

# THE NATIONAL AGENDA FOR ACTION



# HOW TO CLOSE AMERICA'S MENTORING GAP

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## FOREWORD

Whenever we need to introduce people to the power of mentoring, we use a simple exercise that sounds like this: “Take a moment and think about a person from your past who went out of their way to invest time and energy in your growth and well-being.” This almost always brings up a memory of a teacher, coach, neighbor or family friend whose ongoing support played an instrumental role in helping them become who they are. That memory opens the door to a visceral understanding of mentoring’s power.

Fortunately, with each passing year, fewer people need to be “introduced” to mentoring. Mentoring has become a frequently used term and a well-accepted practice in many sectors of our society. And, thanks to the remarkable creativity, vigor and resourcefulness of mentoring practitioners and volunteers around the nation, youth mentoring is poised to become a truly mass phenomenon.

As you will read in the pages that follow, the mentoring community currently serves an estimated 15 to 20 percent of the young people who need the care and support of a mentor. While that percentage translates to 3 million mentored lives, it leaves almost 15 million more young people unserved.

The National Agenda for Action was created to rectify this situation. It represents a comprehensive roadmap detailing the realistic steps necessary to bring the power of mentoring to all the young people of our nation who need mentors. The agenda incorporates the input of hundreds of individuals representing every aspect of the mentoring field. Its recommendations were crafted by an exceptional group of leaders. We gratefully acknowledge the insightful thinking and decisive counsel provided by the outstanding participants in this far-reaching national conversation on mentoring.

MENTOR takes its commitment to the National Agenda for Action very seriously. We will introduce the agenda to leaders in every sector – corporate, foundation, public and nonprofit – to engage them in making the action items a reality. We will join the Corporation for National and Community Service in co-convening a Mentoring Working Group dedicated to generating an additional 3 million mentoring relationships by 2010. We will also work to inspire individuals to do their part for mentoring. In short, we will promote the National Agenda for Action and engage more Americans in closing the mentoring gap.

Regardless of your background, professional position or area of expertise, you have a role to play in the future of mentoring. As you read the National Agenda for Action, ask yourself what you can do to bring this plan to life. If we each challenge ourselves to take action, we can change the future for an entire generation of young people.

The plan of action is in all of our hands. The time to act on it is now.

Sincerely,

**Geoffrey T. Boisi**  
Co-Founder and Chairman  
MENTOR

**Haim Saban**  
Chairman and CEO  
Saban Capital Group

**Alan D. Schwartz**  
President and Co-COO  
Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc.

**Gail Manza**  
Executive Director  
MENTOR



## THE NATIONAL AGENDA FOR ACTION: HOW TO CLOSE AMERICA'S MENTORING GAP

### THE PROVEN POWER OF MENTORING

Mentoring is an ancient concept that has gathered significant momentum in recent years as a means of helping young people overcome the complex challenges they face in today's society. Along with parents, mentors help young people realize their potential by providing them with support, advice, encouragement and friendship.

Research confirms the value of mentoring as a strategy for helping young people live up to their academic, emotional and social potential. Studies of formal mentoring programs provide strong evidence that mentoring successfully reduces the incidence of delinquency, academic failure and substance use. These studies further indicate that mentoring can promote positive outcomes, such as improved self-esteem, social skills and career development.

Furthermore, students who take part in successful in-school mentoring programs are less likely to engage in risky behavior and more likely to attend classes and feel more connected to their school.

Youth development experts now agree that mentoring is a critical element in any child's social, emotional and cognitive development. It builds a sense of industry and competency, boosts academic performance and broadens horizons.

Today, thanks to the commitment and dedication of mentoring advocates, 3 million young Americans are now enjoying mentoring's many benefits. That's a six-fold increase in formal mentoring relationships since the national mentoring movement galvanized the nation in the early 1990s. It's an impressive accomplishment. But with 15 million more young people awaiting their turn, America needs to put its energies into making mentoring a reality for every child.

During the past 18 months, the mentoring community has been engaged in a national conversation to determine how America can close this mentoring gap. The result is the National Agenda for Action.

In the following pages you will discover action steps that every sector can take to make mentoring a reality for every young person. Hundreds of national leaders, mentoring experts and practitioners contributed to this agenda, which reflects the consensus of the entire mentoring field.

Clearly, it will require an extraordinary commitment of resources and effort to realize this goal. But considering that the lives of millions of young people and the future vitality of our nation are at stake, that commitment of resources and effort seems not only feasible, but essential.

Pragmatists will correctly point out that even if it takes several years – or decades – to achieve the movement's ultimate goal, a growing number of young people will have their lives transformed along the way. Let's begin the transformation now. Read this agenda, study it and consider what you can do. Then, act.

## Closing the Gap: A National Conversation

Since its founding in 1990, MENTOR has focused its efforts on a single goal: closing America's mentoring gap. An important milestone in the history of MENTOR and the mentoring field was the 1994-1995 National Conversation on Mentoring. During that first conversation, MENTOR reached out to leaders from throughout the mentoring and youth-service communities to identify strategies for bringing the power of mentoring to more young people. The insights that emerged were instrumental in spurring the growth of mentoring over the past decade.

In the years since the first conversation, the field has moved forward on many fronts. It has established best practices to ensure high-quality standards for mentoring and has greatly expanded the types of mentoring that are available. The result is more options to suit the different needs of young people. And today, mentoring is part of the every-day lexicon. That fact, along with dedicated, focused leadership at the local, state and national levels has helped bring about a six-fold increase in the number of young people in formal mentoring relationships and a five-fold increase in federal funding.

As the 10-year anniversary of the conversation approached, MENTOR saw an opportunity to consolidate the gains of the past decade and build upon the mentoring field's momentum by convening a new national conversation on mentoring.

## A New National Agenda for Action

During this new conversation, MENTOR solicited information and feedback from nearly 600 individuals through a combination of interviews, focus groups and a national survey. These individuals included the nation's leading thinkers on mentoring and child well-being; direct-service mentoring practitioners; leaders from the corporate, foundation and policy worlds; and



“In the years since the first conversation, the field has moved forward on many fronts — leading to a six-fold increase in mentoring relationships.”



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON MENTORING

A dynamic, 18-month-long process, the national conversation captured the input, ideas and opinions of a broad range of individuals involved in mentoring and related fields through three data collection methods:

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

- Involved national mentoring leaders and experts
- Included representatives from public, private and non-profit sectors

### FOCUS GROUPS

- Involved mentoring practitioners, mentors and mentees
- Took place in four geographically dispersed markets
- Included a wide range of program types, focuses, organizations and populations served

### WEB-BASED SURVEY

- Included statistical sample of over 1,000 mentoring programs
- Achieved impressive response rate of 42.5%

For a complete overview of the findings from the national conversation, see “The National Agenda for Action: Background and Analysis of Mentoring Today,” available at [Mentoring.org](http://Mentoring.org).

mentors and mentees. Participants in this national conversation were asked to share their perspectives on the obstacles to mentoring’s continued growth, as well as opportunities for moving the field forward.

In April 2005, MENTOR convened a 20-member blue ribbon task force to review the data and provide recommendations for moving forward. The task force was made up of prominent stakeholders in mentoring drawn from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors (see list of task force members on page 26). Their recommendations became the blueprint for creating the National Agenda for Action.

This National Agenda for Action provides a comprehensive roadmap for the mentoring field: an actionable plan designed to overcome the impediments to growth and close the mentoring gap. It identifies 21 action items focused on five strategic solutions:

- Generate adequate and sustainable funding;
- Foster a culture of mentoring;
- Safeguard program quality;
- Elevate the role of research; and
- Build necessary infrastructure.

As the discussion that follows illustrates, these strategic solutions are interconnected. For this agenda to succeed, each of the five strategic solutions must be pursued concurrently if maximum impact is to be achieved.

## STRATEGIC SOLUTION

### GENERATE ADEQUATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

**P**articipants in the national conversation agreed across the board that adequate funding is the greatest challenge facing the mentoring field. Without sufficient and stable funding, mentoring service providers will be unable to operate high-quality programs and expand to serve more young people.

In fact, budget pressures at the federal and state levels of government pose an immediate threat to mentoring programs nationwide. If this issue is not addressed, many existing programs may actually have to close or serve fewer young people.

Participants also voiced concern that mentoring organizations have lagged behind other youth-oriented, not-for-profit groups in presenting a compelling case for funding to the full range of potential funders. In particular, they cited individual donors and foundations among the categories of potential supporters that the mentoring field has not yet adequately engaged.

The mentoring community must develop an adequate, stable and diverse base of private and public funding if mentoring is to continue to grow. To do that, mentoring organizations must reach out to each category of potential funders, explaining how an investment in mentoring can reap specific benefits for their community's young people. They must utilize sound strategies, creativity, flexibility and effective communication about the growing range of mentoring program options and the latest research results.

Specifically, to ensure that mentoring organizations have the necessary resources to close the mentoring gap, the mentoring community needs to pursue the following action items:



**“The mentoring community must develop an adequate, stable and diverse base of private and public funding if mentoring is to continue to grow.”**



## A LIFE TRANSFORMED

“Just by having Farid as my mentor, my sense of pride and independence rose...he was able to see me, and what I could be, without the limitations I had placed on myself...I never really desired or believed that I could have success...and I am most grateful that he volunteered to become a part of my life.”

The young man who wrote these words - a high school sophomore named Damon - met his mentor through a school-based mentoring program in Georgia that identifies and supports students at risk of failing or dropping out. After just over a year in this program, Damon's GPA rose by two letter grades. His attendance record went from “poor” to nearly perfect.

Teachers noticed dramatic improvements in Damon's maturity, self-esteem and concern for others. Damon summed up his mentor's impact by noting, “I know my life and my future have forever been altered by Farid's influence.”

## #1 Produce an evidence-based case for greater support.

To better make the case to funders, the mentoring community must find more effective ways to communicate that mentoring is critical to the future success of young people; has an economic impact on all of society; and offers a substantial return on investment for funders. And, the point must be made that a society that does not sufficiently invest in mentoring faces long-term costs and risks for the future of its young people. Mentoring organizations should make greater use of the growing body of research that demonstrates the positive impact of mentoring. At the same time, they need to understand each potential funder's decision-making process and criteria. The mentoring community should commission a series of carefully targeted publications that demonstrate mentoring's relevance and impact, as well as give voice to young people's interest in involving more caring adults in their lives.

## #2 Secure greater and more stable public funding at the federal and state levels.

Federal funding for mentoring has increased dramatically over the past several years, growing from \$17.5 million in fiscal 2002 to \$100 million in fiscal 2006. But to close the mentoring gap, even greater – and more sustained – levels of government support will be required in the years ahead. Using a rationale built upon research results and documented best practices, the mentoring community must advocate persistently for increased public funding at both the federal and state levels. Public funding could also be diversified by adding mentoring as an allowable option under more types of youth development and prevention programs. This would result in more funding for mentoring, while also strengthening youth-serving programs that could benefit from having a strong mentoring component.

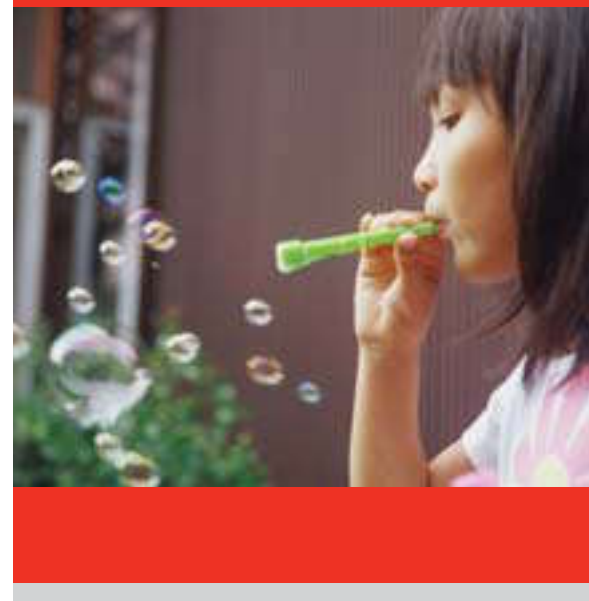


### **#3 Broker relationships between individual donors and mentoring programs.**

Like much of the not-for-profit community, mentoring organizations have traditionally appealed to individuals principally as potential volunteers, rather than as potential donors. The mentoring field must be more aggressive and creative in offering flexible, easily personalized funding options to individuals. And, mentoring organizations must be able to succinctly explain to donors what their approach is to solving problems facing young people today and demonstrate that it works. Individual donors should be encouraged to consider the variety of different ways in which they can financially support a mentoring program or even a single mentoring relationship. For example, mentoring organizations could solicit smaller donations to support mentor background checks or training, or in-kind donations of supplies and services. Or, they could encourage larger donations to underwrite the cost of a single mentoring relationship through a “mentorship.” Brokering individual donor-program relationships on a large scale will require a national campaign designed to reach out to individual donors. In addition, it will require the use of Web-based technology to create a donors’ portal. Such a portal would enable individual donors to identify mentoring programs and funding options that best suit their preferences.

### **#4 Increase philanthropic support through a cohesive, multi-pronged effort.**

To date, the mentoring community’s approach to the philanthropic world has primarily consisted of individual mentoring programs seeking project-specific grant support. To increase mentoring’s share of philanthropic support, the community will need to devise a cohesive, national approach that asks philanthropies to bring the full complement of their resources to bear on the challenge of expanding quality mentoring. This effort must be driven by an evidence-based approach that enlists philanthropies as partners, rather than



“...mentoring organizations have traditionally appealed to individuals principally as potential volunteers, rather than as potential donors.”



## THE DOUBLE OMEGAS

Simple, yet powerful, the Double Omegas embody the spirit of the mentoring movement and capture the essence of the mentoring experience. The larger of the two omegas represents the caring adult mentor; the smaller omega represents the child eager to fulfill his or her potential.

Placement is

also important: the adult mentor (the larger omega) stands in the background, offering encouragement and support and serving as a role model to the child (the smaller omega).

The Double Omegas can also be interpreted to represent the lasting impact a mentor can have on a mentee throughout his or her life. Upon reaching adulthood, the former mentee can better appreciate the profound impact the mentor has had - and resolve to do the same for another child. Thus, the continuum of caring is passed from generation to generation.



simply as donors. Integral to this approach will be a series of donor briefings that are tailored to the needs, interests and expertise of different types of donors—including private, community and family foundations. The mentoring community should also create a “donors’ guide to mentoring.” The guide would reinforce the relevance of mentoring and help philanthropists strengthen grant programs for mentoring. It would also include practical information, such as how to choose strong grantees, monitor progress and maximize the impact of mentoring investments.

### **#5 Encourage the creation and growth of self-funded mentoring programs.**

Most mentoring programs are run by small not-for-profit groups, schools or faith organizations, which depend on private funding that is cyclical in nature and time-consuming to produce. While several of the action steps identified in this National Agenda for Action are aimed at bolstering the availability of funds, a complementary strategy for growth is available. That strategy would encourage organizations not traditionally involved in mentoring to use internal resources to start their own mentoring programs or partner with existing programs. Already, many corporations and government agencies have started such self-funding mentoring programs with excellent results. The mentoring community needs to convince more of these types of organizations to invest in such efforts. In so doing, it could significantly increase the number of young people being served without putting additional pressure on existing funding streams.

## STRATEGIC SOLUTION

### FOSTER A CULTURE OF MENTORING

**W**ith millions of young lives in the balance, it is time to develop a “culture of mentoring” – a culture where mentoring is viewed as integral to the health and well-being of both organizations and individuals.

Such a culture is possible. The latest research indicates that sufficient volunteer interest exists: a recently conducted national poll has found that over 90 percent of current mentors are satisfied with their experience and would recommend mentoring to others. The same poll suggests that as many as 44 million adults would be willing to volunteer as mentors. Yet, only a fraction have initiated the steps to do so.

In fact, participants in the national conversation reported that finding effective ways to recruit mentors on a large scale is one of the greatest challenges facing the mentoring field. Further, participants noted that the need for male mentors far outstrips the supply of current volunteers. The need is particularly acute for male mentors of African-American and Hispanic descent. The mentoring community must focus on refining recruitment methods that motivate men to volunteer as mentors.

Participants also offered innovative ideas for helping more adults act as mentors for young people outside of formal mentoring programs. The mentoring field could begin by encouraging and supporting informal mentoring relationships, such as those offered by coaches, teachers and friends of the family. The field could also work to export mentoring practices into more organizations that provide a wide range of services for young people, such as after-school programs. This would capitalize on recent findings that suggest that after-school programs emphasizing mentoring can provide critical resources to help youth navigate early adolescence.

The following action steps will help increase the number of mentors in both formal and informal mentoring relationships:



“...finding effective ways to recruit mentors on a large scale is one of the greatest challenges facing the mentoring field.”



## THE MENTORING GAP

Based on certain life circumstances, including such factors as poor academic performance, substance abuse and early sexual activity, an estimated 17.6 million young people are in special need of mentors. Without caring adults to offer guidance and support, these kids could easily fail to live up to their potential. Fortunately, according to the Mentoring in America 2005 national poll, 3 million have found high-quality mentoring relationships. The remaining 15 million make up our nation's "mentoring gap." MENTOR's top priority is to close that gap.

The 2005 national poll also found that 44 million adults say they would seriously consider becoming mentors; that means America has vast potential for closing the mentoring gap. By using the results of the 2005 poll and by following the recommendations contained in this National Agenda for Action, we can tap into that tremendous potential and address the mentoring needs of our nation's young people.

## **#6 Build interest among potential volunteer mentors through a national awareness campaign.**

Over the past two decades, public service announcements and other media efforts have helped increase awareness of mentoring. They have motivated tens of thousands of interested volunteers to learn more about mentoring opportunities. By "softening the ground," these awareness-raising efforts have helped increase the success rates of subsequent mentor recruitment efforts. Now, the mentoring community needs to capitalize on this broadened awareness in order to meet the growing demand for mentors. The answer lies in conducting a sustained and effective awareness campaign that is broad in scope and targets specific audiences. As noted earlier, the mentoring community must make special outreach efforts to the adult male population, especially men of minority descent. To be truly effective, the campaign would require careful planning, along with sophisticated message testing, development and delivery systems.

## **#7 Provide increased support to mentoring programs for local recruitment efforts.**

Mentoring programs frequently lack the financial and human resources to undertake effective local recruitment efforts. As the mentoring community gears up for a sustained national awareness campaign, it must simultaneously help programs maximize the impact of their local mentor recruitment efforts. This support should take a variety of forms, including sharing expertise on how to target and reach key audiences; providing guidance on how to work with local businesses, universities and other large organizations on local recruitment efforts; and developing a range of customizable recruitment materials and tools that tie into a national awareness campaign.

## **#8 Create targeted wholesale recruitment programs on a national level.**

Mentor recruitment has traditionally focused on reaching out to the general public to attract volunteers. Another strategy that has demonstrated great promise is “wholesale” recruitment. A wholesale recruitment effort involves strategically engaging large organizations – such as corporations, universities and faith organizations – in mentor recruitment. To be most effective, this engagement must begin at the leadership level. Once an organization’s leaders agree to support mentoring, they can leverage their influence to get the word out to their employees, students or members, who are then more likely to volunteer for mentoring opportunities. A nationwide, wholesale recruitment effort has the potential to generate large numbers of volunteer mentors at reasonable cost to the mentoring community. Such an effort leverages the size, communications capabilities and leadership influence of large organizations.

## **#9 Connect mentors to greater support and networking.**

Mentoring programs typically offer initial training to volunteers and, after matching volunteers with mentees, provide ongoing supervision. The mentoring community must do more to support both formal and informal mentors with encouragement, information and a sense of belonging. The Internet is a logical means for creating a rich, dynamic community for mentors. Mentoring.org offers many resources for mentors. However, additions to the site would vastly enhance its utility and allow mentors to interact with each other. These enhancements could include an “Ask an Expert” feature, online mentor forums and message boards, moderated “chats” on specific topics, an online magazine for mentors and online trainings and tutorials. Once functional, the enhanced Web site should be actively promoted as part of any national mentoring awareness and recruitment efforts.



“We must do more to support both formal and informal mentors with encouragement, information and a sense of belonging.”



## A CONTEMPORARY IDEA WITH ANCIENT ROOTS

While “mentoring” has become something of a buzzword in recent years, its roots date back to Ancient Greece. In Homer’s epic poem, *The Odyssey*, Odysseus asks his trusted friend, Mentor, to watch over his household and guide the development of his son, Telemachus, while Odysseus embarked on his 20-year journey. Mentor advises Telemachus throughout his life, serving as both instructor and role model, and eventually preparing Telemachus to journey into the world.

Today, we use “mentor” as a verb: describing the act of providing guidance and support; and as a noun: describing the person who provides such guidance and support. We believe that all young people have the potential to succeed in life and contribute to society, and that mentoring can be a powerful tool for helping them fulfill their potential.

This agenda focuses on how we can build a culture of caring through mentoring.

### **#10 Empower young people to find informal mentors in their lives.**

Some young people may not need the involvement of a formal mentoring program to identify and connect with caring adults who are already part of their lives. What they do need are materials and resources that guide them on how to reach out to a caring adult and engage them in a productive and safe informal mentoring relationship. The mentoring community needs to develop such resources. In a similar vein, mentoring organizations could look to a young person’s network of caring adults and work to recruit them as formal mentors, rather than relying exclusively on recruiting mentors from the at-large population. These strategies will help serve more young people while reducing the demands placed on formal mentoring programs to recruit more volunteers.

### **#11 Export mentoring into youth-serving programs and organizations.**

The mentoring field has an extensive knowledge base about developing long-term, caring relationships with young people. Many youth-development programs are primed to learn more about how to incorporate mentoring concepts and relationships into their programming; some have already begun doing so. Organizations, such as after-school centers or tutoring programs, could work to encourage their volunteers and staff to form longer-term, consistent relationships with those young people they work with. And those same types of organizations could draw on the expertise and tools used by mentoring programs to encourage program staff to build mentoring practices and concepts into their existing programming. In order to facilitate the “exportation” of mentoring into more youth programs, the mentoring field must further refine the key program practices that lead to strong mentoring relationships and effectively package and share that expertise.

## STRATEGIC SOLUTION

### SAFEGUARD PROGRAM QUALITY

**R**esearch strongly suggests a direct relationship between the quality of a given mentoring program and the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for young people in that program. Therefore, high-quality programs and up-to-date best practices are an essential part of the equation for closing the mentoring gap.

Participants in the national conversation stressed the importance of maintaining mentoring's rigorous focus on quality. Participants noted that even while the field looks to expand the number of young people being served, leaders in the mentoring field must continue to emphasize the importance of maximizing program quality across the full range of mentoring program models and settings. Mentoring practitioners must be given the resources, training, technical assistance and evaluation tools they need to augment program quality. Only then can all mentoring programs meet high standards of quality and accountability.

To enhance the level and consistency of quality across all mentoring efforts, the mentoring community must pursue the following action steps:

#### **#12 Design and launch a standardized evaluation and tracking tool for mentoring programs.**

The mentoring field urgently needs a scientifically sound, standardized system for tracking program results and evaluating and demonstrating impact. A tool of this sort would allow researchers to aggregate and analyze data across programs and over time, and gain vital information about mentoring's effectiveness with new levels of detail and accuracy. The information would be of great value to a variety of constituencies. Mentoring programs could better evaluate and refine their efforts; funders could evaluate the impact of their investments; and the mentoring field could develop a greater



“...high-quality programs and up-to-date best practices are an essential part of the equation for closing the mentoring gap.”



## MENTORING RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

A study by ChildTrends found that mentored youth:

- Improve their school attendance and academic work;
- Are more likely to go on to higher education; and
- Feel more positively toward school and teachers.

(Jekielek, Moore, Hair, and Scarupa, "Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development," ChildTrends Research Brief, February 2002).

A study conducted by Dr. Jean Rhodes and colleagues found that mentored youth:

- Feel closer to their parents and communicate more effectively with them;
- Get more emotional support from their friends and peers; and
- Experience a greater sense of self-worth.

(Rhodes, Grossman, and Resch, "Agents of change: Pathways through which mentoring relationships influence adolescents' academic adjustment," Child Development 91 (2000)).

understanding of which mentoring practices and procedures are most effective in various populations and settings. Work on MentorPRO, a tool designed to provide this type of standardized tracking information, has already begun. It should be pushed toward a successful launch and aimed at vastly improving the mentoring field's ability to demonstrate results, measure program effectiveness and support funding requests.

### **#13 Ensure safety and credibility by developing a "seal of approval" for mentoring programs.**

One of the strengths of the mentoring field is the wide array of organizations that offer youth mentoring programs. But the sheer number of programs and models can prove challenging to funders, policy makers, prospective volunteers and parents of mentees as they try to evaluate various programs. At present, these constituents have no easy way to determine whether a given program is well-run, safe and effective. By developing a "seal of approval," the mentoring field would be able to identify programs that follow best practices and have demonstrated solid outcomes. Implementation of a national "seal of approval" would promote professional practices, encourage excellence and accountability, and institutionalize quality in the mentoring field. As a result, it would help strengthen individual mentoring programs and raise the level of confidence in the mentoring community, as a whole.

### **#14 Provide mentoring programs with practical, cost-effective tools for safety and risk management.**

Mentoring programs face a number of administrative challenges, including the need to protect mentees from harm, while protecting their programs from liability risks and soaring insurance premiums. Local programs frequently lack the money, time and expertise to effectively manage these risks. In fact, anecdotal evidence indicates that rising liability insurance



premiums and concerns about risk are forcing some mentoring programs to move away from the traditional community-based mentoring model. One way to ensure greater safety for mentees is to offer access to thorough, timely and affordable national fingerprint-based background searches for prospective volunteers. Progress has already been made through the creation of SafetyNET, a pilot program of the federal government. Congress should make SafetyNET permanent and universally accessible to youth-serving organizations. Similarly, the mentoring community must advocate for affordable liability insurance for all types of mentoring models and settings, and for tools that help programs effectively manage risk.

### **#15 Hold regular, regional training conferences for mentoring staff.**

Mentoring staff need diverse skill sets to successfully recruit and train mentors, make effective mentoring matches and provide case management for mentors and mentees. And, with ongoing developments in mentoring research, recruitment techniques, funding opportunities and program models, the mentoring community must have a way to disseminate this vital information to staff. Many segments of the human service field hold conferences to keep professionals apprised of the latest advancements in their area. The mentoring field should adapt a similar approach. By holding regional conferences on a recurring basis, the field could provide consistent staff training about best practices and effectively disseminate the most up-to-date knowledge about mentoring. Conference participants could learn about a wide spectrum of subjects, such as creating effective recruitment messages, using research findings to enhance programs, conducting different types of evaluation, and sharing fundraising tips.



**“To ensure greater safety for mentees, Congress should make the SafetyNET background check pilot permanent and universally accessible to youth-serving organizations.”**



## STRATEGIC SOLUTION

### ELEVATE THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

#### MENTORING RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

A study of workplace-based mentoring found that it can:

- Give students a sense of industry and competence and bolster their self-esteem; and
- Help young people understand how their school work ties to the world of work, so they become more motivated to learn.

(Linnehan, F., "The relation of a work-based mentoring program to the academic performance and behavior of African American students," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 59(3) (2001)).

In a survey of adolescents, Sharon Beier and colleagues found that young people with mentors were significantly less likely to participate in high-risk behaviors, including:

- Substance abuse
- Carrying a weapon
- Unsafe sex
- Violent behaviors

(Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky, and Bontemppo, "The potential role of an adult mentor in influencing high-risk behaviors in adolescents," *Archives of Pediatric Medicine* 154 (2000)).

**R**igorous scientific evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of long-term, one-to-one, community-based mentoring matches. Research has also demonstrated that programs that follow key "best practices" can expect strong outcomes.

To the extent that research findings are available, they have made a tremendous difference in the field's ability to promote mentoring as an effective model of positive youth development. Research has also enabled mentoring organizations to recruit greater numbers of mentors and attract funders – both private and public.

Participants in the national conversation agreed that the field needs to promote more research and find ways to make new research findings more readily accessible and easier to implement. Right now, research is not keeping up with innovation in the mentoring field. The field must better understand why different models of mentoring are more effective for some young people, but not others. Further, because mentoring programs are increasingly targeting very distinct populations of young people with specific needs, they need more research to help them understand how to best meet those needs.

Participants, including both mentoring experts and practitioners, felt that ongoing, up-to-date and expanded research is essential to make needed progress in program quality and to underscore the benefits funders would reap by investing in mentoring. This growing knowledge base of research findings and best practices must also be shared with policymakers and practitioners.

To that end, the action steps that follow provide a plan to elevate the role of research in mentoring practice and policy:

## **#16 Secure dedicated federal funds for mentoring research.**

While it is clear that research has a significant value in demonstrating the positive outcomes of mentoring, research on mentoring has been constrained by a lack of dedicated funding sources. Researchers have been forced to cobble together funds from the multiple funding streams dedicated to youth-prevention or from small evaluation set-asides within public grant programs. To address the lack of available research funds, the mentoring community must advocate at the federal level for dedicated public funding for research, including streams within the National Institutes of Health. All research conducted with public funding should meet the highest standards of independent and scientific review and be disseminated widely in a form useful to mentoring practitioners.

## **#17 Conduct the high-priority research projects identified in the National Research Agenda for Youth Mentoring.**

The need for additional, ongoing research within the mentoring field has been apparent to leaders in the field for some time. To identify the priority areas for mentoring research, MENTOR convened the National Research Summit on Mentoring in 2003. Out of that summit came the National Research Agenda for Youth Mentoring. The research agenda provides an important guide for undertaking specific research that would give a better understanding of the effectiveness of the full range of mentoring models and target populations. It also discusses research advances needed to make sure that the match between a child's individual needs and the type of mentoring program is the best one possible. This targeted research would ultimately lead to advances in mentoring practices and strengthen outcomes for young people. Executing the research agenda must become one of the movement's highest priorities.



“This targeted research would ultimately lead to advances in mentoring practices and strengthen outcomes for young people.”



## THE NATIONAL RESEARCH AGENDA FOR YOUTH MENTORING

In 2003, MENTOR convened a National Research Summit on Mentoring, led by research experts Dr. Jean Rhodes, University of Massachusetts Boston, and Dr. David DuBois, University of Illinois at Chicago. The summit brought together the nation's leading youth-development researchers.

Based on the summit, Drs. Rhodes and DuBois prepared a National Research Agenda for Youth Mentoring that identifies mentoring research priorities and recommends strategies for executing them:

- Increase support for mentoring research through dedicated funding streams;
- Conduct a national longitudinal study of mentoring;
- Conduct a multi-site consortium study of mentoring; and
- Develop a standardized system for tracking and evaluating mentoring programs.

### **#18 Create a Mentoring Research and Policy Council.**

Policymakers and mentoring practitioners alike need to have their efforts informed by the best available research in the mentoring field. The creation of a new body, a Mentoring Research and Policy Council, would help connect policymakers and practitioners with current mentoring research. This high-level council would serve as a “think tank” on mentoring, producing high-quality, research-based policy recommendations that would inform the public debate. The council's recommendations would enable the mentoring field to more effectively advocate for mentoring policies with legislators and administration officials at the federal and state levels. In addition, the Mentoring Research and Policy Council would serve as a conduit for the latest scholarly research, translating this research into user-friendly materials for mentoring practitioners.

## STRATEGIC SOLUTION

### BUILD NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE

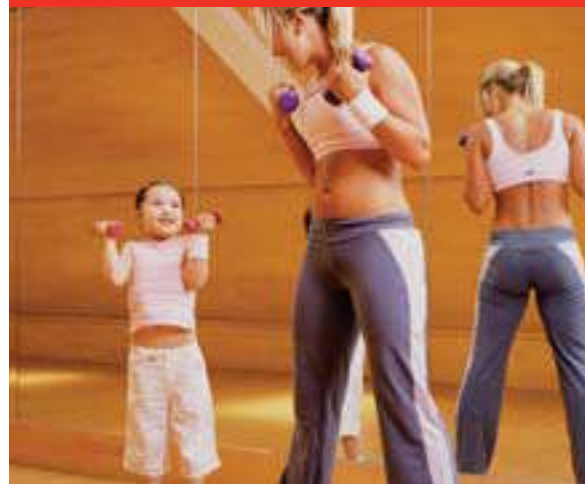
Up to this point, the agenda has provided strategic solutions and action steps for the key issues that participants in the national conversation identified as the greatest challenges to the mentoring community: fundraising, mentor recruitment, program quality and research. Each of the action items identified in those four areas are critical to the advancement of mentoring.

However, without necessary infrastructure, the mentoring field lacks the essential framework and delivery system it must have in order to disseminate newly developed best practices and research to mentoring practitioners. Further, the mentoring community must have a strong infrastructure to facilitate effective mentor recruitment and advocacy and to engage corporate and foundation leaders at the state and local levels. Infrastructure is also a key component of maintaining a high public profile and awareness for youth mentoring.

This fifth strategic direction encompasses the action steps necessary to build and strengthen the infrastructure for mentoring:

#### **#19 Support Mentoring Partnerships as capacity-builders for mentoring.**

A nationwide network of Mentoring Partnerships provides the critical infrastructure necessary to support the aggressive growth of youth mentoring. Bipartisan in nature, these Mentoring Partnerships serve as “mentoring central” for their communities and states. As such, they offer a wide range of essential services, such as mentor recruitment and referral, training and technical assistance and advocacy on the state and local levels. These partnerships help mentoring programs make the most of limited resources by offering centralized services, bringing together leaders from across their community or state and eliminating duplication of efforts. The result is greater communication and collaboration, better service, smarter use of resources



“...without adequate infrastructure, the mentoring field lacks the essential framework and delivery system it must have to strongly deliver for young people.”



## ABOUT MENTOR

MENTOR is leading the national movement to connect America's young people with caring adult mentors. MENTOR believes that, with a mentor's help and guidance, each child can discover how to unlock and achieve his or her potential.

As a national advocate and expert resource for mentoring, MENTOR is dedicated to delivering the research, policy recommendations and practical performance tools that mentoring organizations need to effectively serve young people and make mentoring a reality for more of America's young people.

MENTOR works in concert with Mentoring Partnerships throughout the country and with more than 4,000 mentoring programs nationwide.

and more youth in quality mentoring relationships. The mentoring field must collectively support the growth of existing Mentoring Partnerships, as well as the creation of new Mentoring Partnerships in underserved regions.

### **#20 Establish a federal coordinating council.**

Currently, funding for mentoring within the federal government is provided by numerous agencies, and there is no consistency from agency to agency on program requirements, types of mentoring supported or outcome tracking. In fact, over 100 federal programs have supported mentoring at some point in recent years. The creation of a federal coordinating council on mentoring would foster collaboration between the various federal agencies providing manpower and funding to mentoring. The council could also serve as a catalyst for bringing public and private stakeholders together to advance mentoring. Ultimately, creating cohesion and consistency among the agencies that support mentoring would result in greater cost-efficiency for grantees, smarter use of federal resources and allow for more young people to be served.

### **#21 Bring the mentoring community together every five years for a high-profile "summit."**

The mentoring community needs a mechanism for coming together on a regular basis to share ideas, re-energize practitioners, and garner widespread attention for mentoring. A "National Summit on Mentoring," to be launched in 2008 and held every five years thereafter, can provide this mechanism. These summits would engage the participation of practitioners, researchers, funders, policymakers, mentors and mentees. They would also provide an opportunity to recognize excellence across the field. High-profile speakers and events within the summit could become focal points for media coverage, dovetailing with the larger communications effort designed to promote mentoring and encourage volunteerism. The inaugural summit in 2008 will help rally the field around implementation of the National Agenda for Action, and provide a unique opportunity for calling national attention to the role mentoring plays in the lives of young people.

## A CLOSING NOTE

In June of 2005, a college freshman named Ean Garrett addressed a group of over 600 mentoring supporters at MENTOR's National Recognition Event. What he said would move everyone there.

Six years earlier, as a 13-year-old being raised by a single mother in a depressed section of Omaha, Nebraska, Garrett was chosen to participate in a mentoring program for low-income students who showed academic promise. Mentoring helped Garrett realize that promise, and he has since returned the favor, serving as a mentor in a program he helped create at Howard University.

As he concluded his remarks on that June evening in New York City, Garrett thanked the audience for their support, and urged them to help create a nation in which every young person would have the same opportunities he had been given. He described that nation as "a limitless America, a mentored America, a better America." In that moment, with those words, Garrett embodied the power and the potential of mentoring.

**How would that America differ from the nation we live in today?**

Young people would still face many challenges: the growth of mentoring won't eliminate problems such as failing schools, poverty, fractured family structures and the temptations of illegal drugs.

But in "a mentored America," no young person would feel that he or she faced these challenges alone. In a mentored America, individuals of different generations and backgrounds would feel a sense of connectedness, a sense of family. In a mentored America, the encouragement, support and guidance of a trusted adult would help steer young people through the challenges and toward their true potential. The journey would still be difficult for many; but in a mentored America, it would be a journey of hope, and a journey that would lead to a brighter future for millions of young people.



“...in ‘a mentored America,’ no young person would feel that he or she faced these challenges alone.”

## THOUGHTS FROM LEADERS IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

“The National Agenda for Action talks about creating a ‘culture of mentoring.’ This is very wise, for it is only through an approach that reaches more Americans where they are every day - in workplaces, places of worship, non-profit institutions, and in local communities - that **we can realize the true power of a national mentoring movement and fulfill the promise of transforming the lives of millions of children.**”

– John Bridgeland,  
former Director, White House  
Domestic Policy Council, and  
CEO, Civic Enterprises

“The National Agenda for Action has its roots in a conversation that took place a decade ago about the future of mentoring. **It now provides a pathway for us to follow that will ensure that every young person has the chance to develop the positive, often life-long, connections they need and deserve** in their lives.”

– Shay Bilchik,  
President and CEO, Child  
Welfare League of America

“**The National Action for Agenda is a clarion call to all to grow and sustain the mentoring movement** while focusing our attention on thoughtful strategies. Striking the important balance between aspiration and substance, the Agenda will serve to call the mentoring movement into its next phase of development, a phase of sustainability with clear outcomes and impact.”

– Daniel Cardinali, President,  
Communities In Schools

“We have an enormous mentoring gap that we need to close if we want the next generation to succeed. The National Agenda for Action is a powerful blueprint to close this gap. We are working to recruit three million new mentors by 2010 as a first step towards the ultimate goal of a caring mentor for every child who needs one. **Working together, we can grow mentoring and ensure a brighter future for all of America's youth.**”

– David Eisner, CEO,  
Corporation for National and  
Community Service

“The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention was an important pioneer in identifying mentoring as a strategy to help troubled youth find a better path. We remain convinced that **mentoring has a key role to play in positive youth development** and have come to believe that standards-driven innovation is the key to it playing a larger role in the future.”

– J. Robert Flores,  
Administrator, US. Department of  
Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice  
and Delinquency Prevention

“As we move from vision to reality, the National Agenda for Action covers, in compelling terms, not only why **we must commit to increasing the number and quality of mentoring relationships, but where to target our collective energies** necessary in filling the gaps affecting practice and execution.”

– Robert Goodwin,  
President and CEO, Points  
of Light Foundation



"As critical as a parent is in the life of a child, **we all need to know that we matter to a responsible someone who does not have to care about us.** It's an important part of how we learn to connect and to become a caring and responsible person. Adult mentors fill that role for many children, yet the gap between the number of children and the number of mentors available is enormous. The National Agenda for Action hits that challenge head on. Now its time to translate the Agenda into action."

— Irv Katz, CEO, National Human Services Assembly

"Many of today's younger students in Florida are academically more successful because our communities are beginning to understand the benefits of a culture of mentoring. **The call in the National Agenda to Action to create a culture where mentoring is valued is an enormous and important undertaking,** and one I believe that the American public will embrace."

— Liza McFadden, President, Florida Mentoring Partnership

"Two of the most important recommendations identified in this fascinating and productive National Agenda for Action were to develop a scientifically valid evaluation system and to integrate effective mentoring practice into youth settings. **Evaluation tools will deepen our knowledge of the conditions under which mentoring is most effective.** And, to the extent that we can effectively export what has been learned about best practices to other youth settings, we will strengthen children's ties to the many caring adults in their everyday lives—ultimately affording them more 'mentor rich' lives."

— Dr. Jean Rhodes, Professor of Psychology, University of Massachusetts-Boston

"**The National Agenda for Action provides a bold set of strategic goals for increasing the effectiveness, sustainability and scale of mentoring** in the United States and lays out concrete steps for getting there that include increased roles for young people themselves and the community organizations that support them."

— Karen Pittman, Executive Director, The Forum for Youth Investment

"It's quite simple. Mentoring is one of the most powerful transformational experiences in a young person's life. The National Agenda for Action reveals that a culture of mentoring is emerging, and **pinpoints the linchpin issues confronting the mentoring movement today.** If you are concerned about our nation's young people, this agenda is a 'must read.'"

— David Van Patten, President, Dare Mighty Things, Inc.

"As the mentoring field continues to grow, it is a very positive sign to see this agenda's emphasis on quality and research. The call for increased mentoring funding **underscores that we need to ensure that mentoring programs will be strong and effective,** with maximum impact on the youth we serve."

— Judy Vredenburg, President and CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

"Mentoring's broadest **impact will come not by expanding it as a discrete program, but by having its lessons influence the practices** of all institutions and employees who work with youth."

— Gary Walker, President, Public/Private Ventures

"The National Agenda for Action clearly identifies **what will be required if mentoring is going to continue as a critical youth development strategy** in the future. MENTOR has the ammunition from this agenda to issue a call to action for the next decade and beyond."

— Dr. Susan Weinberger, Chair, MENTOR's Public Policy Council

"**By connecting young people to positive adult mentors, everyone wins.** The National Agenda for Action is a pervasive strategy aimed at generations to come. Those who are mentored will become the mentors of the future. Mentoring can change the world by creating a contagion of care."

— Harry Wilson, Associate Commissioner, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Countless leaders and practitioners in the mentoring and youth-development field have played a critical part in the creation of this National Agenda for Action. We are grateful to the nearly six hundred individuals who participated in interviews, surveys or focus groups as part of the national conversation on mentoring. The conclusions drawn from that research underpin the strategic solutions identified herein. And, twenty leaders in the youth-development world graciously gave of their time and expertise to participate in a two-day summit. At the summit, these leaders reviewed the research findings and generated solutions to issues facing the mentoring field. We have also called on them, along with a larger group of mentoring experts and practitioners, numerous times since the summit to review drafts of the agenda and provide critical feedback. We are indebted to each of these fine individuals for their generosity in contributing their wise counsel and keen insights about mentoring.

Several individuals were critical in to the creation and refinement of the National Agenda for Action. Rebecca Saito and Dr. Cynthia Sipe ably conducted the research and analysis phase of the national conversation on mentoring. Gary Forman and Colleen Appleby-Carroll crafted the language and structure of the agenda. James Waller provided strategic oversight and Margo Pedroso managed every aspect of the agenda's creation.

It is only due to the assistance of all these individuals that we are able to declare with certainty the strategic solutions and action items necessary to address the challenges and opportunities facing mentoring today. It is rewarding to know that the mentoring field is made up of so many individuals who are generous with their time and expertise.

# MENTORING PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

## ALABAMA

Mentor Alabama

## ARIZONA

Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona:  
The Mentoring Partnership

## CALIFORNIA

Governor's Mentoring Partnership  
The Los Angeles Mentoring Partnership

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Mentor Center of Palm Beach County

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## MAINE

Maine Mentoring Partnership

## MARYLAND

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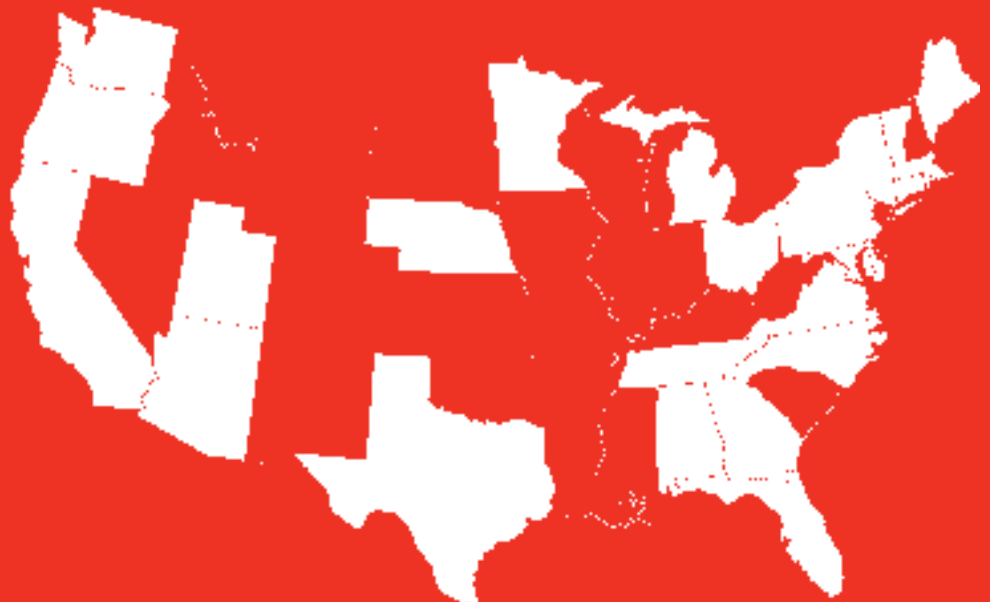
Vermont Mentoring Partnership

## VIRGINIA

Virginia Mentoring Partnership  
Fairfax Mentoring Partnership

## WASHINGTON

Washington State Mentoring Partnership



Work on the agenda began in April 2005 with the convening of a high-level task force. Key leaders representing the breadth of the mentoring field – including the mentoring and human service fields, foundations, the federal government and the corporate world – convened at a two-day summit. These strategic thinkers got an early look at the data gathered through the national conversation and brainstormed a wide range of solutions to key issues facing the mentoring field. The actions and strategies suggested by this task force served as the core of the National Agenda for Action. We thank them for their thoughtful and strategic counsel.

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Executive Vice President  
L'Oréal USA

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Communities In Schools

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Executive Director  
National Network of Youth  
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**Mr. David Van Patten**  
President  
Dare Mighty Things, Inc.

**Ms. Judy Vredenburg**  
President and CEO  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
of America

**Ms. Carol Waldron**  
Director  
State Farm Insurance

**Dr. Susan Weinberger**  
Chair  
MENTOR's Public Policy  
Council

**Mr. Harry Wilson**  
Associate Commissioner  
Administration for Children  
& Families, U.S. Department  
of Health & Human Services



MENTOR is leading the national movement to connect young Americans with caring adult mentors. As a national advocate and expert resource for mentoring, MENTOR delivers the research, policy recommendations and practical performance tools needed to help make quality mentoring a reality for more of America's young people.

**This project was funded by a generous grant from Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention**