

The stories **Mass**
behind **Mentoring**
the data **Counts**



BUILDING FUTURES THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS



2017

PRESENTED BY: **Bank of America** 

“QUOTES”

“I enjoy spending time with him in smaller activities, outside of the whole class, it’s a good time to bond with him.”

—YOUTH
ON PROGRAM COORDINATOR
AT CROSSROADS

“We say we’re brothers, because our relationship is forever.”

—BIG BROTHER
ON HIS MENTEE AT BBBS-CM

“His words just really get through to me. I feel like what he says has the most influence on me.”

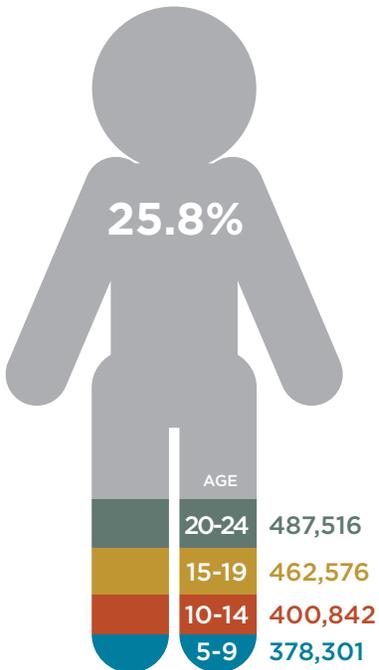
—STUDENT
ON HIS PROGRAM COORDINATOR
AT SCHOLAR ATHLETES

INTRO

At the core of youth mentoring is the belief that high-quality youth-adult relationships are central to healthy development of young people, empowering them to reach their full potential. For the past ten years, Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP) has initiated a biennial survey called *Mass Mentoring Counts*. The study offers insight into the landscape, trends, and needs of mentoring programs and it equips MMP, our network, and key stakeholders with benchmarks for the field and allows us to better serve youth.

In addition to serving formal youth mentoring programs, we have expanded our scope to support a wider field of youth-serving organizations to increase opportunities for impactful relationship formation to greater numbers of youth. In order to better understand and serve these relationships, we conducted a 2016 survey of 116 youth-serving programs with MENTOR. We also partnered with the UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI) to develop a case review of exemplary youth-adult relationships from four diverse organizations. Various stakeholders offered insight into their programs and relationships formed. The results highlight key findings that comprise impactful formal and informal mentoring relationships.

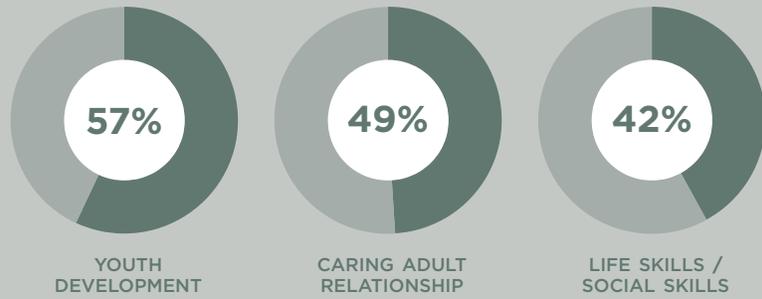
The four organizations in the study were **Big Brother Big Sister of Central Massachusetts/Metro West**, **Scholar Athletes**, **Raw Art Works (RAW)**, and **Crossroads**.



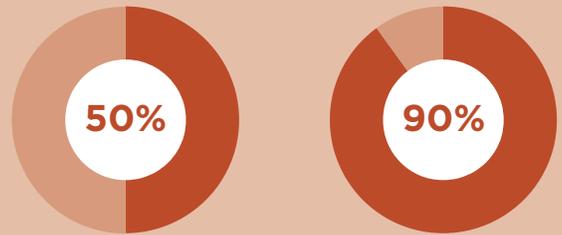
THE NEED IN MASSACHUSETTS



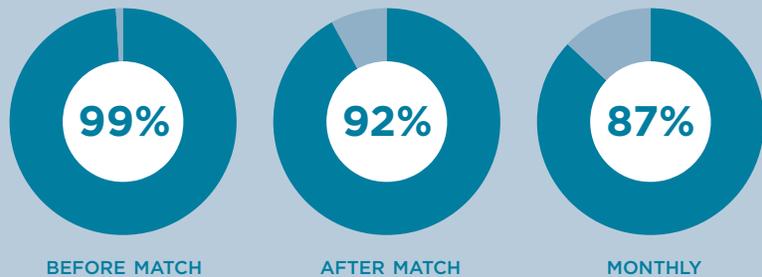
FINDINGS



PROGRAM GOALS



HOUSEHOLDS OF YOUTH SERVED



MENTOR TRAINING & SUPPORT



PROGRAM LEVEL

We spoke with program staff and volunteers to understand the structure and policies that created opportunities for exemplary relationships. The organizations stressed the importance of: relationships as fundamental to the mission; intentionality of relationship building as integral to the success of the programs; structured well-defined rules and theory/effective practices training for positive youth development.

RAW is a community-based organization whose core value is to see and hear every youth participant. With on-site therapists, artists and group leaders, youth have

the opportunity to build relationships among program staff, their peers, and the community. Through art, youth in the RAW program build meaningful and impactful relationships with adults.

All programs surveyed value youth voice and the relationships they build. High numbers of the formal structured programs reported youth development (57%), life skills (42%) and providing a caring adult relationship (49%) as their core goal. Interestingly, less than 60% of programs said they frequently measure the quality of relationships between youth and adults.

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS & MENTEES

Consistently, young people expressed that if the relationship and activities were not enjoyable, they would not participate. Thriving relationships, however, must also involve youth being open to the idea of relationships, provide space for youth to be themselves, embrace opportunities and address meaningful issues.

In addition to factors such as a low-income household and poor academic performance, students bring other hardships that make connecting with adults difficult. For

example, most programs state that 90% of the students they serve come from single-parent households. Amos and his little brother were paired through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest (BBBS-CM) over five years ago, and due to his little brother's upbringing without a second parent, building trust was a challenge. Over the years, however, the pair have developed a genuine, consistent, and fun relationship.

PROGRAM STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

The youth and adults we spoke with clarified the intentional actions and attitudes that helped adults create empowering relationships. Through these relationships, young people build on their strengths, develop skills and set goals for their futures. Across program models the youth identified key characteristics of an effective mentor:

**CARING • SUPPORTIVE • TRUSTWORTHY • CONSISTENT • GENUINE
• TRANSPARENT • EMPOWERING • CHALLENGING • HAVE AN
ABILITY TO ADDRESS MEANINGFUL ISSUES**

This is a lot to balance. Our survey of formal mentoring programs inform us that 54% of programs provide mentors three or more hours of training before a match is made and 47% offer the same after the match is made.

To support these mentors, 87% of the programs reported that they offer one or more hours a month of support contact with program coordinators.

Just under 40% of programs stated that the youth served are academically struggling. While tutoring sessions and programs can help improve grades, academic achievement is not enough for long-term success. One program, Scholar Athletes, aims to reduce the opportunity gap and support students, academically, socially and emotionally through athletics. Staff work closely with guidance counselors, educators, coaches and athletic departments to identify and support students.



“RAW is the only place I’ve ever felt like I truly belong. Because of RAW, my future plan is to step onto a college campus feeling as if I belong.”

- YOUTH AT RAW

“The program has helped me know myself, my peers, and understand life in general.”

—PARTICIPANT OF CROSSROADS

“He’s a role model, and I trust him to give me good advice.”

—STUDENT

ON HIS PROGRAM COORDINATOR
AT SCHOLAR ATHLETES

CONCLUSION

The four case reviews reveal that there is not a one-size fits all model or structure; impactful mentoring relationships can be successfully developed both formally and informally across varying program models. We also learned that there are commonalities in youth programs on a program level, in what adults brought to the relationship, what young people valued in their mentors and how they contributed to their relationships. Relationships are the heart of youth programming and a focus on intentionality is key to the success of programs and their missions. As young people work through their developmental phases, the presence of caring adults who provide opportunities, care, support, empower youth voices, and challenge youth to grow are crucial to help young people become thriving adults.

RELATIONSHIPS IN ACTION

Mass Mentoring Partnership relies on findings like this and survey results to understand what young people need to thrive. It enables us to support organizations to create relationships where and when they are happening. Our continued goal for 2017 and beyond is to build capacity not only at the individual level but on a systemic level to ensure that all young people have access to quality and intentional relationships. Furthermore, we want to ensure there are policies that support, encourage and even mandate that systems attend to relationships. We aim to develop funding streams that support relationships as a key intervention for positive youth outcomes. We want to celebrate and continue to bolster the mentoring programs that have traditionally created one-to-one and small group intentional relationships. Our call is to foster *Relationships in Action*, and we will continue to assess, build, connect and advocate to meet the needs of young people across Massachusetts.



Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP) is fueling the movement to expand empowering youth-adult relationships to meet the needs of communities across Massachusetts.

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CONTACT US: INFO@MASSMENTORS.ORG**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:  **MENTOR**

 **UMASS
DONAHUE
INSTITUTE**