

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE & MENTORING

FINAL
EVALUATION



Alberta
**Mentoring
Partnership**
Your Mentoring Resource
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FINAL REPORT - MARCH 2020

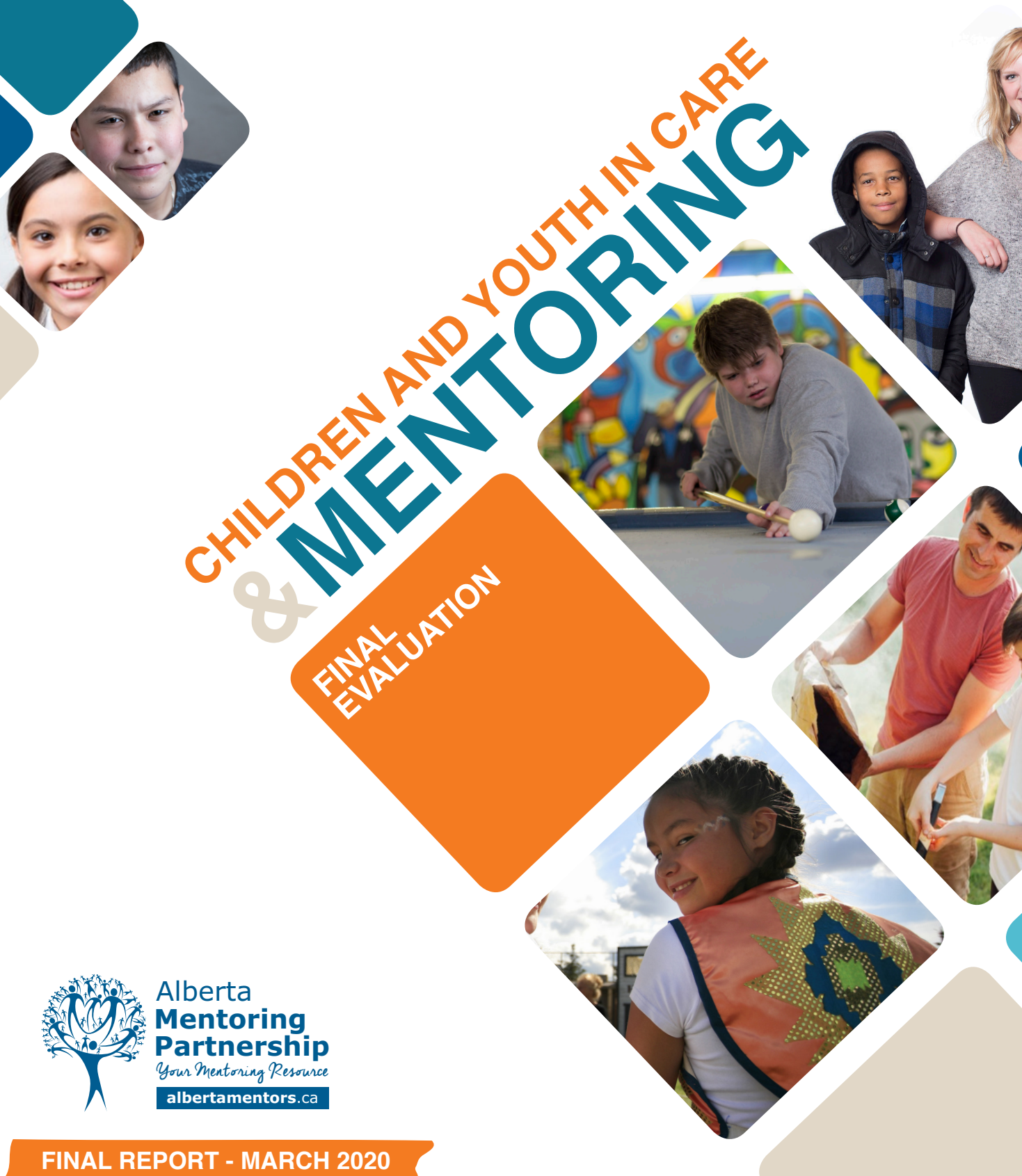


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Children and Youth in Care & Mentoring project aimed to increase participation in and further foster meaningful relationships between mentors and children and youth in the Child Intervention system. A partnership project supported by the Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee including three mentoring organizations in Alberta (located in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer) who worked collaboratively to create, implement and evaluate this project. The aim of the project was to:

- support organizations in developing and facilitating mentoring programs for young people with special considerations for working with children and youth in care;
- build the capacity of service delivery staff in providing mentoring programming for children and youth in care;
- help children and youth in care develop meaningful life-long connections and relationships through formal mentoring relationships; and
- increase the number of mentors for children and youth in care.



The theory of change underpinning this collaborative project was: If children or youth in care or involved in government supports are connected to specifically selected, trained and supported mentors, they will engage in a developmental mentoring relationship and are more likely to successfully transition to adulthood.

The evaluation approach led by the external evaluator AndersonDraper Consulting Inc., was participatory as well as developmental in nature as sites continued to work in a complex environment learning how best to implement a mentoring program for children and youth in care. The developmental evaluation had at its core purpose to embed evaluative thinking and activities into the project with the objective of generating relevant information for decision making as opportunities arose. The external evaluator worked closely with sites to facilitate a dialogue that supported the development process, through documentation, data collection and analysis. This evaluation was intended to document the achievements, contributions and learnings of the sites, measure the extent to which outcomes were achieved, and create a model and delivery system for mentoring children and youth in care.

The evaluation incorporated a mixed methods approach gathering multiple lines of evidence (interviews, surveys, focus groups, site visits, document and literature reviews) from diverse stakeholders (members of the Advisory Committee, agency managers and staff, mentors, mentees, guardians and child intervention workers) to ensure the evaluative reach reflected the breadth and scope of the project. The project initially launched in 2014. This evaluation report encompasses outcomes and findings during the 2017 – 2020 funding cycle.

IMPACTS & FINDINGS

The mentoring relationships and supports provided through the project resulted in positive outcomes. The evaluation identified the following achievements:

Children, youth in care & families were supported by mentors & agency staff:

- 433 children and youth mentored through the programming across 3 sites (since July of 2014).
- Mentees consistently reported feeling supported by their mentors.
- Mentees and mentors both reported feeling supported by the agencies.

Children and youth in care developed relationships and increased support networks:

- Mentees noted an increase in positive relationships and available support networks through the project.
- Project sites established programming opportunities to encourage development of life skills as well as developing career and employment competencies including resume building, mock interviews and career exploration, stepping-stone activities, often overlooked for youth in care.
- Guardians noted positive behavioural changes in the youth that were mentored through the program including more respectful behaviour, calmer attitudes, increased academic performance and willingness to communicate.
- Guardians also noted positive outcomes related to increased self-esteem, more confidence, increased socialization and greater independence.

Enhanced and ongoing training and support help mentors to be confident and successful in their role:

- Sites developed comprehensive pre-match training, follow-up and intentional continuing education opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge for mentors, based on trauma-informed care principles.
- Enhanced training to support the delivery and uniqueness of the population influenced the agencies overall and informed the training all volunteer mentors received.
- Mentors reported feeling confident and competent to support their mentees and knew where to go to obtain support.

Staff have the necessary experience, skills, training and supports to do this work:

- Staff across the partner sites had enhanced qualifications and generally came to the role with more experience than front-line staff in other program areas.
- Staff demonstrate flexibility, a key attribute required to accommodate the mentees and mentors they supported.
- Staff worked with caseloads that were smaller than community-based programs in order to address the complexities of the population of children and youth that were being mentored.

Stakeholders are aware of the benefits of mentoring and demonstrate support for the mentoring process by working together and contributing time, energy and resources as appropriate to support the needs of children and youth in care:

- Caregivers and Children’s Services staff were engaged throughout the project with increased communication and regular presentations to staff.
- Agencies created awareness of the opportunity and the benefits of mentoring in their communities and partnered with other organizations to advance the goals of the program.

Stakeholders learn from each other and share learnings with others:

- Literature review was completed and utilized to inform the program design and advance the knowledge of mentoring specific to this population.
- A mentoring program model was developed and implemented as a result of the partnership between the sites, with support from the Advisory Committee.
- Frequent communication and sharing of learnings with Children’s Services as well as two key objectives have been included in the Ministry business plan with specific reference to mentoring support that aligns with this mentoring program.
- Webinars, conference presentations and other information and learning opportunities were provided for partners to share successes and knowledge amongst themselves and others.

In addition to accomplishments in the articulated outcomes, the evaluation identified other key areas of success of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program:

- The creation of a comprehensive program design.
- Engagement by partners and stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for children and youth.
- Continued building on the positive reputations of each organization to develop and deliver quality mentoring supports resulting in the increase of non-paid role models, positive and meaningful relationships in the lives of children and youth.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

The findings of the evaluation support this project's achieved outcomes. In addition, the evaluation identified the importance of this work, the collaborations and continued need for this kind of programming. As such, the evaluation identified the following next steps and recommendations to advance mentoring for children and youth in care:

- Expand the scope to include additional sites throughout the province.
- Undertake a Photovoice participatory action research method project to deepen understanding of the importance of this work and the difference it makes to the wellbeing of children and youth in care.
- Review and update program design. Include an evaluation of the extent to which the design has been utilized and how its utility could be increased.
- Incorporate learning from sites and enhance focus for Sexually and Gender Diverse (SGD) youth.
- Further enhance and support mentoring for Indigenous youth.
- Advocate for sustained funding for current and expansion sites.



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Youth require caring adults to help develop the resilience they need to face the challenges of life. The presence of healthy, positive adult relationships in the lives of children and youth contribute to improved future outcomes and positive youth development. One of the most effective interventions for at-risk children is to offer a caring and responsible adult role model who can make positive lasting impressions (Alberta Mentoring Partnership, 2017).¹

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) defines mentoring as the presence of a caring individual who provides a young person with support, advice, friendship, reinforcement and constructive role modeling over time. Strong, supportive, healthy relationships in the lives of young people are recognized as the most important developmental assets associated with positive youth development.² Wrap around supports and scaffolding that mentoring relationships provide strengthen the likelihood of better outcomes for young people. Children and youth in care can be left without the benefit of positive adult role models due to fractured ties with their family and community of origin. Mentoring relationships provided through intentional mentoring programs have the opportunity to connect these children and youth to positive adult mentors who can provide emotional support, guidance and help with building positive skills.

Three established mentoring organizations in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer³, along with stakeholders and partners collaborated to expand mentoring for children and youth in care, with funding from Alberta Children's Services. The purpose of this project, launched in 2014, was to foster meaningful relationships between mentors and children and youth in the child intervention system. This document serves as the final evaluation report encompassing outcomes and findings during the 2017-2020 funding cycle and building on the learnings of the first phase.

The aim of the project was to:

- support organizations in developing and facilitating mentoring programs for young people with special considerations for working with children and youth in care;
- build the capacity of service delivery staff in providing mentoring programming for children and youth in care;
- help children and youth in care develop meaningful life-long connections and relationships through formal mentoring relationships; and
- increase the number of mentors for children and youth in care.

¹ <https://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Children-Youth-in-Care-and-Mentoring-Program-Design-Alberta-Mentoring-Partnership.pdf>

² Core Character Competencies and Positive Youth Development; Resiliency Initiatives; Resiliency Canada, 2013.

³ The sites are Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area; Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area; and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Red Deer and District also known as Youth HQ.

BACKGROUND

A host of complex scenarios can lead a child or family to become involved in the child intervention system. More often than not, a variety of traumas are precursors to child intervention involvement. These may include addiction, mental health concerns, illness, poverty, unemployment, abuse and neglect. Because of exposure to this trauma and adversity, children and youth in care are at increased risk for poor outcomes. Over half of children who enter the intervention system demonstrate a concern with their physical, emotional or cognitive health or behaviour. Youth exiting care are less likely to graduate from high school or to enroll in post-secondary education, experience greater difficulty securing employment, are more likely to be involved in the justice system and have a greater incidence of mental health and substance abuse problems.⁴

As of March 2018, there were 10,458⁵ children and youth receiving Child Intervention Services in Alberta. Close to 70% of children and youth who received those services are Indigenous. In contrast, Indigenous children make up approximately 10% of the child population in Alberta (Child Intervention Information and Statistics Summary Update, 2016). As such, it was imperative that any mentoring approach or program incorporate and respect cultural identity and practices. This includes training and knowledge of reconciliation and trauma-informed practices for staff and mentors.

A key component of prevention and support is strengthening natural support networks in young people's lives.

A critical component of the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring project has been establishing and cultivating close working relationships with partners and stakeholders. The Advisory Committee includes members from the provincial government, youth advocacy groups, youth in care experts, mentors, mentee representatives, executive and front-line staff from the project organizations and other community agencies and organizations. From the onset, the three sites along with the Advisory Committee have identified core functions in effectively building and delivering the project: building relationships across sectors, engaging youth and stakeholders in the creation of the program design and striving to remove barriers for children and youth in care to access the mentors within communities.

“Mentoring programs provide a consistent, positive relationship for young people experiencing many transitions, stressors and challenges. A mentor acts as a stable, positive relationship with a strong youth voice during a time when they may not feel in control of things going on in their lives. Young people find it very valuable to be able to just talk to someone uninvolved with their family and/or professionals and get out and do positive activities together.” Advisory Committee member (Child Intervention Panel Submission, 2017)

⁴ Vandenbergh, C. (2017). Mentoring Youth in Care: An Update of the Literature. Calgary, AB: AndersonDraper Consulting Inc. for the Child and Youth in Care and Mentoring Subcommittee of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership. <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/child-intervention-info-stats-summary-2017-18-q4.pdf>

The literature review⁶ (commissioned by the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee) identified that full implementation of a mentoring program or strategy may take up to three years. A collective approach across the three organizational sites required increased resources, planning, evaluation and leadership. It was important to have in-depth dialogue amongst leaders, front-line staff and the committee in order to reach common understanding to articulate shared values, philosophy and project focus. Common outcomes and a collective theory of change was established. Parallel to the collective work amongst professionals, it was critical to engage a youth voice and perspective youth in the mentor program planning process. Youth in care helped guide the program's elements, practices and administration. Focus groups were designed and conducted with youth in care to lend their voice to this important work. Throughout the project, mentees were surveyed on an annual basis. There were youth in care at various times sitting as part of the program's Advisory Committee table.

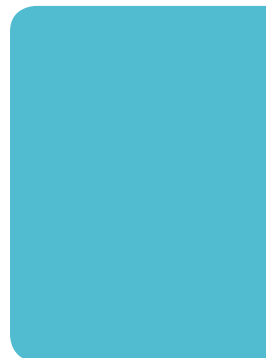
A Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee and Program Principles were established as part of the program design (see appendix B).



THEORY OF CHANGE

The project tested the following theory of change: If children youth in care or involved in government supports are connected to specifically selected, trained and supported mentors, they will engage in a developmental mentoring relationship and are more likely to successfully transition to adulthood.

(Developmental relationships are close connections that help young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.)



⁶ Vandenberghe, C. (2017). Mentoring Youth in Care: An Update of the Literature. Calgary, AB: AndersonDraper Consulting Inc. for the Child and Youth in Care and Mentoring Subcommittee of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership.

EVALUATION APPROACH

Evaluation involves gathering data and then analyzing so the resulting information can be used to determine whether the program is effectively carrying out planned activities, and the extent to which outcomes are being met and anticipated results are being achieved.

The evaluation approach for this project was participatory as well as developmental in nature as sites continued to work in a complex environment learning how best to implement a mentoring program for children and youth in care. A developmental evaluation has at its core purpose to embed evaluative thinking and activities into organizational life with the objective of generating relevant information for decision making as opportunities arise. The external evaluator (AndersonDraper Consulting Inc.) worked closely with sites and the Advisory Committee to facilitate a dialogue that supports the development process, through documentation, data collection, analysis and reporting.

This evaluation included both quantitative and qualitative feedback from multiple informants including members of the Advisory Committee, agency managers and staff, mentors, mentees, guardians and child intervention workers. The lines of evidence utilized in the evaluation include interviews, surveys, focus groups, site visits, document and literature reviews. The intent of the evaluation was to document the achievements, contributions and learnings of the sites, measure the extent to which outcomes were achieved, and create a model and delivery system for mentoring children and youth in care.



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation focused on determining answers to the following:

1. To what extent have the following outcomes been achieved?
 - Children, youth in care & families are supported by mentors & agency staff
 - Children and youth in care develop relationships and increased support networks
 - Enhanced and ongoing training and support help mentors to be confident and successful in their role
 - Staff report having the necessary experience, skills, training and supports to do this work
 - Stakeholders are aware of the benefits of mentoring and demonstrate support for the mentoring process by working together and contributing time, energy and resources as appropriate to support the needs of children and youth in care
 - Stakeholders learn from each other and share learnings with others
2. What have been the greatest successes of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring project?
3. What have been the greatest challenges of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring project and what strategies were used to mitigate them?
4. Does there continue to be a need for this type of program?

TYPES OF DATA COLLECTED



In person quarterly evaluation **consultations** with Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee and interviews with the 3 project sites.



Mentor, Mentee, Child Intervention Worker, Parent & Caregiver **online surveys**; Sites provided examples in the form of narratives/stories that have been included to illustrate findings.



Caregiver and Child Interventions Worker **interviews**.



Document review (2018) Mentoring Youth In Care Program Design based on data collected from site discussion and Advisory Committee meetings throughout this project.

LIMITATIONS

Survey and interview results offer a snapshot in time. As respondents are self-selected, findings may not be representative of the entire population.

As the evaluation focused mainly on the implementation of the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring program in three sites, there were no control groups used in which to compare results to other mentoring programs (e.g. in other sites or community-based mentoring).

It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to track individual matches long term. The evaluator relied on the sites to provide match numbers and site-based data.

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

This report is organized as follows:

- Mentoring reach
- Summary of highlights from the 2019 outcome survey
- Detailed findings organized by outcomes and evaluation questions
- Next steps and recommendations
- Individual site match numbers
- Appendices: program logic model, principles, terms of reference of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee, interview guide from the site interviews and Children and Youth in Care Advisory Members.

SECTION 2: MENTORING PROGRAM REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

This evaluation reports on the number of children and youth served from April 2017 to September 2019. The following provides the number of matches supported by each site.

MENTORING PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT:

- **Calgary:** supported 74 mentoring matches through a one to one mentoring approach. (includes supporting existing matches as well as facilitating new matches). A further breakdown of the unique children and youth served can be found in section 4 under Calgary's site description.
- **Edmonton:** supported 171 mentoring matches and 70 young people in their group programming (who may have also been part of a match) over the course of the evaluation period (includes supporting existing matches as well as facilitating new matches). A further breakdown of the unique children and youth served can be found in section 4 under Edmonton's site description.
- **Red Deer:** supported 43 mentoring matches and 22 young people in their group programming (who may have also been part of a match) over the course of the evaluation period (includes supporting existing matches as well as facilitating new matches). A further breakdown of the unique children and youth served can be found in section 4 under Red Deer's site description.



As of May 2019, a total of **433 children and youth** have been mentored through the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Project since July 2014 as reported by sites and collected by Alberta Children's Services.⁷

According to data provided by Alberta Children's Services, the average monthly case count of children, youth and young adults (ages 6-24) receiving Child Intervention Services in Alberta Central, Calgary and Edmonton Regions in 2018/19 was 5,624. As such, it is important to acknowledge that 433 young people served is only a small number (13%) considering the total number of children receiving intervention services. It could be that some young people in care may be receiving mentor support from other community based-programs or connected to natural mentors, as well as the possibly that greater awareness of the program needs reach caseworkers in the future.

⁷ Numbers reported to Alberta Children's Services for reporting purposes and collected by the Mentoring Programs Advisor (May 2019).

SECTION 3: OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESULTS

An online survey was administered to gather data from mentors and mentees on their experience with the program. The following provides an overview of key findings from the 2019 survey. In addition to the information presented below, more detailed survey findings are presented throughout the report to answer evaluation questions.

SURVEY SAYS

Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Program 2019



The Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Project received grant funding from the province of Alberta 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, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Red Deer and District, and Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton and Area Society. AndersonDraper Consulting Inc. was contracted to evaluate the project. An important part of the evaluation was asking mentors and mentees to complete an online survey about their experiences to date. Here are some of the 2019 survey highlights.

This survey was administered in 2016, 2018 and 2019. Survey responses continue to confirm positive experiences for both mentees and mentors and report positive outcomes for the young people involved.

DID YOU KNOW?



Mentees range in age from 6-24 years old. 76% of mentors are between the ages of 26-45. (n=70)



68% of mentors have been committed to mentoring youth for over 1 year. Most of these adults are first time mentors (70%). (n=73)



Training is provided to help our mentorships succeed. 86% of mentors reported that this training was useful for their role. (n=73)



64% of our mentors indicated that their mentee experienced personal challenges or major life changes during their match. (n=70)



43% of the mentees experienced a placement change or move during their match, as reported by their mentor. (n=69)

139

Mentors and Mentees from Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer participated in the survey.



MENTORSHIP IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

"My mentee seems to enjoy our time together. She had come out of her shell more and shares many things about her life with me. She seems happy overall and well adjusted to the changes she is facing. I believe she feels safe with me and able to talk to me about her day to day life. We have fun together!"

"My mentee never wanted to go to high school and now she talks about one day going to post-secondary.."

"It had taken a long time for him to open up and start to trust me. But in recent month I hear a lot more from him and he is sharing about his life. We talk about situations and process the emotions surrounding them."

SURVEY SAYS

Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Program 2019

THE MENTOR EXPERIENCE



Mentors volunteered because they:

- wanted to make a positive impact in someone's life and be a role model
- wanted to contribute to their community
- had previous positive experience of being mentored themselves or realized they could have benefited from a mentor
- had free time or wanted to volunteer
- had the opportunity through work or school to be a mentor

"I have had a distinct lack of mentors in my life and I wanted to make sure this didn't happen for at least one young person"

"OO F!!!! I have received far more from my little than I ever imagined. She's taught me about resiliency, strength, her culture and the true meaning of unconditional love."

"The hardest part is getting started but if you trust the process and go in looking to help you will be amazed at what you have to offer."

THE MENTEE EXPERIENCE



Mentees enjoyed:

- going new places & trying new things
- having someone to talk with and to help solve problems
- having fun
- increased confidence, self-esteem and positivity about life or improved self-esteem, more positive about life
- spending time with their mentor

"I have had more opportunities to try new things and go to more events that I wouldn't have if I didn't have a mentor."

He taught me how to calm down when mad, and how to cook.

"She has helped me be more confident in myself as a person and as a leader."

"I have a second family that cares about me spending time and having a healthy relationship making me feel loved and not alone."



COMMON SUCCESS

Mentors told us that one success of their mentorship has been building trust and developing a strong relationship for the mentee to open up. 90% of the mentees agree their mentor has helped them feel hopeful about the future. (n=61)

Learn more about mentoring children and youth in care at <https://albertamentors.ca/children-youth-care-mentoring-project/>

SECTION 4: DETAILED FINDINGS

OUTCOMES

The literature review commissioned by the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee (2017) found mentoring outcomes for youth in care include changes in socio-emotional and interpersonal outcomes. These included changes in social skills, trust, self-esteem and mental health. Some studies have also shown changes in educational outcomes. In interviews with mentored youth in care, mentees reported tangible outcomes had been achieved. For example, mentees discussed how their mentors helped them to learn problem solving and independent living skills. They also reported that their mentors assisted them by connecting them with useful personal contacts as well as informational resources. Mentors aided youth in teaching them about healthy relationships, including conflict resolution, anger management, and setting boundaries with peers. Additionally, mentors provided emotional support and acted as role models to youth.⁸ The following section explores the extent to which outcomes, as listed in the program logic model (see Appendix A), were achieved for this project and presents the evidence collected.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE FOLLOWING OUTCOMES BEEN ACHIEVED?

Children, youth in care & families are supported by mentors and agency staff

A number of sources of evidence were used to report on this outcome:

- Document Review (description of support from Program Design)
- Site Interviews
- Survey Findings
- Advisory Committee Consultations
- Mentoring Relationship Narratives

The Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program design describes the need for intentional, ongoing, consistent support for mentors and young people. This support is best provided by highly skilled and trained program staff. Sites engaged in meaningful, personalized relationships with both mentors and youth from the initial stages of enrollment to intentional individual support and engagement for each mentoring relationship from onset and throughout the mentoring journey. The consistency of contact, and types of engagement by individual staff with both mentors and youth is

⁸ Vandenbergh, C. (2017). Mentoring Youth in Care: An Update of the Literature. Calgary, AB: AndersonDraper Consulting Inc. for the Child and Youth in Care and Mentoring Subcommittee of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership.

regarded as an effective element in delivering high quality impactful Youth in Care mentoring programs. This approach provides consistent and meaningful connections between one specific program staff for both mentors and youth resulting in effective communication, shared experiences and working relationships. This intentional engagement offered staff a deep understanding of the interests of youth and mentors so potential mentoring matches were easily identified, as well as providing meaningful mentoring relationship supports early on when relationships begin to form. Project sites have built into established structured contact, the flexibility to tailor support and increase contact beyond existing standards and practices. This flexibility included the ability to have additional face-to-face contact versus relying telephone or electronic contact, and the inclusion of all adults at contact intervals. This team approach has resulted in mentors and young people reaching out to program staff frequently for support, resources, and guidance; as well as meaningful connection and supporting relationships during transitions or crisis.

The following excerpts, related to support, are from the three site interviews.

“Mentoring Coordinators support matches. They support mentors and mentees to navigate challenges, celebrate successes and overall help to foster the match relationship. Each match requires different support and we want matches to have the support they need.”

Calgary site interview, 2019

“Our staff had a conversation with a Grandma where she explained the struggle that she has been facing in the process of adopting her grand children. She has been happy with BGCBIGS in comparison to other programs as she has always felt heard and understood by the agency especially as both kids were matched within the program and attended the Waitlist Activity Night before that.”

Edmonton site interview, 2019

Every match is different, but all mentors reported being able to see the kids grow, experience new activities and see positive impacts in their life. Children, youth and families are supported by the agency from the time they join the program. We offer additional support to the family through waitlist programming and opportunities for the guardian to attend activities alongside the mentee. Through pre-match training with the children, youth, and guardian information is provided about community resources and circle of supports. Being involved in group mentoring or 1:1 mentoring provides youth the opportunity to grow and enhance their support networks.

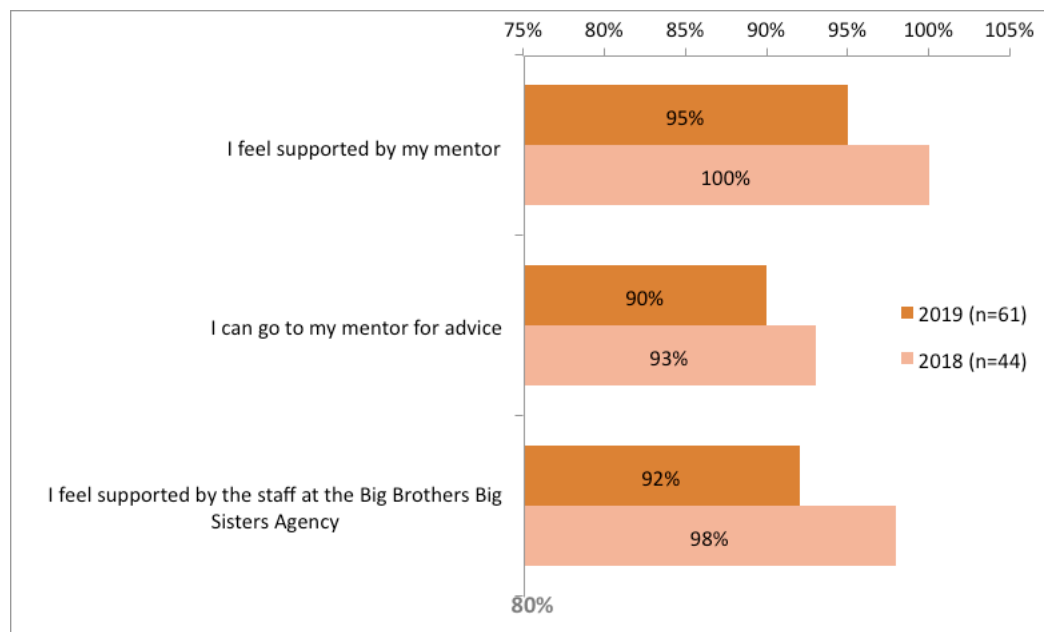
Red Deer site interview, 2019

The survey findings that relate to the outcome of children, youth & families being supported by mentors and agency staff are presented below.

SURVEY FINDINGS

As part of the 2019 survey, mentees (n=61) from the three sites were asked to indicate their agreement with statements about level of support provided. Overall, when combining the agree and strongly agree responses, the majority agreed they felt supported by their mentor (95%) and felt supported by the staff at the Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency (92%). Patterns of responding were similar when compared to the 2018 survey. These results surpass the target set of 80%.

Figure 1. Agreement percentages from 2019 compared to 2018 and targets



Please note responses were more positive in 2018 overall, likely a function of differences in sample size from 2018 to 2019 and a diluting and leveling of responses.

“My volunteer coordinator is great. All the ones that I’ve had are actually wonderful. They always check-in and are there when I have any questions or concerns. The organization also offers many opportunities for my mentee and I to participate in city events/outings at little or no cost. This is a huge benefit and I can speak for my mentee and I when I say that we appreciate it!”

Quote from Mentor Survey, 2019

EDMONTON MENTORING STORY

The following mentoring story illustrates how the outcome of children, youth & families are supported by mentors and agency staff.

Katherine (Mentor) and Danielle (Mentee)- matched 1 year

Danielle is 10 years old and is an only child. There is a Temporary Guardianship Order (TGO) status for her living with grandma. The long-term goal was to have her back living with mom in the near future and wanting Danielle to have access to more positive adults and experiences in her life.

The match has done lots of fun activities such as Chuck-E Cheese, walking the dog, made slime, baked cookies, went to trampoline parks and gone swimming so far. For Danielle's birthday, she took her to get her nails done which was really special for her. They've been together for 1 year. They meet every week, and Danielle rates her match a 10/10 and says that it is awesome. Danielle loves playing with her mentor's dog. She knows she matters to Katherine because she is 'happy to see her' when she picks her up. The family indicated they feel very 'blessed' to have the mentor and it feels like they've 'always known her'. They've felt their connection to the agency has also been helpful in that they get tickets to events when they're geared towards family events, and also tickets for the match. The match feels they have a lot in common with each other, especially in being creative and artistic and similar senses of humor. The mentor indicated she feels the match has exceeded her expectations and it's been a rewarding.

Names have been changed. All mentoring stories included in this report were provided by sites.



Children and youth in care develop relationships and increased support networks

A number of sources of evidence were used to report on this outcome:

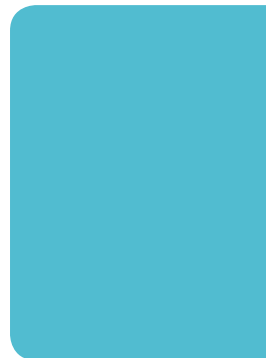
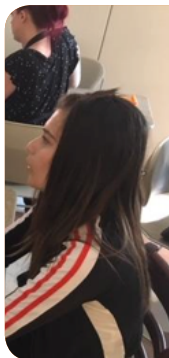
- Document Review (Program Design)
- Survey Findings
- Advisory Committee Meeting Discussions
- Mentoring Narratives

The program design discusses the importance of relationships and support networks. Project sites recognized the effects of increased social isolation due to disruptions in social networks and relationships for children and youth in care. They have developed opportunities and space for youth to learn important social building blocks, career and life skills, and developmental opportunities which may be missing from their lives. Such activities help mentor and youth relationships to evolve naturally.

Project staff encourage activities that allow children and youth to explore key transitions to adolescence and adulthood. There may be opportunities to learn budgeting, career development and work search skills, grocery shopping, and gain cooking and culinary skills. Matches can also explore post-secondary and higher education knowledge through onsite visits at community colleges, universities and specialty education sites. This may include applying for bursaries that can remove financial barriers to accessing higher education opportunities.

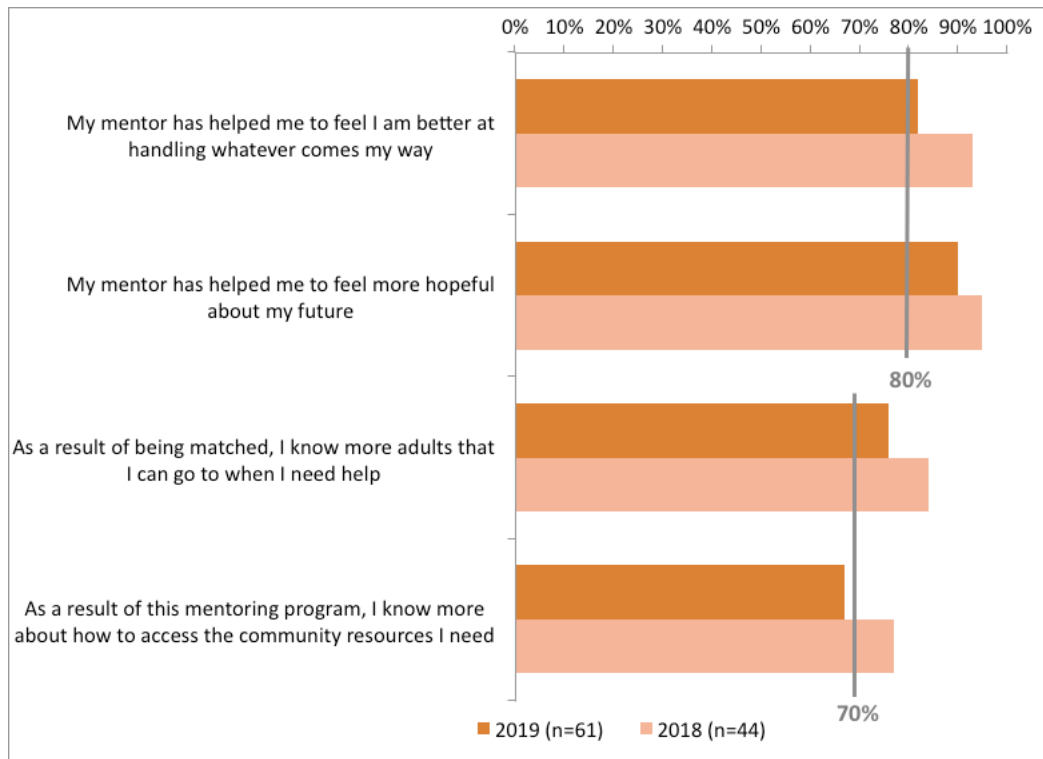
Project sites have developed programming that encourages career and employment skills including resume building, mock interviews and career exploration. These stepping-stone activities often occur naturally occur for youth who live with parents and within family units. However, for youth in care, such life experiences are often overlooked. Project sites acknowledge that staff and mentors can play a key role in supporting and sharing in these activities, milestones and developmental opportunities with children and youth in care and increasing their support networks.

As part of the survey, mentees responses were positive to a series of statements which demonstrate an increase in supportive relationships and available networks.



MENTEE SURVEY FINDINGS

Figure 2. Agreement percentages from 2019 compared to 2018 and targets



*Please note responses were more positive in 2018 overall, likely a function of differences in sample size from 2018 to 2019 and a diluting and leveling of responding.

Example comments from Mentee Survey (2019):

“She has helped me be more confident in myself as a person and as a leader.”

“I have a second family that cares about me spending time and having a healthy relationship making me feel loved and not alone.”

PARENT & CAREGIVER INTERVIEW AND SURVEY FINDINGS

Caregivers were interviewed by phone as part of the program evaluation in 2017 (n=13). When asked about outcomes, most noticed behavioural changes in the mentored youth which included more respectful behaviour, calmer attitudes, more positivity, increased academic performance, and increased willingness to communicate. Some respondents felt it was too early in the matches to notice changes, that there were ups and downs in the youth's behaviours or that they were matched prior to them having guardianship.

Participants were asked about the greatest benefits their child or youth has received as a result of having a mentor. Participants commented about the dedicated, one-to-one time provided to their child. They also commented on the ability of the mentor to be a support, a role model, and provide a different perspective. Other comments were centered on advocacy for the child or youth and the ability for the mentor to be a constant in their life.

In 2018, parents and caregivers were asked to participate in a survey. They were asked about the greatest benefits their child has received as a result of having a mentor (n=33). They noted themes about having a trusted person to talk to, increasing self-esteem, increased socialization and confidence, having fun, better moods, experiencing new things and developing new skills and becoming more independent.

The following identifies the themes and the frequency of commenting by caregivers as part of the 2018 survey:

- Having a trusted adult to talk to and a positive role model to spend time with one-on-one (x20)
- Getting out of the house more and increasing socialization (x6)
- Increased self-esteem and confidence (x5)
- Learn new things and develop new skills (x4)
- Increase of independence (x4), and,
- Having fun (x3).

“Our boy is matched with a male. Before coming to our home, he had not had a strong male figure. They talk about male things, that a mom cannot provide – this is a huge thing, for our boy who hadn't had that male influence growing up. They do lots of activities, have honest conversations, and build trust. I think he'll maintain that relationship forever.”

Parent interview, 2017

Child Intervention workers were surveyed by phone in 2018. Five of the eight Child Intervention Workers surveyed felt they had noticed changes in the children and youth since becoming involved in the program. Child Intervention Workers shared they observed positive changes in the child or youth since becoming part of a mentoring relationship. Changes noted include improved confidence, life plans and interests, less self-harm, an increase in calm and leveled behavior as well as approachability, talkativeness, and more maturity.

SUCCESS STORIES:

The following mentoring stories illustrates how the outcome of children and youth develop relationships and increase support network.

Red Deer Mentoring Story:

Cheryl & Callie's match started as an in-school mentoring relationship in one of the schools and last summer it moved to community-based match. Callie was removed from her home because her mother was shot, and she died. Callie lives with grandma and Cheryl sees her weekly. The grandma shared a story about the impact the mentor has had on this young girl. Before Callie wasn't able to travel – go on school trips, mentor has showed her how to do things. Callie had terrible anxiety and now she is able to do many more things now. The family is receiving other supports. Cheryl has taken Callie to places that have benefited her. The match has made its one-year commitment in July. It has been a major success. As the mentor Cheryl is getting a lot out of her role as is Callie and her family. It is good to have someone take Callie and do the one-on-one. The mentoring relationship is a real asset to the family as they were still going through the court system and have that communication and support from each other.

Calgary Mentoring Story:

Eight months ago a mentoring match was made with a young Indigenous girl, who was very excited to be mentored. She lives with her ill grandmother and six other children, her mother struggles with addiction and homelessness, and she's never met her father. She has always taken on the role of an adult with her siblings and has not had a lot of opportunity to just be a kid without stress and worry. Her mentor has built a relationship with the family and has been able to provide the mentee with a safe space to share her thoughts and experience new things. The mentor was also able to connect this young girl to the Indigenous community and counselling services. They enjoy weekly visits together where the mentee gets to be a kid.

Names have been changed. All stories referenced in the report were compiled and provided by the site staff.

Enhanced and ongoing training and support help mentors to be confident and successful in their role

A number of sources of evidence were used to report on this outcome:

- Document Review (Program Design)
- Survey Findings
- Site Interviews
- Advisory Committee Consultations

A key aspect of the mentoring programs noted in the Program Design is comprehensive training provided by experienced professional staff. Each site created a minimum five-hour pre-match mentor training. One hour of the pre-match training is provided online. The initial training is supplemented with ongoing training once participants are matched. Pre-match training helped to give mentors and mentees an orientation to the organization and what to expect once a match is made. Ongoing training supports and educates mentors on how to address difficulties as they arise in the mentor relationship, ideas for activities and information on the organization's policies and procedures.



Many youth in care have experienced abuse or neglect and as such mentoring program staff and mentors are trained in trauma informed care. Yeager, Cutler, Svendsen and Silis (2013, p. 595) define trauma informed care as:

Care that is organized around a contemporary, comprehensive understanding of the impact of trauma that emphasizes strengths and safety and focuses on skill development for individuals to rebuild a sense of personal control over their life.⁹

Each site created enhanced training to ensure mentors are confident in their role. Mentors were educated on:

- program goals,
- roles and responsibilities,
- general description of characteristics of children and youth in care, and,
- strategies for supporting them,
- trauma and brain development,
- types of abuse,
- attachment,
- sexual orientation,
- cultural awareness,
- Sexually and Gender Diverse (acceptance and oppression),
- boundaries,
- fostering a strength-based relationship,
- strategies supporting youth,
- mental health impacts,
- transitions and times of stress,
- boundaries and self-care, and,
- community resources.

⁹ Vandenberghe, C. (2017). Mentoring Youth in Care: An Update of the Literature. Calgary, AB: AndersonDraper Consulting Inc. for the Child and Youth in Care and Mentoring Subcommittee of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership.

Staff also spent time ensuring everyone (mentors, mentees and caregivers) understood and agreed to the roles and responsibilities.

MENTOR SURVEY FINDINGS

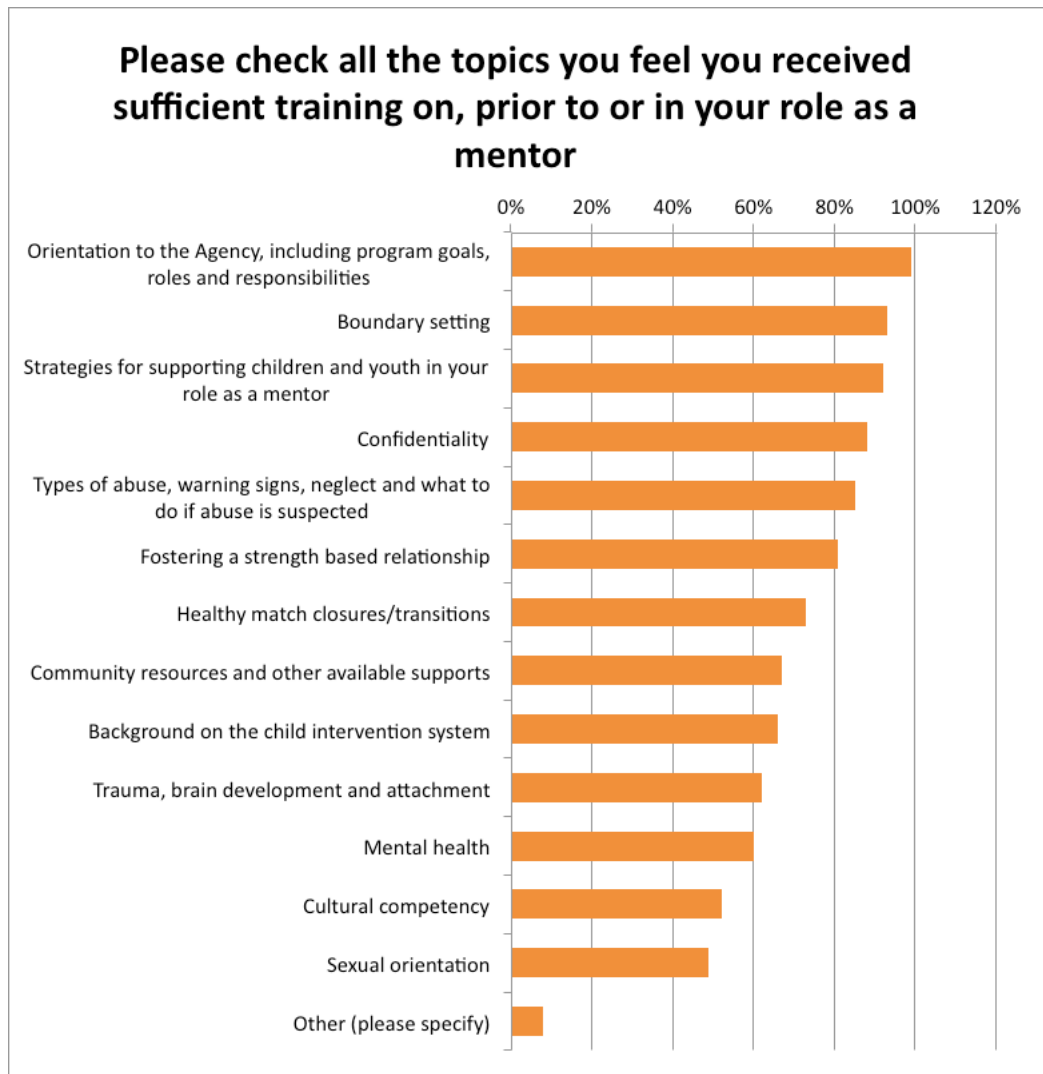
As part of the 2019 survey, mentors were asked to indicate which topics of training they felt they had received sufficient training in as a mentor. The highest rated topics included: orientation to the agency (99%); boundary setting (93%); strategies for supporting children and youth (92%); confidentiality (88%); types of abuse and warning signs (85%); fostering a strength-based relationship (81%); and, healthy match closures/transitions (73%). Areas that were less likely to be noted as sufficient training was experienced were: background on the child intervention system (66%); community resources (67%); trauma, brain development and attachment (62%); mental health (60%); cultural competency (52%); and, sexual orientation (49%); and, those that provided 'other' noted: they had previous training so this was review (x4); Youth in care (x2); and, FASD (x1).

"I would love more Indigenous focused training - especially because my mentee's family is very involved in our match process. My mentee's grandmother is a residential school survivor, and I would like to know how to access more indigenous based resources and know about more indigenous activities so that I can guide my mentee and myself to learn more about her rich and amazing heritage."

Mentor Survey, 2019



Figure 3. Topics of training received by mentors (n=73)



When compared to the 2018 results, the top training categories identified in the current surveying match the 2018 results with slight variations. In addition, there has been a slight increase in training for the lowest identified areas: community resources (59%); trauma, brain development and attachment (52%); and, cultural competency (43%). This has been an increasing trend since 2016. It is important to note that some of these areas are further explored in additional training later on or with more depth should it apply to that match's situation (e.g. mental health, sexual orientation).

The Red Deer site noted that advanced mentor training was developed and implemented at the beginning of the project. This advanced training is provided to mentors subsequent to meeting the youth. Providing advanced training post initial meeting provides context and a direct link to their specific mentoring relationship, while providing confidence in mentoring skills and context to the relationship. Recently, a mentor asked for additional support and training that focused on mental health and suicide awareness. As a result,

the agency scheduled this mentor for training in 'Adults Interacting with Youth' through Mental Health First Aid Canada. The unique relationship established between the agency staff and mentors has fostered open dialogue to not only provide support but also to recognize impending training needs and access to community resources.

Edmonton

The Edmonton site commented on the success of their training in the 2019 site interview:

When any volunteer comes into youth in care and mentoring program, they do the enhanced training. They talk about what they might experience: boundary setting, self-care, any of those conversations. Volunteers find it helpful to talk about scenarios that do happen. Priority is to spend time and get to know the child or youth. Takes longer related to trauma and volunteers not taking it personally. Volunteers are able to share their own stories and their experiences. Great conversations and they come back and like that. Other training in the follow-ups they are talked to more specifically about what the child or youth could be going through. We also offer other training with Alberta Health Services. We also make sure that we have strong alignment of caregiver training. We updated some of the language and brought in current research (e.g., Foundations of caregiver support).

Calgary

As part of the 2019 site interview, the Calgary site commented on the work done helping mentors understand the intended outcomes of this work:

We have done a lot of work to help mentors understand the benefits of mentoring and the outcomes we are looking to achieve. Our training includes topics like brain development, how to buffer toxic stress and promote health and wellness. With all mentors having advanced training it opens up the pool of mentors for the Youth In Care program. For matching it allows us to focus on the best match rather than a specific program choice.

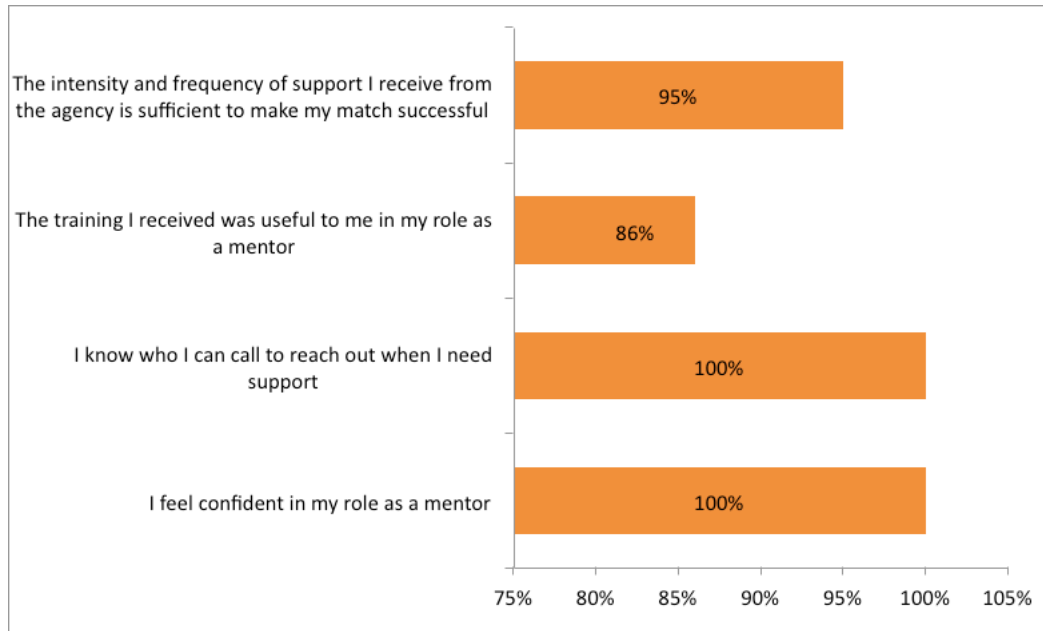
The agency identified providing advanced training for all mentors is useful, when mentoring young people facing adversity.

Red Deer

Red Deer noted the unique environment and smaller size of their site allowed for one-to-one Mentor training to accommodate volunteer engagement, and diversity. They talked about the importance of offering advanced training to mentors working with the children and youth in care as part of their orientation and how the advanced training has provided benefits to the agency in its entirety. Currently, all agency staff are in the process of taking the Palix Foundation Brain Story Certification (focusing on increasing understanding of brain development and its consequences for lifelong health). Program staff working with at-risk youth have taken two levels of Intersectionality Training along with Healthy Relationship Training and the 40 Developmental assets.

As part of the mentor survey, mentors were asked to rate their level of agreement (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with a series of statements.

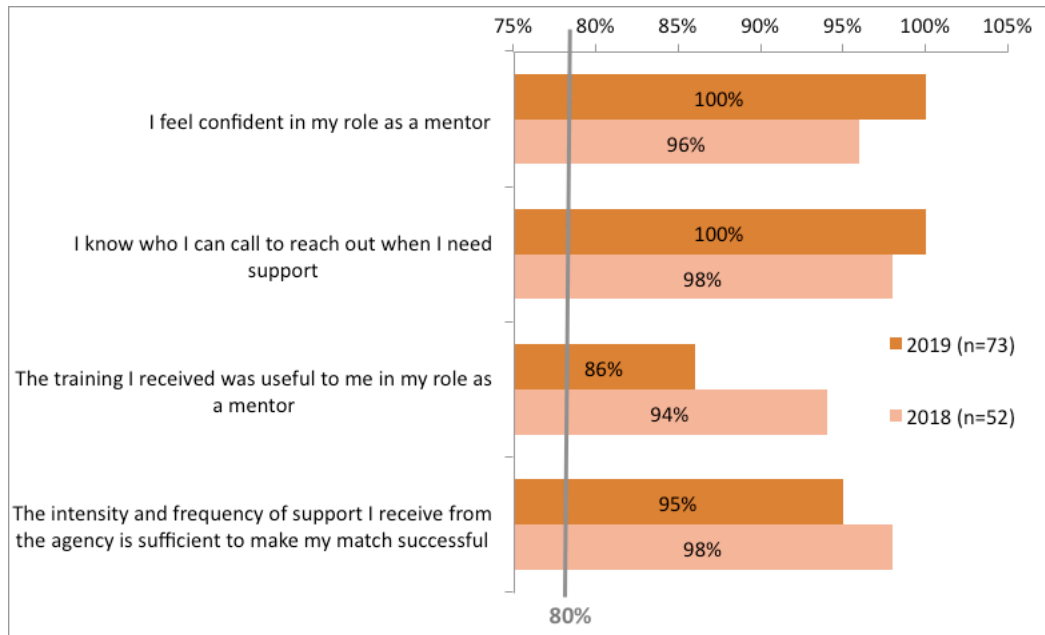
Figure 4. Mentor Actual Response Results compared to Baseline targets



MENTOR SURVEY RESULTS

- 100% (n=73) of mentors' report feeling confident and successful in their role. Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 100% (n=73) of mentors who report knowing who they can call to reach out when they need support. Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 86% (n=73) of mentors who feel the training they received was useful to them in their role as a mentor. Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 95% (n=73) of mentors who feel the intensity and frequency of support they receive from Big Brothers Big Sisters is sufficient to make their match successful. Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement.
- 96% (n=73) of mentors who feel like they have made a positive difference in the life of their mentee. Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Figure 5. Agreement percentages from 2019 compared to 2018 and targets

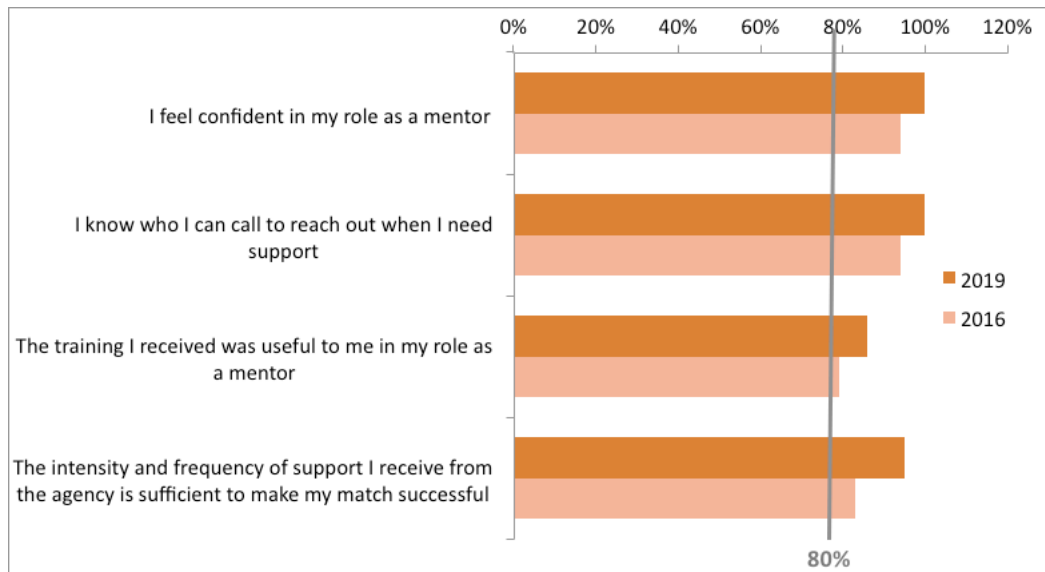


*Please note responses were more positive in 2018 overall, likely a function of differences in sample size from 2018 to 2019 and a diluting and leveling of responding.

“It’s a lot to navigate so it’s important you participate in the training and keep in touch with your facilitator. Kids often have a lot of trauma so it’s important to be trauma-informed and be consistent, honest and hopeful. Call out their goodness and don’t give up on them.”

Mentor survey, 2019

Figure 6. Agreement percentages from 2019 compared to 2016



Red Deer Mentoring Story

During a match support conversation, it was evident that the mentor and mentee were going to continue their relationship in the Youth in Care mentoring program into a natural mentoring relationship. After discussing some of the challenges in the mentoring relationship it was decided that providing the mentor with additional training around mental health and suicide prevention would be important in his role. Big Brothers Big Sisters sent this mentor to Adults Interacting with Youth training in September 2019.

The last follow up with the match information was shared about how truly beneficial this training became for the mentor. In November the mentor received a call from Mental Health as his mentee had left work in need of immediate assistance and went to his Mental Health practitioner. When the mentee was asked who he could call as he needed to go to the Hospital, he requested the contact person be his mentor.

Reflecting on his training to remain calm and of course not to panic the mentor was able to be the support person for his mentee. This mentee is doing well now, and the mentor described the training as “right on” and feels it could be of benefit to anyone as you never know when you can support someone through such a vulnerably important point in their life.

In Alberta, Indigenous children and youth comprise a large proportion of intervention cases involving Children's Services (OCYA 2016)¹⁰. The number of Indigenous children and youth involved in mentoring varied between the three project sites. It was dependent on the location of each organization, the Indigenous population in each program vicinity and the number of Indigenous resources and organizations in each community. The sites have developed and embedded specialized training for mentors in the areas of intergenerational trauma, cultural awareness and reconciliation. Using a youth narrative lens, program sites work closely with Indigenous agencies and groups to ensure children, youth and mentors who are interested have access to Indigenous resources, activities and supports that are appropriate and meaningful.

Staff report having the necessary experience, skills, training and supports to do this work

A number of sources of evidence were used to report on this outcome:

- Document Review (Program Design)
- Survey Findings
- Advisory Committee Consultations
- Mentoring Narratives

The role of program staff, as explained in the program design, is to foster and establish long-term, meaningful relationships that provide a web of support around the young person well into the future. To do this work, sites have engaged professional, experienced and flexible staff with a strong understanding of trauma as well as the needs of children and youth in care. Staff are supported with access to ongoing training and compensated in accordance to the additional qualifications they bring to the role.

Staff have increased experience (a minimum five years' working experience with youth), skills, training and supports to do this work well. Staff also bring a strong understanding of children and youth in care, mental health, trauma, loss and grief, as well as child and youth development. They are aware of available resources and have made connections with other supports and services for ease of referrals. Front-line staff are also part of the Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee and regularly engage in conversations about necessary skills, training and support.

When evaluating their own agency leadership and staff inputs as part of the site interview, the Edmonton site identified they have the right staffing model to fulfill the activities and staffing has been relatively stable during the program life cycle. Red Deer noted staff within the Child & Youth in Care and Mentoring program have stayed consistent within the agency with the Team Leader, and Program Director being involved since inception and the current Program Coordinator having a connection to the agency for many years. Calgary noted their site makes a large investment in training for staff to be able to support the program. To raise the bar of excellence in providing highly skilled support to matches, staff are required to take a 30-hour Brain Story Certification through the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative along with other training.

¹⁰ https://www.ocya.alberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/SpRpt_2016July_VoicesForChange_v2.pdf

Staff flexibility is key to success (e.g. able to work evenings; can assess cases on an individual basis to make decisions in the best interest of the child or youth). To enhance support, staff report directly to knowledgeable managers who understand this specific population and the issues they face.

It is important to note programs have an established staffing model in place to support the program. For instance, in Calgary the Chief Executive Officer, Director of Service Delivery, Manager of Service Delivery, Team Lead, Finance Manager, Evaluation Specialist and Communications and Marketing Specialist all indirectly support the program. Staff directly connected to the Children and Youth in Care program include two Mentoring Coordinators and one Engagement Coordinator, however these staff also support other programs within the agency. Similarly, in Edmonton in addition to the support of the Executive Director, Director of Service Delivery, Volunteer Enrolment and Recruitment staff, and some involvement from Human Resources, Finance and Fund Development departments, they have allocated close to forty percent of the Supervisor's time and have three full-time frontline staff. Red Deer accesses the Volunteer Resource Coordinator, Marketing and Communication Specialist, Program Director, Program Coordinator, Team Leader, Enrollment Coordinator and Executive Director to support this program. Suffice to say, a large structure of support rather than simply front-line staff is necessary to sustain this type of programming.

To be successful, caseloads are also smaller in number (than mainstream one to one community mentoring community programs) so increased individual contact can be made with youth, mentors and significant adults, caregivers and guardians more often. Staff engaged in youth in care mentoring programs are, for the most part, solely dedicated to this specific program approach.

“We feel like we are able to articulate more today what takes more time. One of the outcomes was to better understand why the smaller caseload for youth in care versus community and the recognition that the amount of support to the family and the match is important for success.”

Edmonton site interview, 2019

Stakeholders are aware of the benefits of mentoring and demonstrate support for the mentoring process by working together and contributing time, energy and resources as appropriate to support the needs of children and youth in care.

A number of sources of evidence were used to report on this outcome:

- Document Review (description of support from Program Design)
- Site Interviews
- Survey Findings
- Advisory Committee Meeting Consultations
- Match Stories

The following figure identifies the key stakeholders of the project.

Figure 7. Children and Youth in Care & Mentoring Stakeholder Map



Agencies have created multiple ways to build awareness of the opportunities for and benefits of mentoring. As part of the 2019 site interview, the Red Deer site commented on the many connections made with stakeholders to support this programming.

Stakeholders are more diverse – like community business and other societies that were more our stakeholders. We have youth in care in Innisfail and now it is not just Red Deer and district for rural but modifying understanding in individual communities.

Children's Services unit meets occur quarterly where information sharing and meeting new staff occurs. Consistent follow up occurs with Children's Services workers of the youth being mentored through email, text, phone, and face to face.

Other key stakeholders are the Advisory Committee, Corporate/business partners (ATB, KCB Cabinets, Crossroads Church), other youth serving organizations in Red Deer. I.e. high-risk youth coalition representation, Central Alberta Refugee Efforts as well as Family School Wellness, School Administration, Interagency groups.

The following poster is an example developed by Calgary Big Brothers Big Sisters to raise awareness and promote the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program, with a focus on support during times of transition.



Having a mentor could be the start of something **BIG...**

YOUTH IN CARE WEBSITE

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership has a website dedicated to the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring project. The site can be accessed at: <https://albertamentors.ca/children-youth-care-mentoring-project/>

Since April 2017 there were over 1500-page views on Alberta Mentoring Partnerships site!

WEBSITE DATA: (APRIL 2017 - SEPTEMBER 2019)

33 Email Downloads	444 Page View Downloads	Total Downloads 477
		

BRIEFING NOTES

A government of Alberta representative from Children's Services estimated there was a frequency of 3 to 4 briefing notes per year submitted to departmental leadership as updates on this project.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

As of 2018/2019, there has been a performance measure added to the Children's Services Annual Report that reports the number of individuals mentored through the Child & Youth in Care Mentoring Program each year.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2020-2023

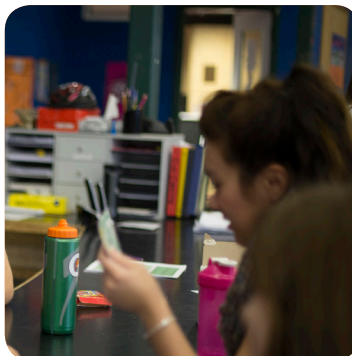
Two key objectives were included in the ministry business plan which specifically reference mentoring support that aligns with the mentoring offered through the Children & Youth in Care Mentoring Program.

Key Objectives 3.1

Develop strategies to support safe, healthy and resilient children and families, including mentoring opportunities for children and youth who have experienced trauma.

Key Objectives 3.2

Support the successful transition for youth out of care into adulthood, focusing on educational attainment, career exploration and employment readiness.



CAREGIVER & CHILD INTERVENTION WORKER SURVEY AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS

In a 2018 survey, caregivers (n=33) were asked their level of agreement that a mentoring relationship is contributing to a strong system of support for their child/ youth. The majority of participants (90%) noted they agreed or strongly agreed. Child Intervention workers were also surveyed in 2018 (n=19). When asked to indicate their level of agreement that the mentoring relationship is contributing to a strong system of support for children and youth in care who are participating, all respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed it was. For children and youth in care, the opportunity to build long lasting genuine relationships with adults in the community not only provides them with a network of meaningful relationships, such relationships can foster community connections that transcend placements, programs and workers.

As part of the evaluation, interviews were conducted by phone with caregivers of youth in the program in 2017. All of those interviewed (n =13) were satisfied with the interaction with the mentoring program staff and had overall positive comments about mentoring and the program.

In 2017 there were eight interviews conducted by phone with Child Intervention Workers from the three sites. Participants were asked if they were aware of the benefits and outcomes of mentoring. Four indicated 'yes, very much so' and four indicated 'for the most part, but I would still appreciate more information'. Those who provided comments noted they were aware of the connections mentoring offers as well as helping youth in transition, but they would appreciate more information.

Child Intervention Workers with clients in the program spoke positively about the support from the mentoring agencies. They commented that there is a good level of communication with the agencies if there are issues, the mentors are generally a good fit for the children and youth, and they appreciate the mentoring coordinators and find them approachable.

In 2017, a few of the workers identified some challenges with the program at the time of the interview. These included the skill sets of the mentors and ensuring they have the tools needed to support the children and youth, that some of the mentees did not have the buy-in to meet consistently with their mentors, while others highlighted the need for more mentors due to the number of children and youth who want a mentor. In response to this feedback, pilots continued to focus on recruitment efforts to provide additional supports and the number available mentors.

"I can only speak from my experience, when you get a child who has been in care and doesn't have that firm foundation, having someone like a [mentor] to help transition to adulthood and be there for him. It's that person who is not paid. No one is paid to spend time with me, they are doing out of their care for me. That's a huge piece."

Child Intervention Interview, 2017

Calgary Match Story: Heather met Courtney when she was living in the group home where Heather worked, at that time Courtney was experiencing significant mental illness and was moved to a hospital setting for one year. Over that year Heather continued to visit with Courtney and build a relationship with her, they reached out to the agency to formalize their relationship and help move it in a new direction. Heather visited with Courtney weekly, they would have coffee, play boardgames and Heather supported her through many relationship struggles and having her baby apprehended. Courtney shared that Heather has been with her through her biggest challenges and changes in life, and knows her better than anyone else. Courtney's placement notices how excited Courtney is to see Heather each week, they go to movies, shopping or make meals together. Heather is the most important and longest lasting healthy relationship in Courtney's life. They have been matched for a few years and they plan to continue to be in each others lives for years to come.

Names have been changed. Site provided the match story.



Stakeholders learn from each other and share learnings with others.

A number of sources of evidence were used to report on this outcome:

- Document Review (description of support from Program Design)
- Site Interviews
- Survey Findings
- Advisory Committee Consultations

A mentoring model for Children and Youth in Care was developed and completed in September 2018.

The 2014 Literature Review was updated based on new research and learnings from this program and was revised in 2017.

A number of significant presentations were provided from 2017 to date. Such opportunities contributed to increasing knowledge and building awareness throughout the duration of the project:

- Child Intervention Panel Submission and Webinar Presentation (June 2017)
- Allies for Youth (May 14-18, 2018)
- Youth in Care Webinar “Sneak Preview: Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Program Design” (September 24th, 2018)
- FCSSAA Conference (November 29th, 2018)
- Child Welfare League of Canada (Feb 2019)
- Edmonton Children’s Services Regional Managers (Sept 17, 2019)

YOUTH IN CARE WEBINAR

Forty-nine (n=49) participants attended the webinar “Sneak Preview: Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Program Design”.

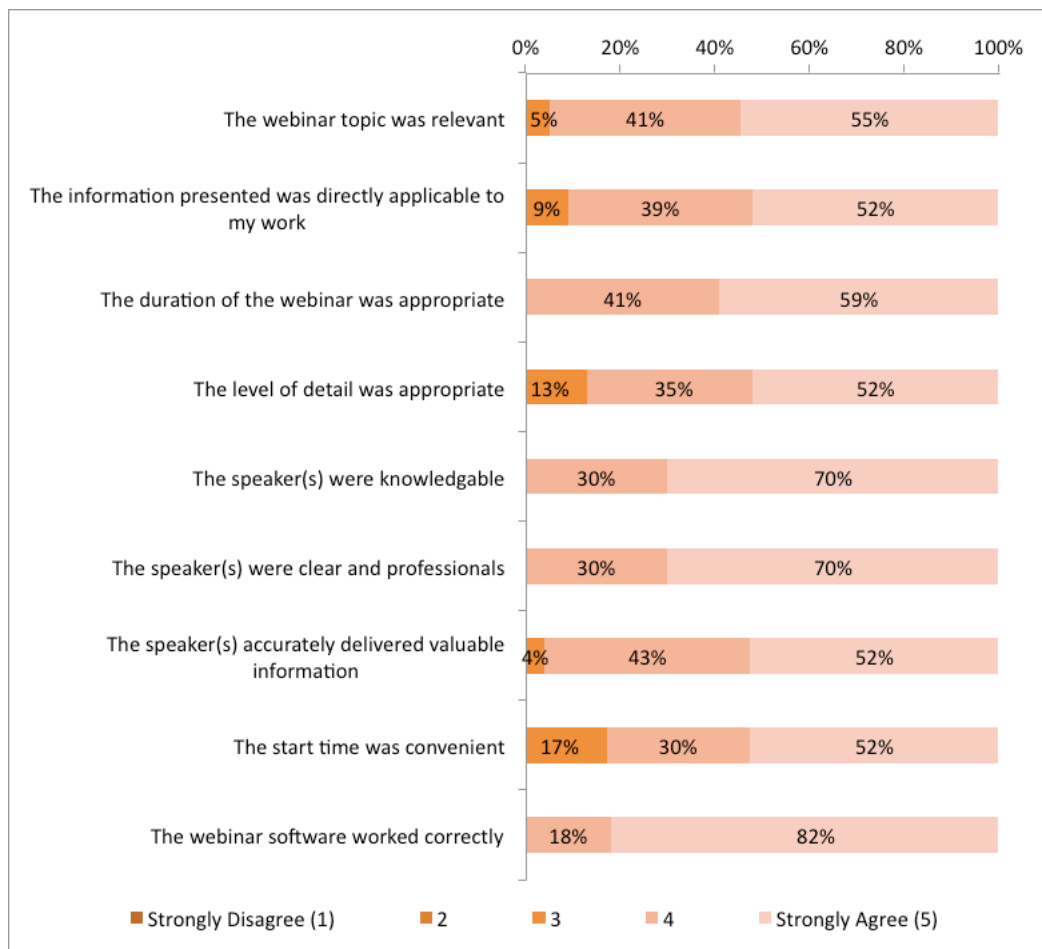
Participants had heard about the webinar through the AMP newsletter(x10) or email (x6) or from a supervisor (x1).

Following the webinar, participants had the opportunity to complete a survey. Twenty-three attendees completed the survey. Participants noted the webinar topic was relevant, the information presented was directly applicable to their work, the duration and level of detail of the webinar was appropriate, the speakers were knowledgeable and clear professionals, the information was accurately delivered, the start time was convenient, and the software worked correctly.

Participants noted the following topics they would like to see in the future delivered via webinar:

- Electronic mentorships;
- Activity ideas;
- Engagement;
- Keeping mentors motivated;
- Creating engaging training;
- Creation of a mentoring program among ESL students;
- Connecting with mentors after traumatic event with their mentee;
- Work with Indigenous led groups;
- Best practices for matching; and,
- Evaluation for school-based mentoring.

Figure 8. Respondents' level of agreement with statements (n=23)



SITE INTERVIEWS ON OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT

In the summer of 2019, the three sites were interviewed as part of the evaluation. When asked to what extent outcomes have been achieved, all sites agreed they had been achieved and an important achievement was the number of children and youth in care being supported by mentors. All sites spoke of the importance of collaboration, learning from each other and sharing the learnings through conference presentations and webinars. All sites approached this work from a lens of continuous improvement and were always striving to improve on their processes. Sites were proud of the enhanced training developed, the relationships built, and the fact this work was no longer a “stand alone project” but was influencing and integrated into their whole agency.

An example of sharing knowledge comes from the Red Deer site. In April 2019, the agency hosted a focus group to analyze the findings from all surveys completed (YIC and other programs). Representatives from funders, Family and Community Support Services, parent/guardians, mentors, Board of Directors, and alumni youth attended. These focus group conversations and findings were beneficial to expand the knowledge of the diverse needs of mentoring within the communities served.

All sites commented on the importance of the Advisory Committee and throughout the project.

“There is an advantage of having this committee in place and it has been very valuable and useful work in terms of shared learnings and knowledge (e.g., literature review, guiding principles, program design). Members of the committee bring great value and knowledge for us to connect to (e.g., Office of the Advocate, Children’s Services). We are able to reach out to all of them.

Also, every month we attend the high-risk interdisciplinary consultations with Children’s Services with workers that refer youth. We go to see what other supports there are – what else can we do and who else can we get support from. We have gotten referrals from here and other learnings from there.”

Edmonton site interview, 2019

SECTION 5: SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES & CONTINUED NEED FOR PROGRAM

What have been the greatest successes of the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring project?

- More children and youth in care are part of positive, developmentally supportive relationships with adults who are not paid to be in their life.

“The greatest success is bringing someone nonpaid into these people’s lives who is choosing to be with them. Choosing to stay with them when all the other adults in their life are changing (caregiver, guardian) this person is staying with them. For group it is allowing them opportunities to lead themselves. Match successes – a lot of it is overall being able to have the volunteer able to support them in hard times. The relationships we are able to offer the youth who do not have access to positive adults, connecting with volunteers and staff and the opportunities we have offered them. Sending a kid of the day to Vancouver – lots of kids wouldn’t have that opportunity. Went to Ottawa for the youth in office – a day on parliament hill and get to meet other kids’ part of the movement and this is the core of what we are doing.”

Edmonton site interview, 2019

- Finding natural (youth identified) mentors for matches.

“From the onset of this project, we have looked for innovative ways to match the young people on our waitlist. One strategy we have found to be a success is youth identified matches. Clients on our waitlist identify someone from their past who has been important to them and is someone they would like to re-connect with in a formal mentoring setting. This requires staff to work with clients to identify individuals in their life who they would like to re-connect with and then reach out to discuss the potential of becoming a mentor. All youth identified mentors complete the same enrollment process as all other volunteers. We have seen great success with this strategy.”

Calgary site interview, 2019

- Children and youth in care have increased access to stronger support networks and report improved outcomes.
- Enhanced training for mentors has been developed, implemented and embedded throughout the agency.
- An evidence-based mentoring model for children and youth in care was created, implemented and evaluated. (Program Design completed September 2018)
- Strategic use of resources, knowledge and approach has impacted the whole organization.

The Red Deer site described:

The most significant success was the commitment from mentors to engage, persist and support youth with complex needs and higher risks through the mentoring. Mentors have been able to work through challenging circumstances and maintain a positive, influential relationship as a constant figure in these mentee's lives. Red Deer noted further successes pertaining to transitioning from children and youth in care as a project to a core program offered in their organization and are committed to offering ongoing extensive training as a key component to the success. Red Deer has noted increased resiliency amongst the mentees and even though these mentoring relationships are more complex and require more pre-planning and support, they were achieving positive outcomes and longevity.

The Calgary site shared:

Over the past three years BBBS Calgary has examined who we should we serving as an organization. We learned from the Youth in Care project and those learnings has impacted our strategic direction as an agency.

- The Children & Youth in Care Advisory Committee provided oversight and support throughout implementation.
- There was frequent communication and sharing of learnings with Children Services as well as two key objectives have been included in the Ministry business plan with specific reference to mentoring support that aligns with this mentoring program.

As part of the reflection on this project, the Advisory Committee reported success in the following areas:

- Ongoing funding support for the project beyond seed funding for the pilot.
- Increased influence and interest across various Alberta Government Ministries to support this work and approach; and
- Continued building of community awareness pertinent to the needs and benefits of mentoring for youth in care as an effective community approach.

What have been the greatest challenges of the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring project and what strategies were used to mitigate them?

Mentor recruitment, specifically male mentors, and waitlists. One of the challenges of mentoring children and youth in care is attracting and matching appropriate adult mentors. Surveys regularly show the majority of mentors are female. In fact, in 2019, 61% of mentors identified as female while only 39% as male. There has been a consistent lack of male role model/mentors throughout the project. The sites focus on providing opportunities for children and youth in establishing and developing meaningful long-term connections with adults. As a result, children and youth in care tend to wait longer to be matched. Sites recognized the lack of community services and opportunities for youth who were waiting and have developed intentional, outcome-focused supports, programming and resources that promote connection and belonging as well as personal development for children and youth in care. An emphasis on corporate recruitment, team sports and couples mentoring to access more potential mentors is showing promise.

“Our biggest challenge has been recruitment of mentors for the Youth In Care program. Since the onset of the project, we have been looking for creative ways to recruit mentors. We are all recruiters, however we are lucky to have a recruitment manager to increase our focus in this area.”

Calgary site interview, 2019

Change in staff and turnover of Children Services Caseworkers.

Sites worked to build relationships with stakeholders including regular meetings with Children’s Services. Throughout a project of this time frame there will undoubtedly be some staff turnover. However, changes in key contacts with Children Services Caseworkers did create a challenge of having to invest additional time to build new

relationships when there was a change. Sites themselves also experienced some staff change over the project. The consistency of supervisory staff as well as the development of the program design, staff training, and documentation helped to ensure continuity and support to participants.

The complexity in the lives of the children and youth being served, frequent transitions and more time required to effectively support mentoring relationship.

Matches close for a variety of reasons but to date there have been minimal who did not grow and learning from their mentoring relationships. Success is measured based on the outcomes achieved and the expectations set out by the mentees, each match is different. Red Deer site interview, 2019

Extra interaction for change of placements if they need more communication with Children's Services and new caregiver and linking the volunteer with them. In general, the time the team spends doing follow-up is longer than the community-based team. Usually 5-25 minutes longer. Providing extra resources, talking more about the struggles and how they can better support them. Families share more with the worker and having the line of communication and knowing this person has supported them previously and the subsequent follow up connections take extra time. Edmonton site interview, 2019

Does there continue to be a need for this type of program?

Evaluation findings confirm there is an ongoing need, which is reinforced by the research conducted throughout the project and during the evaluation. Stakeholders and service providers recognize the need for mentoring specifically focused on children and youth in care, as is further evidenced by a strong body of research that supports the effectiveness of this type of program.¹¹ The support for mentoring has also increased as a result of acknowledging the complex circumstances and needs of children and youth in care. Caring adults can play a significant role in fostering and developing resilience for these unique children and youth and equipping them to successfully face the challenges of life as they transition to adulthood. Furthermore, each site continued to have children and youth on their waitlist as of September 1, 2019 (Calgary n=36, Edmonton n=144, Red Deer, n=17) which suggests an interest by children and youth in care to have a mentor and a continued ongoing need for the program.

"It takes time to build a program and grow a program. The development of Youth In Care is no different. It has taken three years to build and grow the program to the place we are at today. We have been able to support more matches than we did at the beginning of the project, which we see as a success. However there continues to be a strong need for the program with so many young people continuing to be in care."

Calgary site interview, 2019

¹¹ Vandenberghe, C. (2017). Mentoring Youth in Care: An Update of the Literature. Calgary, AB: AndersonDraper Consulting Inc. for the Child and Youth in Care and Mentoring Subcommittee of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership.

The development of the program design can assist other sites beyond the current three (Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer) to gain knowledge and information about activities and learnings. The program design highlights essential elements for implementing a similar program and developing policies and procedures required for mentoring children and youth in care as compared to mainstream mentoring programs. The Red Deer site has expanded mentoring programs to the communities of Innisfail, Bowden, Spruce View, and Penhold. With that there has been an increase in knowledge shared about the benefits of mentoring.

Red Deer agreed that there is an ongoing need for this unique program and noted they have a waiting list of children and youth. They noted within their service area they have additional group homes that could be served through expanded programming and reach. They identified the growing need for sustainability and would like to expand this program into a school-based mentoring approach to further meet the need. Red Deer noted they are continuing to grow and learn and are having conversations with outlying communities that would value this specialized mentoring approach within their area.

SECTION 6: KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION, CONCLUSION, NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

In October 2018, preliminary findings from the evaluation were presented to the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee for discussion. This discussion was incorporated into the report.

Over the final months of this project (January – March 2020), the evaluation findings will be presented and discussed with key stakeholders, including:

- The Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee
- The Alberta Mentoring Partnership
- Site Discussions, including agency representatives (leadership and staff), mentors and mentees
- Children's Services

CONCLUSION

The implementation of this type of program in the three sites has had a significant impact on expanding networks of support, fostering the presence of healthy, unpaid, positive adult relationships and increasing experiences in the lives of children and youth in care (and/or receiving government supports) and contributed to improved outcomes. The findings from the evaluation support the attainment of the outcomes for the project. In addition, the evaluation identified the importance of this project, the collaborations and content area and highlights the continuous need in the community for this kind of programming. As such, the evaluation identified next steps and recommendations to advance the work.

NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand to include additional sites throughout the province.

- The program design, developed as part of this project, can be used to support additional sites who wish to begin or enhance a children and youth in care mentoring program.
- The Children and Youth Advisory Committee is a structure that could provide support in terms of mentorship to new or expanding programs.

Undertake a Photovoice participatory action research method project – to deepen understanding of the importance of this work and the difference it makes to the wellbeing of children and youth in care.

- Photovoice employs photography and group dialogue as a means for marginalized individuals to deepen their understanding of a community issue or concern. The visual images and accompanying stories are the tools used to reach policy and decision-makers. The aim is to improve conditions by making changes at the community level.¹²

Review and update program design.

- A significant success of this project was the creation of the program design. The document is intended to provide professionals with 1) knowledge and information about the activities and learnings from the three project sites, and 2) to provide essential program design elements for organizations interested in establishing and implementing a mentoring program for children and youth in care. Future evaluations could explore the extent to which the design is being used and what updates are necessary to enhance its usefulness. Further enhance mentoring supports for Indigenous youth.

Incorporate learning from sites and enhance focus for Sexually and Gender Diverse (SGD) youth.

Further enhance mentoring supports for Indigenous youth.

Advocate for sustained funding for current sites.

- Findings from the evaluation support the desired outcomes have been achieved. There continues to be a need for this type of program to be adequately funded.

¹² <http://www.cwhn.ca/en/node/43952>

SECTION 7: SITE SPECIFIC MATCH NUMBERS

The three sites, Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer each received funding to increase the number of children and youth in and transitioning from care or government supports, who have access to an adult mentor, and to provide specific training and support to these mentoring matches and approaches. The grant funded their efforts to recruit mentors, screen mentors and mentees, train all parties, and support mentoring relationships until they concluded or transitioned to a natural relationship beyond the organization.

As part of the final evaluation, interviews were conducted with site representatives from each location.

The following section provides a summary of site interviews conducted in summer 2019. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

CALGARY

OVERVIEW

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area's Youth in Care Mentoring¹³ connects mentors to youth who have been involved with Child Intervention Services. These mentoring relationships can build confidence, feelings of connection and healthier brains. Evolving into adolescents and young adulthood can be an exciting and challenging time, where a mentor can support a young person on their journey to a bright future. The Calgary site serves children and youth from 6-24 years old, with a minimum mentor time commitment of one year, with 2-4 meetings per month.

Seventy-four matches were supported over the course of this period. A breakdown is provided in the following table.

¹³ <https://bbbscalgary.ca/incare/>

MATCH DATA

CALGARY (all data provided by the site)					
YIC & Mentoring Match numbers for 3-year grant period for the purposes of the evaluation report					
Time Period: April 1, 2017 to September 1, 2019					
1. Unique individuals mentored through 1:1 or group programming throughout the time period above	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER or NOT INDICATED	INDIGENOUS	VISIBLE MINORITY CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Child 6-11		5		3	
Youth 12-17	11	16		10	2
Youth 18-24	12	27		9	10
TOTALS	23	48	0	22	12
2. Total number served by the Program	Matches Served (children & youth served in a 1:1 match during that reporting period -includes youth re-matched during the reporting period)	Matches Closed During Reporting Period (i.e. matches that did not continue)	Matches Graduated During Reporting Period (i.e. graduation refers to matches continuing without agency support or have aged out)		
Total Served	74	39	16		
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area does not have group mentoring programming. The focus is one on one mentoring relationships.					
5. Please provide totals for the following demographic information on number mentors (unique individuals) accepted into the Youth in Care and Mentoring Program during the program report period.					
Total # of Mentors	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER or NOT INDICATED	INDIGENOUS	VISIBLE MINORITY CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Applied	15	59			
Accepted	15	22			
Matched	13	26			
TOTALS	43	107	0	Please note that we do not require volunteers to share their ethnic identity with us	
*Please note - not all mentors who apply are accepted and of those accepted, not all are matched. This is because individuals can apply to mentoring within youth in care yet change their mind on who they want to mentor. Some individuals they could withdraw, lose contact or not be a good fit. Additionally, the agency sometimes finds a mentee in another program who is a better fit for the mentor therefore a mentor may initially be interested in youth in care yet not be matched at all or not be matched in Youth in Care. Therefore, the number of accepted is not the same as the number matched and all is not the same as those who apply.					

6. Wait List:	
What was the wait list number April 1, 2017?	6
What is the wait list number September 1, 2019?	36
What was the average wait list time (time to be matched)?	8 months
Child Intervention System: Is this program meeting needs of your community?	Yes. Between April 1, 2017 to September 1, 2019 the number of youth in care clients that Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area has served in a mentoring relationship has increased. The agency has made more matches since beginning this project which has ultimately increased the number of children and youth in care that are served and therefore have a more natural and unpaid relationship in their life. Additionally, the number of children and youth on our waitlist has increased since April 1, 2017. This showcases the need for more mentors for children and youth in care.

The following table, provided by Alberta Children’s Services, presents the average monthly case count of children, youth and young adults (ages 6-24) receiving Child Intervention services in the Calgary Region in fiscal year 2018/19.

Number of Children and Youth Receiving Services for Calgary Region (2018/19)

Region	Legal Status	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total
Calgary Region	Not In Care	100	329	429
	In Care	362	516	878
	SFAA	124	299	423
	Total	586	1144	1730

Type of Intervention:

- **Not in Care** refers to children who remain at home while the family receives services to resolve matters of concern.
- **In Care** refers to children who have been placed outside of their home on a temporary or permanent basis. These children may be placed in kinship homes, foster homes, group homes or treatment facilities.
- **Support and Financial Assistance (SFA)** agreements are available to young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who were previously involved in Child Intervention, to help support them in fully reaching their independence.

EDMONTON

OVERVIEW

Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area Children & Youth in Care program¹⁴ is founded on the belief that people are empowered through consistent and supportive relationships. The program is focused on young people who have had involvement with Children's Services and could be living in alternate arrangements such as foster homes, group homes or kinship placements. There are two options for volunteers: 1) one-to-one, and 2) group.

ONE-TO-ONE

- Mentees: Between 6 and 24 years old who are/were involved with Children's Services.
- Mentors: Anyone over 18 who is sensitive to other cultures, backgrounds, life circumstances, and who feels they can relate to a youth who identifies with some of the above.
- Minimum Commitment: 1 hour every week or 2 hours every other week for a minimum of one year.

GROUP

- Mentees: Between 10 and 17 years old who are/were involved with Children's Services.
- Mentors: Anyone over 24 who is sensitive to other cultures, backgrounds, life circumstances, and who feels they can relate to a youth who identifies with some of the above.
- Minimum Commitment: 2 hours per week for a minimum of one year.

¹⁴ <https://bgcbigs.ca/volunteer/youth-in-care/>

MATCH DATA

EDMONTON: All Data provided by the site					
YIC & Mentoring Match numbers for 3-year grant period for the purposes of the evaluation report					
Time Period: April 1, 2017 to September 1, 2019					
1. Unique individuals mentored through 1:1 or group programming throughout the time period above	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER or NOT INDICATED	INDIGENOUS	VISIBLE MINORITY CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Child 6-11	23	31	0	26	2
Youth 12-17	56	65	2	60	9
Youth 18-24	11	16	0	9	6
TOTALS	90	112	2	95	17
2. Total number served by the Program	Matches Served (children & youth served in a 1:1 match during that reporting period -includes youth rematched during the reporting period)	Matches Closed During Reporting Period (i.e. matches that did not continue)	Matches Graduated During Reporting Period (i.e. graduation refers to matches continuing without agency support or have aged out)		
Total Served	171	115	27		
3. Total number served by the program in Group Mentoring	Group Mentoring (children & youth served in a group during this reporting period).				
Total Served	70				
Comments:	A large number of the youth that attended Group in this time frame ended up being matched 1-1 as well and therefore				
4. Type of involvement with Child Intervention Services (unique individuals):			Number of Youth		
Number of open Child Intervention files (by child).			37		
Number of OTHER past Child Intervention involvement (e.g., Family Enhancement).			142		

5. Please provide totals for the following demographic information on number mentors (unique individuals) accepted into the Youth in Care and Mentoring Program during the program report period.					
Total # of Mentors	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER or NOT INDICATED	INDIGENOUS	VISIBLE MINORITY CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Applied	35	139	0	10	65
Accepted	22	71	0	5	22
Matched	63	108	0	8	21
TOTALS	120	318	0	23	108
6. Wait List:					
What was the wait list number April 1, 2017?			141		
What is the wait list number September 1, 2019?			144		
What was the average wait list time (time to be matched)?			13.2 months		
Child Intervention System: Is this program meeting needs of your community? (help to tell our story of potential expansion)	Yes, it is meeting a small cohort of need within our community but with more funding and resources we could support a larger volume.				

The following table, provided by Alberta Children's Services, presents the average monthly case count of children, youth and young adults (ages 6-24) receiving Child Intervention services in the Edmonton Region in fiscal year 2018/19.

Number of Children and Youth Receiving Services for Edmonton Region (2018/19)

Region	Legal Status	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total
Edmonton Region	Not In Care	274	321	595
	In Care	1049	357	1406
	SFAA	621	384	1005
	Total	1944	1062	3006

Type of Intervention:

- **Not in Care** refers to children who remain at home while the family receives services to resolve matters of concern.
- **In Care** refers to children who have been placed outside of their home on a temporary or permanent basis. These children may be placed in kinship homes, foster homes, group homes or treatment facilities.
- **Support and Financial Assistance (SFA)** agreements are available to young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who were previously involved in Child Intervention, to help support them in fully reaching their independence.

RED DEER

OVERVIEW

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Red Deer and District¹⁵ (BBBSRD) connected youth between the ages of 5 and 24 living in, involved with, or leaving government care with volunteer mentors. Mentors received enhanced support and training that included trauma and brain development, fostering strength-based relationships, cultural awareness and intergenerational trauma, and attachment. This intentional training provided mentors with a solid foundation of their role, expectations, connection to key agency staff as well as an understanding of their commitment.

The program's belief is that young people who have the opportunity to engage in a healthy and sustainable mentoring relationship are more likely to positively transition to adulthood. The project included a focus on better understanding the conditions that lend to lasting and supportive mentoring relationships and documented the successes, challenges, and learnings along the way.

Core components of the programs also included:

- A minimum mentor commitment of 1-year including two outings per month;
- advanced mentor training; and
- either a 1:1 mentoring relationship or a couple's match (a couple's match provides a unique opportunity for a couple to mentor one child or youth, providing extra support to one young person).

Mentoring relationship goals include: 1) children and youth in care will develop relationships with adult mentors as they develop leadership skills, communication skills, gain confidence and sense of self; and 2) children and youth in care will experience supporting, enduring, and impactful mentoring relationships.

¹⁵ <https://youthhq.ca/programs/children-youth-care-mentoring/>

MATCH DATA

Red Deer: All Data provided by the site					
Time Period: April 1, 2017 to September 1, 2019					
1. Unique individuals mentored through 1:1 or group programing throughout the time period above	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER or NOT INDICATED	INDIGENOUS	VISIBLE MINORITY CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Child 6-11	14	9		16	
Youth 12-17	19	10		13	3
Youth 18-24	6	3		2	
TOTALS	39	22	0	31	3
2. Total number served by the Program	Matches Served (children & youth served in a 1:1 match during that reporting period -includes youth rematched during the reporting period)	Matches Closed During Reporting Period (i.e. matches that did not continue)	Matches Graduated During Reporting Period (i.e. graduation refers to matches continuing without agency support or have aged out)		
Total Served	43	7	5		
3. Total number served by the program in Group Mentoring	Group Mentoring (children & youth served in a group during this reporting period).				
Total Served	22				
4. Type of involvement with Child Intervention Services (unique individuals):			Number of Youth		
Number of open Child Intervention files (by child).			33		
Number of OTHER past Child Intervention involvement (e.g., Family Enhancement).			28		
5. Please provide totals for the following demographic information on number mentors (unique individuals) accepted into the Youth in Care and Mentoring Program during the program report period.					
Total # of Mentors	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER or NOT INDICATED	INDIGENOUS	VISIBLE MINORITY CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Applied	23	18		3	2
Accepted	19	13		3	2
Matched	9	10		1	1
TOTALS	51	41	0	7	5

*The mentors not matched in the Child and Youth in Care Mentoring Program have been matched in the Community-Based Mentoring Program.		
6. Wait List:		
What was the wait list number April 1, 2017?	11	
What is the wait list number September 1, 2019?	17	
What was the average wait list time (time to be matched)?	Matched on a first come first served basis	

The following table, provided by Alberta Children’s Services, presents the average monthly case count of children, youth and young adults (ages 6-24) receiving Child Intervention services in the Central Region in fiscal year 2018/19.

Number of Children and Youth Receiving Services for Central Region (2018/19)

Region	Legal Status	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total
Central Region	Not in Care	69	156	225
	In Care	351	180	531
	SFAA	51	81	132
	Total	471	417	888

Type of Intervention:

- **Not in Care** refers to children who remain at home while the family receives services to resolve matters of concern.
- **In Care** refers to children who have been placed outside of their home on a temporary or permanent basis. These children may be placed in kinship homes, foster homes, group homes or treatment facilities.
- **Support and Financial Assistance (SFA)** agreements are available to young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who were previously involved in Child Intervention, to help support them in fully reaching their independence.

APPENDIX A: LOGIC MODEL



Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Logic Model

Theory of Change:
 If children or youth in care or involved in government supports are connected to specifically selected, trained and supported mentors, they will engage in a developmental mentoring relationship and are more likely to successfully transition to adulthood. (Developmental relationships are close connections that help young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them*.)

Situation	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
				Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
<p>Three established mentoring organizations in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer, along with key stakeholders, have come together to help to expand mentoring for children and youth in care, with funding from Alberta Children's Services.</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to foster meaningful relationships between mentors & vulnerable youth.</p> <p>A critical component of the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring project has been close relationships with partners and stakeholders. The Advisory Committee includes contacts within the provincial government, advocacy groups, youth in care experts, mentors, mentee representatives, executive staff from agencies and other key organizations. From the onset, the Advisory Committee has played a key role in building relationships across sectors, engaging youth and stakeholders in the development of the program design and striving to remove barriers for children and youth in care to access the program within communities.</p> <p>Youth require caring adults to help develop the resilience they need to face the challenges of life. The presence of healthy, positive adult relationships & experiences in the lives of children contribute to improved future outcomes. One of the most effective interventions for at-risk children is to offer a caring and responsible adult role model who can make positive lasting impressions.</p> <p>A host of complex scenarios often lead a child or family to become involved in the child intervention system. More often than not, a variety of traumas are precursors to child intervention involvement which may include addiction, mental health concerns, illness, poverty, unemployment, abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Because of trauma and adversity, children and youth in care are at increased risk for poor outcomes. Over half of children who enter the intervention system voice a concern with their physical, emotional or cognitive health or behaviour. Youth exiting care are less likely to graduate from high school or to enrol in post-secondary education, experience greater difficulty securing employment, are more likely to be involved in the justice system, and have a greater incidence of mental health and substance use problems.</p> <p>Close to 70% of children and youth who received services in care are Indigenous. In contrast, Indigenous children make up approximately 10% of the child population in Alberta (Child Intervention Information and Statistics Summary Update, 2016). As such, mentoring programs incorporate and respect cultural identity and practices.</p> <p>The wrap around supports mentoring offers for children and youth can strengthen outcomes. In particular, children who do not have the benefit of being exposed to positive role models at home have the opportunity to connect with a person who is focused on them provides emotional support and guidance and helps to build positive skills. Mentoring can contribute to the prevention of child intervention involvement and support resiliency skills of children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth in Care & Mentoring Advisory Committee Guiding principles and values Agency leadership and staff Facilitators Policy and procedures (insurance, risk management, BBBS National Standards) Funding and support from Government of Alberta Potential volunteers & mentors and youth Program design Corporate and other partners & key stakeholders Facilities Transportation Promotional materials Training procedures and modules (volunteers, children & youth) Other agencies, community resources and supports (referrals) Evaluation plan, data collection tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote mentoring opportunities Recruit volunteers, children and youth Undertake enhanced volunteer screening Select and train mentors (enhanced training, ongoing) Facilitate the matching process Engage children and youth and assess their readiness for a mentoring relationship, offer training to mentees Facilitate activities and match events Monitor and support matches, and families Recruit, train and support skilled staff Make referrals and connections to community supports Engage and educate key stakeholders Facilitate regular communication between Agency staff, caseworkers, parents/caregivers, and mentors who work together to provide a strong system of support for children and youth in care Conduct evaluation and data collection with a focus on continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of promotional activities, facilitated discussions, meetings with stakeholders # of volunteers recruited, screened, selected & trained # of children and youth matched (ages & demographics) Level of supports provided Referrals and connections made # of group events held # of activities (presentations, discussions & updates) held/participated in to engage and educate key stakeholders. # of mentor, mentee & stakeholder surveys/interviews and engagement opportunities completed An outcome-based annual evaluation conducted to assess the results and contribute to the improvement of implementation 	<p>Children, youth in care & families are supported by mentors & agency staff</p> <p>Children and youth in care develop relationships and increased support networks</p> <p>Enhanced and ongoing training and support help mentors to be confident and successful in their role</p> <p>Staff report having the necessary experience, skills, training and supports to do this work</p> <p>Stakeholders are aware of the benefits of mentoring and demonstrate support for the mentoring process by working together and contributing time, energy and resources as appropriate to support the needs of children and youth in care</p> <p>Stakeholders learn from each other and share learnings with others</p>	<p>Children and youth in care develop skills and competencies to become resilient (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills & responsible decision making)*</p> <p>Mentors are aware of community resources and are able to support their mentees in advocating for supports and services to meet their needs</p> <p>Mentors are a constant and stable relationship in their mentees lives</p> <p>* See https://casel.org/core-competencies/ for more information on core social and emotional learning from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The definition of development relationships used in theory of change adapted from CASEL.</p>	<p>Children and youth have the skills to form and maintain meaningful & enduring mentoring relationships with caring adults while in government care or receiving government supports and throughout transitions</p> <p>Children and youth in care are resilient, experience well-being and reach their full potential</p>



Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Logic Model

Theory of Change:
 If children or youth in care or involved in government supports are connected to specifically selected, trained and supported mentors, they will engage in a developmental mentoring relationship and are more likely to successfully transition to adulthood. (Developmental relationships are close connections that help young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.)

January 2019

Inputs	Activities		Outputs	Outcomes Measures
	Process Measures			
<p>Are inputs available and sufficient to complete expected activities?</p> <p>A demonstrated need exists for the program</p> <p>There is sufficient funding to meet the need</p>	<p>Are activities undertaken as planned? Assessment of how well the process is functioning.</p> <p>Who conducted the activities, what they did and how</p>	<p>What are the direct products or services produced as a result of the activities?</p> <p># of mentors recruited, screened, selected and trained.</p> <p># of children and youth matched</p> <p>Increased number of children and youth in care having a mentor</p>	<p>The # of children and youth in care who have access to a mentor</p> <p>The #/% of mentees who agree "My mentor has helped me to feel I am better at handling whatever comes my way." Target: 80% of mentees agree or strongly agree with the statement</p> <p>The #/% of mentees who agree "My mentor has helped me to feel more hopeful about my future." Target: 80% of mentees agree or strongly agree with the statement</p> <p>The #/% of agency staff, caseworkers, parents/caregivers, and mentors who report regular communication is happening leading to a strong system of support for children and youth in care. Target: Agreement from 65% of agency staff, caseworkers, parents/caregivers and mentors</p> <p>The #/% of mentees who agree "As a result of being matched, I know more adults that I can go to when I need help." Evidence of a strong support network available to mentee. Target: 70% of mentees agree or strongly agree with the statement</p> <p>The #/% of mentees who agree "As a result of this mentoring program, I know more about how to access the community resources I need." Target: 70% of mentees agree or strongly agree with the statement</p> <p>The #/% of mentors who report feeling confident and successful in their role. Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement</p> <p>The #/% of mentors who agree "As a result of volunteering as a mentor, I believe I am making a difference." Target: 80% of mentors who agree or strongly agree with the statement</p> <p>Self-reports and survey findings from mentors, mentees, and caregivers on children and youth in care developing skills and competencies to become resilient (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills & responsible decision making)</p>	
Data Sources			Data Sources	
Document review; interviews with agency staff/Advisory Committee	File review, site visits, surveys; focus group with stakeholders	File review, site reports	Agency file reviews, surveys, focus groups, surveys and interviews with stakeholders	

APPENDIX B: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ALBERTA MENTORING PARTNERSHIP (AMP): CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The role of AMP Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee is to collaborate about learning, knowledge and practice of engaging and mentoring children and youth in care. Further, the role of the AMP Children and Youth in Care Advisory Group is to provide a framework and leading practices evidence to inform mentoring for this specific population.

The Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee will:

- Identify, create, share and use knowledge regarding working with children and youth in care to establish evidence-informed mentoring approaches and programs. The mentoring programs support an increase in the number of children and youth in care who are engaged and benefit from mentoring in the province of Alberta;
- Focus on learning from each other to determine and share promising practices for mentoring programs, including recruitment, training, support, and knowledge gained from the evaluation of the pilot sites;
- Adhere and review the established values and principles to ensure relevance to promising practices within the pilot sites and mentoring children and youth in care as a leading practice;
- Advocate for the implementation of quality mentoring programs across Alberta to support the needs of children and youth in care; and
- Regularly report progress to the AMP Leadership Team, through the Chair and the AMP representative.

MEMBERSHIP:

- The intent of the Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee membership composition is to have a cross section of knowledge, experience, and perspectives to advance mentoring children and youth in care.
- Members have been purposefully selected based on their knowledge and expertise in this area.
- Membership for the Children and Youth In Care Advisory Committee is on a voluntary basis and consists of the following representation:
 - ALIGN Association of Community Services (Chair)
 - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association
 - AMP (administration)
 - Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area Society

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada
- Government of Alberta
- Individuals (i.e. mentors and youth representatives)
- Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
- Youth HQ of Red Deer
- Program Evaluator (external contractor)

TERM OF MEMBERSHIP:

- Members agree to participate for an annual term. The composition of membership will be reviewed annually to ensure relevance.
- Consideration of new members wishing to join will be identified to the Chair, who will bring the suggestion to the Children and Youth In Care Advisory Committee for a decision.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

- In the event of a conflict among members, members are encouraged to enrich and sharpen their thinking through listening to opposing viewpoints. However, in the event of a difference, the goal is to reach a healthy solution through discussion and a shared understanding. The Chair will facilitate reaching a shared understanding among members.

ROLE OF CHAIR:

The Chair is responsible for scheduling and chairing the meetings and for maintaining all relevant documents. This includes setting the agenda and providing minutes describing recommendations, decisions and actions from the meeting.

ADMINISTRATION:

- Administration is responsible for meeting logistics, such as room bookings, drafting and recording meeting minutes.
- Collecting all briefing documents for meetings and distributing them with the agenda in advance of the meeting.

MEETING FREQUENCY:

- The Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee will meet quarterly or as needed.

RESOURCES AND BUDGET:

- There is no budget assigned for this Committee so member organizations will be responsible for their own participation costs. The Chair will arrange financial compensation for volunteers participating on the Children and Youth In Care Advisory Committee that are not already compensated through a member organization.
- Administration will provide the conference call line and arrange for hosting of meeting locations.
- Costs associated with the creation of tools and resources will be requested as part of AMP's operating budget or through separate funding applications.

REVIEW:

- The Terms of Reference should be reviewed annually.

Alberta Mentoring Partnership Children and Youth in Care Advisory Group Guiding Principles

Children and youth in care are entitled to safe, positive, supportive and enduring mentoring relationships throughout their lives. These relationships are best developed through a holistic and inclusive community-based approach that recognizes individual needs and circumstances and reflects unique cultural identities.

As we reflect on the different sources of information (i.e. literature review, review of casework practice principles, conversations with service providers, mentors' experiences, and youth thoughts and opinions) it is possible to identify assets, values and a culture that will support Children and Youth in care mentoring programs.

The following principles are intended to guide the work of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership Children and the Children and Youth in Care Advisory Committee and contribute to the foundation of the developing work of the three pilot sites.¹⁶ Along with the principles are specific actions or qualities that will allow these principles to be operationalized.

Child and Youth-Focused

The needs and rights of children and youth in care will drive our strategies, decisions and actions. We include individual and collective voices of children and youth in decisions that impact their ongoing care and development. Ensuring that all programs are highly attuned and responsive to the particular characteristics and needs of young people will help them to heal, develop and grow.

¹⁶ Three established mentoring organizations in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer (pilot sites) have come together to help to expand mentoring for children and youth in care. The sites will foster meaningful relationships between mentors and vulnerable youth which requires a greater focus on its development, and extensive match support, utilizing trained staff, for the duration of the relationship. It also requires staff to work collaboratively with existing professional supports, and caregivers.

Actions:

- Provide mentors with initial and ongoing training on the rationale and theoretical underpinning of mentoring youth in care.
- Ensure all staff, mentors and mentees understand the philosophy and practice, through discussion, training, practice and modelling.
- Put structures in place for mentors to access support and reflect on their activities with young people.

Collaborative Relationships

Effective and supportive relationships are at the core of a successful and healthy future for children and youth. We encourage a collaborative and holistic approach among all stakeholder groups – children, youth, families, communities, government, as well as child intervention workers, education and health care providers, to enhance outcomes for children and youth in care. We encourage both formal and informal mentoring relationships to facilitate the ability of children and youth in care to form enduring, positive and meaningful relationships throughout their lives.

Actions:

- Ensure child intervention workers and careers (e.g. foster and group care) are aware of the benefits of mentoring, these principles and the work of the pilot sites.
- Offer children and youth in care training on building healthy relationships and other mentoring principles.

Responsive and Adaptive Journey

We strive for ongoing improvements in outcomes for children and youth through continuous learning, information sharing and knowledge transfer among all stakeholders.

Actions:

- Enable the program design to accommodate education about trauma, family of origin, attachment, etc. and how these situations may impact the behavior of young people.

Leading Practices

Our work is grounded in leading practices in the areas of effective mentoring relationships and successful transition of children and youth into adulthood while enabling the physical and emotional safety of children and youth in care. We adopt strategies, programs and practices based on validated research as well as informed by our experiences.

Actions:

- Ensure that mentors receive support from staff with relevant qualifications and experience.
- Put structures in place so that all participants of the program have a sense of safety, acceptance and security.

Culturally Responsive

Our approach reflects and integrates the diverse needs and is sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of children and youth in care. We incorporate cultural education and are welcoming of all cultural backgrounds. We recognize that a significant number of children and youth in care are Indigenous and bring specific and unique needs. Mentoring relationships celebrate cultural diversity and support development in a way that reflects both individual and cultural identities.

Actions:

- Offer young people opportunities to remain or become engaged with cultural practices.
- Provide mentors with information on the impacts of colonization on the Indigenous population as it relates to child welfare.

Inclusive and Anti-Oppressive

We acknowledge oppression in societies, economies, cultures, and groups, and strive to remove or negate the influence of that oppression. Related to this there may be a 'care versus control' issue, because where there is care there is responsibility, and therefore control, and power. Practitioners and mentors need to be fully aware of the potential power imbalance between mentees and providers (e.g. mentors or program staff) in order to work in an anti-oppressive manner. Youth should feel welcome, accepted, safe, listened to, valued and confident that they can participate in all activities.

Actions:

- Offer user-led and user-controlled service (i.e. nothing about us without us principle).
- Help build the confidence of the young person through promotion of healthy relationships to enable them to develop their own ideas about their level of involvement.
- Provide an approach that is sensitive and respectful and actively explores and seeks to understand each young person's unique circumstances and experiences arising from the impact of their culture.
- Listen to young people and engage them to participate in decision-making processes regarding their activities.

Strength-Based, Trauma-Informed, and Solution-Focused

We believe successful mentoring relationships are strength-based and affirming. We start with where the individual is at and build on strengths and successes, using resources available. A strong understanding of trauma and its impacts influences how we support children and youth in care.

Actions:

- Include specialized training in trauma theory model and its applications (effects of trauma and attachment disruption).
- Provide clinical support to mentors in this area.

APPENDIX C: SITE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Site interviews conducted in Spring/Summer 2019.

Site Name:

Site Background:

- Number mentors:
- Number of mentees:
- Number of staff:
- Number of workshops offered:
- Other information:

What progress has been made towards the outcomes as a result of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program at your site:

- Stakeholders are aware of the benefits of mentoring?
- Agencies learn from one another and share learnings?
- Enhanced learning and training for mentors?
- Children and youth being supported by mentors through the program?
- Mentors are aware of community resources?
- Mentors experience enhanced personal wellbeing.

Thinking about the inputs as listed in the logic model, were they sufficient to carry out the intended activities?

Youth in Care & Mentoring Advisory Committee

- Guiding principles and values
- Agency leadership and staff
- Policy and procedures (insurance, risk management, BBBS National Standards)
- Funding and support from Government of Alberta
- Potential volunteers & mentors and youth
- Program design
- Corporate and other partners & key stakeholders
- Facilities
- Transportation
- Promotional materials
- Training procedures and modules (volunteers, children & youth)
- Other agencies, community resources and supports (referrals)
- Evaluation plan, data collection tools

Let's discuss the activities undertaken and consider the extent to which these activities were completed, and how useful they were to the project.

- Promote mentoring opportunities
- Recruit volunteers, children and youth
- Undertake enhanced volunteer screening
- Select and train mentors (enhanced training, ongoing) (see Appendix)
- Facilitate the matching process
- Engage children and youth and assess their readiness for a mentoring relationship, offer training to mentees
- Facilitate activities and match events
- Monitor and support matches, and families
- Recruit, train and support skilled staff
- Make referrals and connections to community supports
- Engage and educate key stakeholders
- Facilitate regular communication between Agency staff, caseworkers, parents/ caregivers, and mentors who work together to provide a strong system of support for children and youth in care
- Conduct evaluation and data collection with a focus on continuous improvement

What were the direct products or services produced as a result of the activities?

- # of promotional activities – collect examples
- facilitated discussions, meetings with stakeholders - descriptions
- # of volunteers recruited, screened, selected & trained (as of September 2019)
- # of children and youth matched (as of September 2019 – by age group)
- Referrals and connections made – types, examples, photos
- # of group events held
- # of mentor, mentee & stakeholder surveys/interviews and engagement opportunities completed
- An outcome-based evaluation conducted to assess the results and contribute to the improvement of implementation

What have been the greatest successes of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program?

What have been the greatest challenges of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program and what strategies were used to mitigate them?

What reflections do you have when thinking about the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring program? (probe: implementation, number of participants, engagement of community)

Does there remain a need for this type of program? Please explain. What is needed to sustain this programming?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX D: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ANDERSON DRAPER

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ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

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Boys & Girls Clubs

Big Brothers Big Sisters



Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area

