Engaging Parents/Caregivers as Partners in Mentoring Programs

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Agenda

• Goals of Session
• Current Research
• Practical Implications
• Promising Practices
• Reflection
GOALS OF SESSION
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
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 WORKER PARENT/FAMILY YOUTH

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)*

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

- Family mentoring
- Youth mentoring + family skill building
- Youth mentoring + family activities
### Parent Perspective: Hopes & Expectations
(Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico & Lewis, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor-Child Relationship</th>
<th>Parent-Mentor Relationship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Additional positive adult role model</td>
<td>• Open, consistent communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidant</td>
<td>• Personal relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experiences and opportunities that broaden child’s sense of self &amp; future</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
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“I’d like my son to experience new things and kind of break out of his shell.”
# Parent Perspective: Mentor & Parent Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust &amp; Satisfaction with Mentor</th>
<th>Parental Role in Match</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clear commitment to mentoring relationship</td>
<td>• Collaborator with Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Genuine positive regard &amp; respect</td>
<td>• Coach to Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Respect for parental guidelines</td>
<td>• Mediator for the Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“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.”</td>
<td>• Ensure Relationship Quality for Youth</td>
</tr>
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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
## Parent – Mentor Interactions

### Forming Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental</strong></td>
<td>• Degree of closeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approves and facilitates outings</td>
<td>• Level of comfort, familiarity, and/or sense of partnership felt by parent or mentor for the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational</strong></td>
<td>• Level of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conveys information about youth’s life/development</td>
<td>• Amount or pattern of contact and depth of conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relational</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establishes rapport, comfort, and trust</td>
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</table>
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**
- Mutual satisfaction with assessed level or communication & closeness

**Not-Working**
- Dissatisfaction with communication & closeness. Disconnect between desire and experience

**Out-of-Sync**
- One member is satisfied with communication & closeness, while the other is not
PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS
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?
### Approaches to Family Involvement

*(Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Involving</th>
<th>Engaging &amp; Serving</th>
<th>Collaborating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Goal</strong></td>
<td>Improve agency-family communication</td>
<td>Address needs of family to support mentoring relationship</td>
<td>Partner with parents in mentoring process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices</strong></td>
<td>- Gauge parental commitment</td>
<td>- Reduce number of staff with whom families interface</td>
<td>- Parent-mentor meet prior to mentor-youth match</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Convey expectations &amp; importance of parental role</td>
<td>- Build relationships with families (home visits)</td>
<td>- Stress importance parent &amp; mentor communication</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Involve parents in agency-sponsored events</td>
<td>- Provide direct service to families</td>
<td>- Coach parents &amp; mentors to increase mutual understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Involvement is responsibility of parent</td>
<td>- Broker relationships with community resources</td>
<td>- Facilitate relationships between all parties involved in mentoring process.</td>
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Engaging Parents/Caregivers as Partners in Mentoring Programs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of Family</th>
<th>Program Views &amp; Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Potential road blocks in the mentoring process</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Challenged and in need of support and coaching</td>
<td>Involving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experts on child, assets to be leveraged to support mentoring process</td>
<td>Collaborating</td>
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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
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”
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”
“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.”
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.”
REFLECTION
• 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 realities effect your program?
• What is one new strategy you will implement to increase family engagement in your program?
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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Comments? Questions?