
Best Practices for Mentoring Programs

by Jerry Sherk

Looking For What Works

We have learned that developing a quality mentoring program takes a great deal of effort and careful planning. It is a difficult and time-consuming process to obtain funding; to recruit, screen, train, and supervise mentors; and to develop evaluations and collect data — all the while keeping the quality of individual matches and the overall program in mind. Although the media has covered several stories of successful mentoring programs, scant information has been available to mentor program managers on the specific practices that make those programs “work.”

For more than a decade, mentoring advocates have been working to identify, evaluate, and maintain effective practices. In 1989, Quality Assurance (QA) standards were developed by a collaborative of mentoring experts headed by the National Mentoring Partnership. These standards provide a guideline of effective, “high quality” mentoring practices and procedures in ten key areas. The QA standards are the most widely utilized “best practices” tool to date. In California alone, more than 400 mentoring programs have administered the QA survey, and 280 of these programs passed.

Other innovative mentoring strategies are being discovered each day. A handful of Los Angeles programs has begun using the newly developed “Two-by-Two” approach (developed by EMT consultant Judy Strother) to increase program quality and consistency to recruit volunteer mentors and to disseminate up-to-date information. (These strategies are discussed further in Appendix A of this report.)

In an effort to build on the knowledge of what works, The Evaluation, Management and Training (EMT) Group interviewed 50 mentor program managers throughout California to uncover the practical wisdom they had gained working on the front lines of mentoring. “Successful” programs were identified by mentoring coalitions, program managers, and mentoring professionals as exhibiting innovative and effective approaches. EMT asked the program managers and coordinators of these programs a series of open-ended questions about their experiences in the mentoring field and the specific practices they believe account for their program’s success. The results of these interviews are identified here as “Six Common Pitfalls and Best Practices.”

SIX COMMON PITFALLS AND BEST PRACTICES

EMT's Survey Findings

EMT wanted to discover the specific “best practices” being used by successful mentoring programs. When talking to program managers and other mentoring program personnel about best practices, however, the conversation often turned to missing or “common pitfalls.” The following six pitfalls were most often cited:

1. Inadequate personnel and/or resources to run the mentoring program.
2. Program manager has no commitment, passion, vision.
3. Mission and goals are not integrated into all parts of the program.
4. Lack of partnering and/or networking within the community.
5. Program staff has superficial contact with its mentors.
6. Nothing is special or unique about the program.

Following is a closer look at the source of common pitfalls and the best practices that have emerged to replace them.

Common Pitfall #1: Inadequate personnel and/or resources to run the program.

One of the major findings of this study is that many programs are so stretched they are unable to build solid foundations for their programs.

This is undoubtedly the most pervasive problem in mentoring programs today. People unfamiliar with mentoring don't understand the tremendous time and energy needed to run a program. It's all too common for a mentor program manager to have a full time position in another occupation (e.g., school teacher, attendance counselor, baker) and then be asked to manage a large mentoring program “on the side.” When this happens, the mentoring program often suffers. A program manager cannot put in 60 to 80 hour weeks without neglecting the mentoring program.

Best Practice #1: Quality mentoring programs are properly funded and staffed. This means they have money, personnel and other resources to meet program demands, now and in the future. Some best practices identified by mentoring managers are:

- The program has qualified administrative staff, along with experts in human relations (could be the same person).
- The staff is not stretched between a number of duties, including other programs and/or other job responsibilities.

- ❑ It's beneficial if a program is able to start out small, concentrating on building a solid program foundation and learning from initial mistakes before expanding the program to a larger scale.
- ❑ It is important that there is not low staff to mentor/mentee ratios. The numbers can vary depending on the type of program. In a quality program (tightly structured and supervised), a well-trained staff person can handle most of the program administration and match supervision duties of say, about 30 to 50 matches.
- ❑ One of the most critical components of a solid program foundation is recruiting and nurturing the volunteer staff. Volunteers are the life force of any mentoring program. Show appreciation for them and make them feel special.
- ❑ The program has enough resources for background checks, food, celebrations, field trips, etc.
- ❑ The program has a viable sustainability plan to guarantee the youth are not abandoned because the program fails financially.

Common Pitfall #2: Program manager has no commitment, passion, vision. Leadership is essential to a good mentoring program. A mentor program without a manager who believes in mentoring (and their own program) is a program in trouble. Many stories exist about programs that have four or five different program managers in a year. Being a manager of a mentoring program should not be merely a stepping stone to a better position.

Best Practice #2: Quality mentoring programs have passionate, committed persons in leadership positions.

- ❑ Program managers should be "champions" for mentoring, and extol its benefits. They should be prepared to tell people what mentoring is, why it is so needed, and why their particular program is so effective.
- ❑ Program managers should be role models. A mentoring program is in the "business" of developing "caring," "trust" and "respect" in relationships. Program managers and staff need to be committed and accountable; they should set the example by striving to develop positive relationships with staff, mentors and mentees alike.
- ❑ Program managers should participate in ongoing education. Mentoring is a relatively new field with breakthrough research, practices and information emerging

all the time. Outstanding program managers want to learn more about mentoring. They take the time to read, attend workshops and network with other program personnel.

Common Pitfall #3: Mission and goals are not integrated into all parts of the program. Most programs have sound mission statements, as well as goals and objectives, but often these painstakingly carved-out elements are forgotten during the program planning phase. Personnel should integrate mission statements and goals into their programs, so that they serve as a tool to direct and inspire. (Programs also need to have sound evaluations to determine if they are reaching their goals.)

Best Practice # 3: Quality mentoring programs define their mission, goals, objectives, and they remain focused on them throughout the life of the program (including evaluating outcomes).

- ❑ Program managers and other personnel should consider their mission and goals, etc., throughout all aspects of their program, from “program development” and “recruitment” to “evaluation.” For example, if your mission statement includes reducing teenage pregnancy, you should integrate this aspect whenever possible (without overdoing it). In recruiting, you might want to find people who have had life experiences dealing with issues of sexuality and childbirth. You obviously wouldn’t want to recruit people who get embarrassed when confronted with issues surrounding pregnancy.
- ❑ Specific outcomes should be included in your goals and objectives. What population will be served? How many? How often? What outcomes is the program looking for? Many existing programs are unable to begin writing for another round of funding; they don’t have data — they didn’t collect data because they failed to establish goals.
- ❑ Consistently emphasizing the program’s mission and goals helps participants to feel secure and cared for. They get a sense that the program administrators know what they are doing. It also helps keep staff and volunteers mentors on track, and it pleases financial stakeholders.
- ❑ A “good program philosophy” is extremely helpful in developing and running a mentoring program. By “program philosophy” we mean the general attitude that the staff displays throughout the program. In a way, it can almost be a program

“mantra”— such as, “We recruit mentors who want to develop a relationship of trust and respect.” A positive program philosophy can be conveyed in all stages, from recruiting on.

Common Pitfall # 4: Lack of partnering and/or networking within the community.

Mentoring programs should not be islands unto themselves. Programs that are not connected with other vested partners are at odds with one of the main purposes of mentoring, “to overcome isolation.” Some mentoring programs which fail to make connections do so because they are too understaffed. Others isolate themselves because of the fear that they are not conducting their programs properly, and they don’t want to be found out. Still others fail to connect because they have a “territorial” attitude stemming from competition for funding or other resources.

Best Practice # 4: Quality mentoring programs develop community partnerships and networking relationships.

- A mentoring partnership might include a school (and its counselors, teachers, administrators), or it could be a university, youth club, non profit organization, business, corporation, service club, etc.
- Developing partnerships is a great way to create support for your program. Collaboration can potentially provide volunteer staff. For example, when partnerships are formed within a school, the school will sometimes provide an on-site staff member to sign in mentors and mentees, collect mentoring logs, and provide data from report cards. In addition, some schools have provided counselors to train and supervise mentors, as well as monitor mentees.
- Developing partnerships can ease the burden of the program manager’s duties.
- A mentoring program should network with other community mentoring programs either individually or as part of a coalition (for purposes of education, support, sharing resources, exploring funding opportunities, etc.).
- An important part of networking within the community is for an organization to have an attitude of cooperation and helpfulness. This attitude will be handed down from program staff to mentors, and then from the volunteers to the mentees. Territoriality is self-destructive behavior and should be avoided.

Common Pitfall # 5: Program staff has superficial contact with its mentors. Surprisingly, many programs make matches and then rarely make contact with participants again. It's alarming to hear stories about program managers who think they have "X" number of matches out there, but are not sure. The safety of the mentees, and the liability of the program are at stake.

Best Practice # 5: Quality mentoring programs provide meaningful, ongoing contact, including supervision, with mentors.

A seven-year study by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) looked at practices of similarly structured mentor programs and found that supervision of mentors is essential, and that adequate supervision was a major factor in reducing the fail rates of mentor/mentee matches. The study found that face-to-face supervision that was initiated by the mentoring program was preferable to volunteer-initiated contact and was also more effective than phone contact.

- Develop the kind of relationship with your mentors that you would like to them to have with the mentees (consistent, caring, accountable, respectful, etc.)
- Include initial and ongoing training for the participants.
- Contact should always include the consistent monitoring, supervision and support of the match. Remember, research shows that when supervisors are proactive, matches have a statistically greater chance of survival.
- Contact or supervision can be in an individual, group, or a combination of the two. The most important element is that the supervision is consistent and "hands on."

Common Pitfall #6: Nothing is special about the program. Some mentoring programs have that "flat feeling." "Flat programs" are created by circumstances previously mentioned in this module. Underfunded programs have a lack of committed leadership, do not incorporate their mission and vision, don't partner with the community, and have little contact with the participants. These programs don't have the energy and resources to bring their program out of the doldrums.

Best Practice #6: Quality mentoring programs are remarkable and noticeable. They capitalize on unique marketing concepts.

Programs need to constantly strive to move from the ordinary to the extraordinary. A program that promotes a sense of purpose sells to participants, program partners, and funders. What makes a mentoring program extraordinary?

- ❑ **Covering the Basics:** The program must first have adequate staffing, good leadership, an integrated mission, community partnership, and contact with program participants.
- ❑ **Special Theme:** The program centers around something exciting? Sports, arts, career, entrepreneurship, etc.
- ❑ **Special Purpose:** The program has a very specific goal or focuses on a specific population that is fighting against overwhelming odds. Example: A mentoring program at a community college who helps former gang members become certified teachers. This program serves an underserved population and has a very specific goal.
- ❑ **Special People:** The program is animated by excited, committed, passionate people. Staff members care deeply about the program. The Board of Directors is eager and supportive. The mentors inspire others both within the organization and out in the community.
- ❑ **Special Incentives:** The program provides “extras” such as speakers, food, field trips, sporting events, community projects, celebrations, raffles, prizes, etc.
- ❑ **Special Ways of Doing Things:** Examples: Having your “wait list mentees” write letters: “why I want a mentor,” and reading them at recruiting meetings. Calling mentors “associate staff” and including them in decision-making process. Giving media a “thanks for your support certificate” each time they come out to cover you. Having effective “ice breakers” at all meetings. Reiterating your program’s mission and philosophy over and over. For example: “We want to help build relationships based on trust and respect.”

EVALUATING THE FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF YOUR MENTORING PROGRAM

Looking back at the issues raised by program managers in this study, what is often missing from programs are the “foundational elements.” A program that lacks basic or a foundational element is a program that will be unable to move ahead. For example, if you have a large mentoring program, it makes little sense to try improving it by increasing the number of active matches or mentor hours when your program manager has another full time job. The first area of business would be to find a way that a dedicated person could put in 40 hours a week with the program.

As mentoring is very new to the social service arena, many programs are still struggling with providing the foundational elements. For this reason, it might be a helpful exercise for program personnel to assess what basics they believe are essential for the improvement of the program.

Exercise: *Review the list of the major elements that program managers identified as often missing in their programs. Then consider the “runners-up.”*

Major Missing Program Elements

- Proper funding and staffing
- Passionate, committed persons in leadership positions
- A focus on mission, goals, objectives, throughout program
- Networking, collaboration with community partners
- Meaningful ongoing contact with mentors
- “Special” qualities of programs (the extras)

Other Missing Elements

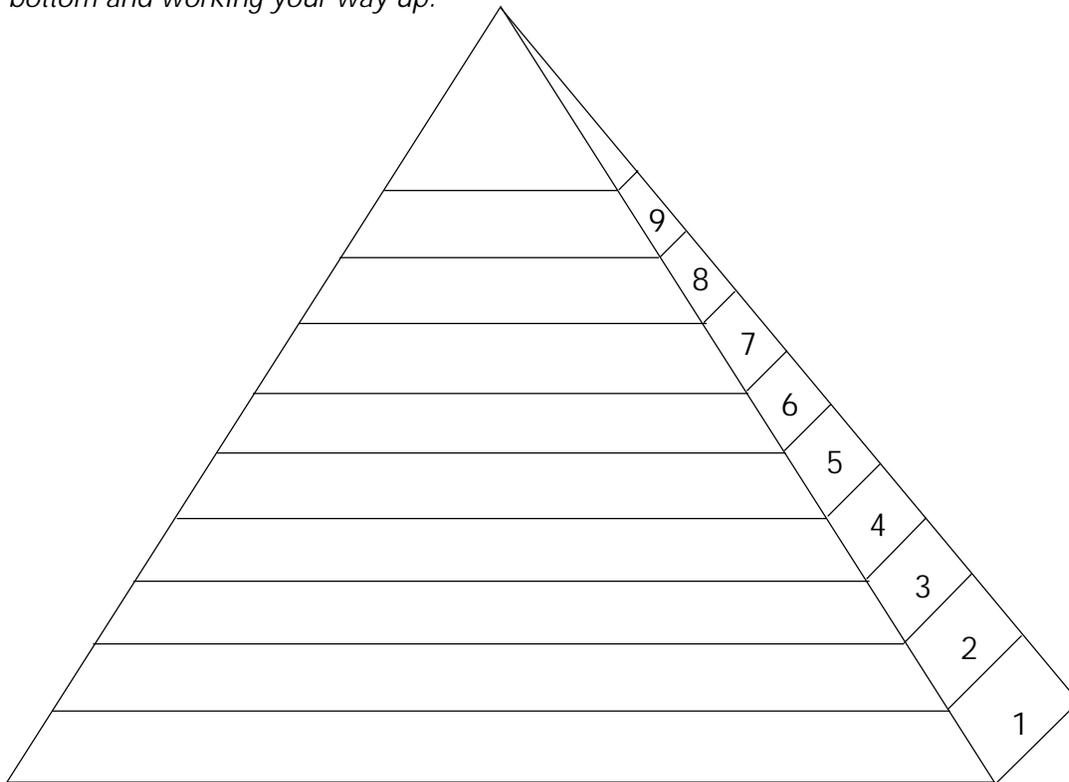
- Appropriate cross-cultural considerations
- Well defined and executed evaluation plan
- Process for keeping mentor volunteers interested during wait time
- Ability to work together with partners (e.g., partners of a specific grant)
- A well thought out operational plan
- A supportive Board of Directors
- Fully developed policies and procedures of program
- Access to a “human relations person”
- Well-developed mentor training
- Sufficient contact with parents

Identify Missing Basic Elements in Your Program

Combine elements from either or both lists on previous page and/or add your own.

Pyramid Of Basic Program Needs

Fill in the pyramid section by section, starting with your most critical need on the bottom and working your way up.



Following are four concrete examples from the field of how mentor program managers have used the current “best practices” knowledge to enhance their programs:

1. Using the Quality Assurance Standards as an Operations Manual

Some start-up mentoring programs have reported their success in using the QA Standards to develop their programs in a step-by-step fashion. They point out that the QA Standards can be used as a menu, a time line, and an operations manual.

A simple way to begin implementing the QA Standards is to purchase a large three-ring binder and create tabs for each of the ten QA Standards. You fill out each section as you go along:

- 1: Statement of Purpose and Long Range Plan
- 2: Recruiting Plan
- 3: Orientation
- 4: Screening Plan
- 5: Training Curriculum
- 6: Matching Strategy
- 7: Monitoring Process
- 8: Support, Recognition, Retention Component
- 9: Closure Steps
- 10: Evaluation

A program manager who developed her program in this manner recently commented, “At the end of several months when I finished my operations manual, I went back to see what I’d missed, and I found that I hadn’t left anything out.”

2. Using the “Two-by-Two Approach” to Increase Program Consistency and Reduce Program Liability*

The Two-by-Two Approach means that while mentors and youth are matched individually or one-on-one, two mentees paired with two mentors participate in mentoring activities together. This design is beneficial for the following reasons:

- When a mentor is forced to miss an appointment with a young person, the child is still part of a small, caring group.
- When a child is unable to attend a session, the mentor still has a focus for that meeting.
- Security and liability concerns are greatly lessened with the addition of a second adult. Some programs may wish to begin with a Two-by-Two Approach and change to one-on-one as the relationship matures and everyone gets to know one another.
- The two mentors serve as resources and sounding boards for one another, a valuable source of feedback. They also serve to make each other accountable.

3. Providing Regional Comprehensive Mentoring Services: The Coalition Approach

Many involved in the mentoring world think it would be very helpful to offer services to every young person who could benefit by a mentoring relationship. In small communities this may be possible, but in large cities, providing comprehensive mentoring services is very difficult (not enough quality programs, programs serve only specific populations in specific areas, etc.).

A group in San Diego called the Balboa Park Collaborative is tackling the problem of developing comprehensive mentoring services, not by taking on an entire city, but by focusing on “a piece of the pie.” Specifically, they are engaging in planning discussions to provide mentoring for a “satellite of schools” consisting of two area high schools and their feeder schools (a junior high, and ten elementary schools).

The focus of the Collaborative is to serve more youth by combining individual mentoring efforts, which in turn will cut costs and attract funders. They join their efforts in the following traditional program areas: recruiting, orientation, trainings, celebrations, program evaluation, and fund raising events.

* Designed by Judy Strother, EMT Consultant (see Appendix C)

The Collaborative has already received financial support from San Diego's Health and Human Service Agency, as this organization is interested in helping develop a model of collaboration which could be used in social service programs within San Diego and elsewhere.

Recently, 15 interested parties spent a day brainstorming for a 12-month plan. Four task areas were developed, and members broke up into the following committees.

Structure and Support Team

GOAL: Hire a staff member to support the efforts of the mentoring collaborative.

- Develop job description
- Define funding needs and funding sources
- Develop a mechanism to guarantee sustainability of position

Planning and Development Team

GOAL: Research and develop plan for how the collaborative could work together; develop proposals for funding sources.

- Review existing materials regarding development of collaboratives of social service programs in general, and specifically mentoring programs.
- Write a concept paper on how a mentoring collaborative could work together to develop comprehensive services.
- Write a business plan.
- Match plan with funding sources.
- Develop funding proposals and send to funders.

Evaluation and Assessment Team

GOAL #1: Develop and implement a collaborative evaluation plan (common evaluations for individual mentoring programs).

- Determine what to evaluate; identify a criterion.
- Research "best practices" models
- Develop a common evaluation plan
- Share findings with a larger group

GOAL #2: Assess existing mentoring programs and the services they are providing and services which they plan to provide.

- Develop and send out a survey for schools, churches, youth services organizations.
- Collect data, develop an asset map of services.
- Determine gaps in service areas.
- There is a lack of partnering and/or networking within the community.
- Share findings with a larger group.

Public Relations Team

GOAL: To inform all schools in the Balboa Park Mentoring Collaborative area about availability of services, and to build relationships with school staff.

- Identify schools and contacts at school sites.
- Categorize parties interested in developing/receiving mentoring services.
- Create flyers and pamphlets for schools/parents.
- Develop a speaker's bureau.
- Attend school meetings to encourage participation.
- Build relationships with school's administrative staff.
- Invite identified schools to participate in receiving mentoring services.
- Create an annual event to recognize contributors.

4. Collaborative Website as a Directory of Programs

A number of mentoring collaboratives in large metropolitan areas in California have created mentoring directories as a way to provide information on individual mentoring programs to prospective volunteer mentors. In addition, many of these collaboratives have developed relationships with a clearing house (such as United Way Volunteer Center). A potential volunteer calls the clearing house inquiring about mentoring they are connected to an overview of all the area programs.

One problem with both of these methods is that information is often outdated within a few days. For example, a program that needs mentors desperately one week may not need any the next. Potential volunteers can easily become discouraged when they take the time and effort to connect with programs which do not need their services.

A collaborative-sponsored website can possibly improve this situation. For instance, a common website could have separate pages for individual mentoring programs which the potential volunteer (as well as someone from the clearinghouse) could access. The home page of the collaborative website would describe the different types of mentoring programs, as well as list the questions a potential volunteer needs to ask the respective program managers. Included in each program's individual pages would be: history of the program, geographical area served, type of population served, requirements and commitments for mentors, general policies, and the program's current need for mentors.

To maintain a listing on the website, each program would be required to update information at least once every two weeks. A reminder to each program to update information (especially current needs for mentors) would be periodically sent to program managers via email from the web master.

The most advanced mentoring directory found to date is run by the San Francisco Mentoring Coalition. It has approximately 30 programs listed. The web address is www.sf.mentor.org.

JUMP Project Evaluation APPENDIX B

Excerpted from the 1998 Report to Congress of the JUMP Project, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

JUMP PROJECT BARRIERS AND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

The 1998 Report to Congress of the JUMP (Juvenile Mentoring Program) Project is a preliminary evaluation of 93 mentoring projects nationwide. Many of the barriers uncovered in this evaluation are the same barriers encountered by other mentoring projects. The proposed solutions may serve as a guide in helping you to enhance your own mentor program.

AREA OF CONCERN: *Unrealistic Project Goals*

- **BARRIER:** We thought we would have more mentors, and that we could serve all youths who wanted mentors.

Solution: We redefined our service goals and our eligibility criteria for mentees, and expanded pool from which to recruit mentors.

- **BARRIER:** Scheduled weekly mentor meetings were not well attended – mentors didn't have additional time to give.

Solution: We changed trainings and supervision from weekly to monthly. We also survey the mentors and ask them what issues they would like to cover in the meetings.

- **BARRIER:** Many of the referred youth did not want a mentor (we in no way predicted that this would happen). This left us with a time consuming screening process, and not enough mentees were in the program.

Solution: We worked with staff in the referring agencies to develop pre-referral screening criteria; we were then able to identify young people who were interested in finding out more about the program.

- **BARRIER:** We expected miracles of transformation from high risk youngsters by working with them only an hour or two per week during one school year.

***Solution:** We began developing specific and realistic goals for each mentee. Small achievable steps like staying in school for a full day, or not getting a referral for one week. We all felt more satisfied, and we know that these small steps will lead to bigger ones.*

- **BARRIER:** We tried to bring up the program too quickly, not realizing that it takes a tremendous amount of time to implement and institutionalize operating procedures.

***Solution:** We reevaluated to determine which activities we could start right away, then we prioritized steps for implementing the rest of our program plan systematically.*

AREA OF CONCERN: *Inadequate Staff and Volunteer Resources*

- **BARRIER:** As the only full-time staff, I found I was trying to be all things to all people.

***Solution:** Because there was no budget for additional staff, we recruited volunteers to handle some of the administrative duties. Some of these people were those who didn't think they could handle the job of a full time mentor, but they wanted to support the program in some tangible way.*

- **BARRIER:** Our staff turnover rate was very high.

***Solution:** We realized we had unrealistic expectations for our staffers. We overworked them--no wonder they left! We developed more appropriate descriptions of our Program Director and other staff members.*

- **Barrier:** Limited resources kept us from implementing some of the supplementary activities we had planned, such as writing a newsletter.

***Solution:** Rather than abandon our plans completely, we amended our goal by writing a periodic bulletin rather than a newsletter.*

- **BARRIER:** We have a difficulty recruiting enough mentors, especially males from a targeted population.

Solution: *We spent more time in the community recruiting, and we were able to expand the pool of organizations from which we recruit. We developed relationships with businesses which designate our program as their community project for the year. Businesses which allowed their employees to provide mentoring on company time helped our mentor pool tremendously.*

AREA OF CONCERN: *Lengthy and Cumbersome Screening Procedures*

- **BARRIER:** We lost some mentors during the lengthy screening process.

Solution: *We developed a graduated program where mentors can participate in the program in a limited way until screening is complete. We don't allow them individual contact with a mentee, but there are some things we let them do during this waiting period. This keeps their interest high, and it also helps with training the mentor.*

AREA OF CONCERN: *Insufficient Community-Based Support*

- **BARRIER:** Everyone in the community wanted the mentoring project, but when it came time to pitch in, they disappeared.

Solution: *It helped when we got specific about our needs, and we translated that into how their support would actually help a youth. We also educated community-based organizations as to how they might be able to help. In addition, we had human interest stories in the local paper.*

- **BARRIER:** Funding in rural areas was very difficult because there were few corporations or large businesses.

Solution: *This still remains a problem, but we have been able to persuade several small businesses to band together.*

AREA OF CONCERN: *Lack of Adequate Parental Involvement*

- **BARRIER:** We serve youth whose parents aren't normally involved. How do we get these uninvolved parents to become involved (a "catch 22" situation).

Solution: *We have done a variety of things. Sometimes school staff will let us know when a parent is coming in and we will try to be there. We have also conducted home visits.*

- **BARRIER:** Getting parents to show up the first time.

Solution: *We developed incentives, such as a visit to the food bank, guest speakers, a "make-over" night for moms from the cosmetic department of local department stores.*

Two by Two

A New Approach to Mentoring

By Judy Strother

For those who have been in the youth development field, mentoring is a valued strategy for having a positive impact on the lives of children. We have all seen how the addition of a caring adult to a child's life brings about miracles. Yet there are issues associated with mentoring that are of concern to program administrators, staff and parents whose children participate in these programs.

The most common mentoring strategy is to structure a relationship between the youth and an adult mentor to provide him or her with the security and stability that are critically important to the successful development of a child. That being a central objective, when a mentor does not show up for a meeting the child is often devastated and the experience reinforces what many youth have come to believe: abandonment or neglect is the norm for child-adult relationships.

Another common occurrence is the arrival of a mentor for a meeting where the student does not show up. Many young people are invited to participate in mentoring programs because they have a pattern of poor attendance; this behavior can carry over to the mentoring relationship. Most mentors are aware of this and will continue trying to reach the child but will get discouraged if the problem continues. Mentors are a valuable resource—one we do not want to squander.

Security issues are also of concern to program staff and parents. While responsible programs go to great lengths to screen potential mentors, in the back of our minds most of us are afraid of the one-in-a-million chance that the wrong person becomes a mentor. Many people who express an interest in being a mentor also raise a concern with being accused of inappropriate behavior. Because they would have no witness who could speak for them, even the possibility deters them from volunteering to mentor a child.

Many of the children who might benefit from a mentor have had little opportunity to interact with an adult who encourages them to set and pursue goals and to develop self-esteem. Often, the presence of another child makes the intensity of the relationship more manageable.

Finally, the potential mentor may be concerned with whether he or she will know the appropriate course of action or advise in response to the things children want to discuss.

What is the Two by Two Approach?

A variation on the traditional model of one-to-one mentoring provides an answer to many of these concerns. The approach is called “Two by Two.” Two by Two means that while mentors and youth are matched individually, or one-on-one, they participate in mentoring activities on a two-by-two (two mentors and two youth) basis. This design is beneficial for the following reasons:

- When a mentor is forced to miss an appointment with a young person the child is still part of a small, caring group. This helps cushion the impact of the mentor’s absence. The second mentor is familiar with both youth and the primary mentor can brief him about any issue he or she might need to address that day.
- IF a child is unable to attend a mentoring session, the mentor still has a focus for the meeting. (This would not be satisfactory on a continuing basis and should be brought to the attention of the appropriate program staff; they will participate in the resolution of any problem causing the failures to appear.)
- Security concerns on the part of the program, the mentor, the youth or parents are greatly lessened with the addition of a second adult. Some programs may wish to begin with a two-by-two approach and change to one-on-one as the relationship matures and everyone gets to know one another.
- Finally, two mentors serve as resources and sounding boards for one another. Each serves not only as a second ear for the other but, because many of the discussions and interactions that occur between a mentor and child are actually observed by the second mentor, he or she becomes a valuable source of feedback.

Implementation

The Two by Two Approach is currently being tested in three locations in southern California:

- Gompers Middle School in South Central Los Angeles
(federally funded under the JUMP initiative, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention)
- A Place Called Home
(in partnership with and funded by HBO)
- The Carson High School Two-By-Two Mentor Program
(funded by a state grant)

Implications

The two-by-two concept has implications for program and evaluation designs, including aspects of recruiting, screening and mentoring activities. It also affects confidentiality and parent/guardian consent. These procedures may need to be changed to reflect the involvement of a second mentor. With the incorporation of the Two by Two Approach, the program may choose to measure its impact on recruitment rates, program drop out rates and any effect on the rate of security concerns.

