



Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring

Survey Results

February 2016

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1. Introduction

In 2014, the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Project received funding from Alberta Human Services to increase the number of children and youth in care having access to a mentor. The agencies participating in the project are Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area, Red Deer Youth and Volunteer Centre Foundation, and Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton and Area Society. As of November 2015, there were 139 Children and Youth in Care reported being matched in mentoring relationships as part of this initiative.

AndersonDraper Consulting (the Evaluator) is leading the developmental evaluation. An important part of the evaluation is engagement of mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers, who were asked to complete an online survey about their experiences to date.

Structure of the report

This report offers findings from the mentor, mentee and parent/caregiver surveys. The document begins with an overview of data collection, followed by findings from each group, and offers implications. Throughout the report some quotes are presented to illustrate themes.

Data Collection

The survey tool was created by the Evaluator with input from the Children & Youth in Care Advisory Committee. The tool was programmed online and tested by members of the Committee and revised as necessary. The final survey link was distributed to mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers by site representatives. At the mid-way point, reminder messages were sent to increase response rate. The survey was open from Spring 2015 to Fall 2015 (an extended period of time due to an extension in funding and desire to increase response rate).

Limitations

The respondents were self-selected and findings may not be representative of the entire mentor, mentee and parent/caregiver population. The results presented are also a snapshot in time of the different groups surveyed. A response rate is difficult to ascertain as the agencies sent out the survey link to current and past participants, however it is estimated the mentor response rate is approximately 37%. The number of response in the parent/caregiver and mentee category was lower than anticipated. As such, future evaluation activities will include alternative ways to gather information including file reviews and focus groups.

While these findings can be helpful in understanding the implementation of the Children & Youth in Care and mentoring project and identifying successes and lessons learned, results should be interpreted with these caveats in mind. The following sections summarizes survey findings.

2. Mentor Survey Findings

There were 33 responses to the survey, however not all respondents chose to answer all questions therefore the numbers provided represent total responses for each question.

Demographics:

The majority of mentor respondents reported living in Edmonton and area (n=15, 45.45%), followed by Red Deer (n=11, 33.33%), then Calgary (n=7, 21.21%). The majority of respondents are between the ages of 26 -45 years old (n= 20, 69.97%) followed by 25 years old or under (n=6, 20.96%). Three respondents (10.34%) identified as being between 46 and 64 years old. Most of the respondents are female (n=25, 86.21%) while four (13.79%) are male. Twenty-seven respondents (84.8%) indicated this was their first experience as a mentor and five (15.6%) of those who completed the survey had mentored before.

Length of match and matching process:

The majority of respondents indicated they had been matched for more than six months (n=21, 63.65%), followed by three to six months (n=10, 30.30%) with two (6.06%) have been matched for less than three months. Five respondents (15.63%) indicated they initially set out to mentor a child or youth in care. The remaining respondents

(n=13, 40.63%) checked "I was open to where the need was greatest" or "no" (n=13, 40.63%). One respondent indicated "not sure" when asked **"Did you initially set out to mentor a child or youth in care?"**

When asked **"How did you hear about this current mentoring opportunity?"** respondents indicated several ways. The responses are presented in order of highest to lowest (respondents could check all that apply).

- From the Big Brother Big Sister Agency (n=12, 37.50%)
- From a friend (n=8, 25%)
- From a media advertisement (n=2, 6.25%)
- From my employer or a colleague at work (n=2, 6.25%)

Several respondents also included a response for the "other" category:

- Website or researched online (5)
- Crossroads Church – Red Deer (2)

This finding has implications for recruiting as many complimentary methods should continue to be used to ensure mentors hear about the opportunity. However, media advertisements were the least likely reported as ways mentors heard about the chance to mentor.

When asked **"What made you decide to become a mentor?"**, the most common response provided was "to make a positive impact in life of child and give back" (10x); others noted "It seemed like it would be a rewarding and unique experience" (4x); and "I didn't have someone like that in my life when I was young (3x)"

The following are examples of responses from mentors about what made them become a mentor:

I had thought about it for years but felt I didn't have enough to give but eventually I decided to give it a try. Best decision I've made!

When I was a kid I didn't have a teacher and having tough conversations was hard for me. [My mentee] confides and discusses things with me that she does not tell her family but feels she can share with me. A good opportunity to get that load off her chest. That's why.

Have always wanted to mentor. I think, through mentoring, children in care can know that the community does care.

I think it is important to give back to the community and that all children should have someone to make them feel special.

Mentors were asked to describe the matching process. Several noted being interviewed and talking with agency staff about the program to determine fit then meeting the potential mentee with agency staff present. Some described being matched through "the standard match process" and a few noted being matched based on similar interests.

I applied and then after training and a couple months of waiting I was emailed about a potential match. Then I met my match in person with the supervision of my advisor [...] and after both sides gave the okay, the match started.

Well I remember my interview, I was having such an off day, I thought I did horrible. The Enrolment person told me after that I had so much life experience that an at risk youth would benefit from being matched with me. Meeting [...], we all met at the assessment centre. It was so intense as the youth are locked in there. We did "get to know you" type questions and a worker and Bigs staff was present. It was so intense but I liked having the staff there for support. We seemed to get along really great and ended up matching.

I was matched with my Mentee first as an in-school mentor and when she and her siblings were first taken into care, I decided that we needed to move our match to a Big/Little where I could be there for her no matter what was happening in her life.

The majority of respondents (n=30, 90.91%) did not know their mentee ahead of time. Three respondents (9.09%) indicated knowing their mentee prior to the matching process. Seventeen respondents (53.13%) indicated “yes” when asked if they share similar interests with their mentee, fourteen said somewhat (43.75%) and one (3.13%) said not really.

I think we both appreciate the need to have a sense of family. I suspect that is the reason we were matched.

Training

The majority of respondents indicated they received between two and four hours of training (n=15, 45.45%), followed by between four and six hours (n=10, 30.30%). Four respondents (12.12%) indicated receiving more than 6 hours, 2 received less than two hours (6.06%) and one (3.03%) was not sure the amount of training received.

Sites report mentors complete a minimum of five hours as part of their pre-match, with one of those hours on-line training.

Respondents were asked to check off all the topics they felt they received *sufficient training* in prior to or in their role as a mentor.

Training Topic	Response
Orientation to the Agency, including program goals, roles and responsibilities	93.94%; n=31
Background on the child intervention system*	39.39%; n=13
Strategies for supporting children and youth in your role as a mentor	66.67%; n=22
Trauma, brain development and attachment*	45.45%; n=15
Types of abuse, warning signs, neglect and what to do if abuse is suspected	78.79%; n=26
Sexual orientation*	48.48%; n=16
Cultural competency*	39.39%; n=13
Confidentiality	84.85%; n=28
Boundary setting	75.76%; n=25
Fostering a strength based relationship	63.64%; n=21
Mental health	54.55%; n=18
Community resources and other available supports	69.70%; n=23
Healthy match closures	75.76%; n=25
Other training topics noted by respondents included: Support from the Caseworker; Safety Plans; A Home Visit	

*Less than half of respondents checked off feeling they received sufficient training on the topics in bold. The information provided can be used to enhance training on those topic areas. Additional information may also be provided through extended training as part of an on-going match.

When asked about additional training and/or support respondents feel would be beneficial to have in their role as a mentor, many answered “no” or “not sure” and some provided suggestions such as “youth in care related training” or “more information on the various care programs the youth may be involved in.”

I think moving forward it would be beneficial to learn more about depression and if I match with a youth that self-harms then potentially that. Just would like more support/ideas on how to support them.

Access (phone/email) to an experienced mentor who would be able to provide advice and/or coaching.

Maybe training specific to the kind of environment your Little has been around (eg. My match has a restraining order against [...]). I know this is difficult considering the number of matches

but I think it would help mentors understand what the child has been through and help them know how to go about such situations if they're brought up.

Some more background on the system. I don't know if BB/BS can disclose the type of government or system assistance my Little is receiving, but knowing the kind of intervention that has occurred might be helpful in understanding her situation.

I think suicide prevention would be beneficial to some matches and maybe classes regarding online/cyber.

Support from Agency

When asked **"what type of support do you receive from Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency?"** the most common responses include "regular check-ins", "phone calls", "emails" and "opportunities to attend events."

Excellent support. [...] is available as a contact and has been very supportive when I need to bounce ideas off her or get a second opinion. She is fantastic at having her own boundaries but is very good at identifying areas of improvement.

Advice on certain situations. How to deal with things. Other options I would not have thought of on my own about situations. Needed the guidance and make sure I was saying the right things to her. I really like the support.

Lots, although our match facilitator (caseworker) has changed often.

Excellent support helping find my match when she goes in and out of care. They have also been very helpful suggesting activities for me and her to do.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I feel confident in my role as a mentor	0.00% 0	3.23% n=1	3.23% n=1	54.84% n=17	38.71% n=12
b. I know who I can call to reach out when I need support	0.00% 0	3.23% n=1	3.23% n=1	16.13% n=5	77.42% n=24
c. The training I received was useful to me in my role as a mentor	3.45% n=1	0.00% 0	17.24% n=5	44.83% n=13	34.48% n=10
d. The intensity and frequency of support I receive from the agency (Big Brothers Big Sisters) is sufficient to make my match successful	0.00% 0	9.68% n=3	6.45% n=2	35.48% n=11	48.39% n=15

The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they feel confident in their role as a mentor, they know who to reach out to for guidance, training was useful and support is sufficient to make their match successful.

Matches

Respondents offered the following comments when asked **"in general terms, describe how your match is going."** Based on the mentors' comments, most of the matches appear to be going well.

Our match is going well. My mentee is going through a really rough time and the training I received has been extremely helpful. I also know that I can call staff whenever needed. Most importantly, I know that I AM making a difference for my mentee and that makes all of my efforts so worthwhile!

Great! I am really enjoying getting to know her and hanging out with such an amazing kid. She even inspires me to be a better person with some of the things she does and says.

Its a great connection. Tells me what she doesn't tell others. She texts me now. Try to make her happy, provide support, guide, and help her make decisions to keep her on the right path. She is now saying she would like to be a mentor when she is an adult.

It has been a positive experience so far. The relationship was slow to develop but I feel it is progressed and we have become closer over time. I feel my mentee has more trust in me than before.

Although several statements were positive, there were some indicating potential challenges.

Generally ok. The time commitment is harder to make than I had anticipated.

Good. More challenging than I expected as my mentee has some social anxiety and shows signs of being on the autism spectrum. It has taken some getting used to but I believe our relationship is growing.

It wasn't what I was expecting, and there has been a big learning curve in terms of adjusting to my match's personality traits, goals, lifestyle, etc. But I think we have made some headway in our relationship.

Match is closing due to no contact. Support will be provided if she reaches out.

It is closing as there have been difficulty connecting with the parent and following through on both sides. Very difficult as there are no responses through texting and calling.

Twenty-one (70%) respondents indicated "yes" when asked "**has your mentee experienced any personal challenges or major changes during the match?**" Some examples of the changes are family members leaving and moving.

Fourteen (45.16%) respondents indicated "yes" to the question "**has your mentee experienced a placement change (move) during the match?**" and seventeen (54.84%) answered "no" to that question. When asked "**how were you made aware of the move?**" to those who answered yes, most mentors were told of a placement move by their mentee (9x), others through the parent or foster parent (2x).

(First move) My mentee moved out of [...] group home when [...] turned 18 to independent living - I was made aware months before the transition 2) My mentee was institutionalized after a mental health related incident. I was made aware the day of. 3) My mentee left the institution (early) and moved in with a friend - I was made aware after.

Her mother told me that she was taken into care. I informed BBBS who then found the foster home she was staying at and connected us.

My little called me from the group home for the second move, I am pretty sure match facilitator called me.

This finding suggests further discussion could be had around a process to ensure a consistent way agency and mentors are informed of match moves.

Activities

The following provides a list of the most common activities mentors engaged in with their mentees: Go for coffee, walks, to a restaurant, cooking, eating, baking, watching movies, crafts, outdoor activities, bowling, go-carting, talking, swimming, bowling, and attend events.

We go to special events and do normal things such as walks and go for meals

Sports, trying new foods, swimming, playgrounds, reading, chess, hanging out, dancing

Hot pots studio, driving around, shopped for her supplies for treatment, went out for lunch, had coffee, watched a movie, worked on the pro's and con's of treatment

Chatting over coffee -Grocery shopping -Making dinner together

The majority of mentors (n= 13, 44.83%) see their mentee "usually once a week or more"; followed by (n=12, 41.38%) "once every two weeks" and then (n=4, 13.79%) "once per month."

This seems to work with my mentee. I have tried to initiate more frequent contact but I think her life has other stressors that have prevented this from happening.

Varies depending on our schedules.

When asked "**How do you connect with your mentee?**" the most common response (n=25, 83.33%) was "in person, face to face", followed by (n=13, 43.33%) "texting" and "talking on the phone" (n=12, 40%). Email and social media were the least likely ways mentors connect with their mentees.

There was a group aspect (e.g. activities, support) to the mentoring program for 43.33% (n=13) of respondents. The majority (n=16, 53.33%) indicated no group aspect.

Changes in Mentee

The most common words used by mentors to illustrate the change they saw in their mentee was:



Yes. I have seen her reach out more for help than she did when we first started. I think trust has been important to establish.

He is becoming more comfortable. Having a voice and wants to be clearer. I am not just some worker. Opened up a bit more. Trying new things as well.

I have seen a positive change in her confidence level, ability to live on her own and do well at it. She has a job and finished high school.

She got more confident. Asks questions and now listens to the answer. Will ask when needs help. Thinks of other people. She is very street smart but does not have strong social skills so would always try to spin things into a positive learning experience ie. asked about a student that was bullying others at school.

She is definitely more attached and less offish since the start of us hanging out. She seems to trust that I will not abandon her.

A few did not see any changes or felt it was too soon in their mentoring relationship to comment.

Challenges

Respondents were asked "**are you experiencing any challenges in your match?**"

Ten wrote “no” they were not experiencing challenges or were able to successfully address any past challenges. For instance, “sometimes contact drops off, but I just keep texting and making sure that regular contact on my end doesn’t drop off.” A few mentors wrote about their mentee “not talking much” or “being distant” and that “scheduling can be difficult, but we are making it work.”

My perception is that my mentee has some challenges with attachment. This manifests itself in her willingness to seek out support and contact me when she is having a particularly difficult time. However, with patience, this seems to be getting better. I try to make regular contact by text to let her know I am available. I intend to be a bit more assertive about getting her to receive help when she needs it. I also think she has had a lot of experience with individuals not following through on their promises. Again, with time, I think she is realizing I am going to follow through because I am consistent.

The match is challenging in many aspects as she has been involved in at risk behaviours (drugs and alcohol) but is in recovery. Much of our time together is spent supporting her in her recovery and learning what that support looks like.

I believe she has some undiagnosed behavioural issues, or do not know about them if diagnosed. As someone with no experience dealing with this I have had to reach out to a lot of sources in my life for tips on how to encourage flexibility and get my mentee to listen to me.

Match Closure

Most of the matches (n=25 83.33%) have not been impacted by or discussed the potential of, match closure. Five (16.67%) indicated they have discussed or been impacted by a match closure.

Successes

Respondents were asked “**what have been some of the successes in your match?**” Mentors reported many successes including seeing growth in their mentee, an increased trust and confidence level, new skills, relationship building and support.

Increased trust. Lots of laughs. Seeing someone who needs support get it when they need it. my mentee is vulnerable so I think it has been nice for her to know that there is someone there to call when she needs it. I have been able to get to know my mentee and her child/partner. It has been a pleasure.

She writes in her journal and we read it when I see her. The journal is to help her with negative thoughts as well as positive things. Supporting her.

I can see her confidence building when swimming. Also, her initial description said she didn't have many friends. Now she tells me she's having sleepovers, and on a couple of outings she has invited her friend(s) to come too.

Learning to tie shoes. Saying a compliment to someone everyday . Bowling for the first time .

His mom reports that he is happier and very excited for our visits. He has tried some new foods. He has conquered some fears and tried new things.

Potential Mentors

Respondents were asked “**what would you tell other potential mentors?**” The following are examples of their guidance.

It can be a lot of fun and very rewarding. The match might not look like you initially anticipate and patience is needed. This is an excellent program and something that is much needed in our community. Even though they don't always show it, I know that mentees appreciate the relationship.

Its a commitment, better be serious about it. You don't play with peoples lives and can't just leave. These kids have been through tough times. Deal gently with hearts and minds

Go for it. Availability is on your time and not others. It can be long term if you want. It doesn't feel like volunteering, it feels emotionally and personally connected and happy.

Be prepared! As hard as it is, its super beneficial. Even if it doesn't work out you learn a lot about one's self and who you have become. You learn what you are capable of. I called my mom more than once to apologize for all that I put her through when I was using. She told me it's why I am the person I am today. I hope [...] can get back to a place where she wants support. I would never close that door. I just want to benefit a youth that is ready for change.

Just do it! Being a mentor is the most rewarding experience as mentors get more from the relationship than the mentees. Seeing on a daily/weekly basis that you are making a difference for a child is an incredible experience!

First off that the time commitment isn't as much as most think (as this tends to be people's biggest concern). Also that it has been a great experience for me. It helps people to personally know someone who has had success with the program.

The information could be used to inform messaging for future recruitment activities.

3. Mentee Survey Findings

There were 17 responses to the survey, however not all respondents chose to answer all questions therefore the numbers provided represent total responses for each question.

Demographics:

The majority of mentee respondents reported living in Calgary and area (n=7, 41.18%), followed by Red Deer (n=6, 35.29%), then Edmonton and area (n=4, 23.53%). The majority of respondents are between the ages of 16-18 years old (n= 8, 57.14%) followed by 12 years old or under (n=4, 28.57%). One respondent (7.14%) indicated being 19 years or older and one (7.14%) being between 13 & 15 years old. Most of the respondents are female (n=10, 71.43%) and four (28.57%) are male. Thirteen respondents (76.47%) indicated this was their first experience as a mentee and four (23.53%) of those who completed the survey had a mentor before.

The majority of respondents (n=8, 47.06%) have been matched with their mentor for more than six months, followed by three to six months (n=7, 41.18%) with two (11.76%) being matched for less than three months.

When asked "how did you hear about this opportunity," the most common response was "from a social worker" (n=6, 37.50%), followed by from BBBS (n=4, 25%), then three checked off "from someone at my school" (n= 3, 18.75%), followed by "from a friend" (n=2, 12.50%). Other ways of finding out about the opportunity include, from a family member (n=3) and being matched together through a different program.

When asked "**how did you first meet your mentor?**", several mentioned at Big Brothers Big Sisters. Others noted went bowling, to the park; met at school; at the mall; or at Tim Hortons.

At [...]. She was a volunteer then staff and we stayed in touch after the program closed.

Went to the BBBS building. He was the first person I chose and we played trouble

We were first introduced at the Centre. Hung out for over an hour. Just talked.

Through Big Brothers Big Sisters. [...] met with us. it was good. I was shy but it was good.

[Agency staff] introduced her to me. I didn't think we would click that well but now its way different. I wasn't really sure or into the program but was willing to try it. Now my mentor is important in my life.

Through group mentoring

The majority of respondents (n=13, 76.47%) did not know their mentor prior to being matched. Four respondents (25.53%) indicated knowing their mentor prior to the matching process. When asked “**do you and your mentor like the same things?**”, the majority (n=13, 76.47%) responded “yes pretty much” and four (23.53%) responded “sort of.” The most common words used by mentees to describe their mentor include: Nice, friendly, kind, a good listener, honest, and fun. One mentee describes his mentor this way:

“He is such a good mentor. He is smart, helpful, kind, knowledgeable and he is a good friend”

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

Statement	Not very much	Sometimes	A lot!
My mentor really cares about me.	0	6.67% n=1	93.33% n=14
I talk with my mentor when I have problems or things that worry me.	20.00% n=3	53.33% n=8	26.67% n=4
My mentor has helped me with problems in my life.	13.33% n=2	40.00% n=6	46.67% n=7
My mentor knows what is going on in my life.	6.67% n=1	26.67% n=4	66.67% n=10
I get to see my mentor as often as I'd like.	6.67% n=1	26.67% n=4	66.67% n=10

The second statement in the table above suggests that mentees do not necessarily talk with their mentors about issues or worries. Further explanation in to this finding may be warranted.

When asked “**has your mentor made a difference in your life?**”, several respondents shared “Yes, by having someone always there to support me.”

Yes, has she made me try stuff I've never tried before

Not really. I've known her for a long time so it's pretty much the same.

She has. She's given me a lot of support. My brothers big part of my life. Having that support to talk with me and my problems. I have someone else I can talk to besides ...

He gave me time to talk to someone. Talk about problems and stuff. Learn with a really good friend

She is someone I can trust, and is someone I know I can trust

He has helped me to become more positive and find the positive instead of the negatives.

Yes, he gets me out of the house on a Saturday. I like him he's a cool guy.

Just over half of the respondents (n=8, 53.33%), have had **challenges or big changes** in their life during this match. Examples included pregnancy, moving, going to a treatment centre, graduating and change in medication.

The most common **activities** mentees reported doing with their mentors are hanging out and talking, going to movies and out to dinner, and engaging in recreation or sporting activities.

Mentees **connect** with their mentor in a variety of ways, with the most common response being “in person, face-to-face,” followed by “texting.” Other ways of connecting included talking on the phone and social media (e.g. Facebook).

When asked “**What would you tell other people you know who would like to have a mentor?**” respondents stated “That it's fun and you will enjoy it.”

Do it. It's kind of like having a friend who supports you in all aspects, just being there for you not just times when there's havoc but good times too like celebrating [...] birthday with us.

I would tell other people it really just gives you someone to trust and will always be there

They take you out, they are active with you. They (staff) try to get you a Big Sister or Big Brother that you have stuff in common with. Such as swimming, horses, music. Someone to help you and feel safe with.

Respondents were asked if they have any final comments:

It's a good program. I want to when I am older

I really enjoy the get together but it should happen more often

It's a good program. More people should. I am still getting to click with my mentor. Its like any relationship, they move at different speeds. At one point I became more closed off as I felt she was expecting more from me. It caused me to close off for a bit. I choose not to share my problems with my mentor as I want our relationship to be based on happiness and fun. Maybe one day.

This Program is Amazing!

4. Caregiver (Parent/Guardian) Survey Findings

There were 13 responses to the survey, however not all respondents chose to answer all questions therefore the numbers provided represent total responses for each question.

Demographics

The majority of caregiver respondents reported living in Edmonton and area (n=6, 46.15%), followed by Red Deer (n=5, 38.46%), then Calgary and area (n=2, 15.38%).

Seven respondents (53.65%) identified themselves as "parent" and two as "Step Mom." Two respondents (15.38%) listed their role as "foster parent" and one (7.69%) as "Kinship Support."

When asked "**how old is your child?**", the majority (61.54%) said 12 or under, followed by 13-16 (n=4, 30.77%) and then 17 or older (n=1, 7.69%).

According to respondents, most of the children or youth (n=7, 53.85%) have been matched with a mentor for six months or more, followed by three months to less than six months (n=4, 30.77%) and the remaining less than three months (n=2, 15.38%). All caregivers (n=13, 100%) have met their child's mentor. One hundred percent (n=13) of respondents said their child seems to enjoy spending time with their mentor. One stated "*its been a very healthy benefit, even an improvement in school, and positive interaction with peers*" and another said "*always look forward to their time with great anticipation.*"

Benefits of mentoring according to caregivers

Caregivers report the benefits of mentoring to be increased self-esteem, confidence and self-worth. Their child has someone to talk to and spend time with.

This youth was very isolated from his family - didn't have any positive natural supports (only professionals). What we have seen - increased confidence, better problem solving, increased stability, engaging in some positive community activities

Guidance, healthy relationship, someone he can trust, confident, support, example of how someone should behave and share, acceptance of differences, experience things that would might have never been able to.

Someone to talk to. She tells her things that she doesn't say to anyone else. Talk about the struggles she has been having.

I see a confidence in her this year that I have not seen since she was 6 years old. Her big sister, and teacher and getting older are all factors of her changing. She is getting straight A's in school, and is more stable. Her mentor is someone who is stable for her and is a consistent relationship for her.

Knowing he has a friend, knowing he's not being judged and can do whatever he puts his mind to with little and sometimes a lot of hard work. Differences are okay.

It has literally saved their lives. After going through a broken abusive marriage I saw my children on a sharp down hill spiral as far as their mental health and threatening suicide. Their mentors have helped me to bring positivity back into their lives. Even their dad has changed his ways so life is good.

Role the mentor plays

Caregivers were asked to share the role the mentor plays in their child's life. Several spoke about the mentor being someone their child can count on, a positive stable role model, and friend.

The mentor supports the youth on an emotional basis, takes him out into the community, has taught youth some life skills (personal - grooming, manners), has done some bridging with his friends and girlfriend, role modelling male 'how to treat a woman'

A big part- someone to vent to. Talk about problems with. To get out, its just them so she does not have to share attention with all her other siblings.

Caregivers were asked “**Since being matched with a mentor, does your child...**” and were asked to check all that apply.

Statements	Percent
Seem happier?	92.3%; n=12
Seem less angry?	38.5%; n=5
Seem more able to deal with challenges?	61.5%; n=8
Feel more supported?	92.3%; n=12
Have a more positive attitude about school?	53.8%; n=7
Seem more connected to others?	61.5%; n=8
Seem to feel better about him/herself?	76.9%; n=10
None of the above	0.0%
Other (please specify)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She has been struggling recently with her attitude. • Talks over challenges and seems to overcome difficulties easier 	

Caregivers were asked if they feel their child's mentor has the necessary skills and training to be successful in their role as mentor. One hundred percent (n=13) answered “yes.”

Transitions

When asked about transitions or challenges in their child's life since being matched with a mentor, a few said “none” and others shared struggles with other family members, moving, or entering an assessment centre.

Yes - he was homeless for a few days, mentor supported youth with finding a place and giving him a safe place to sleep one night

Not overly. His mother enters his life at points and then leaves. Having problems in school.

Moved home in October and [...] has gone through a trauma since being home. She has talked to [...] about what occurred and now is being supported with counselling. She trusts and looks to her for support and advice.

Additional Comments

Its been very good for her. New experiences. She did so well speaking at that bank even though she is so young. Really like she got this opportunity.

If the first match isn't working out, don't sweat it. Just ask for a change until you find something that is great.

Think its fantastic, love it. Recommended mentoring to friends that have youth.

5. Conclusion

The survey of mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers offered an opportunity to gather feedback on the children & youth in care and mentoring initiative. Findings confirmed the benefits of mentoring as well as identified some challenges experienced by mentors. Overall, mentors feel confident in their role, they know who to reach out to for guidance, and found training and support to be sufficient to make their match successful. Mentees saw their mentors as someone they could count on, spend time with and learn from. Parents/Caregivers appreciated the role mentors play in supporting their child, as a positive stable role model and friend. The data provided areas the Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee can review to make program adjustments. More specifically, training considerations, and processes to clarify access to information around when children transition to new locations. All three groups offered messaging on how to promote the opportunity to future mentors and mentees.

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give is your time. Like anyone, these kids just want a friend they can talk to and hang out with.



Appendix: Survey Questions

Mentor Survey Questions

Introduction

In spring 2014 the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Project received funding from Alberta Human Services to increase the number of children and youth in care having access to a mentor. As an important part of the evaluation of this project, we are requesting feedback from you, a mentor. Please Note: Some of these questions are asking about your current match. If you have been matched during this program but the match is now closed, please answer questions based on the how the match went. We would appreciate your taking the time to complete the following survey. It should take less than 15 minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group. To thank you for your participation, at the end of the survey you will be asked if you would like to enter a draw for a \$50 Cineplex gift card. If you answer yes, you will be redirected to another page to enter your contact information. The draw will take place once the survey is closed and the winner will be notified. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [...]

1. What part of the province do you live in?
 - Calgary and area
 - Edmonton and area
 - Red Deer
2. How long have you been a mentor, matched with a child or youth in care?
 - less than three months
 - three to six months
 - more than six months
3. Is this your first experience as a mentor?
4. How did you hear about this current mentoring opportunity? (check all that apply)
 - From my employer or a colleague (at work)
 - From a friend
 - From a media advertisement
 - From the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency
 - Other (please specify)
5. What made you decide to become a mentor?
6. Did you specifically set out to mentor children and youth in care?
7. How were you matched with your mentee? Please describe the matching process.
8. Did you know your mentee prior to the actual matching process?
9. Do you and your mentee share similar interests?
10. What amount of training have you received since applying to become a mentor?
 - Less than 2 hours
 - Between 2 and 4 hours
 - Between 4 and 6 hours
 - More than 6 hours
 - Not sure
 - comments
11. Please check all the topics you feel you received sufficient training on, prior to or in your role as a mentor.
 - Orientation to the Agency, including program goals, roles and responsibilities
 - Background on the child intervention system
 - Strategies for supporting children and youth in your role as a mentor
 - Trauma, brain development and attachment
 - Types of abuse, warning signs, neglect and what to do if abuse is suspected
 - Sexual orientation
 - Cultural competency
 - Confidentiality
 - Boundary setting

- Fostering a strength based relationship
- Mental health
- Community resources and other available supports
- Healthy match closures
- Other (please specify)

12. If there is any additional training and/or support that you feel would be beneficial to you in your role as a mentor, please list in the space below.

13. What type of support from the Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency do you receive?

14. Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree

- a) I feel confident in my role as a mentor
- b) I know who I can call to reach out when I need support
- c) The training I received was useful to me in my role as a mentor
- d) The intensity and frequency of support I receive from the agency (Big Brothers Big Sisters) is sufficient to make my match successful

15. In general terms, please describe how is your match going

16. Has your mentee experienced any personal challenges or major changes during the match?

17. Has your mentee experienced a placement change (move) during your match?

18. How were you made aware of the move?

19. What kinds of activities do you do with your mentee?

20. How often do you see your mentee in person? (check the one that applies most often)

- Comments
- Usually once a week or more
- Once every two weeks
- Once per month or less

21. How do you connect with your mentee? (click all that apply)

- By talking on the phone
- In person, face to face
- Texting
- E-mail
- Other social media (e.g. Facebook)
- Other (please specify)

22. Is there a group aspect (e.g. activities, support) to your mentoring program?

23. Have you seen a change in your mentee since the start of the match? If so, what kind of change?

24. Are you experiencing any challenges in your match? If so, how have you managed those challenges?

25. Have you discussed or been impacted by a match closure as part of this mentoring relationship?

26. What have been some of the successes in your match?

27. What would you tell other potential mentors who would like to mentor a child or youth in care?

28. What is your age range?

- 25 years old or under
- 26-45
- 46-64
- 65 or older
- I prefer not to say

29. What is your gender?

30. What is your employment status?

- employed full time
- employed part time (less than 30 hours per week),
- full time student
- retired
- not employed outside the home
- prefer not to say

31. What is your profession?

32. What is the focus of your studies?

Mentee Survey Questions

As part of an evaluation, you are being asked to provide feedback on your experiences with having a mentor. Your answers are important. Completing this survey is totally up to you. You can skip a question or stop at any time. Answering these questions should take you about 10 minutes and your answers will be anonymous. If you have any questions about this survey you can contact: [...] To thank you for your participation, at the end of the survey you will be asked if you would like to enter a draw for a \$50 Cineplex gift card. If you answer yes, you will skip to another page to enter your contact information. The draw will take place once the survey is closed. Thank you.

1. What part of the province do you live in?
 - Calgary and area
 - Edmonton and area
 - Red Deer
2. How long have you been matched with a mentor?
 - less than three months
 - three to six months
 - more than six months
3. Is this the first time you have had a mentor?
4. How did you hear about this opportunity? (check all that apply)
 - From a friend
 - From a social worker
 - From someone at my school
 - From the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency
 - Other (please specify)
5. How did you first meet your mentor?
6. Did you know your mentor before you were matched?
7. Do you and your mentor like the same things?
8. How would you describe your mentor?
9. Please read the following statements and check what most applies to you.
Not very much | Sometimes | A lot!
 - a) My mentor really cares about me.
 - b) I talk with my mentor when I have problems or things that worry me.
 - c) My mentor has helped me with problems in my life.
 - d) My mentor knows what is going on in my life.
 - e) I get to see my mentor as often as I'd like.
10. Has your mentor made a difference in your life? If so, please describe how...
11. Have you had challenges or big changes in your life during this match?
12. What kinds of activities do you do with your mentor?
13. How do you connect with your mentor? (click all that apply)
 - By talking on the phone
 - In person, face to face
 - Texting
 - E-mail
 - Other social media (e.g. Facebook)
 - Other (please specify)
14. What would you tell other people you know who would like to have a mentor?
15. How old are you?
 - 12 years old or under
 - 13-15
 - 16-18
 - 19 or older
 - I prefer not to say
16. What is your gender?
17. If you have anything else you want to share or tell us, please use the space below.

Caregiver (Parent/Guardian) Survey Questions:

As the parent or guardian of a child or youth matched with a mentor, you are being asked to provide feedback on the mentoring program. Your input is important as part of an evaluation to help us improve this program and see what difference it might be making. Completing this survey is voluntary. Answering these questions should take you less than 10 minutes and your answers will be anonymous. If you have any questions about this survey you can contact: [...]

1. What part of the province are you in?
 - Calgary and area
 - Edmonton and area
 - Red Deer
2. What is your role?
 - Parent
 - Foster Parent
 - Kinship Care Support
 - Group Care Support
 - Independent Living Support
 - Other (please specify)
3. How long has this child or youth been in your care?
 - under one year
 - one year to five years
 - five years or over
 - lifelong
 - Other (please specify)
4. How old is your child?
 - 12 or under
 - 13-16
 - 17 or older
5. How long has the child or youth been matched with a mentor?
 - Less than 3 months
 - 3 months to less than 6 months
 - 6 months or more
6. In your opinion, what are the benefits of mentoring overall?
7. Please describe the role the mentor plays in your child's life.
8. Does your child seem as if he or she enjoys the time spent with the mentor? For instance, looks forward to their meetings, talks positively about the time they spend together etc.
9. What do you think are the greatest benefits your child has received as a result of having a mentor?
10. Since being matched with a mentor, does your child... (please check all that apply):
 - Seem happier?
 - Seem less angry?
 - Seem more able to deal with challenges?
 - Feel more supported?
 - Have a more positive attitude about school?
 - Seem more connected to others?
 - Seem to feel better about him/herself?
 - None of the above
 - Other (please specify)
11. Have you met your child's mentor?
12. Do you feel your child's mentor has the necessary skills and training to be successful in their role as a mentor?
13. Has your child experienced any transitions, challenges or 'big life events' since being matched with a mentor? If yes, please describe below. Indicate if the mentor was able to play a supportive role during this time.
14. Do you have any questions about or concerns with the mentoring program?
15. If you have any additional comments or recommendations, please share in the space below.