Characterizing Mentoring Programs for Promoting Children and Young People’s Wellbeing

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Abstract

Mentoring programs are widely used to promote wellbeing in children and young people and to prevent emotional and behavioral difficulties. There is a growing evidence base on mentoring programs, and research is needed to review and synthesize the extant literature to examine the characteristics of successful mentoring programs. In this study, a scoping review adhering to best practice standards was conducted, and four academic databases were searched for relevant literature. Data were extracted to characterize mentoring programs along eight domains which were deemed to be most important in the current literature: target group, design, recruitment, matching, training, the mentoring relationship, support, and evaluation. Findings from the present review suggest that characteristics of successful mentoring programs may include recruiting mentees with intermediate levels of difficulties, providing ongoing training and support to mentors, matching mentors and mentees on personality styles, fostering an effective mentor–mentee relationship, and routine outcome monitoring to ensure continual evaluation.

Keywords: Mentoring, child, adolescent, youth, mental health, wellbeing
Mentoring programs have become a very popular way of seeking to promote resilience and wellbeing in children and young people. In 2006, for example, there were more than 5,000 mentoring programs in the United States alone (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2006).

Studies evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs have only recently emerged in the academic literature (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). This is primarily because of the multidisciplinary and applied nature of mentoring, which has meant that reports have been published predominantly in the grey literature and a significant proportion have been produced internally by private foundations and other organizations.

While there is now a large body of academic literature on the effectiveness of mentoring programs, there is a very limited literature on how to deliver effective mentoring programs (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). There are very few experimental or observational studies that report the correlates of good outcomes. Even fewer studies highlight what factors may be necessary to ensure delivery of a successful mentoring program (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009; Sipe, 2002). None of the reviews previously undertaken on features of programs moderating outcome has been systematic.

We undertook this review to bridge this gap in the evidence base and identify characteristics associated with positive outcomes in terms of (a) the target groups of mentors and mentees, (b) the design of mentoring programs and their settings, (c) the methods of recruitment used, (d) the way mentors and mentees were matched, (e) the training provided for mentors, (f) aspects of the mentor–mentee relationship that were associated with good outcomes, and (g) the ways effective support could be provided to mentors, with a view to making recommendations for future research and practice.
Method

Identification of Studies

Articles were retrieved by searching OVID databases (Medline, Embase, Cochrane Library) and CINAHL Plus for any articles published in the period 1990–2014 that included mentoring keywords in the title. Articles were also retrieved from grey literature databases such as PsychExtra and Healthcare Management Information Consortium. Further databases such as TRIP were also used. We searched for and combined with the Boolean operator “OR” all relevant subject headings, using the “explosions” function where needed and keywords in titles and abstracts for two concepts: “mentoring” and “program.”

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The review strategy was informed by the realist review, a model of research synthesis designed for working with complex social programs (Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe, 2005). References were screened iteratively with increasing depth until a focused cohort was obtained and reviewed in full. Each article was assessed for inclusion according to the following criteria: (a) the article was published in the English language in a peer-reviewed journal; b) the article discussed mentoring programs to improve positive youth development; and (c) the article focused on programs related to mentoring children and young people up to 25 years of age.

Search Flow

The initial database search yielded 3,860 records; after duplicates were removed, 2400 records remained (see Figure 1). The titles were then screened for meeting the inclusion criteria. In cases where this was not clear from the title, the abstract was reviewed. In cases where it was still not clear from the abstract whether the article met the inclusion criteria, the
full-text article was reviewed. After screening, 17 papers were found to have described and evaluated certain aspects of the delivery of a mentoring program (see Table 1).

The findings were then grouped together into the following eight domains based on the most common components of a mentoring program: target group, program design and setting, recruitment, matching, training, the mentoring relationship, support, and evaluation. Out of the 17 papers identified, 13 were observational studies and 4 were randomized controlled trials (see Table 2).

Results

Target Group

Mentees

There are different theories about who benefits the most from mentoring programs, but there is limited evidence on this question. The general assumption is that the most disadvantaged and/or at risk young people are especially likely to gain from mentoring programs (Drexler, Borrmann, & Müller-Kohlenberg, 2011; Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002). For example, mentoring is considered most effective when directed toward young people who have been identified as exhibiting behavioral difficulties such as delinquent behavior or discipline problems at school (DuBois et al., 2011).

The most recent meta-analysis suggests that mentoring programs have a stronger effect when they serve young people who are experiencing either individual (e.g., personal predispositions in the child, such as genetic risk; Rhodes, 1994) and environmental risk (e.g. family environment, school environment, extra familial sources of support) simultaneously, or environmental risk alone (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005b). Due to the relatively small number of evaluations, it is not possible to say whether environmental as opposed to individual risk, or vice versa, is the determining factor underlying likely responsiveness to mentoring (DuBois et al., 2002).
Another theory is that young people experiencing intermediate levels of difficulties, rather than those presenting with either severe difficulties or relatively mild problems, are more likely to benefit from mentoring programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2013; Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011).

**Mentors**

Mentors are recruited from a variety of settings. Most programs use adults from the local community. Other programs use young adults who are more experienced and may have more in common with the targeted young people. Recently, however there is growing recognition that peers might be an untapped source of mentors. While the term “peer” connotes “of the same age”, mentoring peers are generally at least 2 years older than the mentee. For example in the Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based programs, mentors tend to be at least two grades higher (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011).

Mentors themselves also benefit from mentoring programs. The benefits of mentoring are thought to include increased self-reflection, increased self-awareness, and improved interpersonal and communication skills (Herrera et al., 2011). However, little research has been conducted on understanding the true benefit that mentoring brings to mentors.

**Program Design and Setting**

Consensus suggests that the geographical location of a mentoring program has a significant impact on its effectiveness (Pryce, Niederkorn, Goins, & Reiland, 2011). This may be because of the cultural contexts within which these programs are implemented (Farruggia, Bullen, Solomon, Collins, & Dunphy, 2011).

Research in this field has focused on school-based mentoring models, and very little research has been conducted on programs in other environments. Offering mentoring sessions in school has been found to help students to direct positive feelings about the program toward the school, improving their overall attitude to school (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan,
This is reinforced by the focus of such programs on attendance and attainment. Mentoring in schools has its limitations, however; for example, a school setting requires the program to operate within the confines of the academic calendar. As a result, the mentoring relationships rarely persist outside the academic calendar and are often less intensive (Karcher, 2008; Portwood, Ayers, Kinnison, Waris, & Wise, 2005).

Research is increasingly focusing on community-based mentoring programs as an alternative channel for promoting positive development (Tebes et al., 2007). Community programs have several characteristics that could make them more effective than school-based programs, such as longer meetings and mentee–mentor matches of longer duration. Evidence suggests these might be a viable alternative to school programs, as it has been found that community-based mentors spend twice as much time with their mentees as school-based mentors do (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Portwood et al., 2005). Given that relationships of longer duration have yielded better results, one might expect bigger impacts from community-based programs (Grossman & Johnson, 1999).

Engagement with all stakeholders throughout the process has a positive impact on the success of the program (Larose, Cyrenne, Garceau, Brodeur, & Tarabulsy, 2010). For example, involving parents from the start in program design and implementation is beneficial to the overall success of the program. Certain programs have found that non-supportive parents can sabotage the mentoring relationships, so it is imperative to engage with parents from the start (King et al., 2002; Sipe, 2002; Spencer, 2007).

**Recruitment**

Recruiting mentors and mentees is challenging. Little research has been dedicated to finding out how best to recruit mentors and mentees. Most of the evidence is based on working with groups who are able to engage relatively easily, but very little evidence is available on the process of how to engage so-called hard-to-reach young people—those who
are alienated from educational experiences or other services for children and young people, activities, or constructive leisure pursuits.

There is general agreement in the literature that it is important to screen prospective mentors to ensure that they are able to persist in a relationship of longer duration (Barnetz & Feigin, 2012; Sipe, 2002). In a qualitative study of early ending matches with 31 mentors and mentees in two community-based mentoring programs, abandonment, lack of interest, and unfulfilled expectations were identified as the major themes that contributed to prematurely ending matches. Short-term relationships are associated with negative experiences; thus, it is imperative that mentors and mentees are both invested and interested in participating in the program in the long term (Spencer, 2007).

This is why some programs do not rely on chance and prefer to choose mentors on the basis of recommendations from teachers (DuBois, 2002). Research has suggested that certain young people with specific backgrounds, for example a helping professional background, are more likely to be reliable mentors (Bodin & Leifman, 2011; Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012). Other programs recruit mentors from the community surrounding the school (King et al., 2002).

Other more basic factors may encourage participation. When running recruitment workshops, it has been found that financial reimbursement of mentors and parents for transportation, providing catering during the workshop, and other basic forms of assistance may ensure participation and exposure far more than any program content (Pryce et al., 2011).

**Matching**

In the studies included in this review, evidence suggests that mentors and mentees need to be matched appropriately and thoughtfully (DuBois et al., 2002; Schwartz, Rhodes, Spencer, & Grossman, 2013). The thinking is that having more common ground between
mentors and mentees is likely to make relationships more sustainable. In some programs, professionals operating the programs are given the responsibility of making the matches after giving them the opportunity to get to know the available mentors (Barnetz & Feigin, 2012).

Different programs have matched mentors and mentees according to different characteristics, such as race, gender, or interests. Many programs match according to gender and ethnicity for practical reasons or due to liability issues. Early research looking at the effects of cross-ethnicity matches found no empirical evidence for matching according to ethnicity. In a meta-analysis of matching, race or ethnicity was in fact found to be a predictor of less favorable effects within the best-fitting model (DuBois et al., 2011). Inter-ethnicity matches have been shown to be as close and supportive as same-ethnicity matches (Herrera et al., 2000). The available evidence suggests that optimal matching of mentors and mentees, however, requires going beyond demographic characteristics, and a deeper and more nuanced consideration of compatibility.

Increasingly, research suggests that matching mentors and mentees based on similar interests is more important. There is evidence to suggest that mentors who share similar interests to their mentee feel closer and more emotionally supportive of their mentee compared with mentors who do not share similar interests (DuBois et al., 2011; Herrera et al., 2000; Jekielek et al., 2002). In addition, the evidence suggests that the perception of similarity tend to foster higher quality and longer term relationships between mentors and mentees (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Madia & Lutz, 2004). There are several strategies to achieve this, for example, by matching based on interests that are most relevant to program goals, such as career interests in the case of a work-based mentoring program (Rollin, Kaiser-Ulrey, Potts, & Creason, 2003).
While matching practices have shown to have an impact on the effectiveness of mentoring relationships, the evidence suggests they are not as critical as screening, training, and supervision (Herrera et al., 2000).

Training

The general consensus is that it is important to train mentors prior to any activities (Barnetz & Feigin, 2012; Deutsch & Spencer, 2009; DuBois, 2002; King et al., 2002). It has been found that mentors who are more confident and knowledgeable tend to have greater success (Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002).

It is also agreed that ongoing training is imperative to sustaining mentoring relationships and ensure good-quality relationships (DuBois et al., 2002). It is noteworthy that providing ongoing training once relationships have begun is not common in mentoring programs (DuBois et al., 2002). In a qualitative study, lack of mentoring skills was identified as a major contributing factor to the premature ending of mentoring relationships. Problems identified were lack of mentee focus, unrealistic or developmentally inappropriate expectations of the mentee, and low awareness of the mentor’s personal biases and how cultural differences shape relationships (Spencer, 2007).

Mentors might benefit from training on how to encourage mentees to sustain interest in the mentoring relationship (Pryce et al., 2011) and to encourage them. As trust builds between the mentor and the mentee, mentors can then work more independently with their mentees (Liang, Spencer, West, & Rappaport, 2013).

It has been suggested that it may be of benefit to train other program staff to help in instances where the mentor’s capacities may falter based on inexperience, fatigue, or confusion within the complex process of mentoring (Pryce et al., 2011).
The Mentoring Relationship

Effective and enduring mentoring is associated with higher quality social relationships, greater academic achievement, school engagement, school adjustment, and more positive views of the future (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006).

To date, many researchers have attempted to identify the components of mentoring relationships that are essential for a high-quality mentoring relationship. The main components of mentoring relationships identified as essential pertain to the youth’s interpersonal history (Keller & Pryce, 2012), social competence, and developmental stage, the duration of the mentoring relationship (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005b; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014; Jekielek et al., 2002), program practices that help establish and support the mentoring relationships, and the youth’s family and surrounding community (DuBois et al., 2011).

Approaches to the mentoring relationship

Researchers have found that different approaches to mentoring relationships may have different effects on the success of the relationship. Two main different approaches have been identified: the developmental approach and the prescriptive approach. In the developmental approach, mentors initially devote their efforts to building a relationship with the mentee. The mentor’s perception of the needs of the mentee varies over time. In the prescriptive approach, the focus is on goals rather than the mentee’s subjective needs. According to this approach, mentors require the mentee to take equal responsibility for maintaining the relationship. Research has found that mentees in relationships with mentors who take a more developmental approach are more satisfied with their relationship and feel closer to their mentors (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). This is also true for mentees whose mentors engage in social activities with them. Engaging youth is not only enjoyable
for the mentor; for the mentee, being given challenging tasks over which they feel a sense of ownership can serve to promote positive development (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009).

It is also important to consider the type of mentoring relationships the program is aiming to foster (Spencer, 2004). Research has focused primarily on “formal” mentoring relationships, which are artificially put in place by a school or external agency. Recently, however, it has been found that natural mentoring relationships—that is, relationships that are formed authentically without the help of a school or external agency—may be more important, as they tend to be relationships that last longer and occur more frequently (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005b; Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Behrendt, 2005). Existing evidence suggests that natural mentoring relationships have positive benefits on a range of health-related outcomes for the mentee (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005b). We can therefore learn a lot from examining natural mentoring relationships (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005b).

**Relationship duration**

Research suggests that the duration of the mentoring relationship has a significant impact on its effectiveness (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005a; Grossman et al., 2012; Herrera et al., 2011). An analysis of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America mentoring program found that beneficial effects were progressively greater as relationships persisted for longer periods of time. By contrast, mentees in relationships that terminated in less than 3 months showed declines in some areas (e.g. self-esteem) in comparison with the control group, where no mentoring took place (Herrera et al., 2011). This evidence suggests that, while enduring mentoring relationships bring additional benefits, short-lived relationships can actually be harmful.

Our understanding of the relationship characteristics that are predictive of better outcomes—such as frequency of contact, emotional closeness, and relationship longevity—is
largely based on qualitative research rather than empirical data. This is perhaps unsurprising given the difficulties in rigorously assessing the quality of mentoring relationships.

Support for Mentors/Mentees

Support for mentors

The general consensus from the literature is that mentors need ongoing support throughout the mentoring relationship. This is essential because programs in which mentors quit prematurely or which provide only short-term mentoring (i.e., 6 months or shorter) have been associated with negative outcomes (Karcher, 2008).

Structured recreational opportunities and involvement in community-based learning opportunities seem to provide focus and motivation (Smith, 2007). In the initial stages, supporting staff might involve providing structured experiences in the form of ice-breakers, or small-group problem-solving activities during collaborative meetings with mentors and mentees. The aim is to build some small achievements that develop a sense of mastery among mentors (Liang et al., 2013).

Providing ongoing support also entails supervision of the mentoring relationships and monitoring the fidelity of program implementation (DuBois, 2002). It is also an opportunity to communicate guidelines and help manage mentors’ expectations (DuBois et al., 2002).

Support for mentees

Mentoring has traditionally involved one-to-one relationships, but in efforts to serve more young people, agencies have developed several innovative approaches to mentoring such as group mentoring. In the past, program organisers resisted group approaches due to the risk of contagion among mentees with similar risk factors (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999). In addition, there are concerns that group mentoring will expose mentees to negative experiences, such as exclusion from group interactions. The largest study of group mentoring could not calculate an impact due to the small sample size. However, the authors did find that
mentees participating in group mentoring reported less closeness to mentors, and it seems, therefore, that group programs may be more beneficial in improving peer relationships and social skills (Herrera, Vang, & Gale, 2002).

Similarly, mentors cannot provide as much individual attention to individual young people in a group setting, which may prevent or limit the development of mentor–mentee relationships (Herrera et al., 2002). However, other authors have more recently argued that group mentoring may be an effective strategy due to its influence on social skills and focus on relationship building (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006). It has also been suggested that group mentoring may constitute a way of reaching young people who have not been reached by traditional programs owing to discomfort with meeting one-on-one with their mentor. There is growing evidence that a combination of both group and traditional approaches may mutually reinforce the mentoring relationship and act in a synergistic fashion (Pryce, Silverthorn, Sanchez, & DuBois, 2010).

Some researchers have highlighted that it is important to host structured activities for mentors and mentees to support the development of the mentoring relationship (DuBois, 2002; DuBois et al., 2002; Faith, Fiala, Cavell, & Hughes, 2011). Evidence suggests that efforts to incorporate more structured teaching or advocacy activities into the work that mentors do with mentees has a positive impact. Advocacy activities may include helping young people secure a job and improve academically (DuBois et al., 2011).

**Evaluation**

Evaluating mentoring programs is important to capture the major findings and the lessons learned. Many mentoring programs are not fully evaluated, and even when they are, findings are often not described in detail. However, there is a consensus that evaluators should be included in the planning stages of a mentoring program, as it is useful to incorporate evaluative procedures into the core structure of programs themselves (King et al., 2002;
Scannapieco & Painter, 2013). Data should be collected and analyzed in an ongoing process for continuous quality improvement (Parra et al., 2002; Scannapieco & Painter, 2013). Research suggests that comparative tests of alternative program models or practices are likely to be the most useful (DuBois et al., 2011; Pryce et al., 2010). Unfortunately, such evaluations are currently rare.

Design of the evaluation studies varies, but all evaluations use some variation of routine outcome monitoring (Coller & Kuo, 2014; Taussig, Culhane, Garrido, & Knudtson, 2012; Thomas, Lorenzetti, & Spragins, 2013). Unsurprisingly, measures used also vary greatly. Some studies have used more straightforward measures such as academic achievement and others used validated measures of competencies such as the 25-SF Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory.

Discussion

This review presents the findings from the current best available academic literature on what factors are key to delivering successful mentoring programs. Despite the limited availability of academic literature on correlates of good outcomes in mentoring programs, there is evidence that certain practices lead to such programs being more effective.

In terms of the target population, young people who present with more intermediate levels of challenge should be targeted, as they are more likely to benefit from mentoring programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). Peers are a potential source of mentors that should be considered, but the evidence suggests that the peers should be older than the mentees (Herrera et al., 2011). The setting of the mentoring program has an important impact on the efficacy of the intervention, but it is unclear which setting is the most effective (Portwood et al., 2005). Mentoring programs should include routine outcome monitoring for both mentors and mentees (Coller & Kuo, 2014). This facilitates both continuous improvement of a program and also comparison with other programs.
Screening prospective mentors and mentees is important for the effectiveness of the mentoring program. The evidence suggests that recruiting mentors with specific backgrounds, such as people with a helping background, increases the likelihood of enduring relationships. It is also important to consider the basic factors that may encourage participation (Bodin & Leifman, 2011). These include financial reimbursement, food, access, and transportation (Pryce et al., 2011). Matching of mentors to mentees should also be carefully considered, as, on the basis of the published literature, matching based on demographic characteristics appears to have a limited impact on the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. Matching the basis of perceived similarity, in terms of personality or interests, seems to be important (DuBois et al., 2011).

Mentoring programs need to consider how to promote effective mentoring relationships. Effective mentors should have sufficient training and support to be able to develop effective mentoring relationships. Evidence suggests that training mentors before beginning any activities and providing ongoing training is essential to the delivery of an effective mentoring program (DuBois, 2002). Experiential learning involving the mentor and mentee can be an effective way of providing ongoing training. Evidence suggests that mentors should take a developmental and not a prescriptive approach to the mentoring relationship (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009). Effective mentoring relationships take time to develop and last a significant amount of time. Mentors need ongoing support if they are to build effective and safe relationships with their mentees. It is important to host structured activities for mentors and mentees to support the development of the relationship (Faith et al., 2011). Programs should make use of both one-to-one and group activities, as they promote different competencies.

There are limitations to this review; most studies included are observational studies and thus present hypotheses only about the characteristics of effective mentoring programs.
This is often because the focus of an evaluation study is on the effectiveness of mentoring rather than the effectiveness of the delivery of the program. Within each component of a program, existing approaches that have been observed to be correlates of good outcomes need to be tested in a systematic way. As such, there is a need for more randomized control trials to test competing delivery approaches in order to understand which program approaches are the most effective.

Due to the lack of strong evidence concerning the effective components of mentoring programs, there may be lessons that can be learned from other bodies of literature around how to deliver programs to children and adolescents to promote their mental wellbeing. Mentoring is believed to be one of the most important methods of encouraging positive youth development (Maslow & Chung, 2013; Theokas & Lerner, 2006). As such, perhaps the lessons from the literature on programs promoting positive youth development could also be examined to learn what program practices are effective. The literature around how best to promote positive youth development is more extensive than that concerning mentoring programs.

**Conclusion**

This study presents the results of a literature search pertaining to the delivery of mentoring programs to children and adolescents to promote mental wellbeing. The review revealed that there are lessons to be drawn from the mentoring literature despite the academic literature on what makes a mentoring program effective being limited. These lessons may include recruiting mentees with intermediate levels of difficulties, providing ongoing training and support to mentors, matching mentors and mentees on personality styles, fostering an effective mentor–mentee relationship, and routine outcome monitoring to ensure continual evaluation. However, further research needs to be conducted to compare different variations of practices in mentoring programs, to establish which practices are the most effective.
Mentoring program providers should also consider disseminating the lessons they have learned from their experience of delivering a mentoring program via publications in the academic literature, as this would add valuable knowledge to the understanding of what impact mentoring programs can have on children and adolescents. Mentoring providers should also consider examining the positive youth development literature, which is more extensive, as it would be useful to understand mentoring programs in the context of positive youth development.
References


Mentoring programs: A framework to inform program development, research, and evaluation. *Journal of Community Psychology, 34*, 709-725. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20125


Figure 1. Flow Diagram Showing the Identification of Studies in the Literature Search

Records identified through database searching (n = 3,860) → Duplicate records removed (n = 1,460)

Records after first screening of titles and abstracts (n = 2,400) → Records excluded (n = 1,841) because was not relevant

Records after second screening and assessment for eligibility (n = 549) → Records excluded because did not evaluate the delivery of the intervention or did not meet the search criteria (n = 532)

Eligible studies (n = 17)
Table 1

*Characteristics referred to in each mentoring program study*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Program design and setting</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Matching</th>
<th>Training</th>
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<td>Schwartz et al. (2011)</td>
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<td>Schwartz et al. (2013)</td>
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### Table 2

**Supplementary information on papers reviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Primary Outcome</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Evaluation Design</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Barnetz and Feigin (2012) | To understand the nature of the mentor–mentee relationship in helping mentees cope with the challenges of diabetes. Evaluation study of a mentoring program for adolescents with juvenile diabetes which aims to create motivation. | Age: 10–17 years  
Gender: boys/girls  
Size of study (n): 24 | Found three themes to be important: main mentor-mentee relationship patterns, the central importance of the mentee’s observation of the mentor’s behavior and the emotional effects of the encounter with the mentor | 3 years  | Observational study (pre–post comparison) |
Gender: mixed  
Size of study (n): 128 | Best practices such as using mentors with a helping professional background, an ongoing training of mentors and close monitoring of the mentoring relationship may be crucial for successful program implementation. | 12 months | Randomized controlled trial |
Gender: mixed  
Size of study (n): 122 | After 5 years, the program became a feasible and sustainable school-based mentoring program providing long-term relationships for low-income Latino children. | 5 years | Observational study (retrospective) |
| Drexler et al. (2011) | Evaluation study of a mentoring program aiming to strengthen basic competencies and health-related quality of life of elementary school children. | Average age: 8 years  
Gender: mixed  
Size of study (n): 141 | The mentoring program was able to strengthen basic competencies and their health-related quality of life and prevent hazardous health characteristics. | 1 year | Observational study |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Study Duration</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DuBois and Silverthorn (2005a)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Age: 18–26 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 3,187</td>
<td>Mentoring relationships are not enough to meet the needs of at-risk youths and therefore should be incorporated into more comprehensive interventions.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith et al. (2011)</td>
<td>Observational study (pre–post comparison)</td>
<td>Average age: 8 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 102</td>
<td>Results indicated that there was an impact on the mentor’s self-reported self-efficacy, openness, and agreeableness.</td>
<td>12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herrera et al. (2011)</td>
<td>Randomized controlled study</td>
<td>Average age: 11 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 1,139</td>
<td>Mentored youths performed better academically but did not show improvements in classroom effort, self-worth and rates of problem behavior.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karcher (2008)</td>
<td>Randomized controlled study</td>
<td>Average age: 13 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 516</td>
<td>Mentoring providers should provide mentors to the youth most likely to benefit and bolster program practices that help to support and retain mentors.</td>
<td>12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keller and Pryce (2012)</td>
<td>Observational study</td>
<td>Average age: 10 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 70</td>
<td>Findings suggest effective mentoring relationships are a hybrid between friendly horizontal relationships and the different vertical relationships.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>King et al. (2002)</td>
<td>Observational study (pre–post comparison)</td>
<td>Average age: 10 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 28</td>
<td>Significant improvements in self-esteem post-test and significantly less likely to be depressed or involved in bullying or fighting.</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Larose et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Observational study</td>
<td>Average age: 17 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 307</td>
<td>Structured activities and directive mentoring approaches see to lead to more successful outcomes in more structured programs.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parra et al. (2002)</td>
<td>Observational study</td>
<td>Average age of mentees: 10 years Gender: mixed Size of study (n): 50</td>
<td>Mentor’s efficacy predicted greater contact with mentees and more positive experiences.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Study Type</td>
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</table>
| Portwood et al. (2005)                  | Evaluation of YouthFriends, a school-based mentoring program.         | Age of mentees: 8–18 years  
Gender: mixed  
Size of study (n): 208 | Significant difference (pre–post test) for students receiving mentoring on sense of school membership. | 1 year   | Observational study (pre–post comparison) |
| Pryce et al. (2010)                     | Evaluation of a mentoring program for early adolescent girls with a focus on the mentoring relationship. | Average age of mentees: 8–18 years  
Gender: Female  
Size of study (n): 20 | Can deliver mentoring activities that are goal-oriented while simultaneously youth-focused and playful. | 1 year   | Observational study               |
Gender: Mixed  
Size of study (n): 200 | Mentoring programs should be encouraged for youth aging out of foster care. | 1 year   | Observational study (non-experimental survey) |
| Schwartz et al. (2011)                  | A randomized study of Big Brothers Big Sisters, a school-based mentoring program looking at the association between youth’s relationship profiles and mentoring outcomes. | Age of mentees: 10–15 years  
Gender: mixed  
Size of study (n): 1,139 | Mentoring was found to have different effects depending on the youth’s initial approach to relationships. | 1 year   | Randomized controlled study      |
| Schwartz et al. (2013)                  | Investigating youth initiated mentoring as a new approach to mentoring. | Age of mentees: 16–18 years  
Gender: mixed  
Size of study (n): 1,173 | Results revealed that relationships were more likely to endure when youth chose their mentors on their own. | 3 years  | Observational study               |