Mass Mentoring Counts 2018

Executive Summary

The State of Youth Mentoring in Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DONAHUE INSTITUTE

Executive Summary

Launched in 2006 by Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP), *Mass Mentoring Counts* is a biennial initiative that highlights the landscape, trends, and needs of youth mentoring programs, and offers a comparative analysis of changes in the field over the decade. *Mass Mentoring Counts* is a powerful tool that has enabled MMP, its network of programs, and key stakeholders to establish benchmarks for the field to better meet the needs of youth, to strengthen the case for investment of private and public resources, to raise public awareness for the field, and to guide strategic decision-making.

One hundred six organizations completed the *Mass Mentoring Counts* (MMC) web survey, providing information on single or multiple programs. **This report provides information from the 130 youth mentoring programs run by these 106 organizations**, representing a 51% organizational response rate. Statistically significant differences between key subgroups as well as across prior survey years are highlighted.

At the core of the youth mentoring field is the belief that empowering youth-adult relationships is central to the healthy growth and development of young people, enabling them to reach their full potential. As Mass Mentoring Partnership shaped its strategic vision for 2015-2017, it broadened its scope to include the wider field of youth development and youth serving organizations which these empowering youth adult relationships also serve a cornerstone of their work. They also placed the importance of leading the field to create a more inclusive mentoring movement and better meet the needs of young people and their communities as the second strategic goal. Although, cultural responsive practice had always been important to Mass Mentoring, placing it as the second strategic goal ensured that this work would now be integrated into all aspects of their agenda, their programming both internally and externally facing. From the area of public awareness and the content of each and every training and technical assistance session, every event planned and product developed, MMP would ensure that this mentoring movement was prepared and positioned to align itself with a greater societal need to use relationships to promote equitable services to young people and to create more system change where are young people live, learn and play. This year MMP wanted to understand how mentoring programs were doing in the area of cultural responsive practice and bench mark where the field is on the basic elements in order to identify areas of strengths and challenges, to better understand the needs of the field and to work collectively to improve and harness our effort.

Overview of Youth Mentoring Programs and Practices in Massachusetts

Slightly more than half of the youth mentoring programs in Massachusetts are located in the Greater Boston region. The remainder are well distributed across the southeastern, western, northeastern, and central/metro-west regions of the state.

The majority of youth mentoring programs are components of larger organizations. Nearly 70% of *MMC* respondents described their mentoring program as a component of a larger organization, with the remainder describing their program as a stand-alone organization.

The annual budget size of youth mentoring programs varies widely. Approximately one half of responding programs listed their annual budget as less than $100,000, approximately one quarter between $100,000 and $500,000, and approximately one quarter with a minimum annual budget of $500,000. Nearly one fifth reported annual budgets of less than $10,000.

One-on-one matches of a young person with an adult comprise the largest segment of mentoring program models. Fifty-five percent of programs use a one-on-one mentoring approach. Nearly one third of the programs reported utilizing other mentoring models (i.e., group, team, cross-age peer mentoring, or e-mentoring). Finally, 15% of programs cited using a combined approach incorporating two or more mentoring models.

Approximately two thirds of the youth mentoring programs are site-based, with youth-mentor meetings taking place at a designated location. The vast majority of site-based programs take place at either local K–12 schools or community centers. **Nearly one third of programs reflect the community-based model**, with youth and their adult mentors planning their activities on an individualized basis and meeting at varied locations in the community.

Nearly one half of youth mentoring programs serve fewer than 50 youth annually. Youth mentoring programs vary widely in the number of youth served. Reported numbers of youth served annually range from one to 23,000, with a median of 60 youth served. Forty-five percent of programs reported serving fewer than 50 youth and nearly 10% served 1,000 youth or more.

A few programs serve the majority of youth. The 10 largest programs serve more than 70% of all youth. Even with the removal of one extremely large program, the 10 largest programs would still account for more than half of all youth served.

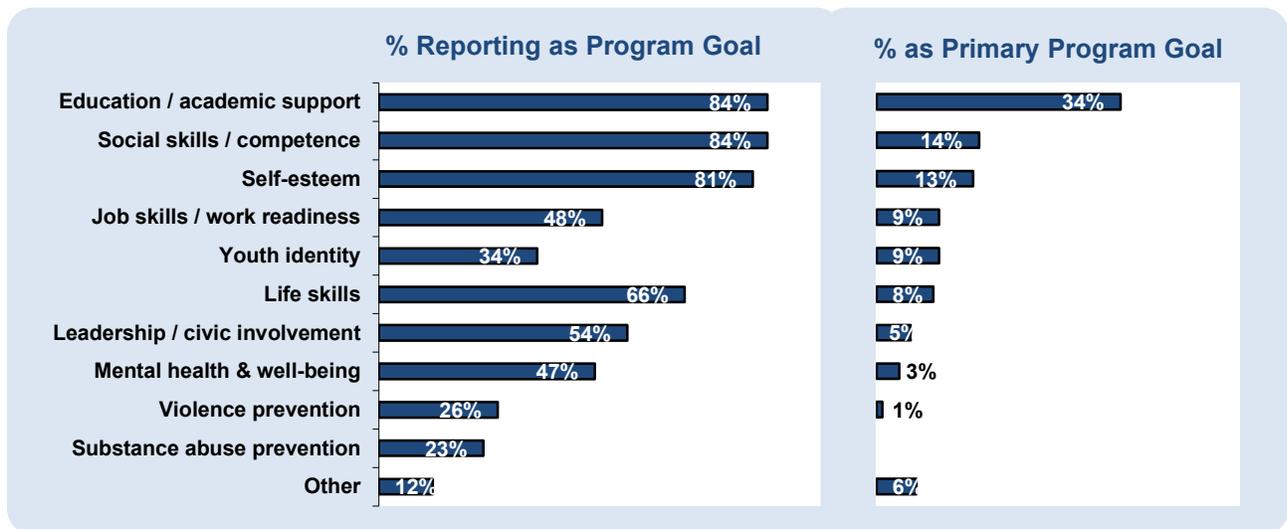## Drivers of Quality Youth Mentoring Relationships

Youth mentoring programs focus on building long-lasting mentoring relationships. More than three quarters of the mentoring programs reported expecting their matches to last at least one school year, and more than two fifths of the programs ask for a commitment of at least 12 months from mentors. **Community-based programs and programs promoting one-on-one relationships are significantly more likely to expect longer match commitments.**

The state's mentoring programs value consistency, with 72% of the programs requiring at least weekly meetings between mentors and youth, and another 17% requiring mentors and mentees to meet two to three times per month. **Site-based programs are significantly more likely to require more frequent meetings between mentors and youth**.

Program Goals and Sub-Populations Served

The most frequently cited intended goals of youth mentoring programs are providing educational and academic support, increasing self-esteem, and improving social competence of the youth served. Education and academic support comprise general education support, academic enrichment, and college access and retention support. **Comparisons across *MMC* surveys reveal an increasing trend of mentoring programs focusing on college access, retention, or success support and a declining trend of selecting self-esteem as the primary goal.**

% Reporting as Program Goal

Goal	%
Education / academic support	84%
Social skills / competence	84%
Self-esteem	81%
Job skills / work readiness	48%
Youth identity	34%
Life skills	66%
Leadership / civic involvement	54%
Mental health & well-being	47%
Violence prevention	26%
Substance abuse prevention	23%
Other	12%

% as Primary Program Goal

Goal	%
Education / academic support	34%
Social skills / competence	14%
Self-esteem	13%
Job skills / work readiness	9%
Youth identity	9%
Life skills	8%
Leadership / civic involvement	5%
Mental health & well-being	3%
Violence prevention	1%
Substance abuse prevention	
Other	6%

Massachusetts mentoring programs are reaching youth populations in need of mentors. Mentoring programs were asked to estimate the percentage of the youth they serve who represent various subgroups. The most frequently cited subgroups included youth from low-income families, from single-parent families, who represent the first generation of their family to go to college, and who are at academic risk. All of these circumstances are correlated with risk factors for youth. **Comparisons across *MMC* surveys reveal an increasing trend of mentoring programs serving a substantial proportion (25%+) of youth representing first generation to go to college.**

% of Programs Serving 25%+

Subgroup	%
Low-income families	93%
Single-parent household	85%
First generation to go to college	76%
Academic risk	75%
Academic achievers	45%
Recent immigrant / refugee	25%
Disabilities or special health…	22%
Incarcerated parents / family	19%
Foster, residential or kinship care	18%
LGTBQI+	13%
Dropped-out of school	11%
Adjudicated / court involved	10%
Pregnant or early parenting	4%

% of Programs Serving 75%+

Subgroup	%
Low-income families	71%
Single-parent household	24%
First generation to go to college	38%
Academic risk	12%
Academic achievers	8%
Recent immigrant / refugee	7%
Disabilities or special health…	2%
Incarcerated parents / family	2%
Foster, residential or kinship care	4%
LGTBQI+	1%
Dropped-out of school	4%
Adjudicated / court involved	3%
Pregnant or early parenting	2%

Snapshot of the Youth Served and Mentors Participating in Massachusetts

The following numbers reflect relationships at those mentoring programs that responded to the 2018 *MMC* survey and provided youth and mentor counts:

- **Youth Served Annually:** More than 51,000 Massachusetts youth, ages 6–24, participated in structured mentoring relationships in 2018.[1]

- **Mentors Matched Annually:** More than 16,000 individuals, ages 14+, served as mentors in formal mentoring relationships in 2014.

- **Youth on Waiting List:** Fifty-seven (or nearly half) of the mentoring programs responding to this survey reported maintaining a wait list. At these programs, more than 2,300 Massachusetts youth are currently on a wait list, hoping to be matched. Male youth and transgender youth spend longer amounts of time on wait lists (averaging 16 weeks) compared with female youth (averaging 12 weeks).

Mentoring is well utilized as a youth development strategy across a broad spectrum of youth. Both male and female youth are well represented in mentoring relationships. Youth of all ages participate, with strong representation across elementary, middle school, and high school-aged youth. Regarding racial and cultural identity, youth of color are considerably more likely to be engaged in mentoring relationships. Nearly 80% of those mentored are youth of color, with the majority being Hispanic/Latino(a) and African American.

Mentors do not adequately represent the diversity of youth mentees. While both male and female adults are well represented in mentoring relationships and adults of all ages participate, mentors do not reflect the diversity of the youth served. As depicted in the following figure, youth of color represent approximately 80% of those served compared with solely 35% of mentors of color.
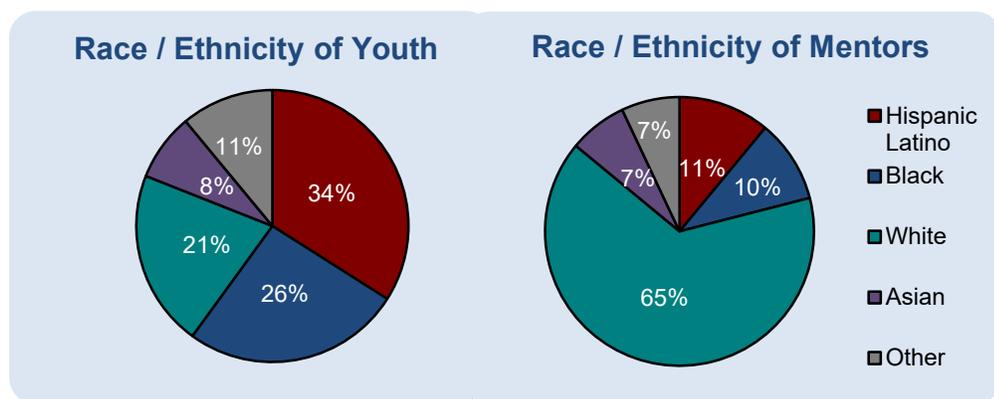
While the majority of mentors were White, it is important to note the increasing representation of mentors of color over time. Comparing *MMC 2018* data to prior *MMC* surveys, we found that the percentage of mentors of color has increased significantly over time, from 24% in 2008 to 35% in 2018.

Culturally Responsive Practices

---

[1] It is important to note that more than 40% of these youth-served numbers were reported by a single program. Junior Achievement reported serving 23,000 youth annually, using a team-mentoring approach (i.e., more than one mentor meets with more than one young person at a time) during classes throughout the school day.
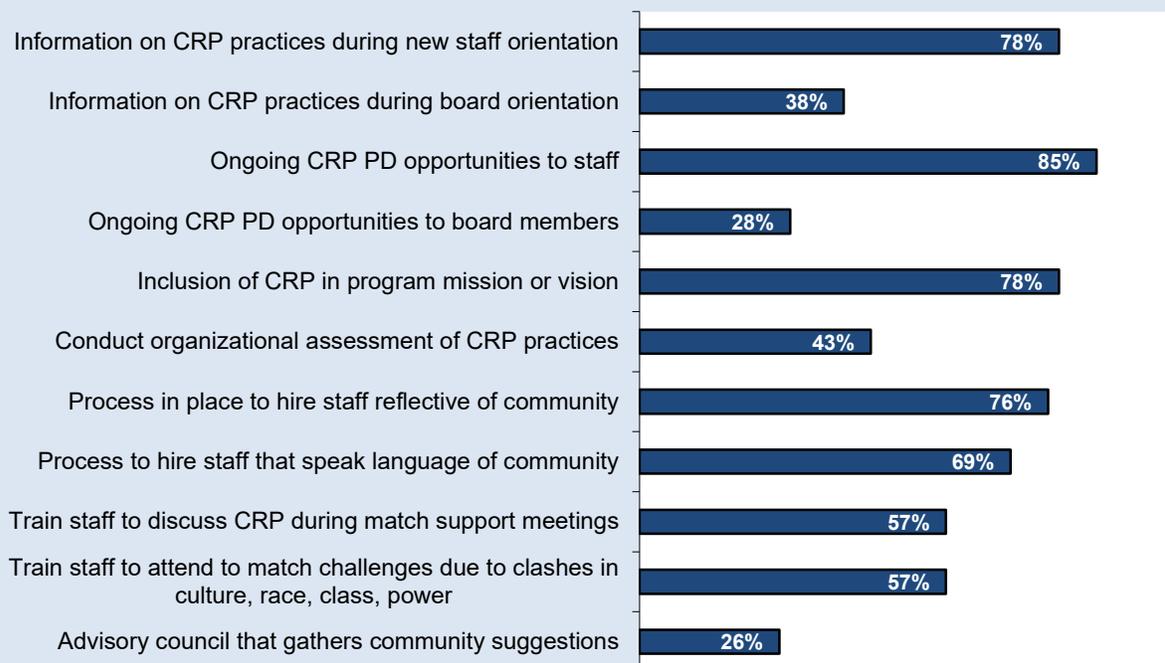
A number of questions were added to this year's *MMC* survey to gain a better understanding of what culturally responsive practices are currently being implemented, to elicit reflections on how well programs are integrating and supporting cultural responsiveness, and to garner descriptions of their best practices and challenges. As defined in the survey,

> *A culturally responsive organization is one that is 'designed to effectively meet the needs of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. It involves understanding not only the societal oppressions faced by various groups of people, but also respecting the strengths and assets inherent in different communities. This understanding is then reflected in program services, personnel, philosophies and policies.'*

The most frequently implemented culturally responsive practices reported by at least three quarters of organizations include:

- providing ongoing professional development for staff on culturally responsive practices;
- providing information about the organization's cultural responsiveness during new staff orientations;
- including the topic of cultural competence or inclusion in the program, mission, vision, or guiding principles;
- having a process in place to hire staff members who are reflective of the community being served; and,
- having a process in place to hire staff members who speak the language(s) of the community being served.

Culturally Responsive Practices Implemented by Organization

Practice	Percent
Information on CRP practices during new staff orientation	78%
Information on CRP practices during board orientation	38%
Ongoing CRP PD opportunities to staff	85%
Ongoing CRP PD opportunities to board members	28%
Inclusion of CRP in program mission or vision	78%
Conduct organizational assessment of CRP practices	43%
Process in place to hire staff reflective of community	76%
Process to hire staff that speak language of community	69%
Train staff to discuss CRP during match support meetings	57%
Train staff to attend to match challenges due to clashes in culture, race, class, power	57%
Advisory council that gathers community suggestions	26%

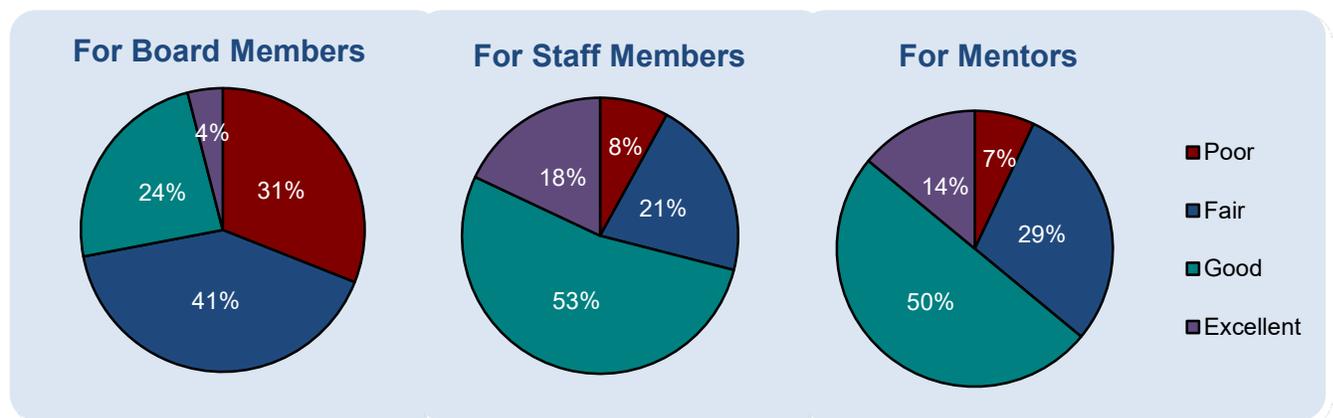Comparative analysis at the program level revealed the following:

- **Mentoring programs that worked formally with Mass Mentoring Partnership during the last five years were significantly more likely to report providing ongoing professional development**

> **opportunities to their staff members on culturally responsive practices and to train their match-support specialists** to discuss the topic of culturally responsive practices during match meetings and/or address match conflicts brought on by challenges related to culture, race, class, and power differentials.

> ▪ **Mentoring programs with larger budgets were significantly more likely to report training their match-support specialists** to discuss the topic of culturally responsive practices during match meetings and/or attend to match clashes due to challenges related to culture, race, class, and power differentials.

> ▪ **Community-based mentoring programs were significantly more likely to report implementing culturally responsive practices than site-based programs.** Community-based programs were significantly more likely to report including the topic of cultural competence and inclusion in their program mission, vision, or guiding principles, conducting assessments of their organizational culturally responsive practices, and having an advisory council that gathers recommendations from the community. Furthermore, community-based mentoring programs were significantly more likely to report providing ongoing professional development opportunities on culturally responsive practices to both their staff members and board members.

Program staff were asked to reflect on how well they think their programs integrate and support culturally responsive practices for their board members, staff members, and mentors. **As depicted in the following figure, the responses differed widely, with programs significantly more likely to report positively about integrating and supporting culturally responsive practices for their staff members and mentors compared with their board members.** The majority of programs cited that that their program is "good" or "excellent" at integrating and supporting culturally responsive practices for their staff and mentors compared with less than one third for their board members.

Reflection on How Well Programs Integrate and Support Culturally Responsive Practices

For Board Members: Poor 31%, Fair 41%, Good 24%, Excellent 4%

For Staff Members: Poor 8%, Fair 21%, Good 53%, Excellent 18%

For Mentors: Poor 7%, Fair 29%, Good 50%, Excellent 14%

Legend: Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent

Program Needs

Mentoring programs identified the top three areas in which their program could benefit from additional support services. At least 20% of programs selected the following as key program needs: mentor recruitment, fundraising/grant writing, mentor training, public relations, program evaluation, and integrating cultural responsiveness into service design and delivery. **Smaller programs—**in terms of both annual budget and number of youth served**—and nontraditional mentoring models** (e.g., group, team, e-mentoring, combined) **were significntly more likely to identify mentor training as one of their top three program needs.**