



TOP TEN GOOD PRACTICES FOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS FOR BLACK YOUTH

Content developed by summarizing a review of research literature on mentoring Black youth.

The term ‘youth mentorship’ describes a supportive, caring relationship between a young person and a non-parental adult that makes a significant positive difference for both youth and mentor.

01 Long-Term Relationships

Research shows that as relationships between mentors and youth continue for longer periods, outcomes for youth are strengthened. Relationship duration should be a significant consideration in planning a mentorship program.

02 Regular Contact

If mentors and youth only meet occasionally, the mentoring relationship may suffer. Mentorship programs should ensure that youth and mentors meet regularly to strengthen youth’s sense of security and closeness.

03 Mentor Characteristics & Skills

Carefully consider who should serve as a mentor by thoughtfully evaluating characteristics and skills. Characteristics that have been found to increase the effectiveness of mentoring relationships include a demonstrable understanding of how relevant cultural and socioeconomic factors influence youth’s lives, their belief in their ability to support youth, and prior experience in a helping role.

04 Youth-Centred Approach

Mentors should take a youth-centred approach, meaning that youth’s interests and expectations should drive the relationship. It may be helpful to match youth and mentors based on shared interests.

05 Social Justice-Based Training for Mentors

Youth mentorship programs should ensure that mentors take a strengths-based approach to working with youth that focuses on youth assets and resources rather than deficits. Mentor training should also aim to develop and enhance mentors’ critical consciousness around “...a fundamental understanding of oppressive social elements, hierarchical structures, and one’s place in society,”¹ as well as social processes and dynamics related to race, especially if mentors are not from the same racial, ethnic or cultural background as mentees.

¹Albright, Hurd & Hussain, 2017. See reverse for complete reference.

06 Group Mentorship Model

Consider a group mentorship model. Research has shown that group mentoring is an effective intervention and can also reduce the pressure on organizations to recruit, screen, train, and support mentors, as fewer mentors are needed than in traditional one-to-one mentoring.

07 Youth Included in Mentor Recruitment & Selection

Youth may experience this inclusion as an empowering shift in taken-for-granted power dynamics. This process may also help to ensure a better fit between mentors and mentees.

08 Support and Structure

While offering support, mentors need to ensure that structure and goals are an equal component of the relationship. A relationship that includes both support and structure will increase the odds of successful mentorship.

09 Social Justice Perspective & Language

When recruiting mentors, youth programs can deliberately use language that aligns with a social justice perspective. Taking a social justice perspective is important to ensure that existing hierarchies and social inequalities are not reinforced. In the recruitment process, this means avoiding talk about ‘at-risk youth,’ which implies that mentors’ primary task will be to ‘save youth’ from dysfunction. By making a conscious effort to use language that is strengths-based beginning in the recruitment stage, programs set the tone for the rest of their relationship with mentors.

10 Considerations for Refugee & Newcomer Youth

When working with refugee and newcomer youth, take into consideration how long youth have been resettled in Canada. For those who are more newly settled, instrumental mentoring, which links youth to opportunities for language acquisition and connects them to resources, may be especially helpful. For youth who have resided in Canada for longer periods, developmental mentoring, which focuses on exploring and unpacking their cultural identity and experiences of migration, may be more appropriate.

References

Albright, J.N., Hurd, N.M., & Hussain, S.B. (2017). Applying a social justice lens to youth mentoring: A review of the literature and recommendations for practice. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 59, 363-381. (Top Ten Practices 5, 7, and 9.)

DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91. (Top Ten Practices 1, 4, and 6.)

DuBois, D., & Silverthorn, N. (2005). Characteristics of natural mentoring relationships and adolescent adjustment: Evidence from a national study. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 26(2), 69-92. (Top Ten Practices 1 and 2.)

Grossman, J. B., & Rhodes, J. E. (2002). The test of time: Predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 199-219. (Top Ten Practice 1.)

Keller, T. E. (2005). The stages and development of mentoring relationships. In D. L. DuBois & M. J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 82-99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Top Ten Practice 2.)

Langhout, R. D., Rhodes, J. E., & Osborne, L. N. (2004). An exploratory study of youth mentoring in an urban context: Adolescents' perceptions of relationship styles. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 33, 293-306. (Top Ten Practice 8.)

Oberoi, A. K. (2016). Mentoring for first-generation immigrant and refugee youth. National Mentoring Resource Center Population Review. Retrieved from http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/images/PDF/ImmigrantRefugeeYouth_Population_Review.pdf (Top Ten Practices 3 and 10.)

Rhodes, J. E. (2005). A model of youth mentoring. In D. L. DuBois & M. J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 30-43). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Top Ten Practice 2.)

Rhodes, J., & Lowe, S. R. (2008). Youth mentoring and resilience: Implications for practice. *Child Care in Practice*, 14(1), 9-17. (Top Ten Practices 1, 3, and 8.)

Yaman, S., & Alkaç, Z. (2010). Self-efficacy beliefs of mentors and the mentors' attitudes from student teachers' eyes: Teaching experience. *E-Journal of New World Sciences Academy*, 5(1), 66-79. (Top Ten Practice 3.)