discuss any

family rules that should be shared with the mentor; discuss what information family members would like to share with the mentor and when).

**Recommendation 48:** Program communicates in private to mentors and mentees who they will be matched with prior to the first meeting.

## STANDARD 5 – MONITORING AND SUPPORT

### BENCHMARKS

B.5.1 Program contacts mentors and mentees at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

**Recommendation 49:** Site-based program staff members should consistently observe each mentor-mentee pair periodically, as needed, throughout the program.

B.5.2 At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure.

**Recommendation 50:** Program solicits input and/or regular feedback from peer mentors about program activities for matches to do together.

B.5.3 At each mentee monitoring contact, program should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

B.5.4 Program follows evidence-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from mentors and mentees about the quality of their mentoring relationships, and uses scientifically tested relationship assessment tools.

B.5.5 Program contacts a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, or teacher) at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.5.6 At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.5.7 Program regularly assesses all matches to determine if they should be closed or encouraged to continue.

B.5.8 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee meeting including, at a minimum, the date, length, and description of activity completed.

**Recommendation 51:** Peer mentors record the activities that they did with their mentees, especially if the activities differ from a preset curriculum, as well as how their activities relate to the goals of the program or their mentee's individual goals for themselves.

B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

**Recommendation 52:** Program staff members at site-based programs should give peer mentors real-time feedback on their relationships, and offer help and support to peer mentors who are struggling with completing an activity with their mentee or relationship challenges.

**Recommendation 53:** Site-based programs should have at least two staff members on site when multiple matches are meeting, including one staff member who coordinates activities, and another staff member who is dedicated to actively monitoring and supporting matches in real-time.

B.5.10* Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise.

B.5.11 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

**Recommendation 54:** Program provides post-match training with peer mentors regarding ongoing challenges related to collaborative decision-making, boundary issues, and other issues that may be unique to mentoring relationships between close-aged peers.

B.5.12 Program provides mentors with feedback on a regular basis regarding their mentees' outcomes and the impact of mentoring on their mentees to continuously improve mentee outcomes and encourage mentor retention.

## ENHANCEMENTS

E.5.1 Program conducts a minimum of one in-person monitoring and support meeting per year with mentor, mentee, and when relevant, parent or guardian.

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

E.5.3* Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and mentees' families.

E.5.4 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.

**Recommendation 55:** Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at multiple points during the course of the program, given that youth volunteer mentors need to be incentivized and recognized more frequently than at the conclusion of the program.

E.5.5* At least once each school or calendar year of the mentoring relationship, program thanks the family or a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., guardian or teacher) and recognizes their contributions in supporting the mentee's engagement in mentoring.

## STANDARD 6 – CLOSURE

### BENCHMARKS

B.6.1 Program has a procedure to manage anticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

B.6.2 Program has a procedure to manage unanticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

B.6.3* Program has a procedure to manage closure when one member of the match is unable or unwilling to engage in the closure process.

B.6.4 Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.

B.6.5* Program has a written policy and procedure, when relevant, for managing rematching.

B.6.6* Program documents that closure procedures were followed.

B.6.7* Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors that includes the following topics of conversation:

    a. Discussion of mentors' feelings about closure

    b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant

    c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship

    d. Procedure for mentor notifying the mentee and his or her parents, if relevant, far enough in advance of the anticipated closure meeting to provide sufficient time to adequately prepare the mentee for closure

e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact

f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant

**Recommendation 56:** Program acknowledges with mentors and mentees that they may interact with one another naturally in their school or community, given their probable residential proximity or attendance in the same school system, and reviews the program's confidentiality policies.

g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible

h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

B.6.8* Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians that includes the following topics of conversation:

a. Discussion of mentees' feelings about closure

b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant

c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship

d. Procedure for notification of mentor, if relevant, about the timing of closure

e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact

f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant

g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible

h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

B.6.9 Program has a written public statement to parents or guardians, if relevant, as well as to mentors and mentees that outline the terms of match closure and the policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends (e.g., including contacts using digital or social media).

## ENHANCEMENTS

E.6.1 At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians to continue the match for an additional period of time.

E.6.2 Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship.

**Recommendation 57:** Program always hosts a final celebration meeting or event for matches, when possible, to publicly honor and recognize the hard work that youth did in the program, and reiterate key messages and lessons learned from the program.

E.6.3* Program staff provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

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# JUSTIFICATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PEER MENTORING RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recruitment of Program Sites for a Committed, Prepared, and Engaged Setting

One new benchmark **(B.1.8)** was introduced in this Supplement that focuses on the "recruitment" of the appropriate setting or location for hosting the mentoring program. This recommendation rose to the level of a benchmark, because many peer mentoring programs are site- or school-based, rather than community-based, requiring buy-in from the site leadership and staff to be successful. In fact, it was clear from our review of the literature that in order for a mentoring program to provide the type of scaffolding, support, and structure needed to successfully utilize youth as mentors, the host school or site needed to be **fully engaged and committed** to the program.[1, 2, 3]

In addition, we identified a number of conditions and resources that a site would need to have in order to commit to the program, and in cases where the program is being offered by an external provider, the program would need to have strategies and materials in place to recruit a host site or school. For example, given the commitment and resources needed to be a host site or school, the host needs to have some confidence that the program will run smoothly and that it will positively impact the school climate and/or youth involved as mentors and mentees. Having an **external group with expertise in the youth mentoring field** actually run the program in a school or site could be advantageous, because of the structure, practices, experience, and knowledge of mentoring they bring to the local program.[3] This type of expertise and credibility can contribute positively to a site

committed to implementing a program. One of the main selling points described in the literature is that these programs benefit the entire school or site in terms of culture and climate, because this type of program "prioritizes relationships, builds a sense of community, and promotes students being happy and safe."[3]

Some common commitment expectations include having an official at the site/school sign a f**ormal agreement** with the mentoring program (if the school is not itself the program) indicating their willingness to accept and be faithful to the model, design, and core features of the program.[4] Having a formal agreement and a **program manual** provides a means for both the host site and the mentoring program to clearly identify and record the conditions (e.g., time, effort, space, resources, staffing, supports) needed to run the program. For example, the *Program Manual for the Cross-Age Mentoring Program* for Children with Adolescent Mentors (CAMP) provide sites or schools with a list of resources they would need to have to run an effective program, such as a dedicated program coordinator, space for conducting mentoring activities, reliable transportation, modest funds for supplies and field trips, and, most important, a commitment to the program from the heads of the school or institution.[5]

One common condition of success mentioned by practitioners was having a **local program coordinator** on site. In fact, in a national survey of peer mentoring practitioners, the most important factor associated with having a successful program was having an effective program coordinator (conversely, having an unsuccessful program coordinator was reported to be the biggest challenge).[1] The program coordinator at each site can serve as a liaison to the mentoring program and administer the program.[4] Managing a mentoring program is both a time-consuming job and serious responsibility, with many potential benefits,

but also some negative ramifications for participants, if it is done haphazardly or poorly.[4] If the program coordinator is volunteering in this position, not well-trained or supported, or not compensated for their time, they could develop a negative attitude toward the program and the demands it places on them — this theme clearly stood out in the Berger survey of practitioners noted above. Well-supported, trained, and supervised local program coordinators are often the linchpin in achieving long-term and sustained program success.

## RECRUITING AND SELECTING THE RIGHT MENTORS FOR THE PROGRAM

Because the mentors in peer programs are youth themselves, more care and attention need to be placed on how the proper individuals are brought into that role. Ultimately, we settled on 13 recommendations related to optimal recruitment and screening practices for locating and enrolling peer mentors.

### Addressing the uniqueness of the mentoring role and of developing a friendship with a near-aged mentee

Recruitment messages need to explain to mentors — who may be relatively unfamiliar with the concept of mentoring — exactly what it is, who they will be mentoring, their roles and responsibilities, and the program requirements. These guidelines are similar to those for any mentoring program; however, in addition, peer mentors need to clearly understand that they will be developing a close, helping relationship with a near-aged peer **(B.1.1 Recommendations 1 and 3)**. Although being a friend to a mentee is core to the definition of mentoring, recruitment messages need to communicate that the friendship with the mentee is in the service of helping and supporting the mentee. Children and teens may find this type of relationship and role to be unfamiliar because they

developmentally lack the deeper reciprocity and mutuality typically found in this particular type of helping-focused friendship. Right from the beginning, prospective mentors need to be introduced to the idea that they will be involved in a supportive role and helping-focused relationship with a mentee.

### Recruiting and enrolling committed mentors is one of the cornerstones of success

One consistent theme in descriptions of mentoring programs is that young volunteers may not be considering the competing demands on their time when they apply to be a mentor and programs need strategies for recruiting, screening, and enrolling peer mentors who will follow through on their commitment to the program. This situation frequently arises in the peer mentoring world because in the beginning of the school year or semester, students' calendars look pretty empty and they may think that they have ample time to devote to a new volunteer program, such as peer mentoring. However, as the school year or semester unfolds, students will likely have increasing amounts of homework, be faced with many enticing extracurricular activities, and a growing list of opportunities to socialize with new and old friends. These competing demands can result in inconsistent attendance and even quitting the mentoring program before it ends. This problem was observed In one study, where several mentors barely made it beyond the beginning stages of the program, quitting after only two months because of extracurricular conflicts.[6] Conflicts with extracurricular schedules was also one of the main barriers to peer matches meeting frequently in the major study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) school-based model, something that the authors ultimately concluded negated the benefits of the program for mentees.[7] The negative effects of inconsistent meetings and premature relationship closure on mentees are now well-established in

the mentoring field; thus, peer programs need to emphasize the importance of identifying scheduling conflicts, as well as consistency and retention in their recruitment messages and screening processes.

Two recommendations **(B.1.1. Recommendation 2 and B.2.1. Recommendation 13.f.)** resulted from these observations about the high rates of early closure among high school student mentors. These recommendations suggest that peer mentoring programs need to address the importance of considering competing demands on time in recruitment messages, and screen volunteers for current or future schedule conflicts. Carefully reviewing each volunteer's schedule and extracurricular commitments with them, both at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the program, will help them anticipate their future plans and make a realistic commitment.

Another approach to selecting mentors who may sustain a longer-term commitment to the program is to purposefully avoid recruiting mentors who are already leaders or who are heavily involved in many extracurricular activities. There is a natural inclination to recruit youth who are already strong peer leaders as mentors, but these youth may be so involved in time-consuming clubs and leadership roles in activities that they have too many scheduling challenges to commit consistently to the program.[7] In fact, it might be beneficial to seek out students who have fewer competing interests or outside obligations to be peer mentors. They might embrace the opportunity to participate in this role and may even have more ability to benefit from the experience.[2]

Alternatively, peer programs might structure their services around shorter program cycles and choose to recruit mentors who can commit realistically to participating in the program for only one semester. This shorter program model might help to prevent

mentors quitting before the program ends and thereby, not disappointing mentees. For example, one study suggested that students with a variety of interests and commitments to other extracurricular activities should not commit to a program that lasts for a full academic year and should only commit to a program with a shorter program cycle.[8] This type of program was rare in the literature reviewed, but it could provide mentees with the opportunity to form relationships with more than one mentor over the course of a school year (have a new mentor every semester, for example) or to simply emphasize a more focused relationship in a program that only lasts a few months. But regardless of the length of the program cycle, what's important is recruiting mentors who can deliver on what they have committed to.

Another challenge noted in the literature is that some mentors had transportation challenges that interfered with consistency in their attendance at mentoring meetings. Transportation issues and scheduling conflicts proved to be challenges in the most prominent evaluation of a peer mentoring program with high school mentors.[7] That study found that the mentors with the best attendance records were those who were close to the school that hosted the mentoring program and who had staff who would arrange transportation to that site. In an attempt to eliminate barriers to consistency in attendance, another mentoring program even recruited mentors from a high school that was literally adjacent to the host elementary school, because the physical proximity of the two schools essentially eliminated travel challenges and helped build a stronger connection given that participants were from the same community.[9]

In addition to including commitment themes in recruitment messages, screening protocols should also include the use of evidence-based measures

to assess how committed youth volunteers are to working in and completing being a mentor **(E.2.6. Recommendation 21)**. Having mentors rate their commitment and provide examples of times they have been committed to some group or organization or achieving a goal is one strategy that programs might use. An example of a measure used to assess mentor commitment is can be found in Gettings and Wilson, (2014).[10]

## CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTORS TO EMPHASIZE DURING RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

There are a variety of recommendations that address the characteristics of effective mentors and the subsequent content that should be included in mentor recruitment messages and screening protocols.

### Positive views about other youth

One robust finding in the peer mentoring literature is that mentors who have a positive attitude toward youth have mentees with more positive outcomes. For example, high school peer mentors who had higher scores on the Social Interest Scale,[11] suggesting that they viewed other children as "fun" and "interesting," had stronger and more enduring connections with their mentees than high school mentors who had lower scores.[12] In contrast, mentors working with academically disconnected mentees who had negative attitudes toward youth had harmful effects on their mentees.[12] Thus, we recommend that recruitment messages communicate that the program is seeking volunteers who have positive attitudes toward youth **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.b.)** and that programs use screening protocols **(B.2.1 Recommendation 13.b.)** that include interview questions and evidence-based measures that assess positive attitudes toward youth as part of their eligibility criteria for acceptance into the program **(E.2.6. Recommendation 21)**.

### Comfort level in dealing with challenging mentees

A second key topic for both recruitment messages **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.c.)** and screening protocols **(B.2.1. Recommendation 13.c.)** is that prospective peer mentors must be comfortable initiating conversations with peers. Younger mentees may be reticent or shy, at least in the beginning of the relationship, to initiate conversations with their older peers. Hence, the burden of getting to know one another may be primarily on the peer mentor, and it may be important that they can start conversations as well as not take it personally if it is challenging to engage their mentee. We are not suggesting here to only select students to be peer mentors who have already demonstrated leadership or exceptional interpersonal skills, because many students may not have had the opportunity to demonstrate leadership potential and yet, may be excellent mentors.[3]

Programs may want to interview prospective mentors and include questions that explore their experience (e.g., babysitting, camp counselor), comfort (e.g., not terribly insecure in the face of interpersonal challenges), and confidence (e.g., feeling efficacious to slowly build a positive relationship with their mentee) with managing the interpersonal challenges that may emerge when responsible for younger peers **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.a.)**. These self-cognitions may provide support to mentors when mentees appear to be disinterested, are uncooperative, or even misbehave. For example, in one program we reviewed, high school students were interviewed about their prior experiences working with young children, in addition to being asked more common questions, such as their goals for being a mentor in the program.[13]

Screening protocols can include additional interview questions to get a sense of the knowledge and skills that volunteers may bring to the program, while

being cognizant that these youth volunteers have not yet been trained or received match support by the program. Interview questions could ask about common scenarios that the program has faced in the past and ask prospective mentors about how they might handle possible challenges that they may face with their mentee **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.c.)**. The examples mentioned above provide a sample of possible challenging interpersonal situations that may occur with peer mentees (e.g., disinterest, uncooperativeness, misbehavior). Consistent with this recommendation, we noted that The Brotherhood (TB) program staff [14] conducts a series of interviews with high-performing graduates of the Conservation Corps interested in being a mentor to assess for their appropriateness for mentoring middle school students. Similarly, in the Peer Group Connection program, student applicants participate in group problem-solving interviews where they discuss hypothetical peer-related problems and demonstrate solutions in role-playing.[15]

## Willingness and ability to seek help when facing a challenge

A third topic for screening concerns openness to help-seeking. It is inevitable that peer mentors will have questions and may also face new challenges in building a relationship with their mentee. Openness to seeking help can vary dramatically across individuals, and in this type of program, it is particularly important that mentors don't try to hide the challenges they face or their perceived weaknesses from the mentoring program support staff. Perhaps because they are youth, peer mentors may feel prey to the imposter syndrome believing that if they admit that they need help, then they are revealing that they don't belong as a mentor in the program or that they are not competent as a mentor. Letting volunteers know in the recruitment materials that help-seeking is expected and normal, and that support and resources will

be available to them throughout their tenure in the program is a strong recommendation. In addition, the screening process and interview protocol should include some form of assessing the volunteer's openness to asking for help **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.b.)**.

## A genuine interest in helping others

A fourth key topic for recruitment messages **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.d.)** and screening protocols **(B.2.1. Recommendation 13)** is having a history or interest in helping society, their community, or other people in their life. In general, one benefit of being a peer mentor is that they have the opportunity to serve in a meaningful role that will be new and stimulating for them, while also making a contribution to a younger peer and their community.[16] Having this interest in helping does not mean that volunteers have to demonstrate that they have already served in leadership roles or been extensively involved in organizations in the past. We are not recommending that peer programs only seek out volunteers with deep passion or commitment to social causes. Rather we recommend that the program seek peer mentors who have demonstrated and expressed an interest in helping others.

This interest also suggests that their motivation to be a peer mentor may transcend having only self-serving goals and that this preexisting interest in helping others may sustain peer mentors to be committed across the life of the program. One of the reasons pupils gave for getting involved in peer mentoring was the perception that they could make a difference.[17] In another example, in a group cross-age peer mentoring program where high school students served as mentors to middle school students, the screening process included assessing whether the prospective mentors had demonstrated any prior commitment to helping others or their school community.[18] In

another example, program staff attended service club meetings at the high school in order to locate students who had already demonstrated an interest in helping others.[19]

There are many examples in the literature we reviewed of peer mentoring programs supporting mentees making a transition to a new setting (e.g., into high school or college). One common theme mentioned by peer mentors about their reason for participating in this type of program is that they looked forward to getting to know a first-year student and helping them settle into their new school. In a retrospective qualitative study of mentors' reports of the benefits of having been a peer mentor, most said they remembered how hard it was to be a first-year student in their school and they welcomed the opportunity to support a young person going through this process.[3] Similarly, in the Victoria University Student Rover program, where mobile peer mentors provide "just-in-time" and "just-in-place" support to other students, mentors were selected who had struggled themselves with the transition to college, knew what those struggles felt like, and wanted to help their younger peers have a smoother transition to college.[20] Similarly, in an e-mentoring program for incoming college freshman by upperclassmen, mentors reported being motivated to volunteer in the program by their own memories of being a freshman and wanting to help others make a successful college transition.[21]

In addition to asking interview questions about an interest in helping others, we also recommend having volunteers complete a self-report questionnaire to assess their interest in helping others **(E.2.6. Recommendation 21)**.

## Age gap between mentors and mentees

A fifth key topic to include in recruitment messages **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.e.)** and screening protocols

**(B.2.1. Recommendation 13.e.)** is that volunteer mentors should be at least two years older than the target age of future mentees. An age gap of a minimum of two years is helpful in establishing a helping relationship with an older and "wiser" near-aged peer mentor, while the relative closeness in age helps mentees feel like their mentor is relatable and "cool."[8] However, we did observe examples of successful programs where mentors and mentees were in the same grades, but those programs were often focused on the delivery of very specific curricula and narrow goals, such as increasing healthy eating and exercise habits[22] or welcoming immigrant youth into the school setting.[23] Another exception to this two-year age gap is when volunteers are alumni of the program and are familiar with the program's goals, objectives, model, and activities. Because the two-year age gap is more common across peer mentoring programs and may have some advantage over programs with a smaller age gap, programs should clearly articulate their requirements in their recruitment messages.

## Ability to focus on the match

Finally, some CAMPs mentioned that peer mentors spent time socializing with one another rather than paying attention to their mentee. Children and adolescents are at a developmental stage where interacting with their friends and other peers is both developmentally appropriate and compelling. By taking attention away from their mentees, mentees may feel badly about themselves, their relationships, and their involvement in the mentoring program. Thus, the sixth key topic to assess in screening is how volunteers might minimize their time socializing with their same-aged peer mentors, who are also serving as mentors in the program, and focus their attention on their mentee. **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.f.)**

## BENEFITS AND MOTIVATIONS AROUND BEING A PEER MENTOR

The research suggests that messages used to recruit youth mentors include information about the benefits they will receive from being a mentor that focus on their personal growth, accomplishments, and résumé building opportunities **(B.1.3 Recommendation 4.a. and E.1.1. Recommendation 11).** Furthermore, during the screening process, we suggest that mentoring programs also assess *the degree to which each applicant may potentially benefit from being a mentor* in the program **(B.2.1. Recommendation 13.a.)** — something that might be especially important to consider if a program has more volunteers than open mentor slots. One program in our literature review noted that many of the high school students who signed up to mentor indicated an interest in pursuing a career in teaching, social work, or another people-oriented profession, and thought that being a mentor would be a good way to get experience in these types of roles, something the program could emphasize in future recruitment.[24, 25] Similarly, in another program, peer mentors felt their mentoring role helped to prepare them for adulthood[17] and future employment.[26] Many other benefits have been mentioned by alumni of peer mentoring programs, including improvements in their social, employment, and organizational skills, as well as increases in their self-confidence.[27, 26] Another commonly mentioned intangible benefit of being a peer mentor, especially for youth with disabilities, is that it can help mentors to integrate and socialize with younger peers through an increase in their own social skills and having positive social experiences.[28] Specific academic skills that were enhanced by being a peer mentor included their study skills, learning strategies, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and their feeling of engagement and belonging in their school.[29, 30, 31, 32, 33] Peer mentors have also reported benefits in terms of improvement in their social and emotional skills, such as improved communication skills,[32] leadership skills,[26] and increased empathy.[19]

In addition to communicating about the unique opportunities for growth, some mentoring programs also provide volunteer mentors with tangible incentives; however, there is some controversy and mixed findings in the mentoring literature, more generally, about providing volunteers with tangible or external incentives to be a mentor. Tangible benefits for peer mentors typically consist of receiving course credit or credit toward accomplishing community service hours that are required for high school graduation. The compensation of peer mentors may be problematic if they put in less effort after they are compensated or it results in their volunteering to participate for only self-serving reasons.[34] This question of the consequences of providing tangible incentives to peer mentors was studied In both the High School Bigs[7] and Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton teen mentoring studies.[35] In both cases, approximately 40 percent of the mentors received course credit or were required to participate in the program, and in both studies, fewer benefits were found in matches with compensated mentors. Specifically, high school seniors who were Bigs and received course credit for being a mentor were less engaged in the program and more missed meetings than Bigs who did not get course credit.[7] (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #6** for a great example of how one program utilized a class-based mentor training but avoided disengagement after participants had received credit.)

Despite these two negative findings in the literature, we concluded, based on other papers and conversations with many peer mentoring practitioners, that mentoring programs should consider giving course credit to peer mentors as an incentive,

especially if doing so provides more opportunities for training and support, and sustains their involvement in the program to fulfill their initial commitment **(E.1.3. Recommendation 12)**. Community service and course credit incentives ranged in the literature from a token amount of credit to a one semester course to a year-long, course that met daily. [19, 36, 37, 38, 39]

Tangible incentives for youth are also sometimes monetary. For example, one effective study was located that provided money and other academically related incentives as intangible benefits to being a peer mentor in the program (i.e., $100 incentive, certificate of leadership achievement, letter of reference describing the teen's contributions to the project).[40] Other more minor tangible benefits mentioned by peer mentors include getting out of classes, going on field trips, and just having fun with their mentee.[3]

In addition, we advise that during the screening interview, staff ask volunteers about their motivation for wanting to be a mentor in the program **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.c.)** and their hopes for the program **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.d.)** which may help to weed out volunteers who are only interested in being a peer mentor for personal gain related to incentives or who have little or no interest in helping their younger peers. For example, in the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS) program, where college students provide STEM mentoring to middle and high school students,[41] mentors are selected based on their interest, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn, as well as coming from a population that is underrepresented in the STEM disciplines.[42] In another example, in the Peer Group Connection (PGC) program, students apply to be mentors in the spring of their junior year in high school, and answer essay questions about how they can contribute to the program and what they expect

to gain from the experience.[15] Similarly, as part of the application process in another program, students are asked to answer essay questions about their reasons for wanting to participate in the program and what they hope to gain from the experience.[18] These screening practices can help inform the creation of inclusion and exclusion criteria, and ultimately, improve the selection process.

## Recruitment of Peer Mentors from Program Alumni or through Mentee Referral

There is a benchmark in the EEPM that states that mentoring programs should ask mentors to assist in recruiting new mentors. Similar to workplace mentoring program, this existing benchmark is particularly relevant for the peer mentoring context, because peer mentors can recruit students whom they already know to be a new peer mentor from their school, extracurricular activity group, or after-school program. This may be even easier in schools or other site-based programs where potential recruits are likely to already be aware of the program and may have some familiarity with the benefits, responsibilities, and challenges that their peers may have faced as mentors in the program. Thus, this benchmark takes on added significance in the recruitment of peer mentors, since youth can be positively influenced and motivated by one another. We recommend that the program asks peer mentors to assist in recruitment efforts, as well as recording testimonials from current or previous peer mentors to use in recruitment messages **(B.1.4. Recommendation 5)**.

Another rich source for recruiting new peer mentors is to recruit and prioritize volunteers who have had previous experience as a *mentee* in the program **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.f.)**. In fact, research suggests that students who had prior experience as a mentee while in elementary school were significantly more likely to volunteer as mentors in high school.[43]

Some peer mentors in the BBBS peer mentoring program in Ireland reported that they volunteered to be a mentor because they had been a mentee in the program and benefited from it.[3] Interestingly, other mentors reported that they had not been a mentee in the program and regretted it, so they decided to volunteer to be a mentor.[3] Thus, recruiting both former mentees and former students from a school that hosts a successful mentoring program can be a rich source for locating interested and motivated future mentors.

Former mentees are also important to recruit for programs that use a curriculum, since program alumni would have experience with and confidence in how to do the curriculum activities. For example, a STEM mentoring program for 6–12th graders recruits high school mentors from former mentees who may already understand the curriculum and goals of the program, and have the science skills and knowledge to properly facilitate STEM activities.[44]

## Using Alternative Methods to Screen Volunteers for Safety and Suitability

The EEPM outlines several procedures that a program should or potentially could use to screen volunteers for being safe and suitable mentors. Because most peer mentors are juvenile and juvenile court records are confidential (unless the juvenile is bound over to the adult criminal justice system), the benchmarks associated with conducting criminal background checks on volunteers are not exactly applicable. Alternatively, programs should conduct comprehensive criminal background checks on all the adults who will be present during mentoring program meetings, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries **(E.2.3. Recommendation 20)**. If the mentoring program is a site-based program that is hosted in a school or preexisting after-school program, it is likely that all of the adults who are working or

volunteering in the setting have already been screened in a criminal records database. However, if not, then the safety of mentors and mentees, who are probably all minors, needs to be considered and protected.

In terms of sources of information about the background, character, skills, strengths, and potential challenges of participation of prospective mentors, programs will need to rely on alternate reputable and reliable sources. For example, adults or peers who know the prospective mentor well and can provide key information about them, may be the most important corroborating source of background information. We recommend **(B.2.5. Recommendation 15)** that the program interviews or requests letters of reference from peers, parents, teachers, or other adults to help them in the screening process. For example, in the BBBS Youth Mentoring Programme in Ireland, in-depth personal references from diverse sources (e.g., teacher, employer, faith leaders, coach) are obtained about prospective mentors.[3] Similarly, the DO-IT program administrator calls mentors' references and conducts background checks, and then, applications are reviewed by a committee prior to acceptance into the program.[45]

Some programs go beyond personal references and actually have adults nominate youth to be mentors in the program. For example, in the iPeer2Peer program, a one-to-one virtual mentoring program for adolescent mentees diagnosed with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), peer mentors, who also have a diagnosis of JIA, are nominated by their health-care team based on maturity, emotional stability, and verbal communication skills.[46] In another mentoring context, high school students are nominated to be peer mentors by their school guidance counselors based on demonstrating responsible behavior, leadership skills, and interest in participating in service projects.[9]

If the mentoring program is hosted in a school, staff have a unique opportunity to directly observe the quality of the volunteer's socioemotional skills and relationships with others in a naturalistic setting. When possible, mentoring programs should observe prospective peer mentors in their school environment or after-school program (or request observations from other adults who know the prospective mentors well) to directly assess the quality of their relationships with peers, teachers, and other school staff members and to see how effectively they communicate and handle challenges **(E.2.2. Recommendation 19)**.

## Recruit and Select the Right Mentees for the Program

In order to recruit and select the right mentees for the mentoring program, six recommendations for mentee recruitment and screening, and two recommendations for parent/guardian recruitment were developed.

Program staff need to set relevant criteria for the types of youth they hope to recruit. As with mentors, programs should emphasize the recruitment of the types of mentees who would specifically benefit most from the program, including benefitting from having a mentor who is a peer and being able to fully participate in the program **(B.2.8. Recommendation 16)**. Another consideration in the recruitment and screening of mentees is to assess whether they will show a positive and respectful attitude toward a near-age mentor **(B.1.6. Recommendation 9)**. One way to build a positive attitude toward having a near-age mentor is to share information about how mentees have benefited from this type of program. Some common "selling points" for mentees noted in the literature were having someone to talk to if they were having a problem and feeling more safe and secure in their school because of their relationship with their peer mentor.[3] Mentors also thought the mentees were less likely to be bullied if they were in the program,

because mentees had people looking out for them in the school.[3] Mentors also said that their mentees benefited from the activities and trips offered by the mentoring program, which were fun to do.[3]

Programs should also assess during the screening process whether mentees might have scheduling problems or other types of conflicts currently or over the life of the project that would interfere with their full attendance at mentoring meetings or who might terminate their relationship prematurely **(B.2.11. Recommendation 18)**. Although the literature suggests this tends to be more of an issue with mentors, mentees may also have busy schedules that evolve over the course of the school year. Helping mentees to anticipate future conflicts so that they don't drop out of the program should be emphasized in the screening process.

The other factor that might influence a mentee's ability to participate in the program is their own behavior. Because near-peer mentors are typically children or adolescents, they may not have the maturity, knowledge, or life experience to serve as a mentor to mentees with serious behavioral or emotional problems. In both the Cross-Age Mentoring Program and the High School Bigs studies, having a more behaviorally difficult mentee predicted lower-quality relationships (mentor-reported),[47] poorer mentor attendance,[48] and lower likelihood of mentors continuing in the program.[7] Thus, peer mentoring programs may consider limiting or excluding youth with serious behavioral or emotional problems from being mentees in the program. Consistent with this idea, one study reported that high school mentors can be overwhelmed by being a mentor to children with high-needs resulting in declines in their own self-reported connectedness to school by the end of the program.[48] The last thing these programs want to do is cause harm to youth volunteers by pairing them

with mentees whose behavior is upsetting and beyond their ability to manage.

Furthermore, **B.1.7. Recommendations 10 and B.2.8. Recommendation 17** suggest that it is important to recruit, screen, and enroll mentees who are diverse in their behaviors, abilities, interests, and backgrounds. Diversity between mentees may be particularly important for peer mentoring programs that utilize a group mentoring model, so that no group has a concentration of youth with one type of personality, or with behavioral problems, which could make it challenging for peers to manage the group process (see the *Group Mentoring Supplement to the EEPM* for a lengthy discussion of this topic). In contrast, however, some peer mentoring programs may be designed to serve special and specific populations of youth. Even though the mentees may be similar in some way, it is still wise to consider diversity within the group on other characteristics, besides the one that defines the target population. In addition, these peer mentoring programs may have added screening procedures in order to determine eligibility for the program, such as having a diagnosis of LD, ADHAD, or comorbid LD/ADHD,[49] diabetes,[50] or juvenile idiopathic arthritis.[46]

Many mentoring programs, including peer, are experimenting with mentee-initiated mentoring, given the prevalence and positive findings emerging from studies of natural mentoring.[51, 52] When mentees nominate and connect with mentors from their existing social network, both match members may be more committed and more likely to sustain a long-term relationship, because they are already familiar with and connected to one another. To capitalize on the burgeoning research on natural mentoring, **B.1.5. Recommendation 6** suggests that mentees identify and recruit peer mentors for themselves or for the program as a whole.

When parents hear of mentoring, they may expect that their child will be mentored by an adult, so it is important that recruitment messages to parents clearly state that mentors will be close in age to the mentees **(B.1.6. Recommendation 7)**. Because these mentors are not adults, parents may have some concerns about the quality of the mentoring that their child may receive. In fact, in one program, although parents were given assurances that mentors went through a rigorous screening and training process, and all calls were monitored, parents stayed in the room during online match meetings even though they were asked to allow their child to have a private conversation with their mentor.[53] This observation suggests that some parents may have ongoing concerns about the type of influence that a peer mentor may have on their child and, thus, they may need additional assurances and ongoing communication with the mentoring program to alleviate their concerns. To address this type of concern, **B.1.6. Recommendation 8** suggests that mentoring programs clearly communicate to parents of prospective mentees how the peer mentors in the program are screened, trained, matched, monitored, and supported throughout their tenure in the program. In fact, most peer programs utilize a written consent form that explains the program to parents and reassures them about safety procedures used by the program, as well as providing them with a contact person whom they could call with any questions or concerns they may have about the program.[37] This recommendation is a best practice, in general, and highly relevant for the peer mentoring model.

## PREPARE PEER MENTORS FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD

Young people who are serving as mentors may have no previous personal experience with mentoring outside of what they have seen in media or heard from peers. Thus, they need a clear explanation and training on what defines mentoring.

### Establish realistic expectations

Their youth and relative lack of experience in mentoring means that they may have little idea of what to expect from themselves as a mentor, their mentee, or their mentoring relationship. In fact, training on expectations significantly predicts both peer mentors' feelings of self-efficacy as a mentor and the quality of their mentoring relationships.[54] Given that having unfulfilled expectations and disappointment are common reasons expressed by mentors for ending their mentoring relationship early, we believe that peer mentoring programs need to spend even more time and attention with pre-match mentors on establishing realistic expectations **(B.3.2.b. Recommendation 25)**. Professionals in the peer mentoring field concur that when peer mentors have unrealistically positive expectations, it can undermine the confidence of mentors and set them up for failure or disappointment.[1] High school peer mentors were found to have higher expectations and more positive attitudes than adult mentors, and had shorter matches, suggesting that training on having realistic expectations is important to include in pre-match training.[55] Some pre-match training topics should include an explanation of the typical life cycle of a mentoring relationship to understand that relationship development takes time; common challenges to relationship development and not get discouraged

and be persistent; how to communicate with youth who have different backgrounds, personalities, and communication styles; and that there should be frank, open, and supportive discussions of volunteers' hopes and concerns.[46, 56, 53, 57, 58]

### Explain the unique role of being a friend as a peer mentor

The role of being an effective mentor, including being able to leverage oneself and one's mentoring relationship to be a positive agent of change in the life of a mentee, is a complex and somewhat sophisticated idea, especially for a young person. In fact, even young adult mentors mentoring freshman to help them make a better transition to college reported difficulty in defining their role.[59] It requires understanding that you are not just being friendly, but also acting as a special and unique kind of friend who provides many of the qualities and supports of a mutual friendship, but the relationship is not designed to be completely reciprocal. Supportive, caring, reliable, consistent, and positive friendship where the needs, goals, and interests of the mentee take precedence is the cornerstone of good mentoring.[58] In fact, reciprocity and meeting the needs of both members of a friendship dyad is typically a goal of enduring friendships. However, this lack of full expected reciprocity in the friendship, and understanding how that manifests itself in everyday conversations and interactions between match members is a key training topic. Furthermore, friends typically get together at nights and on the weekends, at each other's homes, and may even date one another. These activities represent boundary issues that also need to be addressed with peer mentors in their training. Thus, we recommend that programs conduct additional training about roles and boundaries **(B.3.2.c. Recommendation 26)**. Consistent with this recommendation, in one study, teen mentors rated understanding the roles and responsibilities associated

with being a mentor as one of the most helpful topics covered in their training and this topic was endorsed as important by 94 percent of the sample.[39]

## Provide training on being a role model, even though mentees are still youth

In addition to issues of reciprocity in the friendship role, friends also may share thoughts, feelings, desires, and hopes, as well as stories about their interpersonal experiences that can be prosocial or antisocial (e.g., using alcohol or other drugs, criminal or gang activity). Friends may also engage in both positive gossip and negative gossip about others, or may have been the victim of these forms of social aggression. Mentees will need help in managing their emotions about these types of experiences, and mentors need training on how to model and support mentees who have had these types of negative social experiences.[24] These topics should be included in pre-match training to help peer mentors understand how the conversations they have with their mentees could influence their mentee's feelings about themselves and others, and their mentee's behavior. For example, if a mentee shares a story about how a peer was ridiculed or excluded from a party, and the mentor laughs or appears to be approving of those behaviors, it can reinforce socially aggressive behavior in the mentee. Mentees are always observing their mentors for their mentors' reactions; hence, mentors need training in understanding what it means to be a role model to their mentee, as well as skills in how to consistently act as a positive role model. As one example of a program that includes this topic, training for mentors in a summer camp peer mentor program to teach mentees coding skills emphasized the importance of being a role model to mentees through their knowledge, effective instruction, and behaving appropriately in front of mentees.[60]

## Train peer mentors on their role of supporting the safety and health of their mentee

Another aspect of being a mentor in a peer program, and not just a friend, is that it comes with certain responsibilities related to maintaining the safety and health of the mentee. Friends are typically not required or expected to report their concerns about each other to adults; however, mentors are. Thus, we recommend that the program trains peer mentors on their policies and procedures related to sharing information and observations with program staff, especially when mentors have any concerns about the personal health or safety of their mentee. Mentors need training on the range of health and safety concerns that may arise, such as suspected abuse or neglect, being suicidal or homicidal, being victimized by a bully, bullying others, overly restricting food intake, binging or purging, engaging in self-harm, or using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs **(B.3.3.e. Recommendation 35)**. Any of these behaviors can be scary for a youth mentor to deal with in a peer mentee; thus, having a clear plan and protocol about what they should do can help to alleviate any concerns or worries that peer mentors may have.

## Discuss program rules around confidentiality

Friends often have unspoken rules about what information is okay to share with others outside the friendship. There can be dire consequences of divulging a friend's secret that can range from feelings of betrayal and sadness to the dissolution of the relationship. The formality of keeping conversations and information confidential in a mentoring relationship is likely to be an unfamiliar concept to a youth mentor. In addition, the challenges and complexities of maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs may be greater than usual if the

mentors and mentees attend the same school, have overlapping groups of friends, or live in the same neighborhood. Several professionals in the mentoring field believe that peer mentors need explicit training on this topic of when to break confidentiality and being comfortable with the adage, "If you see something, say something."[1, 24, 39, 61, 62] Furthermore, this topic is mentioned in the descriptions of several mentor training curricula in the literature on peer mentoring.[61, 63] Hence, we recommend that mentors (**B.3.3.f. Recommendation 36)**, mentees (**E.3.5 Recommendation 40)**, and parents or guardians of mentees (**E.3.7 Recommendation 43)** all receive pre-match training on issues related to confidentiality. Professionals in the peer mentoring field concur that having a protocol of when and how to report health and safety concerns about mentees that is used to train peer mentors, will reduce concerns that school mental health staff may have about using youth as mentors.[1] Reinforcing this point is that one study found that many teen mentors did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles associated with confidentiality, privacy, and when to tell someone if they suspected their mentee to be unsafe or abused, and in fact, as a result of this study, the program revised their pre-match training to spend more time on this issue.[39]

## TAKE ADEQUATE TIME TO PREPARE YOUR MENTORS

Taken together, the need for going into greater depth on these topics and others that are described below, means that it is likely that peer mentors need more training on more topics than what is typically recommended as the minimum training required to prepare adults to be a mentor — it's simply going to take more time and require more review of concepts and practicing of skills. In one of the more rigorous evaluations of peer mentoring, the greater amount of training that high school mentors received, the better the match outcomes (e.g., longer lasting, higher quality, closer relationships); the more satisfied peer mentors were with the support they received from program staff; and the higher the mentors' rated the program quality.[54] One thing to note from the same study is that excessive amounts of training may have backfired somewhat in that the more training peer mentors received, the less likely they were to want to be a mentor in the future.[54] It is important to note, however, that this result was only reported in one unpublished study and needs to be replicated.

Training of peer mentors ranged from being the minimum recommended time of two hours[64] to as long as eight hours[65] to two or three days[66,56] to eleven days spread out across a year.[67] A number of school-based, peer mentoring programs utilized a dedicated class period during the regular school day to provide training to prepare mentors for the mentoring experience in addition to providing ongoing training throughout the mentoring program.[68, 69, 70] For example, the Big Buddy peer mentoring and tutoring program required high school mentors to enroll in a course that included daily training for the first three weeks of participation in the program before being matched with their mentees.[68] The pre-match training focused on the purpose and rules of the program, relationship-building skills, and guidance for mentors in planning all of their future sessions with their mentees.

It is worth noting that even though there is disparity in how much time programs dedicated to peer training, some peer mentors reported that they believed they needed more training to be effective,[71] whereas others reported that the training that they received was sufficient.[72] Even mentees have expressed the sentiment that mentors need adequate training and that when mentors are well prepared, it help mentees feel more confident in their relationship.[73]

Professionals in the peer mentoring field agree that peer mentors need training, that mentees can get worse if mentors have no training, and that is an effective way to overcome most challenges faced in a peer mentoring program.[1] Notably, peer mentoring professionals disagreed about the duration and frequency of training that is needed for young mentors to be competent and feel efficacious.[1]

We recommend that peer mentors receive more than two hours of pre-match mentor training **(B.3.1 Recommendation 22)**. Even if training proves to be time consuming in order to address all of the topics needed to be an effective peer mentor, programs should still cover the topics needed to adequately prepare youth mentors. Programs should not be discouraged if volunteers drop out when they learn about training requirements or don't make it through this hurdle. Programs need to provide volunteers, especially young ones, with ample opportunities for learning, problem solving, and role-playing before they are matched, and pre-match training may be one of the best investments that a program can make in adequately preparing peer mentors to be successful.[74] One program took their pre-match training requirements so seriously that they set up a protocol to evaluate the competencies of their peer mentors after training and asked potential peer mentors to repeat the training program until they demonstrated proficiency in the basic tasks and skills related to mentoring.[62]

## TIPS FOR PEER MENTORS ON BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR MENTEE

Establishing a helping, mentoring relationship between a peer mentor and mentee may require some additional skills training for peer mentors.

## Relationship development skills

Even if a peer mentoring program uses a curriculum, mentoring isn't just about completing activities together. A key goal of being a mentor is having a trusting and positive relationship; and good communication skills, especially active listening skills, are needed to accomplish this goal well. [5, 24, 38, 39, 53, 62, 75, 76, 77] Training in relationship development skills should be included in the training protocol **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 31)**. This topic is especially important when the program uses a curriculum, so that mentors don't lose sight of the value of their relationship with their mentee, and that their relationship is not there just as a vehicle for delivering the program's activities. One example of a program that does a good job integrating relationship development topics in their training, in addition to training on the program's curriculum and activities, is a summer camp peer mentoring program for middle school mentees that teaches coding skills.[60] In this program, high school peer mentors received five days of training to prepare them for a summer camp mentoring experience — much of the training focused on teaching mentors how to use an app that was integral to the mentoring program, but also included training on being an effective mentor. Lead mentors helped facilitate the training and served as role models for new mentors. Strategies for using questions to help mentees problem solve, and giving constructive feedback were emphasized in the training, which also utilized role-play scenarios to help mentors practice these skills. Thus, training should also include the topic of prioritizing relationship development. **(See Practice in Action Snapshot #7** for a great example of how one program emphasizes socioemotional skills in their training and match activities to foster stronger relationships and personal growth for both mentors and mentees.)

## Managing disengaged or misbehaving mentees

Mentees may, at times appear, to be disinterested in their mentor, mentoring relationship or activities, or mentoring program. They may also be uncooperative or misbehave at times. When mentees exhibit these types of disengaged behaviors, peer mentors, in particular, may be frustrated, personally offended, confused, or clueless about what to do. If peer mentors have never been a teacher, babysitter, camp counselor, coach, parent, or other type of childcare provider — which may be true of most mentors who are youth, themselves — they may be totally unfamiliar with how to manage the behavior of another person. Behavior management could be even more challenging to peer mentors who are volunteering in a group mentoring program, where training on group dynamics[15, 18] and behavior management strategies are needed.[14] Mentors in one study retrospectively reported that they struggled with managing the behavior of their mentees and would have appreciated more training on this topic.[39] We recommend that programs train mentors in how to manage interpersonal challenges that can emerge when supervising a mentee in the program **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 29)**.

Disengagement can evolve into conflict in the relationship or the perceived need for disciplinary intervention. Peer mentors need training on how to not become negative or punitive with their mentee, as well as the programs rules, policies, and procedures about what to do if conflict or disciplinary issues emerge **(B.3.2.e. Recommendation 33)** including who to contact for which issue, when to contact them, and how to contact them. Mentees **(E.3.4. b. Recommendation 38)** and parents or guardians **(E.3.6.b. Recommendation 41)** also need to be aware of these policies and procedures in the program.

## Understanding mentees' challenges

Mentees are likely to be from diverse populations including youth who may have had exposure to chronic stressors (e.g., living in poverty, have an incarcerated parent) or, even, trauma (e.g., been the victim or witness to violence). Stress takes a toll on children's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that can manifest itself by interfering with relationship development, resulting in outcomes such as mentees being distrustful of others and their intentions, having conflictual relationships, being emotionally distant, or, in contrast, being clingy and needy. We recommend that pre-match training include helping peer mentors understand how exposure to stress and trauma can affect a youth and more important, how it can affect the development of a mentoring relationship **(B.3.2.h. Recommendation 34)**. These ideas were reflected in the conclusions from a survey with professionals in the peer mentoring field that mentors "need to hear on the front end that they are not there to fix every problem for their mentees but instead are meant to be a stable peer helper who can provide a source of support."[1]

Relatedly, as noted in the Introduction of this resource, some peer mentoring programs are custom designed to serve specific populations of youth with a disability, impairment, or illness. Examples of peer mentoring programs of this type, including those for mentees with arthritis,[46] chronic illness,[53, 57, 78] chronic pain,[56] Type 1 diabetes,[79] spinal cord injuries,[80] or other disabilities or impairment. [45, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86] Many of these programs also offer background training to peer mentors on the disability, impairment, or illness, and how it can affect the mentoring relationship, and we recommend including this information in pre-match training for peer mentors.

Whether or not a mentee has experienced high levels or stress or comes from a special population, many peer mentoring programs train peer mentors to take a strengths-based approach and focus on building assets in their mentees, rather than focusing on deficits or inadequacies. [23, 87, 88, 89]

## Making their mentee a priority

Mentors who are children or adolescents may see being in a mentoring program as a way to socialize with their friends or other peer mentors. In group mentoring contexts, peer mentors may be distracted by activities that other matches are doing or by wanting to talk with their friends who are also in the room. Mentors need to be trained to understand that the purpose of the program is to help the mentee and thus, the mentee needs to be the focus of their attention. They may need strategies to minimize socializing with their peers — the other mentors **(B.3.2.c. Recommendation 28)**. This type of focus can be difficult to do when peer mentors feel drawn to interacting with their friends or others their age, and it can be particularly hard if their relationship with their mentee is strained, disengaged, conflictual, or just not particularly close or rewarding. We recommend that mentors be trained in the importance of acknowledging the challenges associated with maintaining their attention on their mentee, especially when their mentee seems particularly difficult or needy **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 30)**.

## Getting along with other mentors

In many programs, mentors work together very collaboratively to lead activities or co-mentor groups of mentees. In these programs, mentor training should also include information and activities that can help mentors get to know one another and get on the same page in terms of implementing the program's curriculum. In some programs, the bond that builds among the mentors is one of the keys to their

development and growth. See the Group Mentoring Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice, also available from MENTOR, for more guidance on how to prepare mentors to work with one another in group models. (**Also see Practice in Action Snapshot #8** for a great example of how one program builds comradery among cohorts of mentors.)

## TRAINING ON PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND LOGISTICS

All mentoring programs need to train their prospective mentors on the program's policies and procedures; however, some responsibilities related to program administration and rules may be particularly unfamiliar to children and adolescents taking on the mentoring role. Peer mentors need to know where and when the program will take place. If the program is located at a site other than their school, they need to know how to enter and leave the facility, and what to do if they are running late or not able to attend a session **(B.3.2.a. Recommendation 23)**.[63]

Peer mentors may not realize that they need to provide their mentoring program with feedback about their relationship with their mentee as well as the activities that they do together. This feedback may be in the form of logs, written notes, texts, or emails, or may occur during in-person conversations at the mentoring site.[90] Whatever the form of communication, peer mentors may be not be used to paying attention to their relationships, and sharing their thoughts and feelings about their relationships with others. Helping peer mentors understand the need for monitoring and how being able to provide mentors with match support will be instrumental to the program should be included in training **(B.3.2.a. Recommendation 24)**.

## TRAINING ON UTILIZING A CURRICULUM EFFECTIVELY TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

Peer mentoring programs commonly use a curriculum that includes activities that matches can do together. There are some professionals in the peer mentoring field who believe — and some data that supports — that when programs have minimal goals for the mentoring relationship, the mentee outcomes are stronger.[64] However, more research is needed on this topic to better understand the role of structure and program goals on outcomes. The approach of using a curriculum, nonetheless, can alleviate a common challenge reported by mentors that they don't know what to do with their mentee when they are together, their mentee doesn't have any ideas of things to do, and they feel pressure and responsible to fill their time together in a fun and productive way.

If programs do not use a curriculum, then mentors (and mentees) would benefit from training on "viewing their relationship as a collaborative enterprise"[91] and designing the activities that they will do together. In fact, the more collaborative the decision-making in matches, the better the relationship quality, reported by both match members, and the less mentees reported being dissatisfied with their match.[91] Building on the advantages of using a curriculum in peer mentoring programs, we recommend that programs train volunteers on the importance of preparing and doing activities with their mentees **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32.a.)** and how doing specific activities together can contribute to achieving program goals **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32.b.)**

Although using a curriculum can be helpful, it also presents certain challenges to the program. For example, if mentors are expected to lead activities, they need to understand them or have previous experience doing them, particularly, if they involve equipment or complicated steps (e.g., STEM activities, social skills training programs, text messaging).[90, 92, 93, 94] Thus, the program needs to train peer mentors on how to deliver the program content or activities with both fidelity and enthusiasm[22, 40] **(B.3.2.c. Recommendation 27** and **B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32.c.)**, as the engagement of the instructor who leads curriculum activities is a key predictor of program success. Consistent with both of these recommendations, in a group peer mentoring context, mentors need training on how to facilitate positive group interactions and conversations among group members, while still being able to conduct group activities.

Programs have also benefitted from the insights of peer mentors about the activities in curricula, and some programs actually include peer mentors in designing the program and creating the activities as part of the program experience.[90, 95, 96] For example, in a STEM mentoring program for middle and high school students, the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS) program, near-peer college mentors develop age-appropriate laboratory protocols beginning with conceptualizing and designing an experiment to presenting the findings at a ceremony at the conclusion of the program with assistance from a research scientist.[41] We recommend that programs develop avenues and strategies for peer mentors to provide feedback and input on curriculum activities on a regular basis **(B.3.2 a. Recommendation 24)**. This approach will help not only in building a curriculum that is more developmentally appropriate, engaging, easy to implement with fidelity, and effective, but will also contribute to building leadership skills, and feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence in their peer mentors.

Another common challenge to using a prescribed and pre-prepared curriculum is that it may not reflect the individual goals or interests of the mentee, and mentors may be so focused on delivering the curriculum that it interferes with building their mentoring relationship. Thus, peer mentors need training in how they can do curriculum activities with their mentee, while still focusing on building their relationship **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32d)**. Professionals in the peer mentoring field agree that when a curriculum is used, peer mentors need training on how to use it, while still prioritizing the relationship over the execution of the curriculum activities.[1]

In addition to training on mentoring in general, programs that use a curriculum, will need to spend more time training their mentors if they expect them to implement activities with competence, feelings of self-efficacy, and confidence **(E.3.1 Recommendation 37)** and addressing these issues will result in programs needing more than the minimum required training length of two hours. If a curriculum is adopted by the mentoring program and seen as instrumental in achieving the program goals, then this additional time spent in training mentors in the purpose, goals, and steps in conducting program activities will likely be fundamental to program success.

## TRAINING MENTEES AND PARENTS ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM

Because mentors are typically adults and considered to be "older and wiser" than mentees, respect for the mentor's behavior and actions, and deference to the program's rules of engagement with mentors are taken more for granted. However, when mentors are near in age to mentees, there is the danger that mentees may be disrespectful or negative toward their mentor. Generally speaking, the more proactive (e.g., soliciting information and feedback) a mentee is, the more peer mentors are interested in the

mentoring relationship,[47, 97] so the mentee's attitude and engagement are important for building mentor commitment and a positive mentoring relationship. In addition to the importance of the mentee's attitudes and behavior, parents can also impact the relationship. For example, parents may inadvertently reinforce a negative attitude toward a peer mentor in their child, if the parent does not respect the program's goals, the mentor's role in achieving them, and the fact that the mentor is a dedicated, well-trained, supported, and caring volunteer. In addition, mentees need to know that feedback about their mentor, program activities, and their relationship with their mentor are valued and will be influential in program decisions and support. Thus, programs need to train mentees **(E.3.4 e. Recommendation 39)** and their parents or guardians **(E.3.6.e. Recommendation 42)** on how to participate in the program, the importance of having a positive and respectful attitude, how to provide feedback about what they like and dislike about the experience, and how to advocate on behalf of the mentee with their mentor and with the mentoring program staff. (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #9** for a great example of how one program involves parents in special weekend events to great benefit for all.)

# MATCHING AND INITIATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Practices for matching cross-age peers in a mentoring relationship are informed by the research on mentoring, the broader literature on peer relations, and recommendations from the Working Group. The goal of these recommendations is to promote the creation of the most effective cross-age peer mentoring relationships, taking into consideration the unique opportunities and constraints of this type of mentoring. There are four specific recommendations for characteristics of mentors and mentees to considering when making matches: their relationship history, behavioral history, shared vocational or extracurricular interests, and stated matching preferences.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MAKING PEER-TO-PEER MATCHES

Many peer mentoring programs take place within schools or after-school programs through which program participants may have a history of interactions or even prior relationships. In addition to the standard list of mentor and mentee characteristics to consider when making matches, peer mentoring programs should consider the prior relationship history of peer mentors and mentees **(B.4.1 Recommendation 44)**. Preexisting negative relationships between program participants could interfere with the development of a positive mentoring relationship and reduce the likelihood that program participants will have a positive experience and reap the benefits of the peer mentoring program. For example, if a program participant has been the victim of bullying in the past, mentoring program staff should not match that individual with a peer who was the perpetrator of the bullying experiences. Information about this kind of history should be gathered from both the participant, their parent or guardian, and any other available sources such as school staff (e.g., teachers or counselors) who have insight into these interactions.[1]

On the other hand, preexisting positive relationships between program participants may give them a foundation to build on to achieve the goals of the program and contribute to both participants experiencing benefits from the program. It should also be noted that if a preexisting relationship exists, it might be of greater benefit to one participant in the relationship and that should be considered as well in the context of the program's goals. Avoiding matching participants who already know one another helps ensure all participants are starting their relationships at the same level of familiarity.[76] If a goal of the program is to promote greater connections between program participant and help participants meet new people, then matching individuals with a current or previous relationship may limit the opportunities to meet new people and make new connections.

In addition to considering the relationship history between program participants, the behavioral history of both mentors and mentees should be taken into consideration when matching. This can include a history of delinquent, risky, or aggressive behavior. Children who demonstrate aggressive behaviors are at a greater risk of being disliked and rejected by their peers, which can further contribute to aggressive behaviors.[98, 99, 100, 101, 102] However, increased contact between children who have a history of externalizing behaviors and peers who do have a history of these behaviors can promote positive outcomes among both groups of children.[103] For example, a program for kindergarten and first grade students that paired children with behavior problems with a buddy who did not have a history of behavior problems demonstrated that both groups of children had improved social skills

at the end of the program.[104] If programs choose to include or target individuals who have a history of negative behaviors, the mentors and mentees may need additional training and support to ensure they have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to have an effective mentoring relationship.

For site-based peer mentoring programs that conduct group mentoring or schedule multiple mentor-mentee pairs to meet in the same space at the same time, it is recommended that these programs avoid having mentors and mentees who have a history of engaging in risky health or aggressive behaviors to meet in the same room at the same time **(B.4.1 Recommendation 45)**. The goal of this recommendation is to reduce the potential for individuals with a history of deviant behavior to promote or exacerbate these behaviors in peers who have a similar history and increase their own negative behaviors during their participation in the mentoring program. The mentoring program should be a space for mentors and mentees with a history of unhealthy, aggressive, or antisocial behaviors to enhance their prosocial skills through positive peer interactions and programs should offer a setting and design that supports these opportunities. This recommendation is based on findings from the research on adolescent group psychotherapy indicating that therapeutic groups are less effective in terms of changing aggressive or delinquent behaviors when the groups include only antisocial youth compared to groups with a mix of youth who do and do not have a history of antisocial behavior.[105] Children modify their behavior to the behaviors of the peers they associate with, which, as noted in the Introduction, is one of the main elements of positive change these programs offer. Mixing groups of young people who do not demonstrate antisocial behaviors with those who do have a history of displaying these behaviors has been shown to reduce antisocial behaviors without negatively impacting young people

who do not demonstrate antisocial behaviors.[106] Given the relative inexperience of cross-age peer mentors, it might be more difficult for them, and for program staff, to manage the behavior or mentees if there are multiple mentees in a room who are disruptive or aggressive, which is another reason to avoid grouping participants with these behaviors in the same space during their participation in the program.

It is important to note that this matching recommendation applies to both mentors and mentees. Mentors who have a history of risky health or aggressive behaviors should not necessarily be prohibited from participating as a mentor, although this depends on the screening criteria of the mentoring program. If programs do accept mentors with a history of disruptive or aggressive behavior, then they must to consider how this history will impact matching and where mentors will be meeting with their mentee and interacting with other program participants.[107] If it is not possible to have participant in separate rooms, then having a large space that allows mentor and mentee dyads to meet together at a distance from other dyads has been suggested as a strategy to reduce distractions and support the implementation of the program.[2] Having enough physical space between participants further benefits all participants such that they are better able to focus on their conversation and shared activity, with fewer distractions from other matches meeting near them.

Matching based on interests is a general recommendation for all mentoring relationships,[108] it is given special emphasis for cross-age peer matching. Specifically, it is recommended that mentor and mentee matches are based on shared extracurricular or vocational interests **(B.4.1 Recommendation 46)**. Since peer mentoring programs typically utilize younger, less experienced, similar-aged mentors, they need additional support and guidance when

it comes to initiating activities and conversations with their mentee. Having common interests to build on, particularly at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, will help facilitate the development of the mentoring relationship by supporting the exploration of the shared interests between the mentor and mentee.109 Many cross-age peer mentoring programs emphasize this practice, although it has not been specifically tested in the research.[5, 110] For example, one study describes a STEM-focused cross-age peer mentoring program that involved female high school student mentors who were matched with fourth and fifth grade girls based on their interests in specific subjects and extracurricular activities. Female mentees who participated in this program had higher perceptions of science careers than girls who participated in a similar science program but did not receive mentors and had similar perceptions of science careers as science majors and STEM professionals,[111] suggesting that a program following this practice may enhance the impact of the program. To support the implementation of this practice, interest questionnaires that are administered during program enrollment are often used to help participants identify their extracurricular or vocational interests, which can be used to inform the matching process.[112, 113]

Many peer mentoring programs at the college level emphasize matching based on surface level interests such as similar major and gender,[114] which suggests that these programs assume for college students that these basic similarities in interest are enough for establishing a relationship. These programs may also trust that college-age participants are mature enough to navigate differences that might arise between themselves and their match partner and continue to develop a relationship and work together on the goals of the program. However, peer mentoring programs involving younger participants cannot expect that

mentors and mentees have the same level of maturity or ability to connect with one another without multiple common interests or experiences that give them opportunities to bond given their difference in age and maturity.[115]

## CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS TO EXPRESS THEIR MATCH PREFERENCES

Whenever possible, cross-age peer mentoring programs should consider conducting a meet-and-greet group-matching event that allows all participants to first meet, interact with one another, and then provide feedback to the program on their match preferences **(E.4.2 Recommendation 47).** Given the relative inexperience and unfamiliarity of peer mentoring program participants, this event should be structured and might include icebreaker activities that allow everyone an opportunity to introduce themselves or other activities that give participants a chance to meet and connect with one another. It is important that all participants have a chance to meet one another at least once during this event through interactive activities or games. The CAMP mentoring program, which has demonstrated positive impacts on mentee's self-esteem, social skills, and behaviors[6] utilizes the meet-and-greet matching activities at the beginning of the program to generate enthusiasm for the program and give mentors and mentees an opportunity to express their matching preferences.[116] Following this event, prospective mentors and mentees can be privately asked about who they enjoyed talking to and who they might prefer to be matched with based on their feelings of comfort or connection around shared interests and goals. It is recommended by the CAMP program that participants should not rank potential mentors or mentees but rather list the individuals they enjoyed meeting and talking to; if there were individuals who stood out to them during the meet-and-greet event.[5]

Another approach is to conduct a meet-and-greet event as the first activity so matches can get to know one another before beginning the curriculum component of the program.[117, 118] When mentees are given the opportunity to choose their own mentors, both mentors and mentees report that they feel more similar to one another and mentees are more proactive in seeking out guidance from their mentor.[119] It is important to emphasize that the program cannot guarantee they will be matched with their preferred person, but that this information is taken into consideration during the matching process.

## PREPARING PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR MATCH AND FIRST MEETING

There is one specific recommendation for the initiation of peer mentoring relationships. Once a match determination has been made by the mentoring program, both mentors and mentees should be privately told, in advance, who they have been matched with prior to the first meeting **(E.4.6 Recommendation 48)**. This provides participants with an opportunity to ask questions about this person and prepare for the first meeting. This practice for initiating peer mentoring relationships is designed to help reduce anxiety about the first meeting and generate excitement among program participants while ensuring the relationship gets started on the right foot.

## MONITORING AND SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-age peer mentors are typically inexperienced serving in a mentoring role and working independently with a person near to them in age on a common goal. Mentees are also likely unfamiliar with their role and how to engage with their mentor or may be intimidated to work with an older peer. The ability of student leader mentors to develop strong connections with mentees, follow through with their responsibilities and commitment to the program, and effectively address inappropriate behavior of mentees during the meeting times were reported as significant challenges in a peer mentoring program.[1] Training goes part of the way toward preparing mentors and mentees for their experiences in the program, but once their participation begins, mentors and mentees require ongoing monitoring to ensure they are fulfilling their respective obligations, following the program rules and policies, and working toward the goals of the program. Additional support for program participants may be required to help them succeed or to troubleshoot any issues or concerns that arise during their participation in the program. In a large evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters High School Bigs program, the more the high school peer mentors communicated with program staff, the more the mentees benefitted from the mentoring relationship compared to both their non-mentored peers and their peers who had a mentor but had less communication with the program staff.[7] In addition, peer mentors' perceptions of the quality of the support they received also contributed to longer mentoring relationships.[7] Thus, cross-age peer mentoring programs should ensure they have the capacity to provide substantial monitoring and support of program participants.

## MONITORING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Site-based cross-age peer mentoring programs have the advantage of being able to directly observe mentoring sessions with program participants **(B.5.1 Recommendation 49)**. Whenever possible, direct observations should be done periodically throughout the program and should follow a protocol that reminds program staff to observe the specific aspects of the mentoring relationship, activities, conversation, and any other relevant elements of the mentor-mentee interactions that can inform monitoring and support. Program staff should be on the lookout for program participants who are not engaged with their mentor or mentee or in the program activities, which could be a sign that the mentoring relationships is struggling for some reason. Observing matches on multiple occasions will provide staff with the chance to learn how the relationship is developing and give program staff first-hand information they can use during match support conversations to provide tailored support in areas that mentors and mentees might not have thought to ask for themselves. Interviews with program coordinators of a peer mentoring program reported that regularly scheduled check-ins with the student leader mentors was critical to the success of the program.[1] This scheduled check-in time provided an opportunity to address the challenges experienced by mentors and offer additional training, supervision, and advice, and to get the mentors actively involved in planning and implementing the peer mentoring program activities.

In-person observations also afford an opportunity for program staff to provide real-time feedback to mentors **(B.5.9 Recommendation 52)** to support them in completing an activity with their mentee or dealing with a specific challenge in their relationship. A dedicated class during regular school hours for mentors or dedicated consistent meeting time for mentors is one approach to providing real-time feedback and support.[68, 69, 70] For example, one program designed to support the mentee's transition to high school required peer group leaders to enroll in a daily course that served to prepare mentors for the weekly meeting with their group of mentees and then to debrief at the end of the week, following the peer group session.[69] Another option is to have a brief, regularly scheduled check-in with mentors to discuss concerns and get feedback and support.[61] Since these relationships often have mutual benefit for mentors and mentees,[3, 9, 61] programs should consider how they can provide feedback that will help enhance the mentor's skills and goals, such as their leadership and communication skills.

To provide the required level of monitoring and support to program participants, it is recommended that site-based, cross-age peer mentoring programs have at least two staff members available for every mentoring session that involves more than one mentor and mentee pair **(B.5.9 Recommendation 53)**. This allows for one staff member to coordinate the program activities and the other to actively monitor and support participants in real time. Poorly supervised peer programs can provide an opportunity for negative peer interactions and contribute to increased negative behaviors among program participants[106] and can contribute to participant safety and risk management problems.[120] Program coordinators of a peer mentoring program reported their biggest challenge was not having enough time to plan, supervise, and evaluate the program in addition to their other responsibilities,[1] thus any additional staff can help share the workload so program staff can devote an adequate amount of time to major tasks of running the program.

Having enough staff on hand also helps ensure that all participants are staying on task, particularly when multiple mentor-mentee matches are meeting in one space, such as a school gym or cafeteria. In an evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters high school Bigs school-based program, youth who met with their mentor on their own reported that their mentor and the mentoring relationship were more focused on them and their goals compared to mentees who met with their mentor in a large group setting.[7] This suggests that the mentors may have been more focused on socializing with other mentors or distracted by the larger group setting.[7] The staff members present during mentor and mentee meetings would ideally have experience managing groups of youth and have a connection to the setting in which the program is meeting (e.g., teacher, counselor, teacher aide) as it can be challenging to come into these settings without some prior experience or extensive training.[5]

In addition to observing program participants, program staff should regularly conduct formal check-ins with mentors where they **solicit input and/or feedback from peer mentors about program activities for matches to do together (B.5.1 Recommendation 50)**. While many cross-age peer mentoring programs provide participants with a curriculum or predesigned activities to complete, program participants may also appreciate the opportunity to generate or help plan future activities.[69, 90, 96, 121] This acknowledges the mentors' independence and creativity and supports their investment in the program. A peer mentoring program that included high school mentors who were trained to complete tasks or activities directed by the mentee's teacher also allowed mentors some freedom in the types of activities they completed with their mentee within the constraints of the program requirements.[68] Mentors were charged with selecting a relationship building activity for each mentoring

session and if the mentee's teacher did not designate a tutoring activity for the mentoring session, then mentors were instructed to identify an appropriate activity that would serve the academic goals of the program. Mentoring sessions also allowed time for fun activities, such as computer games, playground, or outside playtime for matches, which were typically chosen by the mentor.[68] Another program encouraged mentors and mentees to collaboratively develop activities following a period of structured activities at the beginning of the program.[9] Peer mentoring programs must strike a balance between playful, relational goals and instrumental goals (e.g., homework help, STEM activities).[5] Getting feedback from mentors during monitoring check-ins can help program staff gauge each match on the balance between these two types of goals and help mentors adjust their approach as needed.

To further augment the monitoring of mentoring relationships, mentors need to **record information about the activities they did with their mentee during each match meeting**, especially if the activities differed from what they were instructed to do based on a preset curriculum **(B.5.8 Recommendation 51)**. Asking mentors to reflect on what they did with their mentees and how the activities relate to the goals of the program helps programs ensure that peer mentors are on the right track and staying focused on the goals of the program during their meetings with their mentee. Gathering this information is particularly important for cross-age peer mentoring programs that do not meet at a set location. This information could be gathered through a simple, brief checklist or form that that is developmentally appropriate based on the age of the mentor. For example, the Big Buddies program required mentors to submit the activity worksheets that included activities for building their relationship, which they used during their mentoring sessions, as a way of monitoring the mentoring

relationships.[68] Another program had debrief sessions with mentors after each peer mentoring meeting to discuss how things went during the meeting with their mentee, reinforce the planned activities, assess the alignment of the meeting with the overall program goals, and make plans for the next meeting with their mentee.[22] These monitoring practice recommendations will inform the unique support practices for cross-age peer mentoring relationships.

## ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING MENTORS

Peer mentors will make mistakes, such as not fulfilling their commitment, not being prepared for meetings with their mentee, or behaving in ways that are not setting a good example for mentees, and programs should have a plan in place for how to address these challenges to their participation in the mentoring program.[1] This plan may include post-match training for mentors on specific topics that help them learn how to handle a similar situation in the future or avoid other common challenges in a peer mentoring relationship. Several specific topics are recommended for ongoing, post-match training for peer mentors based on recommendations from the Working Group, including **training on the ongoing challenges related to collaborative decision-making, boundary issues, and other issues that may be unique to mentoring relationships between close-aged peers (B.5.11 Recommendation 54)**. The similarity in age and unfamiliarity with the mentor role could present ongoing challenges to mentors in terms of making decisions about what to do during their match meetings as well as boundary issues. For example, mentors who are older may feel that they should be making all the decisions in mentoring relationship and the mentee may fall into this pattern of interactions without support from their mentor in making collaborative decisions. Peer mentors need additional training in sharing power and decision-making when interacting with their mentee to encourage their

mentee to participate in the decision-making process. (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #10** for an example of how one program uses ongoing training to enhance the mentoring experience.)

There is also the potential for boundary issues in peer mentoring relationships such as mentees perceiving their mentor as a close friend or even older sibling when the mentor does not share this perspective or even the potential for one member of the match to develop romantic feelings for their partner. These situations cross important boundaries in mentoring relationships and mentors need training on how to identify potential boundary issues and what to do when these issues arise. As noted by Karcher in the CAMP mentoring program model,[121] the social-cognitive skills of mentors in the program should be taken into consideration when planning training related to decision-making and boundaries. Depending on the age of mentors, they may still be developing the ability to take the perspective of others, such as their mentee, to reflect on their mentee's perspective, or use their mentee's perspective to influence their behavior. For example, a mentor may perceive a mentee's reluctance to help make decisions about their shared activities as dislike or disinterest rather than understanding the mentee's perspective; that he or she is nervous about meeting a new, older peer. This difficulty with perspective-taking could cause challenges in the mentoring relationship that should be addressed in ongoing training.

A final recommendation for support is that peer mentoring programs should also go above and beyond the general recommendation for thanking mentors by **recognizing their contributions multiple times during the course of the program** to validate and recognize their contributions **(E.5.4 Recommendation 55)**. Peer mentoring programs place greater emphasis on the mutual benefits of the program experience for both

mentors and mentees; however, given their relative immaturity and inexperience with helping others in a structured program, peer mentors likely need additional encouragement and support to continue to persist in their participation in the program. Peer mentor attendance is associated with poorer outcomes for mentees in a program involving high school mentors.[6] Mentor recognition can take many forms from a personal note to a certificate or small gift and may involve input from the mentee as well, on occasion, to include their voice in recognizing the mentor's contributions.

## CLOSURE RECOMMENDATIONS

### ENHANCED CLOSURE PROCEDURES FOR PEER MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Preparation for the closure of peer mentoring relationships should be supported throughout the duration of the program. As with all mentoring relationships, both mentors and mentees should be given the opportunity to reflect on their relationships and end the mentoring experience in a healthy, positive way. This is true for both prematurely ending mentoring relationships and relationships that have lasted the duration of the program. There are two specific recommendations for closure of cross-age peer mentoring relationships, which reflect unique aspects of peer mentoring programs. **First, upon ending the peer mentoring relationship, program participants may have opportunities to interact with one another** through school or community settings **(B.6.7 Recommendation 56)** and this must be taken into consideration during the closure process. When discussing closure with mentors and mentees, the program should acknowledge the potential for future contact between former mentors and

mentees and discuss with program participants how they should interact with one another. During this conversation, the program should guide participants in deciding whether they want to acknowledge how they know one another and what information might be confidential that was learned through their participation in the program.

### ENDING ON A POSITIVE NOTE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EFFORTS OF MENTORS AND MENTEES

Finally, the program should host a final celebration meeting or event for matches, when possible, to publicly honor and recognize the hard work that youth did in the program, and reiterate key messages and lessons learned from the program **(E.6.2 Recommendation 57)**. A final celebration event provides an opportunity for formal closure of the mentoring relationship and recognition of the efforts of mentors and mentees and the benefits of the program for all participants. A celebration party that includes everyone involved in the program (e.g., family and school or site staff, if relevant) and providing certificates of participation for mentors and mentees, are often described as components of the final celebration meeting.[9, 68] One program asks mentees to create a small, handmade gift and write a note of appreciation to their mentor to give to them at the final celebration event.[9] An important benefit of peer mentoring programs is that mentees often desire to become leaders and peer mentors themselves after their time as a mentee has ended, if they feel they have benefitted from and had a positive experience in the program.[3] A final celebration and positive ending to their experience as a mentee can help increase the likelihood that they will want to be involved in the program in the future.

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# PRACTICE IN ACTION SNAPSHOTS

This section provides brief examples of how many of the practice recommendations and program design considerations mentioned throughout this resource can look in real-life programs. Members of our Peer Mentoring Working Group contributed these in an effort to highlight key aspects of their programming and help other practitioners see how some of these practices come to life in various program contexts.

## Snapshot #1 – Peer Mentors Working Collaboratively to Support the Entire Student Body in College Advising Corps

College Advising Corps (CAC) advisers are near-peer mentors with full-time placement in partnering high schools. In their adviser role, mentors provide college preparation support and coaching to all students with a focus on the needs of the graduating senior class. CAC advisers play a transformative role in schools by fostering a college-going culture in partnership with school staff; they provide supplemental support to overburdened school counselors by spending one-on-one time with students and their families to ensure they have relevant information with which to make informed decisions about postsecondary options. The program has a strict policy that partnership and placement of advisers does not compromise current professional staffing — any counseling staff reductions are an immediate violation of the terms of the program and could result in removal of our college adviser.

In partnership with school counselor(s), CAC advisers serve as experts, mentors, champions, and guides to students. Each school must identify an on-site staff member to provide supervision, guidance, and support to their assigned CAC adviser. The on-site staff member will serve as the primary point of contact between the CAC program and the school and provide mentorship and support to the adviser throughout their placement.

## Snapshot #2 – How Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework Can Support Peer Mentors in Recognizing the Types of Help Peers Can Benefit From

There is widespread agreement that positive peer relationships are critical to youth development. Search Institute's current research focuses on learning what it takes to ensure all young people experience developmental relationships: strong and consistent connections that provide youth what they need to be and become their best selves. Search Institute research has identified five key elements that make relationships developmental: Express Care, Challenge Growth, Provide Support, Share Power, and Expand Possibilities.

Developmental relationships are sustained by the contexts in which they are experienced, including peer mentoring programs. Search Institute has partnered with a number of organizations to learn what it takes to create a context that promotes developmental relationships among peers. Several crucial factors have emerged across diverse programs and settings.

One of these factors is relational mindsets. For example, relationships must be seen as something mentors, mentees, and program staff can affect. Other critical factors are relational skills and intentionality, with all these players constantly looking for opportunities to strengthen relationships through everyday interactions, reflecting on what works and what doesn't, and continually developing and trying out new strategies. Inclusion and equity are other critical factors. These require acceptance of differences and adapting our relational approach based on the unique needs of each individual.

Developmental relationships are nurtured within and through program activities and cultivated through intentional but informal interactions. An organization makes this happen, first and foremost, through organization-wide training. Because real learning happens through practice, the Search Institute encourages following up an introductory training with ongoing "touch backs" to the training, often as part of staff meetings. This allows staff to reflect on their ongoing practice, problem solve, and continually innovate. This is reinforced by training supervisors to integrate developmental relationships into their staff coaching and through organization-wide communication, rituals, and recognition that promote a broad and sustained commitment to nurturing sustainable, strong developmental relationships among peers.

You can learn more about developmental relationships on the Search Institute website at: https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/developmental-relationships-framework/

## Snapshot #3 – Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth's Approach to Aligning Mentor Training and Program Goals

Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth's (S.L.I.Y.) cross-age peer mentors are trained for six hours using a curriculum that is modeled after nationally recognized mentoring organizations trainings utilized by local nonprofit partners and building on a previously studied civic engagement curriculum. The curriculum includes modules authored specifically for S.L.I.Y., addressing coping with trauma and loss, vocational and academic supports, and training youth on researcher skills. Training topics include the definition of mentoring, how to be an effective mentor, and how to notice verbal and nonverbal communicative signs from their mentees. To thoroughly prepare mentors, youth are encouraged to ask questions about life, describe their relationship history with their caregivers or other adults, and role-play effective mentor interactions. The activity manual consists of handouts and resource sheets to help youth reflect and think critically about these concepts. Allowing students to reflect and role-play with their peers helps them prepare for challenging interactions and support each other by giving advice and tips on ways to improve.

Since mentors are likely to learn about serious concerns from their mentees, they are taught to notice signs of trauma, harm, and distress from their mentees; the training helps them to understand confidentiality and the importance of addressing the concerns as quickly as possible by engaging staff. Finally, the youth write a letter stating how they intend to better themselves through participation in the program. Mentors who successfully completed the training and signed a contract committing to the responsibilities of their position (one year commitment, weekly attendance, building a positive relationship with their mentee, etc.) were invited back to serve as mentors in the program.

This mentor training helps equip mentors in building strong relationships with their mentees to ensure match duration promotes positive youth development, one of the goals of S.L.I.Y. Due to the nature of the high-violence, low-income neighborhoods in which the program operates, a trauma-informed approach was utilized during training based on an understanding of the developmental impact trauma has on the youth. This strategic approach created a sense of safety and empowerment for all the youth, especially for those who have been exposed to trauma.

# Snapshot #4 – Navigating School-site Logistics in the FRIENDS FIRST Program

FRIENDS FIRST believes the initial meeting with partner schools is critical to setting up the program for success. In their initial meetings with schools, they program staff meets with at least one of the schools' principals and the school liaison to facilitate an in-depth discussion about these foundational topics:

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) providing detailed expectations for the school and for FRIENDS FIRST staff. It outlines a basis for accountability if logistical challenges are encountered with the school).
- Identifying the right school liaison. Typically, the school principal wants to serve as the school liaison, but FRIENDS FIRST has found principals/administrators do not have the needed availability to provide the level of support the program requires. School counselors or teachers are great options to serve as liaisons, as long as they have the capacity and are bought into the program.
- Establishing program logistics early on in the partnership gives clarity to the school on their responsibility in program success. FRIENDS FIRST has found successful programs cannot thrive if expectations for the partner school are low or unattainable for them. Unfortunately, it's often better to not enter into a programmatic partnership, even when the school really wants to do so. For example, if a school decides that mentors can't be pulled out of core classes, FRIENDS FIRST can be flexible by recruiting mentors who are only available during elective classes. In the FRIENDS FIRST Pueblo programs, schools operate on a four-day school week, making it challenging to ask mentors to be excused from two class periods a week for the program. FRIENDS FIRST found a way to work around this by holding mentor meetings during the lunch hour so mentors are only missing one class period a week. However, FRIENDS FIRST has found being too flexible with school logistics can be problematic. For example, a long-standing school partner restructured its classes and asked FRIENDS FIRST to implement the program as an after-school program. FRIENDS FIRST knew this would not provide the structure or setting needed to implement the program with fidelity, so FRIENDS FIRST decided to discontinue programming at that school.
- Ensuring mentors are maintaining grades and finding support in their classes. Extend care and recognition via thank-you cards, coffee, program T-shirts, etc., to staff who support the program. Check in with teachers to ensure mentors are engaged and doing well.
- Creating relationships that gain buy-in is essential to program success. FRIENDS FIRST ensures at least one school principal signs the MOU and is fully on board with program expectations and deliverables. Additional recommendations include:
  - Developing relationships with counselors, office staff, and other teachers (since these are the people who support the day-to-day logistics of the program).
  - Engaging students and parents/guardians in advocating for the program at their schools
  - Advocating for the program to be a part of the school culture. This can be accomplished by providing the program to all classes in one grade level, working with the school to offer community service hours or school credit to mentors, attending back-to-school program information nights, and partnering with extracurricular activities already present at the school.

## Snapshot #5 – The Critical Importance of Engaged Program Coordinators in Peer Mentoring Programs (Dr. Josh Berger)

An effective program coordinator is a primary factor linked to successful peer mentoring programs. Every major structural component of a program — recruitment, selection, training, matching, curriculum, evaluation, and marketing — are influenced by the coordinator's direction.

Without a proficient trainer, peer mentors will not acquire the skills they need to be successful and this can result in programs having a neutral or even a negative impact on mentees. Traits typically associated with effective program coordinators include: flexible problem-solvers; inspiring motivators and team builders; committed and organized planners; and approachable role models.

Coordinators being approachable and organized are particularly important traits for peer mentoring programs. Student leaders must feel comfortable giving consistent match updates to their on-site coordinators and relying on them for ongoing support, feedback, and training.

Given the importance of the coordinator's role, hiring dedicated and experienced leaders who have received proper peer mentor training is recommended. Occasionally, administrators and organizations select coordinators based on logistical convenience rather than expressed coordinator interest, and this tends to correlate with less successful programs.

Another related peer mentoring challenge involves program coordinator sustainability. Frequent changes in coordinator leadership can result in the erosion of previously well-established programs; school administrators and/or community organizations do not always know what is required to train student mentors and facilitate peer programs. Creation of an active stakeholder team is vital for a peer mentor program's longevity to preserve institutional memory and prioritization in the school and/or community organization's environment.

Co-coordinators can mitigate the departure of a program leader. Beyond a coordinator leaving, the co-coordinator model also helps alleviate one of the most highly rated challenges facing peer mentoring programs: not enough time for coordinators to plan, supervise, and evaluate their program in addition to other responsibilities. It is highly recommended schools, districts, and community organizations give full support to their peer mentoring programs through funding an ample number of coordinators and through scheduling that ensures consistent meeting times between coordinators and mentors, and between mentors and mentees.

For more information, see:

Berger, J. R. (2016). The Implementation of School-Based Peer Programs: Successes, Challenges, and Solutions. UCLA. ProQuest ID: Berger_ucla_0031D_15173. Merritt ID: ark:/13030/m5xq1swj. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7kv3g5w2

## Snapshot #6 – Using Class Time to Prepare and Train Peer Mentors (without losing their interest over time) in the Peer Group Connection Program

In Peer Group Connection (PGC), high school (11th and 12th grade) and middle school (8th grade) peer mentors are enrolled in a daily course for credit as part of their regular school schedule. The course is taught by a team of two school-based faculty who participate in a comprehensive experiential training program led by the Center for Supportive Schools (CSS). The PGC course is designed to develop the mentoring and leadership skills of peer mentors while teaching them to provide mentoring to younger students. Peer mentors meet with their mentees (9th graders in high school; 6th graders in middle school) during weekly mentoring sessions held during the school day. Mentees participate in engaging, hands-on activities and discussions on topics such as sense of school attachment, competence in relationships, conflict resolution, motivation, and goal setting. PGC's integration into the school day provides a built-in mechanism for participation and retaining participants in contrast to extracurricular models that are vulnerable to a variety of scheduling, transportation, and commitment challenges. Because of this, PGC demonstrates greater likelihood than many other approaches of becoming institutionalized and sustained over time.

PGC peer mentors consistently demonstrate they are invested in creating caring communities in their schools generally, not just because they are enrolled in a credit-bearing course. They firmly embrace their roles in helping to develop nurturing, supportive environments for younger students.  Peer mentors are committed to family engagement and service learning endeavors which inspire them to further commit to active citizenship in school and beyond. CSS consistently hears stories of the ways peer mentors stay connected with mentees beyond the course, through social media and other forms of socialization. Peer mentors support younger students in help-seeking when they need to access adults the school community to intervene when they learn about instances of bullying or other threats to younger students. Peer mentors become students' confidantes and are often the first to know when there is a critical school community incident. For over 40 years, CSS has gathered personal stories highlighting the transformational impact of their work, including those of 9th grade mentees who eventually became peer mentors when they reached the upper grades and went on to become teachers and PGC faculty advisors in their own schools."

## Snapshot #7 – How an SEL-focused curriculum supports strong relationships in the Yess Classroom model

YESS Institute has determined their social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, Road to Success, is a crucial influence on the social and academic growth of both their mentors and mentees. Since 2001, YESS has been motivated by the vision of students becoming caring and productive members of their community; to attain this goal, YESS provides students with the tools and knowledge to prepare for achievement in a structured, adaptable, and inclusive way. Road to Success addresses social, cultural, and economic issues facing some, or all, of our students within its six interdisciplinary units, 91 individual lessons, and 250+ instructional hours. Each lesson is aligned with Colorado Grade 10 academic standards, has scaffolding options to suit the needs of a diverse range of learners, and is research-informed around the five core competencies of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Key themes throughout the curriculum include: Personal Identity, Intersectionality, Prejudice and Discrimination, Financial Literacy, Healthy Relationship Building, and Community Building.

The curriculum is introduced and guided by a trained, adult Program Manager, but is facilitated between peer mentors, mentees, and Mentor Leaders. By working one-on-one and in small peer groups, students cultivate a community within the YESS Classroom that lends confidence and comfort to working through more sensitive and personal lessons. Peer mentors are given the opportunity to fulfill a leadership role in directing curriculum lesson discussions, assignments, and activities. Mentees develop confidence and empathy in understanding they are not alone in experiencing social challenges. Mentor and mentee pairs discover social-emotional strategies for navigating socioeconomic barriers. All mentees who demonstrate exceptional growth within the program are invited to return as mentors in subsequent years. Similarly, certain peer mentors are nominated by their fellow classmates to become Mentor Leaders, paid YESS employees who work alongside the adult Program Manager in supervising and co-facilitating the program. Mentor Leaders are critically important when updating the curriculum with relevant and culturally respectful content that represents each individual classroom. The impact of the Road to Success curriculum is supported by data. YESS program data analyzed over four years evidenced that mentees who improve in their SEL skills also improve academically; specifically, mentees who improved in 3+ SEL domains also had significantly higher GPAs (2.47 term average) and credit attainment (34.2), compared to students with smaller or no SEL improvement (1.15 GPA, 18.4 credits).

## Snapshot #8 – Supporting mentor growth and stronger mentoring relationships by building mentors' group cohesion

Sea Research Foundation's STEM Mentoring program has found building camaraderie among cross-age peer mentors is a key component to program success. When peer mentors form genuine friendships and mutual trust with one another, they are more confident in their ability to build strong relationships with their mentees, share successes and challenges, and assist with the recruitment of additional peer mentors.

STEM Mentoring offers several opportunities to help build camaraderie among the 12- to 17-year-olds who serve as peer mentors to the program's 6- to 10-year-old mentees. At the start of each implementation year, STEM Mentoring Program Coordinators hold information sessions for potential mentors, during which they share the program's goals and expectations for mentors and mentees. Having former peer mentors speak during these events is a great way to recruit new peer mentors; they provide a perspective that potential mentors find relatable and valuable. Once mentors apply and are accepted into the program, they attend one or more training sessions which focus on MENTOR's Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, STEM Mentoring program components, icebreakers, and trust-building activities. Additionally, Program Coordinators meet with mentors before and/or after each STEM Mentoring session to make sure they are comfortable with the STEM content, to check whether they or their mentees need any extra support, and to give them a chance to share successes and challenges with one another. These activities allow for connection and support to flourish among the peer mentors.

Each year, STEM Mentoring sites that utilize peer mentors are invited to apply to attend one of the six week-long sessions of Sea Research Foundation's summer Peer Mentor Leadership Academy (PMLA). The PMLA was created to bring together peer mentors from STEM Mentoring program sites across the country, with the objective of increasing leadership and relationship-building skills among participants to enhance their effectiveness as peer mentors. Programming during the PMLA consists of engaging morning workshops on the campus of Mitchell College in New London, Connecticut, and afternoon outings in and around the New London area. Workshop topics cover building camaraderie, developing relationship-building skills, being an effective leader, goal-setting, leading small-group discussions, being a mandatory reporter, helping mentees increase community connectedness, and supporting mentees affected by the opioid epidemic. Peer mentors participate in a coastal field study and beach clean-up event and learn how to model environmental stewardship for their mentees. Peer mentors who have attended the PMLA have reported feeling more confident in their ability to build positive relationships with mentees, help mentees work together as a team, support mentees when they face challenges, be better listeners, be better leaders, and be better mentors.

## Snapshot #9 – A winning family-engagement strategy in the Boy With A Ball program

Boy With A Ball has found creating lasting impact in young people's lives through peer mentoring initiatives requires building meaningful family engagement activities into the very center of the program. Programs that contributes to the development of a young person have a significant impact on their family context. Their family, in turn, has an ongoing, simultaneous impact on their child's level of growth through the program.  Effective family engagement strategies are a game changer that powerfully enhance the program's impact on peer mentors and their mentees; in some cases, the impact expands into the student's homes and neighborhoods.  Boy With A Ball's Velocity program trains and matches public high school students to be mentors to a students attending a neighboring public middle school.  The weekly program takes place after school on the middle school campus.  The program includes quarterly "Super Saturdays" where all mentors and mentees are encouraged to invite unlimited family members to attend a three hour event filled with free food, fun games, activities and content centered on building connectedness within families, the school and even their neighborhoods.  Super Saturdays includes activities like cookie decorating, casual roundtable discussions amongst mentors, mentees, and families, fun group games and lunch for everyone.  Super Saturdays have event themes; all announcements and speeches are translated into Spanish.  While mentors and mentees spend the afternoon engaging in outdoor activities, parents and families participate in a Q&A with Velocity staff about program; parents and families get to know one another and consider participating in Super Saturdays as volunteers.

During Super Saturdays, parents are honored as the heroes in their children's lives and provided with information about the program they have allowed their child to participate in.  Boy With A Ball's experience is that family engagement activities like Super Saturdays are particularly helpful for families with prominent hierarchical structures including many immigrant, Latino, Asian and African-American families. Velocity takes into consideration an ecological systems theory, which helps the program understand how an immigrant parents' lack of familiarity with U.S culture might impact their relationship with their child thus distancing the parent from their adolescent's peer networks.  The program considers family engagement strategies like "Super Saturdays" as pathways to increase familiarity and belonging within a new cultural context as well as to honor vulnerable families and their caregiver/adolescent dynamics.  These strategies strengthen student mentors and mentees and their families, leading to deeper and longer lasting program impact.

## Snapshot #10 – The value of ongoing training of City Year mentors

City Year facilitates experiences for both AmeriCorps members and students that are rooted in an asset-based, developmental approach and a long-held City Year value: the belief in the power of young people. Being asset-based and developmental means applying a consistently positive lens that considers each young person's developmental journey and strengths and positions them as assets for growth and learning.

This developmental approach requires ongoing training, feedback and reflection as AmeriCorps members refine their practice and approach to working with students. Corps members participate in more than 300 hours of training and experiential learning during their service year and gain valuable, transferrable skills that help them excel in a range of professions after their year of service is over.

There are four keys to the success of City Year's ongoing training program:

1. Each school-based team of City Year AmeriCorps members is supervised by a full-time staff member, an Impact Manager (IM), who customizes supports based on needs. Each IM applies a youth development and continuous learning approach to lead AmeriCorps members. They do so with the intention of modeling tone and practices that support a growth mindset and positive learning environment that AmeriCorps members can apply to their work with students.

2. Training experiences over a service year engage City Year AmeriCorps members across three key elements: practices with students, community engagement, and career development. Learning in each of the topics is mutually reinforced across experiences and AmeriCorps members understand the value of each training for both their ability to support student success and nurture their own professional growth.

3. At the start of the year, each AmeriCorps member participates in an "Hour One" - a start-of-year opening meeting that centers service, mindset and expectations in an effort to prepare them to support student growth and strengthen their own practice. This meeting sets the tone for the year and ensures AmeriCorps members are prepared for service as a team and individually.

4. City Year has established a series of partnerships to support AmeriCorps member training and skill development. Corps members are trained in The PEAR Institute's Clover Model to understand students' developmental capabilities and needs over time and how they are revisited as students grow and have new experiences. In addition, corps members acquire social-emotional skills that help them be successful team members, reflect on their service experience, and prepare them for workforce success following their service experience. City Year also collaborates with Playworks to incorporate their games and techniques to foster a practitioner mindset- one that seeks to build strong relationships with students, creates a sense of community on school teams, capitalizes on individual and group

energy and engagement, and empowers students to continuously reflect and learn. Recognizing the critical role of relationship development to any mentor-mentee connection, City Year has developed an emerging partnership with the Search Institute, which helps AmeriCorps members understand what practices are most effective in fostering developmental relationships with students.

City Year consistently revisits its approach to training and supporting AmeriCorps members and considers how each session is not only providing the corps members with the skills they need to successfully complete their service year, but also helping corps members develop as civically engaged individuals.

# MENTOR

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