

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF MENTORING.....

How can we summarize the importance of mentoring in someone's life? One word: *Impact*. There's no doubt that mentoring promotes positive development. Time and time again youth in DCF mention about the need for mentors. Most often youth clearly say that they want unpaid mentors.

Mentors provide coaching and guidance that can bridge the gap between a youth's goals, and his/her desired outcomes. Mentor relationships can offer a protective buffer from substance abuse, bullying, breaking the law, and academic failure. Still, less than half of disadvantaged youth report having a mentor according to a National study published by Brigham Young University (BYU) in 2009.

Consider these results: Findings from a 5 year study conducted by Big Brothers Big Sisters on a little less than 1,000 youth revealed that youth who were mentored are significantly more **confident in their academic abilities** and **less likely to display behavioral problems**. A finding that stood out was that **girls who were mentored were four times less likely to bully, fight, lie, or express anger than girls without a mentor**. These findings were also true for boys who are two times less likely than non-mentored boys to develop negative behaviors like bullying, fighting, lying, cheating, losing their temper, or expressing anger. **Boys who were mentored were also three times less likely than boys without a mentor to suffer peer pressure.**

Mentoring has been linked to academic success. Youth who are paired with an adult mentor, specifically in the teaching field have a **50 percent greater likelihood of attending college. The rate nearly doubled if the mentor was a teacher.**

A study conducted by the University of Georgia, on African American Youth, showed mentoring to be beneficial to disadvantaged teens. African American, disadvantaged teens were more likely to experience hardships and discrimination, but while being mentored reported the ability to overcome such challenges due to support from mentors. **This same study also found that mentoring youth regardless of their income level increased a youth's intellectual, interpersonal, and emotional growth.** These same youth became better planners, organizers, and problem solvers and their self-esteem increased.

Youth in foster care report that mentors help make them believe that someone cares. A column written in The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring noted that mentoring relationships can play an enormous role in helping foster youth reach their academic and personal potential. The experience also nurtures a youth's ability to learn and thrive.

DCF has One on One Mentoring Program (OOMP) contracts with local service providers statewide to supply volunteer adult mentors to DCF involved adolescents ages 14-17 and 18-21 (if they remain involved with DCF following their commitment). The OOMP providers recruit, screen and train eligible candidates to become mentors, partner with DCF social workers, then match approved mentors with DCF committed adolescents and young adults. The goal of the mentoring program is to provide an important and long lasting relationship to adolescents who are placed outside of their homes. Mentors are involved in the adolescent's life as a guide, a positive adult role model and a confidant. A mentor's commitment to the adolescent is very important. Mentors maintain weekly contact with their mentees and visits face to face at a minimum of three times a month. The OOMP program aims at maintaining these relationships on a long term basis. Ideally, the relationships evolve into life-long friendships.

Please contact the Adolescent and Juvenile Services Division to find out how you can help connect a youth with a mentor!