

## The Value of Mentoring

At its most basic level, mentoring helps because it guarantees a young person that there is someone who cares about them. A child is not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges. Think back. Did you know how to study for a test or make plans for college? Do you remember wanting your first car or looking for a part-time job? Simple things that seem easy or straightforward to you now may appear to be a complete mystery to a young person. Mentors provide their mentees with an experienced friend who is there to help in any number of situations.

### Support for education

- Mentors help keep students in school.
- Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class (Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters).
- Mentors help with homework and can improve their mentees' academic skills.

### Support with day-to-day living

- Mentors help improve a young person's self-esteem.
- Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking (Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters).
- About 40% of a teenager's waking hours are spent without companionship or supervision. Mentors provide teens with a valuable place to spend free time.
- Mentors teach young people how to relate well to all kinds of people and help them strengthen communication skills.

### Support in the workplace

- Mentors help young people set career goals and start taking steps to realize them.
- Mentors can use their personal contacts to help young people meet industry professionals, find internships and locate job possibilities.
- Mentors introduce young people to professional resources and organizations they may not know.
- Mentors can help their mentees learn how to seek and keep jobs.

### Mentoring and Academic Achievement

In terms of educational achievement, mentored youth have better school attendance; a better chance of going on to higher education; and better attitudes toward school. In terms of health and safety, mentoring appears to help prevent substance abuse and reduce some negative youth behaviors. On the social and emotional development front, taking part in mentoring promotes positive social attitudes and relationships. Mentored youth tend to trust their parents more and communicate better with them.

Mentoring helps reduce:

- Teen parenthood;
- Substance abuse;
- Criminal behaviors;
- Lack of self-esteem;
- Poor school performance/Grade retention;
- Absenteeism;
- Discipline problems at school;
- Low educational expectations/Lack of plans for education beyond high school; and
- Lack of interaction with extracurricular activities

### Statistics and Research

Research confirms what we know anecdotally or intuitively — that mentoring works. The 2013 study “The Role of Risk: Mentoring Experiences and Outcomes for Youth with Varying Risk Profiles,” examined mentoring program relationships, experiences and benefits for higher-risk youth, and among the findings determined the strongest program benefit, and most consistent across risk groups, was a reduction in depressive symptoms — a particularly noteworthy finding given that almost one in four youth reported worrisome levels of these symptoms at baseline. Findings also suggested gains in social acceptance, academic attitudes and grades. In addition to benefits in specific domains, mentored youth also experienced gains in a greater number of outcomes than youth in the comparison group.

Overall, the study's results suggest that mentoring programs can be beneficial for youth with a broad range of backgrounds and characteristics. Tailoring the training and support that is available to matches based on the specific risks youth face has the potential to produce even stronger benefits.