# Engaging Parents/Caregivers as Partners in Mentoring Programs

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**Kristen Truffa**, Associate Director, MANY

**Antoinette Basualdo-Delmonico**, Lecturer, BUSSW & Independent Researcher

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# Agenda

- Goals of Session

- Current Research

- Practical Implications

- Promising Practices

- Reflection

# GOALS OF SESSION

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# Goals & Objectives

- Understand what mentoring research has discovered about engaging families.

- Learn how to take this learning to practice with practical strategies for implementation.

- Candidly examine the potential hurdles within family engagement and what programs can do to address them.

- Recognize how agency and/or personal perspectives impact our work with families.

- What else?

# CURRENT RESEARCH

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# Youth Mentoring Literature

- **Minimal attention to parental role**
  - Predominant focus on mentor-youth dyad
  - Parents are talked about – own perspective largely absent
  - Parent's role is as reporter of youth outcomes
  - Interest is on parent-youth relationship as an outcome
- **Parents are seen as "important" to the match, BUT**
  - referred to as potential interference
  - mentors are a compensation for lack of . . .

# SYSTEMIC MODEL OF MENTORING

MENTOR

YOUTH

PARENT/ FAMILY

WORKER

Agency-Program
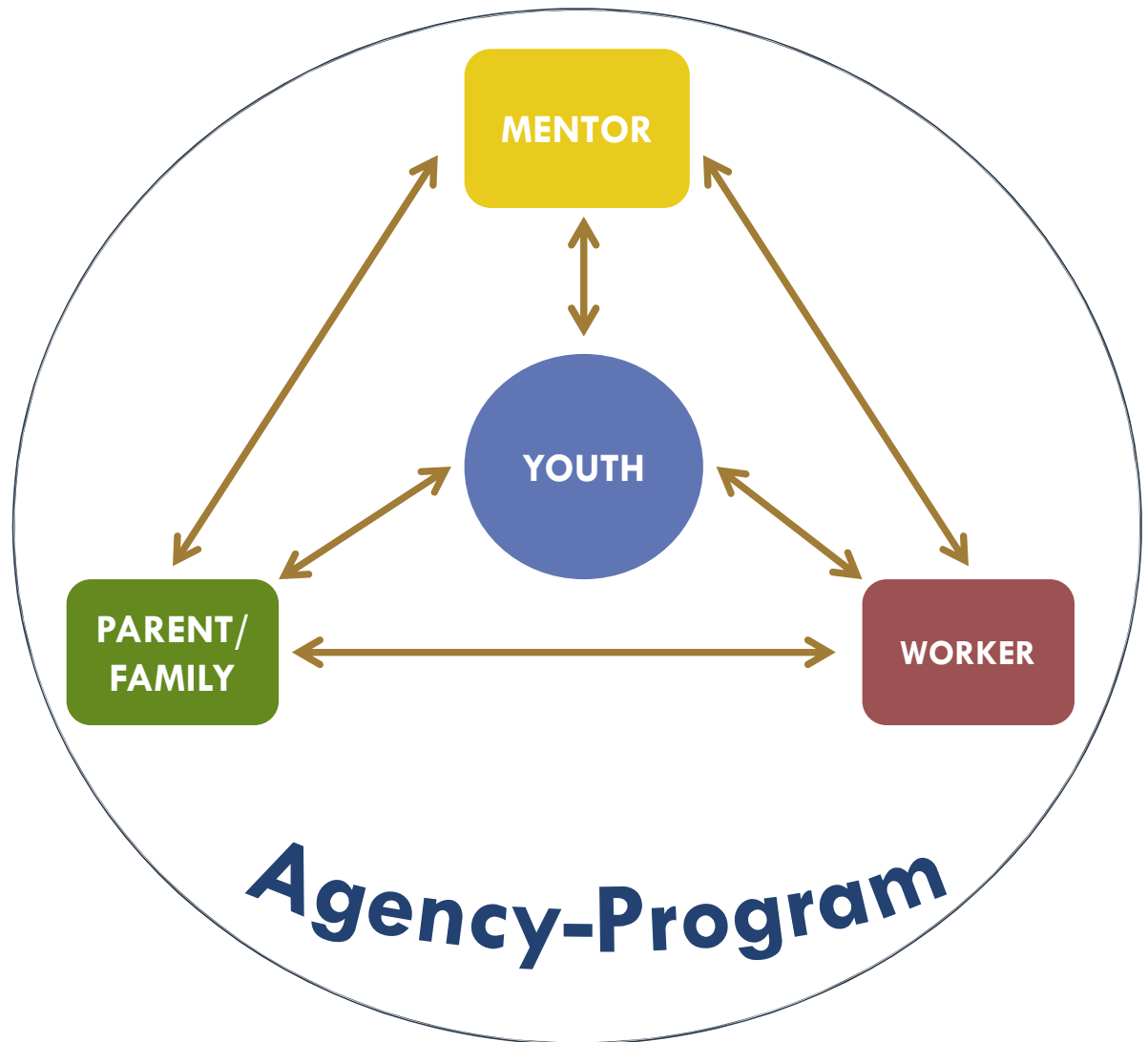
(Keller, 2005)

# Research on Parent Involvement

- Parental involvement associated with more positive youth outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002)

- No clear definition of parental involvement and HOW or if it mediates positive youth outcomes

- Parent Engagement Model (Kaye, 2014) included parent orientation, handbook, and family event: found no significant improvements in youth outcomes

  - Assumption that parental understanding of role/support would improve match outcomes

# Family Involvement Models (Taylor & Porcellini, 2014)

| | Family Mentoring | Youth Mentoring + Family Skill Building | Youth Mentoring + Family Activities |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal** | -Target entire family<br><br>-Help families cope with external issues | -Target youth with behavior or academic problem<br><br>-Engage family to build effective parent-child relationship | -Youth 1-1 mentoring<br><br>-Engage families in some program activities |
| **Components** | -Well-trained mentors<br><br>-Professional case management<br><br>-Family activities: skill, advocacy & resources | -1 to 1 mentoring<br><br>-Parent education & skills for effective parent-child relationship | -Parent input matching process<br><br>-Parent invites to agency events<br><br>-Family liaison on staff |
| **Research Outcome** | -Parents needed and benefited from services & education.<br><br>-Not clear how parent education may moderate youth outcomes. | -Some positive effects for youth, but family engagement was not independently tested.<br><br>-May be less effective for youth in high-adverse situations | -Increase in parent connectedness<br><br>-Parent connection to mentor enhance positive feelings for match/program |

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**POLL**

**Which model best describes your agency's activities?**

- Family mentoring
- Youth mentoring + family skill building
- Youth mentoring + family activities

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# Parent Perspective: Hopes & Expectations

(Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico & Lewis, 2011)

## Mentor-Child Relationship

- Additional positive adult role model
- Confidant
- Experiences and opportunities that broaden child's sense of self & future

*"I'd like my son to experience new things and kind of break out of his shell."*

## Parent-Mentor Relationship

- Open, consistent communication
- Personal relationship

*"I …got to meet him, and I got comfortable, and I liked the idea that they were gonna' spend time together.… I could trust that he was not gonna' steer my kid in the wrong direction."*

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# Parent Perspective: Mentor & Parent Role

## Trust & Satisfaction with Mentor

- Clear commitment to mentoring relationship
- Genuine positive regard & respect
- Respect for parental guidelines

> "She's taking the time out of her busy schedule to make time to see my daughter, when she's supposed to see her. Not just haphazardly, here or there."

## Parental Role in Match

- Collaborator with Mentor
- Coach to Mentor
- Mediator for the Relationship
- Ensure Relationship Quality for Youth

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# Socio-Cultural Dynamics Surrounding *Mentoring*

- **Power**
  - Adult – Youth: Differences in age, class, race/ethnicity, social networks
  - Agency – Match: Program structure/policies
- **Tension about parents of mentored youth**
  - Importance of parents
  - Perception that mentored youth have absent parents or from not "good" families

# Views of Families Served by Mentoring

- **Cultural assumptions:** (Deutsch, Lawrence, Henneberger,2013)
  - Mentors have access to resources mentee do not
  - White, middle-class culture is norm – promotes deficit view of "other"
  - Lessons learned reaching out to military families (AEMCF report)

- **Deficit model** (Valencia, 1997)
  - Problem focused
  - Problems are concentrated in the individual

- **Strengths-based approach** (Saleeby, 2000)
  - Focuses on assets of the individuals and supports that surround the individual
  - Focus on building capacity and empowerment

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# Parent – Mentor Interactions
# Forming Relationships

## Interactions

- **Instrumental**
  - Approves and facilitates outings
- **Informational**
  - Conveys information about youth's life/development
- **Relational**
  - Establishes rapport, comfort, and trust

## Relationship

- **Degree of closeness**
  - Level of comfort, familiarity, and/or sense of partnership felt by parent or mentor for the other
- **Level of communication**
  - Amount or pattern of contact and depth of conversations

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# Parent – Mentor Relationships Working vs. Not Working

- Mentors & parent described similar assessment of relationship closeness and communication
  - No prescribed closeness or communication for a "good" parent-mentor relationship
  - What matters is being in-sync

| Working | Not-Working | Out-of-Sync |
|---|---|---|
| • Mutual satisfaction with assessed level or communication & closeness | • Dissatisfaction with communication & closeness. Disconnect between desire and experience | • One member is satisfied with communication & closeness, while the other is not |

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# PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

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# Family Assessment Tool

- What is the goal of parent/caregiver engagement?

- How will you measure success?

- What are family strengths?

- What are fears related to engaging families?

# PROMISING PRACTICES

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# Approaches to Family Involvement

**(Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014)**

| | Involving | Engaging & Serving | Collaborating |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Primary Goal** | Improve agency-family communication | Address needs of family to support mentoring relationship | Partner with parents in mentoring process |
| **Practices** | - Gauge parental commitment<br>- Convey expectations & importance of parental role<br>- Involve parents in agency-sponsored events<br>- Involvement is responsibility of parent | - Reduce number of staff with whom families interface<br>- Build relationships with families (home visits)<br>- Provide direct service to families<br>- Broker relationships with community resources<br>- Coach families for good reporting<br>- Build support between parents (e.g., PACs) | - Parent-mentor meet prior to mentor-youth match<br>- Stress importance parent & mentor communication<br>- Coach parents & mentors to increase mutual understanding<br>- Facilitate relationships between all parties involved in mentoring process. |

# Program Views Inform Practice

## View of Family

- Potential road blocks in the mentoring process
- Challenged and in need of support and coaching
- Experts on child, assets to be leveraged to support mentoring process

## Program Views & Values



Involving

Collaborating

Engaging & Serving
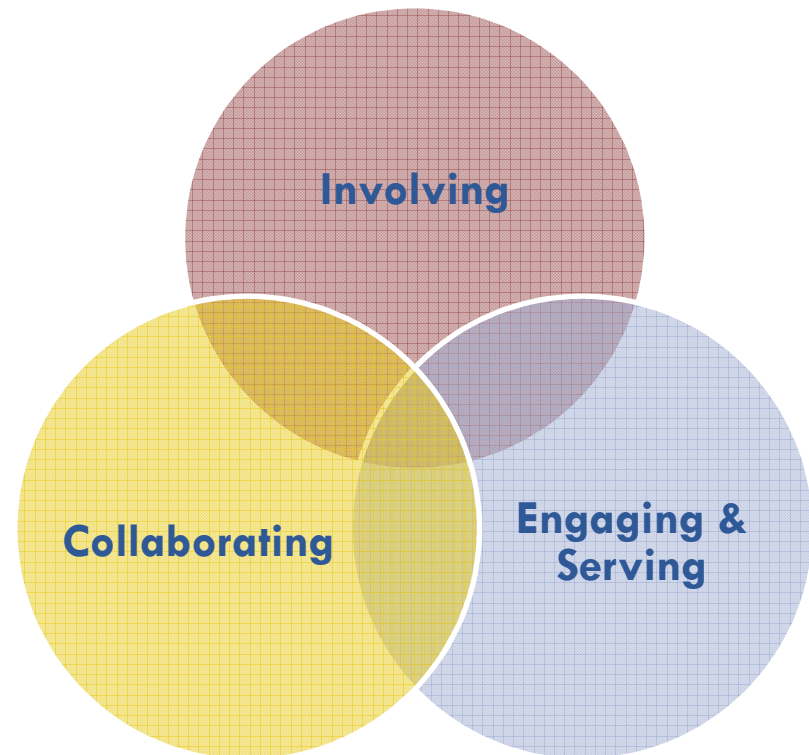
# MANY's Mentoring+ Program

- Mentoring+ Enhancement Initiative

- Mentoring+ Program

- Multi-State Mentoring Initiative funded by OJJDP

  - Involve parent/caregivers in project and provision of services for them

  - Deliver structured activities for the mentoring match

  - Implement/expand ongoing training and mentor support

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# Parent/Caregiver Contact

"When the Match Support Specialist works harder to engage the parent and encourage relationship building between the volunteer and parent as well as the volunteer and child, the match is stronger and lasts longer"

"The result of this was that Case Managers now made easier case contacts and both parents and volunteers called their Case Manager back when some of the harder to reach families weren't calling the BBBS staff back"

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# Ongoing Recognition

*"The family even attended our Volunteer and Parent Appreciation Picnic, which was great to see the staff relationship directly with the family in addition to our norm of having relationships with the mentors"*

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# Mentees, Mentors, **&** Parents Activities

"Because the Mentoring+ grant encourages parents to be involved and provided funds for the events, the mentor has been able to meet and form a great relationship with Mia's Grandma, who Mia lives with."

"We have seen a wonderful increase of parent/guardian participation. Although there were not always high numbers of guardian attendance at the outings, there has definitely been a change in the culture and dynamics between guardians and staff."

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# Parent/Caregiver Newsletter

"The newsletter that was distributed to both the Volunteers and Parent/Guardians as part of Mentoring+ and was so well received by our Parent/Guardians, that the agency has implemented it across the board… a parent newsletter."

# By the Numbers

- Mentees (1105)
  - 99% maintained school enrollment
  - 99% did not offend or reoffend
  - 84% increased social competence
  - 90% indicate feeling connected to mentor
  - **94% indicate satisfaction with program**
- Mentors
  - 100% demonstrated increased knowledge
  - **97% felt supported**
  - **94% display increase knowledge of community resources**
- Families
  - **99.6% accessed new resources**
  - **95% indicated satisfaction with the program**

*"The long term impact of this grant is proving that engaging parents and providing opportunities for matches to meet, benefits the match positively."*

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# REFLECTION

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## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- What do you picture when you think of strong family engagement in a mentoring program?

- What is working about family engagement in your program right now?

- Where have you experienced the most challenges/fears/push-back?

- How do these realties effect your program?

- What is one new strategy you will implement to increase family engagement in your program?

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# Implications: Intentionality in Practice

- Need for greater attention to parents' expectations, needs and role(s) in mentoring process
  - No "one size fits all" approach
- Need for effective program policies and practices that tap family strengths in the service of the mentoring relationship
- Need to identify and critically examine assumptions about target families at institutional and individual (staff, mentors) levels

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# Contact Information

**Kristen Truffa**

Associate Director, MANY

kristen@manynet.org

**Antoninette Basualdo-Delmonico**

Lecturer, Boston University of Social Work & Independent Researcher

abdelmon@bu.edu

412-366-6562

www.MANYnet.com

  /MANYnetwork
@MANYnetwork

# Comments? Questions?