

# Mentoring Youth With Juvenile Justice Involvement

June 2012

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**PART OF THE LEAP COMMUNITY AWARENESS SERIES**

## LEAP

Learning, Employment and Achieving Potential for  
Youth with Juvenile Justice Involvement

*This Young Offender program is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2012; the program received funds totally \$6,230,520 equal to 100% of the cost of operating the program.*



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# MENTORING

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## Introduction

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system in Washington State face significant barriers, especially as they are returning to the community from detention or longer-term incarceration at a juvenile rehabilitation facility. It is not unusual for these youth to face ongoing challenges in many aspects of their lives – at home, in their neighborhoods, and at school. In 2010, under a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Washington’s Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) formed a multi-disciplinary partnership with community organizations in King County. The project is called LEAP – *Learning, Employment and Achieving Potential*- and is a juvenile offender re-entry initiative that is connecting youth to education and employment after they are released from incarceration. LEAP is a working collaborative of youth services that provides educational, employment, outreach, and mentoring resources to King County youth who are released from the county juvenile detention center or a state Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration facility.

TeamChild’s involvement in LEAP focused on providing training and technical assistance to grant partners and raising community awareness about the barriers facing youth returning from incarceration. This best practice series discusses the major challenges faced by youth, highlights the services offered by LEAP partners to mitigate and break down re-entry barriers, and shares lessons learned in promoting the success of young people involved in the LEAP program.

## Mentoring Overview

Mentoring is an important component of the LEAP collaborative and any reentry initiative. It is a strategy that provides youth with adult guidance through a close relationship of care, trust, and support.<sup>1</sup> Many studies evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs in reducing negative behaviors of youth have shown that mentoring has a positive impact on the lives of at-risk youth populations, especially youth who have had involvement with the juvenile justice system.<sup>2</sup>

- This report looks at the benefits of mentoring youth involved in the juvenile justice system and then discusses the key elements of successful mentoring programs. It highlights three LEAP mentoring programs and looks at the ways in which each organization puts these key elements into practice. Lastly, the report outlines recommendations and strategies for developing and sustaining a mentoring program for juvenile justice involved youth.

## What Does the Research Say?

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<sup>1</sup> **MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership** is a national organization that supports mentoring and provides comprehensive information about best practices and evidence based standards in mentoring, in *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, Third Edition. See [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org).

<sup>2</sup> J. Rhodes, “Improving Youth Mentoring Interventions Through Research-based Practice.” Springer Science + Business Media (2008), *Am. J. Community Psychol.*, 41:35-42, A. Bass, D. Henry, M. Schoeny, P. Tolan, “Mentoring Interventions to Affect Juvenile Delinquency and Associated Problems.” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* (2008): 4-5.; T. Cavell, D. DuBois, M. Karcher, T. Keller, J. Rhodes, “Policy Brief: Strengthening Mentoring Opportunities for At-Risk Youth.” *Social Policy Report* (2006).; E. Hair, S. Jekielek, K. Moore, and H. Scarupa, “Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development.” *Child Trends* (2002): 1-2.; *See Id.*, Rhodes.

Impact studies of youth mentoring programs show that mentoring produces benefits for youth at risk, incarcerated youth, and formerly incarcerated youth.<sup>3</sup> Studies show that mentoring can help youth create positive attitudes towards school and the future.<sup>4</sup> It also can have a significant positive effect on school attendance.<sup>5</sup> Mentoring can improve reactions to situations involving drug use by making it less likely that a youth will begin using illegal drugs.<sup>6</sup> In addition, mentoring can help improve relationships that youth have with their families.<sup>7</sup> It can also increase a youth's sense of self-worth, competence, and feelings of well-being.<sup>8</sup> For juvenile justice involved youth, mentoring can have the greatest positive effect on delinquency and aggression.<sup>9</sup>

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership is a clearinghouse for best practices and evidence-based standards for mentoring.<sup>10</sup> Strong mentoring relationships that endure over time are best built by programs that have: (1) reasonably intensive screening of mentors, (2) matching based on shared interests of the mentor and mentee, (3) more than six hours of training for mentors, and (4) ongoing training and support after matches have been made.<sup>11</sup> Other elements of successful mentorships include frequent and sufficient contact between the mentor and mentee, strong emotional support from the mentor, ongoing support from organization staff, and collaborative efforts between the mentor and other adults in the mentee's life.<sup>12</sup>

*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring: A Checklist for Mentoring Programs*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. provides a comprehensive listing of standards for solid mentoring programs. See [http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1225.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1225.pdf).

## LEAP Partner Profiles

MENTOR describes five types of mentoring – traditional one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring, team mentoring, peer mentoring, and e-mentoring (also known as online mentoring or telementoring). The LEAP collaborative incorporated three of the five types of mentoring: one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring and team mentoring for youth in the program.

The LEAP collaborative includes three organizations that provide mentoring services to juvenile justice involved youth: the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) Mentoring Program, the 4C Coalition,

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Tierney, J. B. Grossman, N. L. Resch, "Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers/ Big Sisters." *Philadelphia Public/Private Ventures* (1995).; R. Aseltine, M. Dupre, P. Lamlein, "Mentoring as a drug prevention strategy: An evaluation of Across Ages." *Adolescent and Family Health*, 1 (2002): 11-20.; and, A. Johnson, "Sponsor-A-Scholar: Long-term impacts of a youth mentoring program on student performance." *Princeton* (1999): Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.; U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. "Office of Justice Programs: Fact Sheet on Mentoring." Posted on 11/1/11. Accessed on 4/19/12. <[http://www.ojp.gov/newsroom/factsheets/ojps\\_mentoring.html](http://www.ojp.gov/newsroom/factsheets/ojps_mentoring.html) >

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, Aseltine.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, Tierney.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*, Aseltine.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*, Bass.

<sup>10</sup> "How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements of Effective Practice: A Step-By-Step Tool Kit for Program Managers." MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. (2009)

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> L. LoSciuto, A. Rajala, T. Townsend, and A. Taylor, "An outcome evaluation of Across Ages: An intergenerational mentoring approach to drug prevention." *Journal of Adolescent Research* (1996): 11(1), 116-129.; See *Id.*, Tierney; Johnson.

and Good Shepherd Youth Outreach.<sup>13</sup> Each of LEAP's mentoring partners employs the key elements discussed above. This section focuses specifically on the unique aspects of the LEAP programs that meet the needs of juvenile justice involved youth.

### JRA's Mentoring Program<sup>14</sup>

The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration's Mentoring program was established in the Seattle JRA office in 1996. The JRA Mentoring Program is now in all three regions of Washington State and continues to provide service to youth in the juvenile justice continuum of care. The JRA Mentoring Program was originally part of a Federal Demonstration Grant called SafeFutures which was aimed at creating a community partnership whose goal was to prevent and reduce youth violence. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy studied the effectiveness of the JRA Mentor Program in 2002. The Institute's findings included:

- Twelve months after release, youth involved in the JRA Mentor Program were less likely to recidivate than similar youth who did not have a mentor.
- Youth involved with a mentor had a 34% drop in felony recidivism.

Wiley G. Carter Jr. is currently the JRA Region 2 Mentor Coordinator, managing 25 active mentor-mentee matches. The program is a one to one model designed to match youth while they are serving their sentence at one of the juvenile institutions. The JRA mentoring program implements the MENTOR elements of effective practice guidelines to ensure that mentor matches will endure and thrive for successful outcomes.

The JRA Mentor Program is part of the continuum of evidence-based services offered by JRA. The mentor coordinator collaborates with the Juvenile Rehabilitation Community Counselors (JRCCs) to determine the level of interest from the youth and the viability of the service which would carry over after the youth's return from an institution into their community. Mentoring then becomes part of the overall transition plan designed to give JRA youth the best possible chance at a successful transition out of the juvenile justice system.

The JRA Mentor Coordinator recruits community and stakeholder volunteers to serve as mentors. Prospective mentors must complete and submit an application, attend a required training, and consent to a Washington State criminal background check. Mentors are asked to make a one-year commitment to the program. Training is a unique and important aspect of JRA's mentoring program because prospective mentors do not necessarily have to have knowledge of the juvenile justice system or the youth who are experiencing it. Mentors learn about JRA's continuum of care and relevant information regarding the juvenile system as a whole. Part of the initial training focuses on the behavioral characteristics of JRA youth, including their mental health needs, social and family background, and

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about the mentoring programs please visit their websites: JRA Mentoring Program <<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/jra/treatment.shtml#jra>>; 4C Coalition <<http://www.the4ccoalition.org/>>; Good Shepherd Youth Outreach <<http://goodshepherdouthoutreach.org/>>

<sup>14</sup> In 2002, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of the JRA's Mentoring Program in reducing recidivism. The findings showed that the mentoring program reduced recidivism rates for youth who participated in the program over a 12 month period. A follow-up report by WSIPP in 2006 showed that over a 24-36 month period, the differences between the mentored youth and the non-mentored youth had shrunk. However, the 2006 report was limited by the fact that the program only required a 12 month commitment of the mentors, and it was not possible to measure if the youth were still being mentored with the data available at the time. See Barnoski and Drake.

challenges stemming from their offense or situation. Mentors are prepared for the transition that youth will experience when the structure of the institution is no longer in place and they return to the same environment that they were in prior to incarceration, with all of the same influences and temptations.

Youth participation in JRA's mentor program is voluntary and open to youth whom JRA thinks would be a good fit for the Mentor Program. The Mentor Coordinator then performs an in-depth interview and interest survey with the youth to help in matching the youth with a mentor. Youth who participate are matched with a mentor three or more months prior to their release. The mentor is given access to the institution and visits regularly to establish a relationship which then becomes part of transition and re-entry.

JRA institution staff begin preparations for transition and re-entry by generalizing the skills the youth learn while incarcerated. The parole office conducts a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting which identifies the youth's needs and links the youth to appropriate supports. The MDT meeting includes JRCCs, Program Coordinators, Education Advocate, Drug and Alcohol Counselor and Program Managers. This mix of expertise and experience comes together to discuss appropriate supports and/or services designed to ease transition and re-entry back to their community.

JRA schedules MDT meetings for youth 30 days prior to their release from the institution. Mentors are invited to attend the MDT meeting either in person or by phone to provide their input on the youth's needs.

For the LEAP project, JRA added a group mentoring service to its program. LEAP eligible youth are identified at the MDT meeting for referral to JRA's group mentoring services. An interview is conducted to determine the youth's interest. JRA collaborated with community organizations to provide activities for the group such as bowling, basketball; attending professional baseball games, the King Tut exhibit, and music events; working at local food banks; and involvement in other pro-social community events.

### **4C Coalition**

The 4C Coalition is a community-based nonprofit organization that provides one-on-one and group mentoring services to youth in King County. The organization works with youth who are in the King County detention facility, youth who are identified by the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, and youth who return to King County from a JRA institution.

4C Coalition is an acronym for Clergy, Community, and Children/Youth Coalition. Created in 1999 through a collaborative effort of pastors, mentoring organizations, and community members, 4C Coalition was formed to address the youth violence that existed in the community. The Executive Director of 4C Coalition, and one of the members of the original collaboration, is Hazel Cameron. The 4C Coalition hired a coordinator to work with LEAP youth.

The 4C Coalition is unique in its intentional building of community both within and outside of the program. It creates and honors community between all of the participating mentorships through recruitment of mentors, and through a supportive team of staff. Mentors are recruited from the local churches, government agencies, college campuses, and other places where there is high community involvement and investment. By bringing in community members to become mentors, 4C Coalition creates a space where the work is an investment of the whole community.

The 4C Coalition staff is just as invested as the mentors in the youth. 4C Coalition staff is extremely supportive of all of the mentorships, and are always easily accessible if problems arise. Both staff and mentors meet youth in whatever position they may be in. Mentors and staff accompany mentees to

court proceedings and visit mentees while they are incarcerated. Like the JRA's Mentoring Program, 4C Coalition has staff who initiate connections with youth while they are in the detention center.

While the program's primary focus is on traditional one-on-one mentoring, it also includes group or team mentoring sessions for all of its participants. These mentoring sessions are held every first Thursday of the month, and all of the mentors and mentees are invited to spend time together going on field trips and doing fun activities. Many of the youth have never had the opportunity to have the kinds of experiences that 4C Coalition incorporates into the program. The activities are meant to provide safe and fun activities for the youth to participate in. In addition, these activities help build community and camaraderie between the mentors, mentees, and 4C Coalition staff.

### Good Shepherd Youth Outreach

Good Shepherd Youth Outreach (GSYO) is an organization that has been serving youth in King County for over seven years. The organization provides group mentoring services at JRA facilities for youth who are currently incarcerated and for youth who return to the community from JRA placement.

Louis Guiden Jr. is the Executive Director, creator, and lead mentor for GSYO. He created the program, recognizing the need for strong role models for youth who are at risk of criminal involvement. Having gone through similar experiences in his own life, Louis has the ability to connect with this group of youth. He created GSYO's programs and services to address relevant issues for juvenile justice involved youth and to teach them how to deal with common challenges they face in their lives. Group mentoring is particularly important because it has the ability to reach older youth and youth who may be at risk of gang involvement.

The GSYO group mentoring program is composed of a variety of workshops and activities that are focused on the needs and interests of the youth that it serves. The program helps youth learn how to manage anger and conflict, boost their self-esteem, address mental health issues, set positive life goals, and move out of situations that are likely to involve them in delinquency, gangs, and substance abuse.

For example, one of the special programs is a fatherhood class. Many of the GSYO youth are either fathers themselves, or have gone through traumatic experiences involving fathers who have had a negative impact on their lives. The fatherhood class aims to educate youth about what it means to be a father. It helps build and strengthen their social and life skills and deal with issues of manhood in our current society.

Other programs offered by GSYO focus on building self-esteem and pro-social skills, such as how to deal with anger and life on the streets. Youth develop skills to help them survive socially and financially. The GSYO team picks up on the strengths of youth and redirects them to careers and jobs that replace illegal activity with positive activity. For example, GSYO offers an entrepreneur class where students learn how to make a profit without resorting to illegal means. All programs are meant to be engaging and are geared toward empowering and inspiring youth.

Louis creates deep relationships with youth that allow them to trust and have hope in their futures. When asked what the most important thing is to him about the work he does, Louis said, "Giving youth the inspirational message of hope: you *can* come out of the system strong, overcome the hate and injustice, and feel empowered. I represent a man who has been through it all, and like me, you can always bounce back. I am here to give the youth that hope."

## Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the experience gleaned from the LEAP project in concentrating mentoring resources on youth who are being released from incarceration.

### 1. Establish mentorships while the youth is incarcerated.

Incarcerated youth benefit from having connections to the community and goals for their release. Matching incarcerated youth with a mentor prior to release gives the youth and mentor an opportunity to build a relationship that can continue during the transition back to the community. Mentors are connected to community programs and resources, and can serve as an important bridge for youth in the juvenile justice system. Planning and goal setting discussions with a mentor can help youth look forward to his or her release and can ease some of the anxiety or uncertainty that the youth might be experiencing.

### 2. Create, leverage, and coordinate partnerships with other youth re-entry service providers.

Mentors can be the first person that a young person turns to for advice and help. Coordinating mentor goals and activities with work, school and extracurricular activities can be effective in keeping youth engaged and on track. The LEAP project brought together mentoring organizations, caseworkers, education resource providers, employment resource providers, youth outreach services, and mental health services. Good communication between partners, shared goals developed with youth input, and co-location of services made collaboration among LEAP partners more effective for many youth. Areas of growth for the LEAP and other re-entry collaborations should include more intentional and coordinated goal setting among partners and focusing the mentor relationships on keeping youth engaged in education, employment, and pro-social activities.

### 3. Create and provide training and orientation that gives mentors a solid grounding in the experiences of youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Mentor trainings should provide information about the juvenile justice system and the root causes for involvement and incarceration. Training should also cover issues around poverty, race and discrimination, adolescent development, child welfare, and disability. Mentors also benefit from knowing basic rights that youth have to education, housing, medical care and other services. They can help steer youth and their parents to advocacy help if necessary to overcome an obstacle to support.

### 4. Provide adequate staff support for mentors and mentees to help resolve any conflicts that may arise and to coordinate with partners.

Having someone who can check in on the mentors and mentees ensures that the mentorship is not lost to poor communication, mismatches, or scheduling and transportation challenges. Staff can address problems early on or find a better fit for the mentor and youth. In a re-entry partnership, mentor program staff can serve a key role in communicating with partner agencies so that there is more coordination in setting goals and supporting the youth.

### 5. Create and support activities that connect youth to community and provide opportunities for giving back.

Expose mentees to new activities and positive ways to spend their free time. Organize group activities such as field trips to museums, art galleries, college tours, etc. Engage the group in other recreational activities such as sports or art projects. Or, identify restorative justice projects that give

youth a chance to give back to their community. Invite all mentors and mentees to participate. Make it fun for everyone.

## 6. Offer activities and programming that empower youth and provide them with life-skills that are relevant to them.

Provide activities and programming that build on the experiences and strengths of the youth, and turn them into something positive and empowering. Workshops focusing on addressing the particular needs of incarcerated or previously incarcerated youth should be implemented. Consider the topics that would be relevant and interesting for the youth so that they want to come back and learn more. Invite community members and professionals from different career areas who can relate to the youth on some level, to host workshops.

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