Mass Mentoring Counts 2014

Executive Summary

The State of Youth Mentoring in Massachusetts

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RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY

University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute
Mass Mentoring Counts 2014

Launched in 2006 by Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP), this biennial initiative depicts the landscape, trends, and needs of youth mentoring programs and offers a comparative analysis of changes in the field over the last eight years. 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 thirty-six organizations completed the Mass Mentoring Counts (MMC) web survey, providing information on single or multiple programs. This report provides information from the 186 youth mentoring programs run by these 136 organizations, representing a 54% organizational response rate and a 62% individual program 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 in which these empowering youth-adult relationships also serve as a cornerstone of their work. In an effort to better understand the landscape of youth development organizations, the Donahue Institute also conducted a research initiative in four targeted geographies within the Commonwealth in which MMP will direct focus and resources over the new few years: Cape Cod; Hampden County; the Essex County communities of Lynn and Lawrence; and the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. These survey results provide a baseline understanding of some core similarities and distinct practices of the youth mentoring field and the wider scope of youth development and youth serving organizations. These findings will be reported in a companion brief.

Overview of Youth Mentoring Programs & Practices in Massachusetts

More than half of the programs are located in the Greater Boston Region. The remainder are well distributed across the southeastern (15%), western (13%), northeastern (11%), and central / metro west (7%) regions.
There is a wide diversity in the programs' length of time in operation. Slightly more than one-half are well established, having been in existence for 10 or more years. Of the remaining programs, nearly 30% have been in existence for less than 5 years and nearly one-fifth have been in existence for 5–10 years.

The majority of youth mentoring programs are components of larger organizations. More than three-quarters (77%) described their mentoring program as a component of a larger organization with the remainder describing their program as a stand-alone organization.

One-to-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-to-one mentoring model approach. One-quarter of the programs reported utilizing other mentoring models (i.e., group, team, or cross-age peer mentoring). Finally, one-fifth of programs cited using a combined approach using two or more of the above mentoring models.

Three-fifths of the youth mentoring programs are site based, with youth-mentor meetings taking place at a designated location. Two-thirds of site-based programs take place at either local K–12 schools or community centers. Two-fifths 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.

Approximately one-half of youth mentoring programs serve less than 50 youth annually. Youth mentoring programs vary widely in the number of youth served. Reported numbers of youth served annually range from 2 to 3,800, with a median of 42 youth served. Nearly fifty-five percent of programs reported serving less than 50 youth.

A few programs serve the majority of youth. The ten largest programs serve more than sixty percent of all youth. The twenty largest programs serve more than three-quarters of all youth.
Drivers of Quality Youth Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring programs focus on building long-lasting mentoring relationships. The vast majority of the mentoring programs report expecting their matches to last at least one school year, and nearly sixty percent of programs ask for a commitment of at least 12 months from mentors. Programs promoting one-on-one relationships are significantly more likely to expect longer match commitments. A total of 65% of programs promoting one-on-one relationships reported expected match length commitments of one year or more, compared with 45% of programs promoting other program models with higher youth-mentor ratios.

Consistency was also valued by the state's mentoring programs, with 72% of the mentoring programs requiring at least weekly meetings between mentors and youth, and another 18% requiring mentors and mentees to meet 2–3 times a month.

Parental support and engagement is commonly associated with better match outcomes. By far, the most common practice reported involving parents/caregivers was the requirement to sign program consent forms (80%). Furthermore, approximately half of all programs reported conducting the following: inviting the parent/caregiver to program activities, formally introducing the parent/caregiver and the mentor, contacting the parent/caregiver as a regular part of match support, and/or providing information on community resources.
Less than half of programs provide ongoing professional development that includes content on cultural and linguistic competency ‘often’ or ‘routinely’ to their program staff or mentors. Very few programs report providing such professional development services for their board members.

The diversity of the board members, paid staff, and/or mentors in these programs is often not representative of the diversity of mentees served.

The vast majority (82%) of programs report ‘often’ or ‘always’ working with community leaders and organizations in diverse communities to increase awareness and acceptance of program services offered.

Sub-Populations Served, Anticipated Impacts, and Outcomes Measured

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 include youth from low-income families, from single-parent families, and those at academic risk. All of these circumstances are correlated with risk factors for youth.
The most frequently cited intended impacts of youth mentoring programs are educational and academic support, increasing self-esteem, and improving social competence of the youth served.

Nearly all (95%) programs report currently measuring outcomes to assess their programs' success in meeting its intended youth participant goals. The most commonly reported outcomes measured include quality of relationship between youth and mentor, attitudes towards school, and attitudes toward the future.
**Snapshot of the Youth Served at Mentoring Programs in Massachusetts**

These numbers reflect only those relationships at mentoring programs that responded to the 2014 MMC survey and provided youth counts.

- **Youth Served Annually** – More than 33,000 Massachusetts youth, ages 6–24, participated in formal mentoring relationships in 2013–2014.

- **Increased Youth Served Counts** – Compared to 2012, programs reported formally mentoring an additional 3,161 youth, a 10% increase since 2012 and nearly double the youth counts reported in 2006.¹

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¹ Analysis revealed that the large jump in youth served counts between 2010 and 2012 was primarily attributed to the first year of inclusion and/or growth of a few large youth mentoring programs, primarily using a group and/or team oriented approach.
The vast majority (85%) of programs report either stable or increased youth counts since last year. Forty-four percent reported growth since last year with the primary reasons being an increased public knowledge of their program, increased number of volunteer mentors, increased youth interest, and established new community partners. Fifteen percent of programs reported a decline in youth served counts and cited loss of funding and loss of staff as key factors. The remainder served the same number of youth since last year.

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 the majority representing elementary and middle school aged youth. In terms of racial/cultural identity, youth of color are more likely to be engaged in mentoring relationships. More than eighty percent of those mentored are youth of color, with the majority being Hispanic / Latino(a) and African American.

Nearly half (45%) of the recorded mentored youth from the Commonwealth reside in Boston, primarily in the neighborhoods of Dorchester and Roxbury. When exploring by region, the number of mentored youth in the Greater Boston region expands to more than 60%. Beyond Greater Boston, youth in formal mentoring relationships are fairly equally divided by region—Central and Metro West (11%), West (13%), Southeast and Islands (9%), Northeast (4%)—and concentrated in large urban areas.

Snapshot of those Serving as Mentors in Massachusetts

- **Mentors Matched Annually** – More than 15,000 individuals (ages 14+) served as mentors in formal mentoring relationships in 2014.

- **Mentor Counts Stable Over Recent Years** – While the reported number of annual youth served counts has continued to increase over time, the number of mentors has remained comparatively stable over the last four years.², ³

² Mentoring programs reported a decline of 234 individuals serving as mentors over the last two years compared to an increase of 3,161 youth served during the same time period.

³ The sizeable increase in mentor counts between 2006 and later years was largely due to the increased number of programs reporting data.
The majority of programs report either stable or increased mentor numbers since last year. The findings closely mirror the earlier findings on reported changes in youth services over the last year. Forty-two percent of programs reported a growth in mentor numbers since last year, with the primary reasons being increased marketing and knowledge of their program, improved mentor recruitment effort, increases in youth served, and newly established community partners. Less than one-fifth of programs reported a decline in mentor numbers, citing loss of funding and loss of staff as key reasons for the decline.

Mentors do not adequately represent the diversity of youth mentees. Both male and female adults are well represented in mentoring relationships. Adults of all ages participate, with the nearly three-quarters between the ages of 18 and 35. Not reflective of the diversity of the youth mentees, nearly 70% of individuals serving as mentors are White.
Unmet need for mentoring is still very high, especially outside of Boston. While mentoring programs across the state are successfully targeting specific high-risk youth subgroups, including youth from low-income and single-parent families, there is still an extremely high need to be met.

**Cities with the Highest Numbers of Youth from Single-Parent Families in Poverty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Youth in Single-Parent Families in Poverty</th>
<th>% of Need Being Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>18,250</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>9,678</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>6,250</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>4,757</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Bedford</td>
<td>4,028</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brockton</td>
<td>3,635</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowell</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall River</td>
<td>3,488</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>3,299</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holyoke</td>
<td>2,790</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Program Sustainability**

Mentoring programs identified the top three challenges to their programs’ sustainability and growth. The most frequently cited challenges include financial resource development infrastructure, the identification and the diversification of funding opportunities, and mentor recruitment.

More than one-half of programs predict growth in participant services. Seventy-eight programs (53% reporting) predicted growth in the number of youth served within two years. More than two-fifths (43%) predict participant services to remain stable, and only 5% forecast a reduction in the number of youth served in the next two years.

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4 The numbers of children (ages 5–17) from single-parent families in poverty are estimates based on the 2009–2013 American Community Survey.

5 The percentage of met need is based on the numbers of youth in mentoring relationships reported in MMC 2014. It is important to note that MMC 2014 youth residence data does not specify if youth are from single parent families in poverty. Responses do indicate that the vast majority of mentoring programs serve substantial proportions of youth from low income, single parent families.