

# Mentoring High Risk Youth

Mentoring Programs in the Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems



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[youthmentoring.org.au](http://youthmentoring.org.au)

# Overview

## Mentoring in the Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems

- Mentoring program structures
- Mentors
- Young people in your programs

# Benefits of Mentoring

- Positive strategy to youth development
- Deterrent for risky behaviour
- Improves academic performance and retains students in education
- Increases social networks

# Young people who are mentored

- Have better overall psychological wellbeing and report high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. (Grossman and Bulle,2006)
- Reported high levels of resilience. (Wener 2001)

# Mentoring Works Best



# Mentoring Works Best



# Important!



There is **no one size fits all** model.

Every program must be designed to **meet the specific needs** of the young people it hopes to help

“We need to stop making young people fit our system!

Our systems need to fit our young people”



- Geoff Butt, John Jay Centre University of New York

# Program Structures

- Mentoring programs alone are not enough for high risk youth
  - Holistic approach to supporting the young person
- Quality program practices
- Match length
  - Critical for foster care children
  - Relationships < 6 months can cause more harm than good
- Combination of 1:1 and group/team mentoring
- Early intervention best for youth in Foster Care

# Mentors

- Recruiting
  - Mentors from helping professions
  - Similar experiences
  - University/college students as mentors
    - ✓ Can earn extra credit
    - ✓ Essays/ assignments can data for the program
    - ✗ Limited life experience
    - ✗ May lack the maturity needed for problem solving (not skilled themselves)

# Mentors

- Training
  - Managing expectations
  - Worst case scenarios
- Mentors need to be supported throughout the relationship
  - Tackling issues before they become major problems

# Young People

- Must be in the program voluntarily
- Trained before they are matched
- Have a say in choosing their mentor
- Prepared for the match to end

# Summary

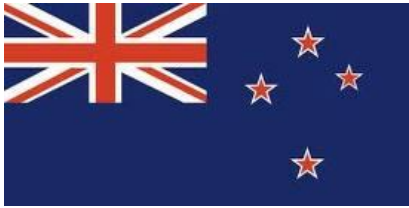
- Mentoring relationships are REAL relationships and don't always go to plan
- Prepare mentors for the worst case scenario
- Prepare the young person on how to handle conflict
- Program practices will impact the success or failure of these relationships
- Traditional models of mentoring need to be modified to meet the needs of these two populations

# Over the Fence

Examining international mentoring policy



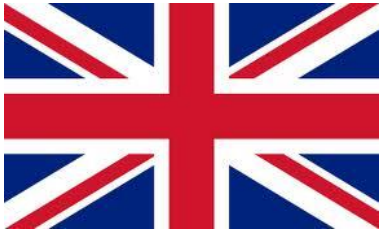
# Peak Bodies



Youth Mentoring Network NZ



MENTOR  
National Mentoring  
Partnership



Mentoring and  
Befriending Foundation



Mentoring  
Canada



Australian Youth  
Mentoring Network



# International Mentoring Policy

## USA

- FY2004 - FY2009 \$450M
  - Education Department
  - Health and Human Services (children of prisoners)
- FY2009/10 funding cut in half!
  - Program evaluation was critical
  - Only children of prisoners program remains

# International Mentoring Policy

## UK

- Emphasis on crime prevention programs
- Community based mentoring is more dominant

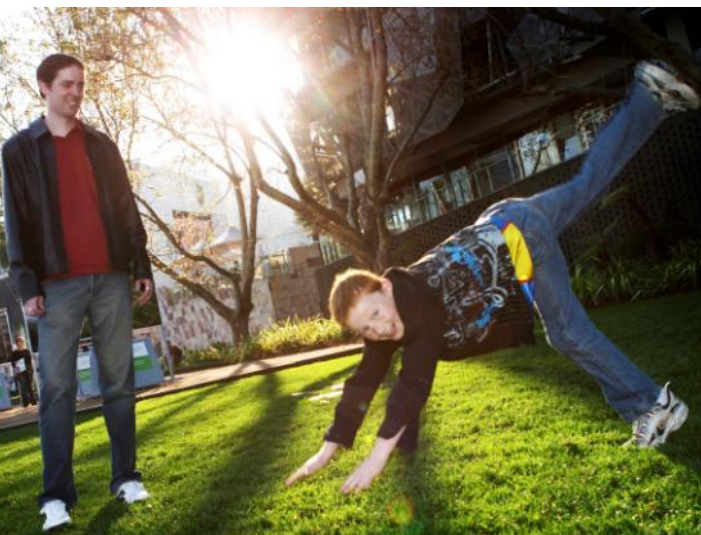
# International Mentoring Policy

## AUS

- \$12M for mentoring ended in 2009
  - Competing for funds in a pool of \$618M
  - Number of programs has decreased
- WA Youth Mentoring Framework
  - Minimum funding of programs for 5 years
  - Programs must meet NYMB to receive funding

# What can we learn from this?

- Quality matches take precedent over quantity of matches
- Quality matches will provide the evidence to justify further funding for the sector.



Quality mentoring programs can make a difference and will transform lives



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**Thank you!**

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