

This Changes (Almost) Everything: Mentor, Youth, Parent & Staff Perspectives on Youth Initiated Mentoring

Renée Spencer, EdD, LICSW

Boston University School of Social Work | rspenc@bu.edu

National Mentoring Symposium | Banff, Alberta, Canada

November 2, 2016

Thank you to:

- Research Team:
 - Jean Rhodes , PI, University of Massachusetts, Boston
 - Katy Malley, Project Director, Innovation Research and Training
 - Emily Abrams, (previous) Project Coordinator, BU
 - Rachel Strathdee, Project Coordinator), BU
 - Alison Drew, Graduate Research Assistant, BU
 - Grace Gowdy, Graduate Research Assistant, BU
 - John Paul Horn, Graduate Research Assistant, BU
- Agency Partners:
 - Midlands Mentoring Partnership
 - Youth Emergency Services
 - Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands
 - Girls Inc
 - 100 Black Men
 - Juvenile Assessment Center
 - Project Everlast
 - YouthBuild US
- Funder:
 - U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention

Huge
Shout Out

Whitney Mastin



This I believe

We become who we are and realize our full potential in and through strong supportive relationships with people who care about who we are and what happens to us.

A Tale of Two Relationships

Tiffany & Elizabeth 8-year Match

"I was like a terrible kid **I was like wicked bad**. Take tempers and stuff... I wouldn't let kids touch me, talk to me, say hi to me or nothing. I didn't like teachers, I'd give them attitudes. Yell at them and stuff. and then ... in 6th grade I started getting like honors and stuff. And **doing wicked good**..."

"I'm glad she's my Big Sister. I don't know what I would do if she wasn't and I don't want to know."

Eugene 1st Match: 2 months

"we just kept on callin' and callin', and nobody answered. So. We just gave up on him.... My mom said, 'It's okay. It's not your fault'" "So, I was like **really devastated**" "cause he was like really keepin' in touch with me, like most of the time. ... he said exactly six weeks."

2nd Match 1 year later: 3 visits

"I was like, **really, really so angry ...** I really had wanted to hit him but I was like, Naw, don't hit him 'cause it might be somebody else."

Importance of Match Quality and Duration

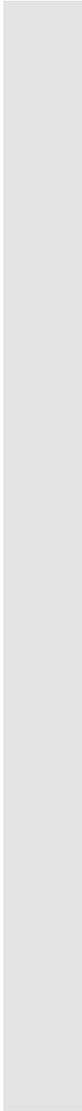
- Close and enduring relationships most likely to be effective
 - 1-year or more, SB continue into 2nd year
 - Connected – youth feels “close” to mentor, sees mentor as significant adult
 - Collaborative - developmental or youth driven
- But many formal relationships never achieve this
 - 1/3 to 1/2 end early
- Potential for decrements in youth functioning
 - Early ending relationships
 - Inconsistent relationships
- We often don't help matches end well

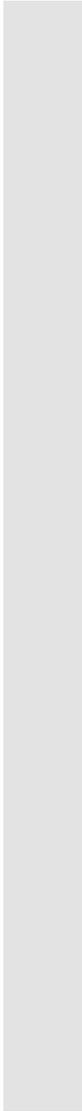
(Aseltine et al., 2000; DuBois et al., 2002; Grossman & Rhodes, 2001; Herrera et al., 2007; Karcher et al., 2007; Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, 2002; Spencer et al., in press; Whitney Henricker & Offutt, 2011)

Youth-Initiated Mentoring (YIM)

- What is it?
 - Youth identify adults they know to serve as their mentors
 - Program finds, recruits, screens, and trains adults and formalizes matches
- Why do it?
 - Not enough mentors to meet demand
 - Mentor attrition
 - Premature match closures
 - Low to modest effect sizes of mentoring, particularly for higher risk youth (DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Herrera et al., 2011).

- Sites in 27 states and Puerto Rico
- Youth age 16-18 dropped out of school, unemployed
- 17 month program: 5-month intensive residential phase, followed by 1-year nonresidential phase
- Goal: Return to school, obtain GED or employment, enlist in military
- Innovative mentoring component - Youth Initiated Mentoring (YIM)
 - Developed to address recidivism
- 3-year follow-up:
 - More likely to have GED, to be employed, earning more than controls (Millenky et al., 2011)
 - Youth with longest-lasting mentoring relationships did the best, while those in shortest relationships not different from controls (Schwartz et al., 2013)

- 
- 
- But, we still don't really know very much about it
 - No research to-date captures youth, mentor, parent and program staff experiences of these relationships.



Our Research on YIM

Our Study Purpose

- Describe YIM relationships
 - Mentor and youth experiences
 - Types of support
 - Perceptions of influence
 - Strength of connections
 - Durability
- Document YIM program practices
 - Challenges
 - Lessons learned

Participants and Data Collection

- Two programs serving vulnerable youth
 - Program 1: Youth in or recently aged out of foster care system
 - Program 2: Youth who were first-time offenders in juvenile justice system
- In-depth, in-person (mostly), semi-structured interviews

Participant Type	Age	Race
Youth	15-25 yrs (M=18 yrs)	Racially diverse
Parents	29-47 yrs (M=37 yrs)	Racially diverse
Mentors	21-58 yrs (M=38 yrs)	80% White

All matched < 1 year

Had known each other
7 months- youth's lifetime

Thematic Analysis

- Developed initial code book based on previous research and semi-structured interview protocol
- Coded by cases of up to three interviews (youth, mentor & parent)
- Created narrative summaries of each case
- One team member as master coder, reviewing coding and narrative summaries to ensure consistency in coding across cases.
- Coders met weekly to discuss questions and clarify definitions related to coding categories

Program Staff Interviews

- Interviews with 10 program staff
 - 2 from agencies referring youth to YIM
 - 8 from programs implementing YIM

Who were the mentors?

Mentor's Previous Role in Youth's Life

School employee	6
Social services (e.g., case worker, CASA)	5
Church activities	2
Friend network	2
Extended family member (aunt and informal cousin)	2
Foster parent	1

YIM Influenced More than just Matching Process

- Recruitment
- Matching
- Parent/guardian involvement
- Expectations
- Relationship development and duration
- Support provided and received
- Challenges

Program Recruitment

- Say what?!
- Prior to this YIM initiative, the JJ program had referred 30 youth to mentoring programs but none had been matched
 - *"for the most part every time we would contact the mentoring organization, they would say 'We'll try but it's really hard,' you know over the course of time we'd be in meetings with different organizations and they'd say well we need special training because you know these kids are scary, and very much misunderstanding of these kids are our kids. This could be your son or daughter in fact many of these kids are sons and daughters of school teachers, police officers, you know people you know, your neighbor.... and so there was a real from I believe the administrators of mentoring programs, having a disconnect more than mentors themselves..."* (Referring program staff)

Youth Recruitment

- Engaged more typically difficult to engage youth
- Motivated to keep connections and to have help with that
 - *"that's another reason why I wanted to do it because I wanted to stay in touch with [mentor]." (Rosie, youth)*
 - *"It's really hard to get back in contact with someone from your old high school or something." (Stephano, youth).*
 - *"being able to go and like, build a more structured relationship with someone who wasa good influence on me in my past because it's really hard to set that up yourself." (Cole, youth)*

Mentor Recruitment

- Reaching different pool of mentors
 - Capable and trustworthy adults who were interested but “too busy” to sign up for a mentoring program
- Felt compelled to serve because asked by youth
 - *“I honestly don’t know if I would’ve just had, made the time to do it for a student I didn’t know.”* (Sarah, mentor)
 - *“I would not have done this, ... without it having been a youth-initiated piece. They really roped me in with that one ...at first I thought, boy I’m overwhelmed... but when I heard that it was [youth] I was more than willing to help him..”* (Ashley, mentor)
 - *It wasn't like it was a professional person thinking that I would be a good fit for her, it was [youth] remembering me and asking if I could do it. And how do you say no to that? I can't imagine saying no.”* (Molly, mentor)

Matching: Youth Voice and Choice

- Highly intentional in their selection – chose mentors who:
 - They trusted

"You know, so I mean, that's always been in bad situations with people. It's hard for me to trust. When I would get in trouble, instead of of course sending me to the principal's office, [inaudible], she would try to get down to the core emotion and why I was feeling that way. And, I remember, I had, I had like a big huge fit one day, and she told me, she's like '...You know you're safe here, I'm never going to let you down. Never going to hurt you. Never going to lie to you.' And then that right there, I knew, just like seeing it and hearing it in her voice, I knew she was honest." (Marie, youth)
 - Felt comfortable talking to

"I was comfortable talking to her like back then... so I knew I would be comfortable talking to her... now." (Jane, youth)
 - Knew and understood them and their challenges and did not judge

"Because she under- she's been through half the things I've been through so she really understands, and she went, she's not like judgmental." (Angel, youth)

"So she knows a lot about my background, my family history, and all that. And I just, I felt really comfortable with her." (Marie, youth)

"I wanted somebody... who wouldn't judge me for things I've already done". (Amy, youth)

Parent/ Guardian Involvement

- Engaged PGs in new ways
- When involved - approved, appreciated, and felt supported by mentor
 - *"I didn't want her just spending time with somebody that we wasn't, you know, okay with."* (Parent)
 - *"I knew that I could trust her to take care of [child] and make sure she was doing okay...But, you know, meeting her and knowing her, you know, I could just tell that she was a good person."* (Parent)
 - *"There was never a feeling of 'Hey, you're taking my job here'... You know, because sometimes... as parents... we need a little bit of help...I just believe in you know, 'Hey, sometimes you can give me good pointers on maybe you know, I've done something wrong, you know, or maybe you can help me in this area that I can't seem to get through.' So he does assist."* (Parent)

Expectations

- Specific and based on real knowledge of the other person, rather than general idea of mentoring
 - *"When I found out... I was picking [John], I was really excited because I knew exactly what we were going to be doing."* (Cole, youth)
 - *"...my thought was just kind of how it's been. like that we would touch base either, through phone calls and kinda be that support in binding that she struggles with the relationship of her children's father and stuff like that, and her family, and just kind of letting her talk about it encouraging her, you know, with different jobs ..."* (Nikki, mentor)

Support Provided and Received

- Appraisal
 - *"She's given me pride..... I used to think I would never be able to do anything, because I'm so different. Besides, you know, compared to everybody else that I wouldn't get a job. I wouldn't, you know, do anything in life."* (Amy, youth)
- Informational
- Instrumental
- Emotional
 - *"she's always trying to better herself and so a lot of [our] conversation is just chatting about her worries"* (Ashley, mentor)
 - *"I'd say about 90 percent of what we do is really talk and try to figure out what's going on with his life or the current girl in his life, or whatever thing that might be troubling him at that moment. So a lot of it is just discussion um... and like I said sometimes it's just getting him out of his place and letting him just blow off some steam. And just go and sit down and watch a movie or sit down and drink a coffee or something and vent."* (John, mentor)

Relationship Development and Duration

Start out a few, or even many, steps ahead

- *It was, it was cool. We had so much to talk about, so much to catch up. And it was like [program staff person] was just kind of like sitting there like, alrighty then. Yeah, she eventually ended up leaving and we still talked and talked and talked, and then you know that was when we, you know, she had my number already and we just, said that we'll text and set up a day to meet.” (Nikki, youth)*
- *“... every time she's had a new therapist, or a new case worker, or a new whoever, they've you know. You always start with, 'Okay. Tell me about,...what you've been through.' And then she has to tell that story so many times. And I know she's sick of it, because she's told me that. So, with me it was like we met at a restaurant and we just started talking about normal things and she didn't have to explain herself or who she is or what she's been through.” (Molly, mentor)*
- *“Because we had some interesting early on track record...[laughs] that first year that we met, and he kind of figured out that shock value didn't really work, and figured out that I'd still be there, even if he tried all this stuff.” (Sarah, mentor)*

Program Staff Noted this as Well

- *"I think.... you know, they already had a relationship with the child and yeah. So a lot of mentors stated that, with knowing the child, they knew who they were. Like they knew they were a great kid. They knew that, you know, they sometimes made bad decisions. So they understood who the child was and what they were capable of."*
- *"I think they just really appreciate someone that knows what they've been through,.... without having to necessarily lay it all out again. ... like I did a match um, the one that was her 5th grade teacher, and she knew all about how the girl had come into foster care. She knew all about her family situation. They didn't have to talk about it, but she was really supportive of the struggles she was going through and she let her know, like, "Yes, things are hard for you, but just think about what you've been through already." So, her knowing what she has already gone through was you know, really helpful to her."*
- *"it helps the youth be genuine up front about who they are...So, that they mentor ... You know it's not 6 months of let's get to know each other. I mean some of them of course don't have a super close relationship. Maybe it was someone from three years ago who was an after school [counselor] or something, but that there's some sort of familiarity that helps them just sort of um jump right in."*

Relationship Development and Duration

Mentor engagement

- *"It is important to me. I didn't take on this role lightly. So I see it as a ... priority... It's one of my things I prioritize and make time for."* (Charlize, mentor)
- *"Getting him into college right now is the big one. ...he's said he signed up so as long as he actually does that and gets in, that's the goal **we** have right now. **If he doesn't ... go, then it's going to be my goal** to get him in by Spring no matter what."* (John, mentor)
- *"I definitely feel close to her. she's a cool young woman... she's somebody that I think is gonna do really interesting things with her life and I think it's really neat,.... to sort of see her at these beginning steps...I adore her. I think she is just a wonderful, wonderful young woman and so.... I totally want to brag about her....she's a neat young woman and I feel very close to her and I do feel honored to get to spend this time with her and like I said, I'm in a better mood."* (Ashley, mentor, matched 2 months, has known each other 3 years)

Relationship Development and Duration

Likelihood of long-lasting connections

- *"I don't think I'll ever really get to a point where I say 'I don't want you to be my mentor anymore'.... I hope nothing like that ever happens. I don't think it will"*
(Stephano, youth)
- *"Well the contract's for two years, but you know my door will always be open if he needs help or advice, so, as long as it needs to go."* (John, mentor)

The Difference These Relationships Made

- *"She gave me the nudge to keep going... I was just gonna give up and slow down like everybody else did and not care about school anymore... But she was the one to say, 'Hey, you got to keep going. You need to go. Okay, you want to be successful in life. You don't want to be one of those people living off of pennies on the car floor.' ... I was like, 'Huh.' So, she is the drive. She is what's making me want to keep going."* (Amy, youth)
- *"She's important to me....Because she's a big influence on me. She's pretty much what got me to go to college."* (Stephano, youth)

Challenges

- Many challenges similar to agency-matched pairs
 - Communication, scheduling, no-shows
- Burden of them is not
 - Challenges not taken personally, understood in context of youths' lives
 - (after being stood up): *"So I, I just explained to her that... it wasn't that great for me and it would have been kinder if she would have been a little more, a little bit more... forthcoming in helping me get to her so we could just spend the time on... us being together as opposed to an hour of me getting to her."* (Sally, mentor)
 - *"Oh, there was a time we, you know, we had scheduled dinner, something like that and I had something come up. I couldn't make it, and so I just texted her and said, 'Can we postpone,' and then we just did lunch the next day, and that was fine. You know, so, I mean, there's flexibility, but, you know, I'm purposeful in making sure that we have some type of contact."* (Snoopy, mentor)
 - *"There's been times where she's just been in bad mood and, you know, ... I think I do ... I talk too much like if I get,.... talking with her or asking her questions and she just gets irritated.... that's funny because it's probably how it was with my mom growing up, you know, and she'll just be like, 'Ugh, enough questions,' and I'm just like, 'Whoa, really?'"* (laughs) (Lynn, mentor)

Paul & Mr. Good Looking

Matched 2
months

- Paul, 16 yrs, Hispanic, referred because he has been caught stealing with friends
- Mr. GL, 32 yrs, Hispanic
- Mentor selection
 - Parent: helped youth pick – younger daughter’s teacher and basketball coach of younger son
 - Someone the mother would want her son to be like
 - Also, “he is very strict but the kids like him a lot. So there is something that makes the kids appreciate him, even after his way of doing things that he has of being really strict.”
 - Youth: liked mentor because he was “nice” and was “someone who had been through a lot”
 - Mentor: responded right away when contacted, because he knew who Paul was and “was very interested in helping out”
 - Had considered mentoring before but was always “too busy” with other things
 - Being asked to mentor “sounded like a privilege”
- Mentor commitment
 - Youth late to first match meeting – mentor waited for over an hour said he would have waited as long as it took “because obviously he needs it” and also said, “Maybe it proved to him too that I cared about it... too. If I stayed there I cared about him”
 - He “wanted to make sure” Paul knew he was “invested in the relationship”
 - When not able to spend time with Paul, felt like he was “neglecting” him
 - Wants to “provide the support” Paul needs to achieve whatever goals he has
- Paul does indeed feel like mentor is invested in him
 - Notes that Mr. GL “makes time” for him” and that he is someone he can talk to “about just about anything” and feels that he could turn to him if he needed help

Kobe & Labo

Matched 9 months

- Kobe 15 yrs, Black, referred by JJ program
- Labo 44 yrs, Black, staff in Kobe's after school program
- Kobe decided to do the program and picked his mentor
 - Was happy he could choose, because it would be somebody he was "already comfortable with"
 - His criteria: someone who was "always around", "funny", and who liked Kobe Bryant
- Mother struggled and was not able to really identify anyone and was concerned about allowing her child to participate in mentoring
 - *"I am going to let my child go with this person? I need to know their background. I need to know where they came, what kind of family they are from"*
 - That her son got to choose made her more comfortable with the idea.
- Labo responded once he knew it was Kobe who was asking
 - *Once he told me who the person was I was excited and I felt a little privileged that he asked me to help mentor him.... It made me feel proud. It made me feel happy. It made me feel like the things I had been doing for him at the program, he really paid attention to. And letting me know his mother appreciate the things that I was doing to him at the program as well"*
 - *"I know him. I know his family..... I just told myself I'll make time"*
- Play basketball weekly. Labo uses this time to talk with Kobe – about everything: school, grades, friends, manners
- Labo and Kobe's mother have built a strong working relationship and they appreciate one another
 - *"I guess his mother, being so involved, it made me want to be even more involved with him"*
- Kobe is more confident and thinks more about his future, including college

Nikki & Snoopy

Matched 6 months

- Nikki 25 yrs, Black
- Snoopy, 43 yrs, White, worker in a group home where Nikki lived when she was 15-16
- Kept in contact after Nikki left group home but had not been in contact for 3 years
- Nikki wanted a mentor
 - *"I need somebody to talk to. My mom, she's incarcerated, I just recently found out my dad has passed."*
 - When considering mentors, Nikki listed adults who *"just are on the right track, they make their decisions, they all have careers. And they all want to see me do good."*
- Snoopy was a little shocked and also "flattered" when asked - had some difficult moments when Nikki was in the group home.
 - Knew Nikki needed a role model and someone to offer her guidance, *"because [Nikki] didn't have to [have a mentor] She wanted to and so ... why not be a part of that?"*
 - Also accepted for "selfish reasons" – *"It felt good Knowing that you made a difference and for someone to think about you after considering all that time has passed"*
 - Felt confident going in because she knew a lot about Nikki's past and family
- On the surface, these two are opposites but what they share, from Nikki's perspective is being "goal oriented" and genuinely wanting to "help people" and "care for people."
- The pair met once a month, usually for a meal, talked every week in between
 - Talk about what is going on in Nikki's life, her two children, which she sometimes brings to the visits, career advice and emotional support
- Nikki trusts Snoopy so much she asked if she would be her children's guardian if anything were to happen to her and Snoopy agreed

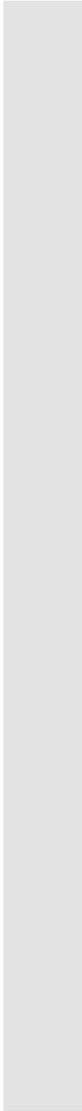
Michelle & Bridgette

Matched 7 months

- Michelle 22 yrs, Black
- Bridgette 37 yrs, Black, was Michelle's former foster mother for 7 weeks
- Michelle chose her because they were still in touch and very close, so it seemed natural, and because Bridgette *"already knew, basically, what [she] went through and basically why [she] was in the system"*
 - Knew she could talk to her (*"she didn't judge me no matter what"*) and that Bridgette would "call [her] out"
 - Described Bridgette as someone who "knows she messes up, so why would she judge the next person" and "doesn't think that she is better than anybody." She contrasts this with her experiences of caseworkers who "just go off what's in [her] file" and "don't really get to know you"
 - Also picked her because she sees her as "an alpha" and as someone she "wants to learn from"
- Now that they are in a formal mentoring relationship, Michelle felt like Bridgette is "more and more on her", which "encourages [her] and helps [her] to better more and more".
- Relationship is focused on helping Michelle become more independent, to get and keep a job, go to and stay in school
 - Bridgette says her goal for Michelle is to "better herself over all in everything she does" and sees her role as saying things that a parent would say because Michelle "doesn't really have any type of good parent figures in her life"
- Michelle said her relationship with Bridgette has *"made [her] think of the world different"* and has helped her manage her anger better by helping her think through the consequences of her actions

Carolina & Fort Matched 2 months

- Carolina 17 yrs, multi-racial, both parents incarcerated
- Fort, 21 yrs, White, pair met through a church program
- Carolina selected Fort because he felt close to him and he had stayed in touch as Carolina moved from foster home to foster home
- Fort accepted – saw it as an extension of the work he was doing at the church and was also touched that Carolina liked him so much
- See themselves as similar in important ways
 - Fort: they both had parents that encouraged them to attend church, get a high school diploma, and make something of their lives
 - Carolina: they have both suffered from depression and have lost family members
- Fort sees his role as being there for Carolina and offering his support
 - *"I think this is the best way I could help him out is just spend time with him each month and ... go do stuff with him"*
- When asked how being Carolina's mentor changed his relationship with Fort, he said that he was able to be more "intentional" in helping him, spend one-on-one time with him rather than just time in the church group



What's not to like?!

Why Program Staff like YIM

- Youth empowerment
- Reach more relationally vulnerable youth with whom it can be difficult to build new relationships

"A lot of kids who are, you know, who we see here already struggle with relationships and ... certainly don't want necessarily new folks just invasively brought in. They wouldn't buy into that."

(Referring program staff)

- Wait lists a poor fit for these youth
 - JJ and transitioning foster youth need support now, not in 6 months to a year or more

But Poses New Challenges in Implementation

- Much more work up front
 - Helping you understand what a mentor is and how they can benefit
 - Supporting youth in identifying and selecting mentors
 - Locating and contacting mentors

Work to Help Youth See the Benefits of Mentoring

"They have a hard time trusting new people. With trusting people period....Then a lot of our young adults are at that age where they're trying to branch out on their own become independent and prove that they could do it on their own. Now is not the time where they're coming to us and asking for a lot. They want to do things on their own. A couple years down the road they come back to us and say 'I need some help.' But usually around this age where a lot of clients are around the 19 year old range. They're just first starting to get out there by themselves. They really want to prove that they can do it on their own." (Referring Program Staff)

"I didn't really know what they meant about mentors"
(Youth ChalleNGe mentee)

"wasn't sure how she was gonna help me in a sense, or what she was gonna do to make anything change, but... I just kinda went with the flow, an' it turned out to be really helpful" (Youth ChalleNGe mentee)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LPkA2q-Rbg>

Have to Support Youth Selection of Mentors

- Provide information about characteristics of a good mentor
- Guide them through identifying potential mentors
 - Asset mapping exercise prompting youth to think of potential mentors from different areas of their lives (e.g. school, sports, work, church, neighborhood, family friends)

"so we give a little description a couple bullets on the requirements of them being a mentor, like they have to pass screening, 21 years old, not be a parent or guardian. ... stuff of that nature. We have a little information section, and then how the person is related to them. A couple questions, how long you've known them... How frequently you're in contact, and then other things they want the Mentoring Coordinator to know about the person that they're nominating. ... so it's a good way for...the youth to think a little bit outside the box to someone they might not have readily identified as a mentor.so we focus heavily on the youth voice in the process."

"our young people, they know who's actually positive in their life and, and who will make a good example." (Program Staff)

What won't Work

"I think the thing that they don't take into consideration is that it's called youth initiated mentoring and I've had a handful of youth where I've talked to them about, thinking about some potential mentors talked to their parents about it or something and have a list ready for me when I come for the interview so we can discuss those mentors. ... and there's been several times when I've gone to the home and there's no list. They can't think of anyone. Parent can't think of anyone so uh, I kind of thought like well, I mean if we came to them and told them um from the jump that you know, this is usually youth initiated mentoring. You're going to have to you know, figure out some potential mentors for yourself. And then, in that time that should be like, two three weeks that we give them between um, you know the, the ... talking to the referral specialist. ... me getting ahold of them and then starting up an interview time, that could take like a month if that, like on average could be a month until I actually see them. So in that month they still can't put together a list, that's kind of concerning"

Shift from Recruiting to Locating Mentors

- Can be difficult to track down adults selected by youth

"But it, you know also it's like, we're like all hands on deck when it comes to you know, finding a prospective mentor. We're you know, all Googling people, trying to use our networks to try to reach people to find these mentors. We search Facebook, we make phone calls if we know someone who knows someone who might know this person. So, it's been interesting. And I think too often times the kids will identify a person but they maybe won't know they're last name, they'll only know their first name and work....So there is a lot more work in trying to just identify who these people are."

- When found, don't always pass background checks
 - Important to identify multiple possible mentors
- Honored to be asked!

"Anybody who wants to be a mentor of course is speaking out and saying I want to be a mentor, but when a youth approaches you and says, 'Hey I'd like you to be my mentor.' That is such a sense of ownership of, you know, 'oh my gosh, this is an important relationship.' It puts such a more I can't think of a better word than 'value.' The value there of this young person sought me out. This is important."

Match Support: Easier in Some Ways

- Participants – mentors, youth, parents – less nervous at the start
- Relationships take off quickly
- Match support less intensive

"[The] relationship is just expedited. ... So instead of us waiting or a mentor in our program waiting like 3 months, 6 months, you know it may be even a year to connect with the youth, ... that connection is already there.... it's kind of a relief for support staff in that they don't have to do as much support.... they still do their monthly phone calls, but if they take the incoming calls of any issues or questions that the mentor might be having or the mentee might be having, there's a lot more reduced, decreased than it would be in a traditional match."

Match Support: More Challenging in Others

- Contacting mentors for follow-up
- While relationships seemed to be progressing smoothly, program staff reported some greater difficulty maintaining contact with YIM mentors and parents in some cases

"This is a person that didn't have it in their mindset ahead of time that they would volunteer. Um, this is something that you're asking them to do, and that they have to think about, and it's a little harder for someone like me to approach someone, ask them to do it versus someone that's approaching you asking to do it."

- Contacting youth whose phone service may be sporadic
 - One program turned to Facebook as a way to keep in touch
- Boundaries
 - *"I think some of them just can't help themselves, because they were workers in some official capacity before. They kind of still feel like it's an extension of that time. It's really hard. Even though I have a conversation like, 'Yes, I know that you were an authority figure, but you're not that anymore.' I think they just can't help themselves that it's just the role they've always played."*

Mentor Experience

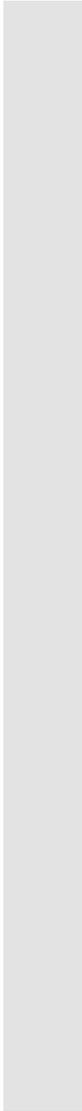
Traditional Matching	YIM
Committed to idea of mentoring, intends to commit to mentee	Mentee is reason mentor agreed to serve
Wants to make a difference	Has just learned s/he has already made a difference
Hope youth will like them	Knows youth must already like/feel comfortable with/appreciate mentor
Work to earn youth's trust	Has earned some trust already – typically selected because youth sees them as someone who knows their circumstances and does not judge them
May not be sure what experience of mentoring will be	Has a pretty good idea what it will mean to mentor this youth
Has to get to know youth; hope they will like youth	Already knows something about this youth and what s/he is like
Not sure how they'll respond to youth's circumstances	Tend to have a good understanding of youth's challenges

Program Experience

	Traditional Matching	YIM
Recruitment	Identify and maintain an ongoing pool of mentors	Help youth identify potential mentors
		Track down adults identified
		Reach out to and invite adults to serve
Mentor Screening	Screen for safety	Screen for safety
	Screen for mentoring skills	Screen for adult agreeing because they want to and not out of guilt
Match Support	Manage expectations	Check-in to make sure matches are meeting
	Help mentors build a relationship	Helping mentors and youth navigate change in relationship
	Help mentors persist (feel like they are making a difference, etc)	Assist with management of potential boundary issues
	Help mentors build productive relationships with mentee's family	

What Drives the YIM Difference?

- Youth voice and choice
- Trust
- Mentor commitment
- Aligns programs, parents, mentors and youth on the “same team”



Thank you!

Renée Spencer, EdD, LICSW

Boston University School of Social Work | rspenc@bu.edu