YOUTH MENTORING IN THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY: STATE OF THE FIELD

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

This study was conducted by the Jewish Nonprofit Planning and Research Institute (JNPRI). Its goal was threefold:

1. Identify youth mentoring programs serving the U.S. Orthodox community.
2. Describe these programs relative to evidence-based best practices in the field of youth mentoring.
3. Create tools to help the programs continue to improve.

JNPRI reviewed existing research on youth mentoring and best practices that contribute to efficacy. The key sources of evidence about the efficacy of youth mentoring are cited on page 22. JNPRI then interviewed organizers of 20 classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs, as well as nine other programs with similar goals. Interviews began with programs known to JNPRI; interviewees then identified other programs. Interviewers used a semi-structured interview protocol informed by current research, but interviews were allowed to develop organically.

This report brings together what we learned from the literature and from the field. We hope communal professionals and lay leaders will find the resulting recommendations and tools valuable.

Overview – Key recommendations for the field

Youth mentoring in the Orthodox community has tremendous potential to benefit children who have, or are at risk for, problems related to school, conduct, motivation, relationships, or psychological health. Existing programs and new programs can take steps to actualize that potential.

Existing programs should focus on implementing the following best practices, which will help guide future decision making:

1. Create a written logic model detailing who needs the program, activities that make up the program, and desired outcomes of the program. Sample logic models for one-to-one mentoring programs can be found on page 23.
2. Use a standardized procedure to document activities, the quality of the relationship, and child outcomes. Sample measures of relationship quality can be found on page 31, and sample measures of selected outcomes can be found on page 33.

New programs should also include the following best practices in their program models and implementation:

1. Focus on children ages 9 to 13, who are most likely to benefit from a youth mentoring program.
2. Recruit mentors who have had or currently have similar experiences to the children—e.g., adults with divorced parents to mentor children with divorced parents.
3. Collect critical information about prospective mentors and help set their expectations with a written application, in-person interview, and personal reference check.
4. Provide prospective mentors with a written document that clearly explains the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of the program. A sample expectations document can be found on page 26.
5. Provide mentors with at least 2 hours of in-person training. Review program goals and expectations and help mentors understand the needs and challenges of the children.
6. Match mentors to children based on shared interests, hobbies, and skills.
7. Have program organizers facilitate and document a formal, initial meeting between the mentor, the child, and the parents, where all parties sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements. A sample commitment agreement can be found on page 29.
8. Have mentor-child pairs meet once per week for at least an hour.
9. Find a concrete, goal-oriented task that mentors and children can undertake together, such as homework or athletic coaching.
10. Involve parents in the initiation and maintenance of mentoring relationships.
11. Check in with mentors, children, and parents at least monthly.
12. Structure programs so that the mentoring relationships can continue for at least 12 months.
13. Create a procedure to manage the closure of mentoring relationships. Conduct exit interviews with mentors and children.

All programs should take the following step to ensure child safety:

1. Preform criminal background checks, including searches of sex offender and child abuse registries, on each mentor. A list of resources for criminal background checks can be found on page 21.

The sections below include more information about each of these recommendations, including the rationale behind them and the number of programs currently following best practices in these areas.

The programs – What programs did we find?

This project identified 20 classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs currently serving Orthodox children in the United States. These are community-based programs where each child is matched to a single mentor. The prototypical example of this type of mentoring program is Big Brothers Big Sisters.

The project also identified 6 other, site-based youth mentoring programs. Some of these are also group mentoring programs, where a small group of mentors works with a slightly larger group of children. The programs are based out of centers that offer fun activities, food, tutoring, and sometimes housing and therapy. The prototypical example of this type of mentoring program is the Boys and Girls Club.

See Table 1 for the location of all the youth mentoring programs. Names and websites for these programs are available in an Appendix on page 20.

Table 1. Number and location of youth mentoring programs, by program type

	Classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs	Other youth mentoring programs	Total youth mentoring programs
Baltimore-DC	5	1	6
Monsey	3	2	5
5 Towns-Far Rockaway	1	1	2
Lakewood	2	0	2
Passaic	1	1	2
Boston	1	0	1
Brooklyn	1	0	1
Chicago	1	0	1
Cleveland	0	1	1
Los Angeles	1	0	1
South Florida	1	0	1
Multiple[1]	2	0	2
Anonymous	1	0	1
Total	*20*	*6*	*26*

Together, these 26 programs serve more than 2,000 Orthodox children.[2]

These 26 programs are not an exhaustive list. There are some small programs that were inaccessible to the JNPRI team. However, we believe the largest programs are included here.

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[1] Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Lakewood, Monsey.
[2] Three of the programs—Baltimore's Big Bro Big Sis Program, Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Boston, and Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Los Angeles—are part of the national Big Brothers Big Sisters movement and also serve children from non-Orthodox and non-Jewish homes. Those children are not included in this estimate.

Other programs

In addition to the 26 programs analyzed in this report, this project identified two classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs that closed recently. Fundraising and staffing were major challenges for one program, while the other found that the young people needed care beyond what mentors were able to provide. A third program, which is included in this report, is poised to close, as well.

Finally, the Naomi Center in Baltimore offers a psychiatric rehabilitation program (PRP) that is licensed and funded through the state of Maryland. The program is available to children with a diagnosed psychiatric condition and Medicaid insurance. Children are matched with a mentor called a PRP counselor: a paid, highly trained paraprofessional who works in conjunction with the child's therapist. The fact that the mentors are working in a professional capacity as part of a treatment plan places this program outside the umbrella of youth mentoring.

Theory of Change – What are programs trying to do?

Research has shown that the cornerstone best practice of a successful mentoring program is having a clearly articulated Theory of Change. The Theory of Change is a map of sorts, a detailed explanation of:

1. Who **needs** the program?
2. What **activities** make up the program?
3. What are the desired **outcomes** for the children?

A Theory of Change provides a program with direction for decision making and clear measures of success.

For most of the programs we studied, the Theory of Change articulated by the program organizers is very general or implied. Below is a detailed examination of how the program organizers describe needs, activities, and outcomes.

Needs

Nine of the programs have a clearly defined target population and specific eligibility criteria for participating:

- 6 programs support children with divorced parents. Parental divorce is a demonstrated risk factor for emotional, behavioral, social, health, and academic difficulties, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.
- 2 programs serve boys who can't attend traditional schools due to serious mental or behavioral health problems.
- 1 program caters specifically to children who have a chronic illness or genetic condition and their siblings.

The other 17 programs do not have clear criteria for participation. Program organizers referred to nonspecific academic, social, emotional, or behavioral problems, or to vague "difficulties" or "challenges."

Best practice would be to define the target population more clearly. For example, is the program designed for young people who have specific childhood or adolescent problems, such as substance use, school failure, delinquency, etc.? Or is the program designed for young people with particular risk factors that increase the likelihood of problems, such as family conflict, poverty, attention deficits, etc.? Is there a means test for participating families? Are there eligibility criteria such as having a 504 Plan or IEP? Are there mental conditions that disqualify children from the program? Naming the specific criteria that qualify children for the program makes it easier to identify specific desired outcomes, and thus easier to structure the activities in a way that will lead to those outcomes.

Activities

Program activities are discussed in detail on page 15. In general, the underlying assumption of the program organizers is the one supported by data: vulnerable youth benefit from a supportive, sustained relationship with an older or more experienced individual who can provide guidance.

Outcomes

Almost none of the program organizers articulated a concrete, comprehensive list of desired outcomes for their programs:

- 14 program organizers offered extremely vague outcomes that verge on tautological, such as achieving long term results.
- 4 program organizers said they are trying to create "stability" but left that term undefined.
- 4 program organizers conflated the activities of the program with program outcomes. For example, building relationships with a trusted adult is what happens during the mentoring program, not an attitude or behavior that the program seeks to nurture.
- 2 programs listed some concrete outcomes, such as preventing substance use, reducing behavioral issues, and building social skills, but these outcomes appeared to be examples rather than a comprehensive list of desired outcomes.

Of the two remaining programs, one has two clearly defined, concrete, measurable goals: obtain a high school diploma or GED, and then move on to a job or an Israel program. Another program aims to improve girls' academic performance, but the goals for the boys are vague.

Specifying desired outcomes and then operationalizing them makes it easier to assess the impact of a program. Are the desired outcomes for each youth mentoring program attitudinal/motivational, such as educational aspirations? Are they social/relational, such as relationships with peers? Are they psychological/emotional, such as symptoms of depression and anxiety? How can each of those outcomes be measured? For example, youth mentoring has been proven to have a positive impact on school attendance, school behavior, and grades. If improvement in these areas is a desired outcome, then programs could ask schools to track or share number of days absent, number of disciplinary infractions, or GPA.

If programs move from a very general or implicit Theory of Change to a concrete, well-specified Theory of Change, they will be able to measure success and then make changes to the program to achieve success.

Recommendation: Create a written logic model detailing who needs the program, activities that make up the program, and desired outcomes of the program. Sample logic models for one-to-one mentoring programs can be found on page 23.

The children – Who benefits?

Gender

Of the 26 youth mentoring programs, 18 serve both boys and girls, 6 serve only girls, and 2 serve only boys. See Table 2. Both boys and girls benefit from mentoring, but research has shown that boys benefit more than girls do.

Table 2. Gender served

Gender served	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
Boys only	2	8%
Girls only	6	23%
Girls and boys	18	69%
Total	*26*	*100%*

All programs match girls with female mentors and boys with male mentors.

Age

Research shows that mentoring is most effective from mid-elementary school through early adolescence—roughly ages 9 to 13. Most of the programs serve at least some children in that sweet spot, although two of the site-based programs only serve young people ages 15 and older. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Ages served
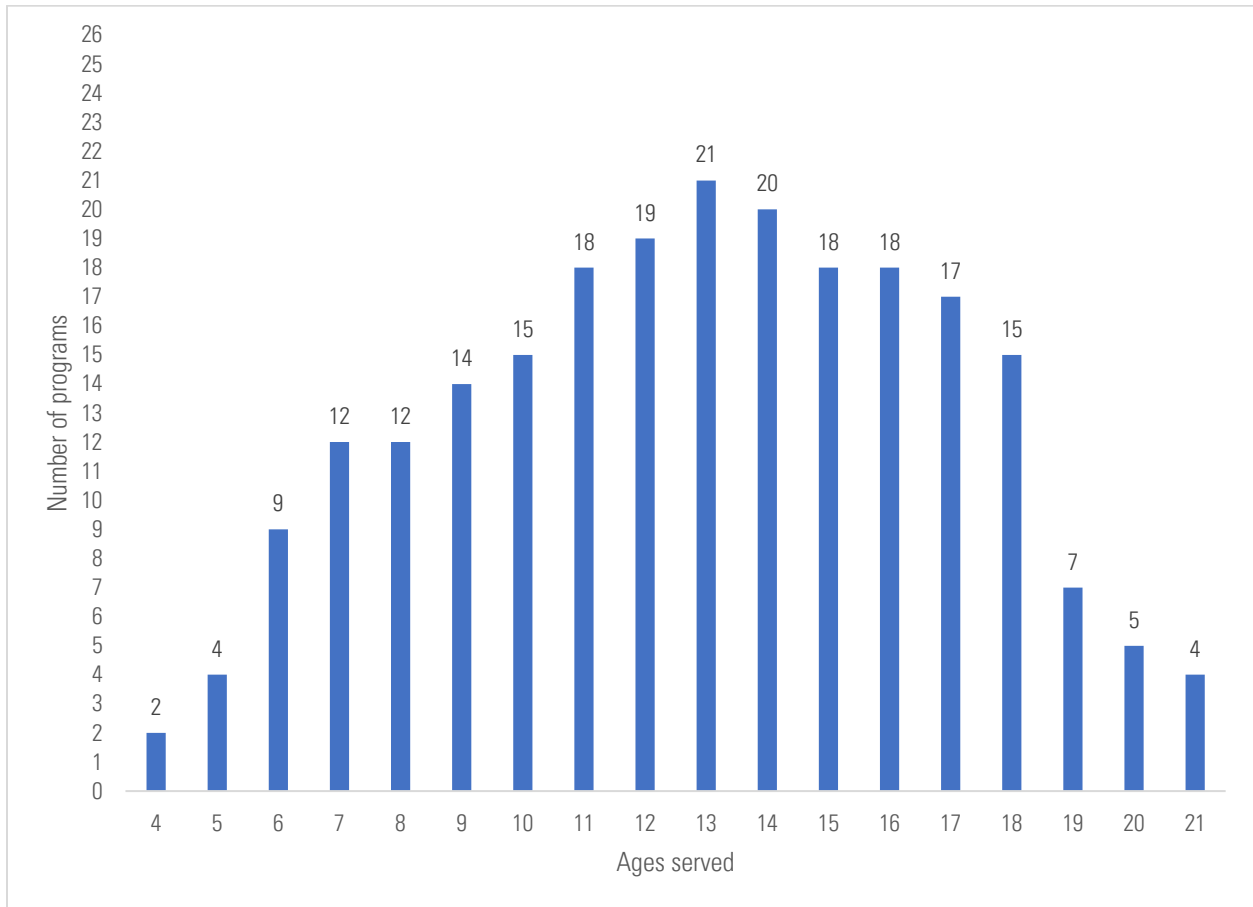
Recommendation: Focus on children ages 9 to 13, who are most likely to benefit from a youth mentoring program.

Recruiting children

All of the program organizers encountered strong demand for their programs. The primary source of referrals to the youth mentoring programs is schools. Community organizations like Sister to Sister also refer children to the programs, as do therapists. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Sources of referrals of children
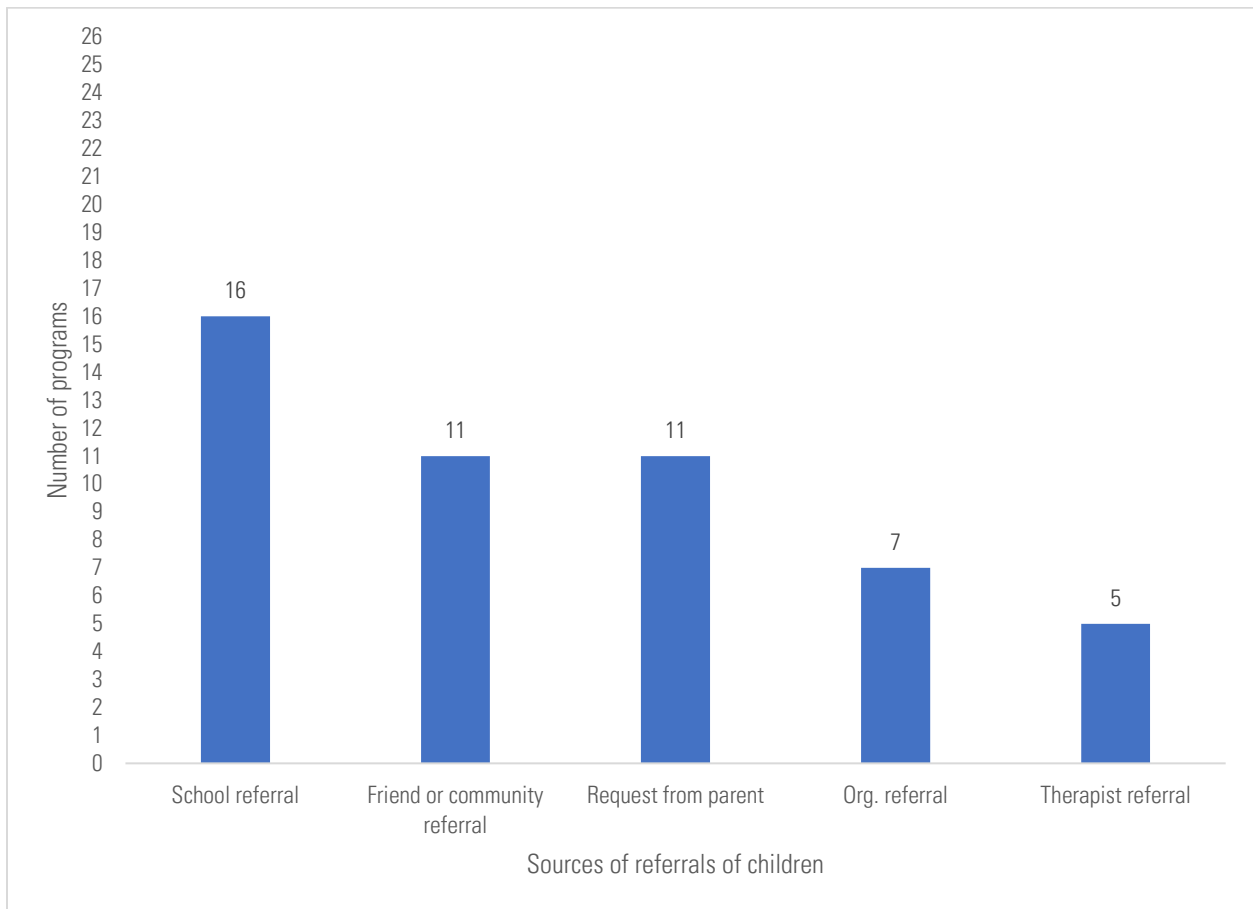
Sources of referrals are not mutually exclusive.

The mentors – Who helps?

At the heart of the youth mentoring program is the relationship between the child and the mentor. The two critical ingredients of an impactful mentoring relationship are:

1. Mentoring relationships are **high quality**.
   Youth mentoring is successful when mentors and children forge a strong and meaningful personal connection. The relationship must be mutual and characterized by trust and empathy.
2. Mentoring relationships are **long term**.
   Youth mentoring is successful when relationships are long-term, one year at a minimum. Very short-term or prematurely-terminated relationships have a negative impact on children.

The recruitment, selection, and training of mentors is a critical step in ensuring that mentoring relationships are both long term and high quality.

Mentors' life experiences

Children develop closer bonds to mentors who they believe are similar in an important way to themselves. Best practice is to recruit mentors who have had or currently have similar experiences to the children—for example, a child with a learning disability would benefit from a mentor who has the same learning disability. These mentors become "credible messengers" for the children. Six programs exist specifically to support children with divorced parents, but none of them seek out adults with divorced parents to mentor the children.

> **Recommendation:** Recruit mentors who have had or currently have similar experiences to the children—e.g., adults with divorced parents to mentor children with divorced parents.

Mentors who have settled life circumstances are more likely to fulfill their commitment to the mentoring program and the child. In the general population, research shows that college students are not well suited to serving as mentors due to their changing life circumstances, academic pressures, and generally busy schedules.

Nine programs currently include high school students and very young adults as mentors. Four of these programs are designed to last for only one academic year (see page 17 for why an academic year model may be problematic). The duration of matches in the programs using high school students as mentors is unknown and should be tracked.

Recruiting mentors

The most common way mentors are recruited is through word of mouth, or through broad communal networking and connections. Five programs also recruit through schools, which refer current students or alumni. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. How mentors are recruited
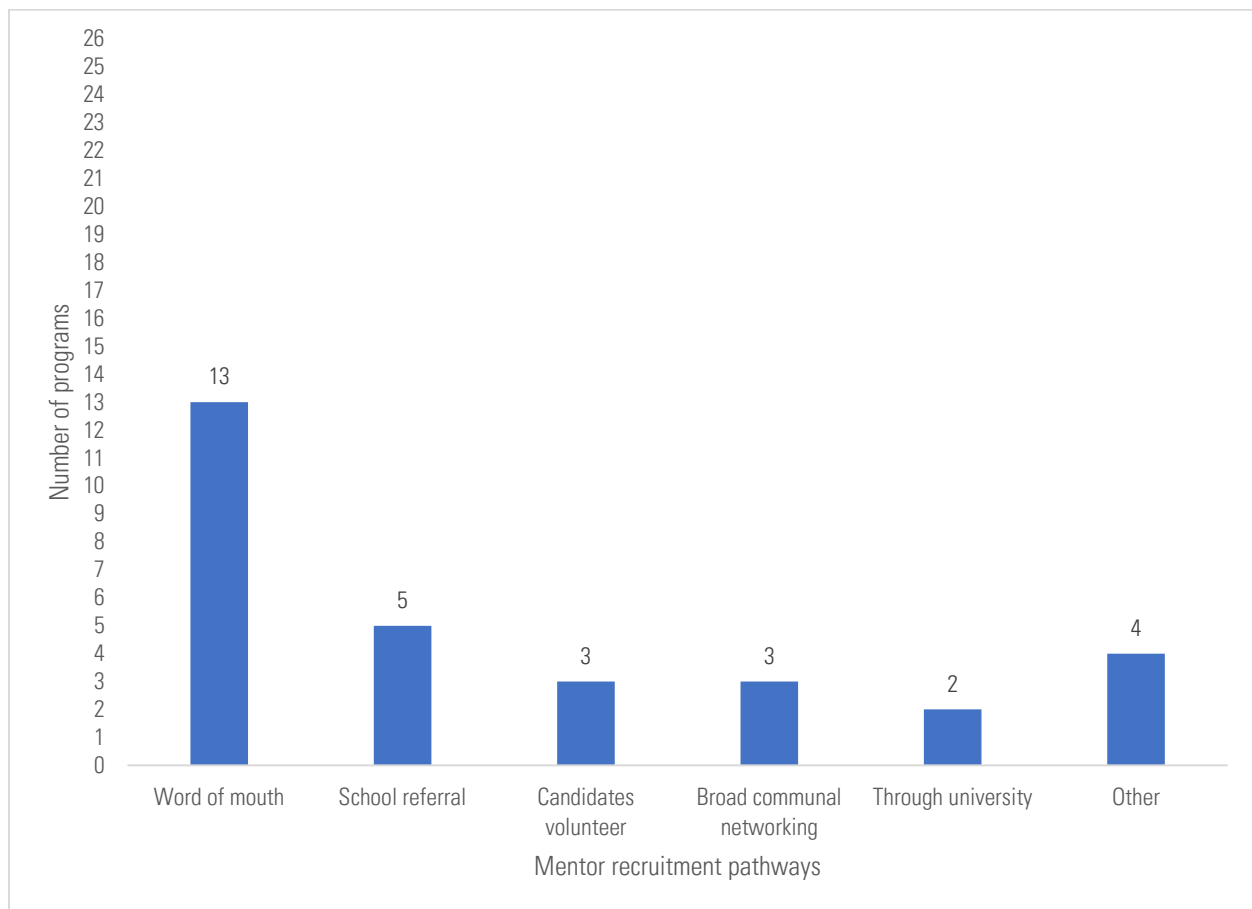
Recruitment pathways are not mutually exclusive.

Payment as an incentive

There is no evidence that mentor compensation impacts the effectiveness of a youth mentoring program. Therefore, compensation can be used as a tool for recruitment and retention.

Among the 26 programs, payment is somewhat dependent on gender.

- Programs that serve only boys pay mentors.
- Of the 6 programs that serve only girls, 1 pays mentors.
- Of the 18 programs that serve both boys and girls, 5 pay all mentors and 4 pay the male mentors only. Program organizers explain that the male mentors are married and in need of supplemental income, whereas the female mentors are unmarried and able to volunteer.

Thus, in the youth mentoring sector as a whole, male mentors are more likely to be paid than female mentors.

Screening mentors

Once potential mentors have been identified, the best practice is to have them:

1. Complete a written application
2. Participate in an in-person interview
3. Provide personal references

These three steps serve several functions. First, they allow program organizers to evaluate candidates carefully. Second, they give program organizers key information (e.g., interests, skills) that will aid in matching mentors to mentees. Third, they communicate to potential mentors what to expect from the mentoring program. Unmet expectations often lead to volunteer failure.

Of the 26 youth mentoring programs, some do one or two of these steps, and 11 do all three (written applications, in-person interview, and personal reference check). See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Three key steps in the mentor selection process
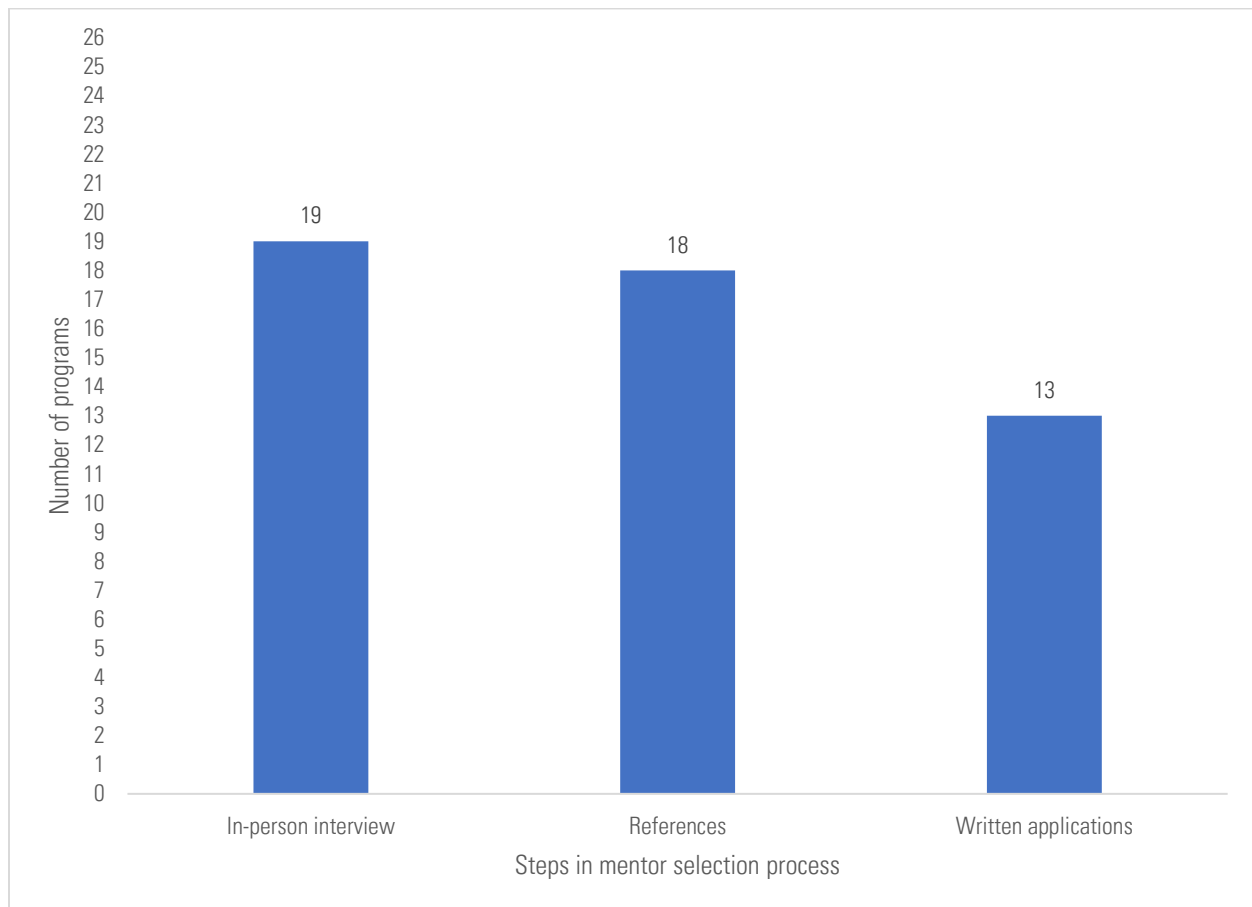
Recommendation: Collect critical information about prospective mentors and help set their expectations with a written application, in-person interview, and personal reference check.

Mentors should always undergo a criminal background check, including searches of sex offender and child abuse registries, before they begin working with a child. Only 7 of the 26 programs currently perform these background checks.

> **Recommendation:** Preform criminal background checks, including searches of sex offender and child abuse registries, on each mentor. A list of resources for criminal background checks can be found on page 21.

Setting mentor expectations

Mentoring relationships are most successful when everyone involved knows what to expect from the mentoring program and has realistic expectations about what it can achieve. Best practice is to provide prospective mentors with a written document that clearly explains the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of the program—including features that may be unappealing. Ten of the 26 mentoring programs already have such a document. The organizer of one mentoring program that did not have an expectations document noted that they don't tell potential mentors that the mentoring relationship is supposed to be open-ended specifically because they think mentors wouldn't participate if they knew. This obfuscation is problematic because unmet expectations often lead to volunteer failure.

> **Recommendation:** Provide prospective mentors with a written document that clearly explains the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of the program. A sample expectations document can be found on page 26.

Training mentors

Best practice is for mentors to receive at least 2 hours of in-person training, reviewing program goals and expectations and helping mentors understand the needs and challenges of the mentees. Mentors who receive training feel more confident and prepared. At least 15 programs currently offer in-person training; 6 do not. The rest are unknown.

> **Recommendation:** Provide mentors with at least 2 hours of in-person training. Review program goals and expectations and help mentors understand the needs and challenges of the children.

Matching mentors to children

The strongest, most consistent predictor of successful youth mentoring programs is that children and mentors have shared interests, hobbies, and skills. The site-based programs don't necessarily match a single mentor to a single child, but of the 20 classic one-on-one youth mentoring programs, half currently make matches based on these criteria. Many programs use amorphous criteria such as "intuition" and "personality." Other factors include religious community and geographic location or schedule. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Criteria for matching mentors to children, classic programs only
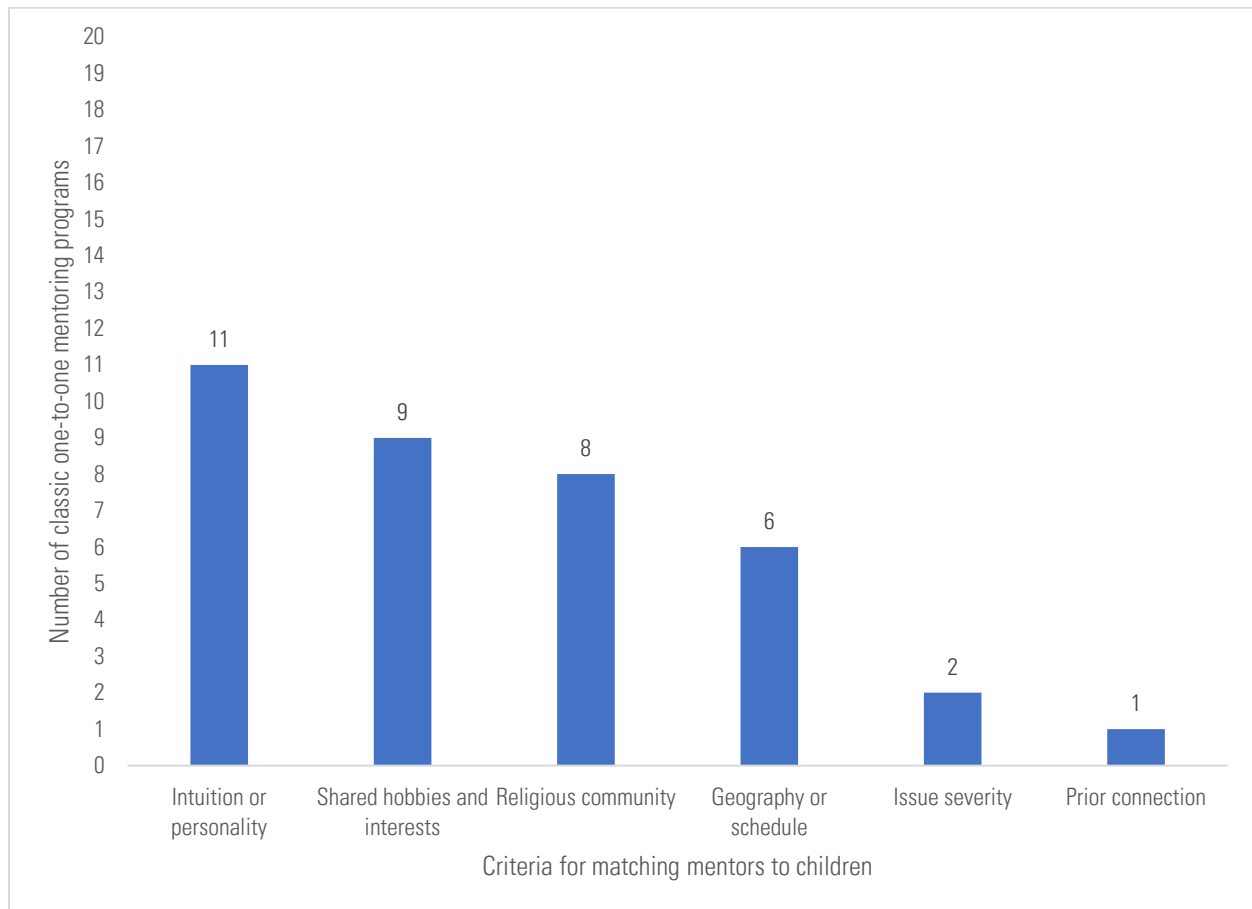
Criteria are not mutually exclusive.

Recommendation: Match mentors to children based on shared interests, hobbies, and skills.

The mentoring relationship – What happens?

The activities of mentoring are different in the 20 classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs and the 6 other programs. In the classic one-to-one programs, each child is matched to a single mentor, and they can meet in multiple venues. In the site-based programs, most activities happen at a central location or during an organized group activity, such as a camping trip. Further, a single mentor might work with a group of children. Some analyses in this section of the report refer to the 20 classic one-to-one programs only.

Initiating the relationship

In a classic one-to-one youth mentoring program, best practice is for program organizers to facilitate and document a formal, initial meeting between the mentor, the child, and the parents. The initial meeting positions the relationship for success by setting expectations. All parties have a chance to share critical information and discuss potential opportunities and challenges. Ideally, all parties also sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements.

These best practices for the initial meeting are not common among the classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs examined in this study. See Figure 6. Only 2 programs follow all 3 best practices.

Figure 6. First meeting practices, classic programs only
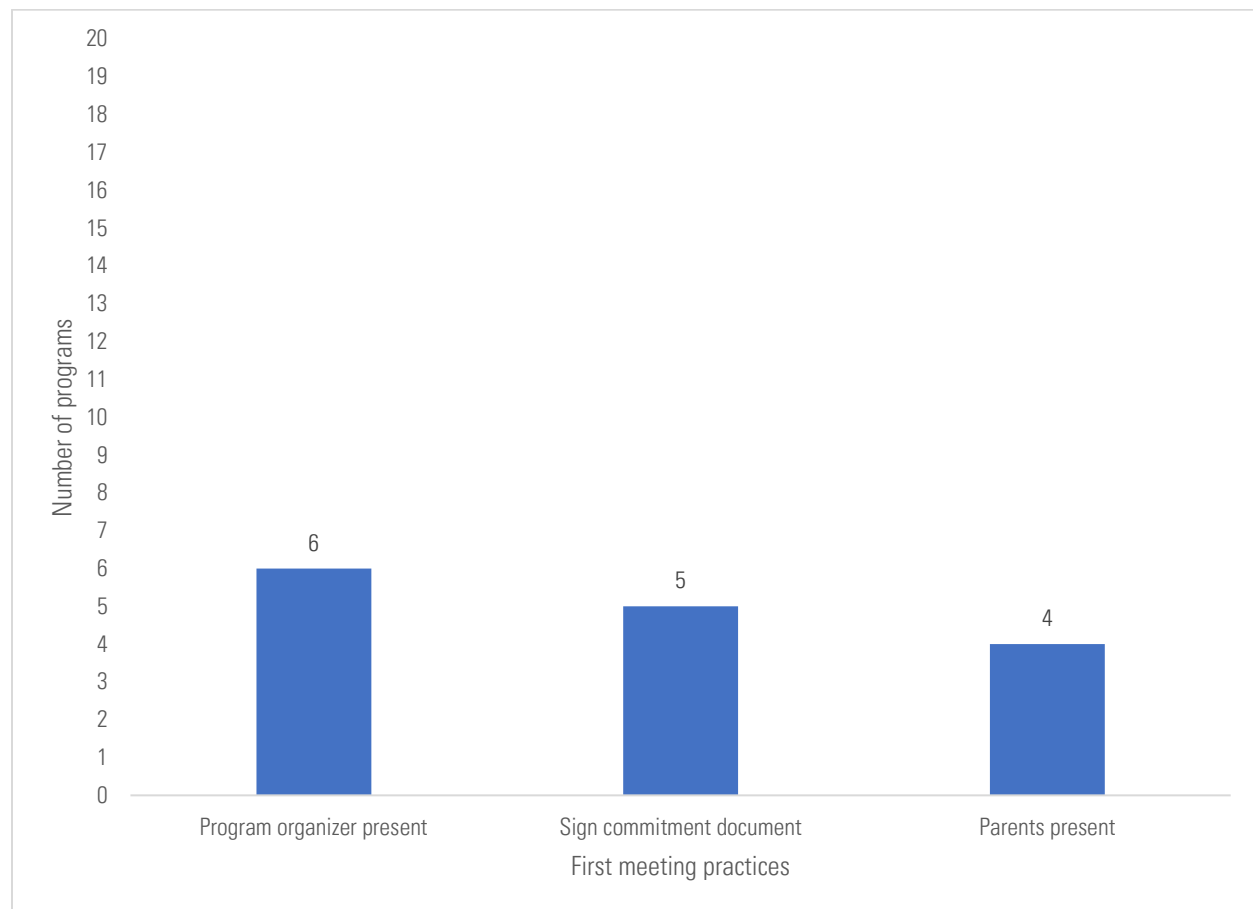
Recommendation: Have program organizers facilitate and document a formal, initial meeting between the mentor, the child, and the parents, where all parties sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements. A sample commitment agreement can be found on page 29.

In 2 programs, children are not aware that they are part of a mentoring program. Program organizers create pretexts for the children to spend time with the mentors, such as a joint chesed project. These programs aim to create mentoring relationships that feel natural and organic, and to avoid stigmatizing the girls. Based on known best practices in youth mentoring, these models may face the following challenges:

- Youth mentoring is most effective when children understand what to expect from the program and the mentor: what they will do together, how it will benefit them, and what might be challenging. Can children who are not aware that they are part of a mentoring program develop those expectations?
- Youth mentoring is most effective when the mentor-child relationship is characterized by trust and empathy. Could beginning a mentoring relationship without full transparency lead to loss of trust later on?

The activities of mentoring

Frequency of contact between mentors and children is essential to the success of the mentoring relationship. As a general rule, research suggests meeting a minimum of once per week for at least an hour. Seventeen of the 24 mentoring programs have met this standard. See Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of contact

Frequency of contact	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
Twice a month	5	19%
Once a week	14	54%
More than once a week	3	12%
Not set	4	15%
Total	*26*	*100%*

Recommendation: Have mentor-child pairs meet once per week for at least an hour.

It is critical that mentors and children engage in fun social activities together. All 26 youth mentoring programs include these types of activities. Examples include playing sports, pottery painting, and going out to eat.

At the same time, although a mentoring relationship should not be overly task-focused, best practice is for mentors to have a purposeful role such as teaching or coaching. Research shows that children come to trust and appreciate their mentors in the context of working with them on goal-oriented activities—the classic example is repairing a bicycle and then going for a bike ride together. Mentors who try to address children's issues by solely having fun and establishing an emotional connection are less successful. Nine youth mentoring programs incorporated specific tasks or goals, such as homework help and chesed projects. One of those 9 has a specific task for boys (a learning program) but none for girls.

Recommendation: Find a concrete, goal-oriented task that mentors and children can undertake together, such as homework or athletic coaching.

Parental involvement

Many program organizers believe that parental involvement will impede the mentoring relationship and discourage a child from feeling comfortable sharing with his or her mentor. Statistically, this is not true—mentoring relationships last longer and are more impactful when parents feel included. Involved parents can support the program by expressing confidence in the mentor, setting expectations for the child's behavior with the mentor, providing the mentor with key background information, and assisting with the logistics of scheduling and transportation.

Of the 20 classic one-on-one mentoring programs, only 7 of the programs encourage mentors to get to know the child's family. Further, only 4 of the programs include parents in the initial meeting between the mentor and child (see page 13), only 4 programs check in with parents

regularly during the mentoring relationship (see below), and only 4 programs conduct exit interviews with parents when a match ends (see page 17).

Recommendation: Involve parents in the initiation and maintenance of mentoring relationships.

Monitoring

Best practice in the field of youth mentoring is for program organizers to call or visit mentors, children, and parents at least monthly to ask about activities, the quality of the relationship, and child outcomes. This regular contact ensures that mentors and children have the support necessary to navigate any new challenges, thereby increasing match quality and longevity.

The majority of programs include regular check-ins with mentors. Only 4 programs keep in regular contact with the parents (for more on parental involvement, see page 15). Only 2 programs, both site-based, check in with the children.

Figure 7. Do program organizers check in at least monthly with…?
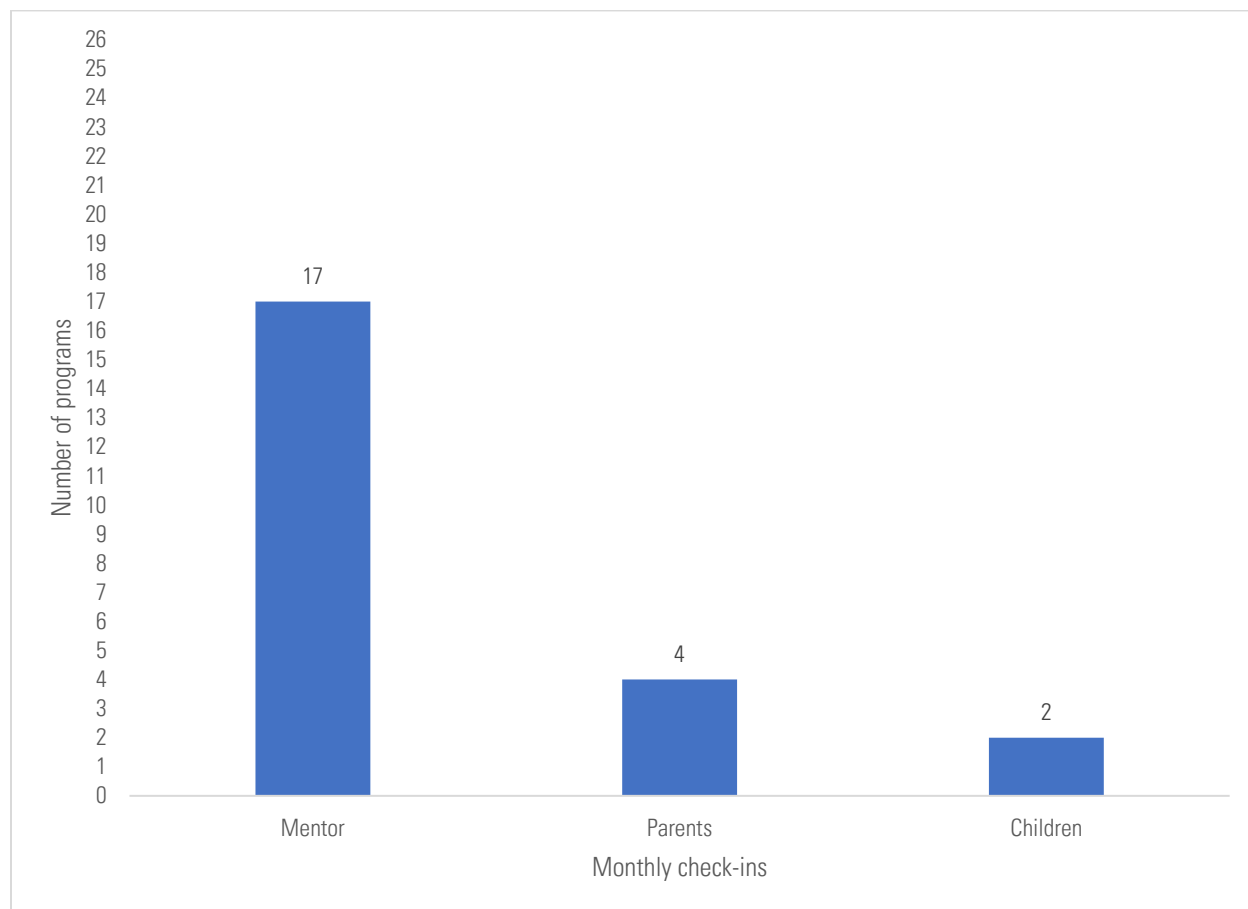
Recommendation: Check in with mentors, children, and parents at least monthly.

Ending the relationship

Program duration is one of the most critical factors in a mentoring program. In general, mentoring relationships that last less than one year do not have an impact on children; very short-term or prematurely-terminated relationships actually have a negative impact on children.

Four of the programs were designed to use students as mentors, and their expected program duration is one school year (i.e., 9-10 months). The children in these programs may not reap the benefits of youth mentoring. Most of the rest of the programs are designed to be open-ended. See Table 4.

Table 4. Expected program duration

Intended program duration	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
Open-ended	19	73%
School year	4	15%
1 year	1	4%
2 years	1	4%
3 years	1	4%
Total	*26*	*100%*

> **Recommendation:** Structure programs so that the mentoring relationships can continue for at least 12 months.

Best practice is to have a procedure to manage anticipated and unanticipated closures of mentoring relationships. These procedures help mitigate negative emotions (e.g., disappointment or sadness) that children, mentors, and parents may feel following the conclusion of a mentoring relationship. They also provide the program organizers with information that will help them improve the program.

Program organizers should conduct exit interviews with mentors, children, and parents. If appropriate, it is also beneficial to host a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and children, where they can reflect on positive experiences in the mentoring relationship. Only one program takes all of these steps; the majority of the programs don't take any of them. See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Match closure procedures
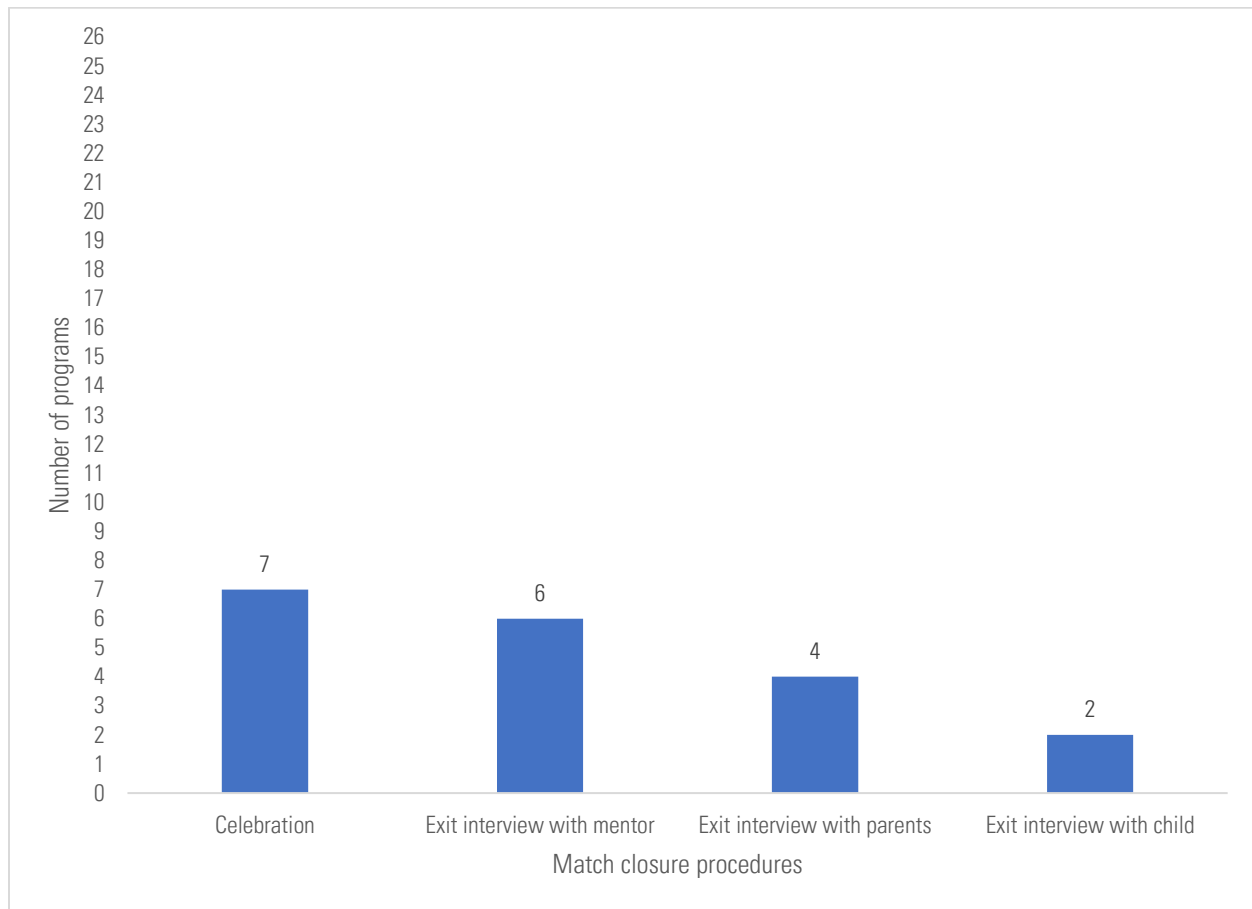
Recommendation: Create a procedure to manage the closure of mentoring relationships. Conduct exit interviews with mentors and children.

Collecting data – How do we measure success?

As programs move toward best practices in the field of youth mentoring, they should begin using simple, effective monitoring tools to document outputs and outcomes.

Outputs are the signs that the program is functioning as intended, according to best practices in the field.

> Key outputs for effective youth mentoring programs are frequency of contact; doing both fun social activities and goal-oriented activities; and quality of relationship. Mentors can easily report the date of each meeting, the length of the meeting, and a brief description of the activities. There are several brief sets of survey questions that can measure relationship quality, such as the Strength of Relationship Measure (SoR) that was developed for Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. The questions, which can be found on page 31, could be included in a survey once or twice per year.

Outcomes are the desired characteristics of the children after they have benefitted from the program.

> Each program will have different desired outcomes, depending on its Theory of Change (see page 3). There are voluminous sets of survey questions designed to measure outcomes such as mental and emotional health, social-emotional skills, caring for others, etc., and surveys could be administered at regular intervals to test these. Sample survey measures of selected outcomes can be found on page 33. Another way to measure youth outcomes is to collect information from schools or parents, such as grades, behavior, etc.

By collecting this data, programs will know whether meetings are occurring as intended, whether the relationships between each mentor-child pair are strong, and whether children are progressing toward their goals. They will be able to recognize and address challenges quickly when they arise, and, over time, they will be able to state definitively how the program has impacted the children.

> **Recommendation:** Use a standardized procedure to document activities, the quality of the relationship, and child outcomes. Sample measures of relationship quality can be found on page 31, and sample measures of selected outcomes can be found on page 33.

Appendix 1: List of youth mentoring programs in the Orthodox community included in report

Program name	Location	Website
Classic one-to-one youth mentoring programs		
Anchor Mentoring	5 Towns-Far Rockaway	www.anchormentoring.org
Areivim	Monsey	areivim.com
Big Bro Big Sis Program	Baltimore-DC	jcsbalt.org
Bikur Cholim of Boro Park	Brooklyn	-
Bnos One on One	Multiple[3]	-
DITTO	Baltimore-DC	-
GIVE	Passaic	givechessed.org
Imadi	Baltimore-DC	imadi.org
JTAP	Baltimore-DC	www.jtapmd.org
Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Boston	Boston	www.jbbbs.org
Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Los Angeles	Los Angeles	www.jbbbsla.org
Krovei Lev	Lakewood	-
My Extended Family	Monsey	www.myef.org
Nesivos	Lakewood	nesivos.org
One Family Chicago	Chicago	-
Ohr Malka	Monsey	-
RESOLVE	Multiple[4]	resolveteens.org
Shalom Tikvah	Baltimore-DC	shalomtikvah.org
Tova Mentoring	South Florida	-
Anonymous[5]		
Other youth mentoring programs		
Ahavas Chaim	Baltimore-DC	ahavaschaim.org
Lev Leyeled	Monsey	levleyeled.org
Naaleh	Cleveland	naalehcleveland.org
Project Extreme	5 Towns-Far Rockaway	projectextreme.org
The Chill & The Bais	Passaic	passaicchill.com
The Lighthouse	Monsey	www.thelhproject.com

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[3] Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Lakewood, Monsey.
[4] National.
[5] Program organizer spoke on condition of anonymity.

Appendix 2: Resources for criminal background checks

A thorough criminal background check involves searching many databases sourced from federal, state, and county agencies. A small nonprofit organization is not equipped to run a thorough background check, but there are companies who provide this service for a fee. The following products have been recommended by other Jewish organizations:

- Checkr: checkr.com
- Verified First: verifiedfirst.com

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Tool 1: Sample logic models

As explained in detail on page 3, the cornerstone best practice of a successful mentoring program is having a clearly articulated Theory of Change: who **needs** the program, what **activities** make up the program, and the desired **outcomes** for the children? As explained in detail on page 19, it is also critical to identify **outputs**, which are the signs that the program is functioning as intended. A logic model should contain the four components shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Four components of a logic model
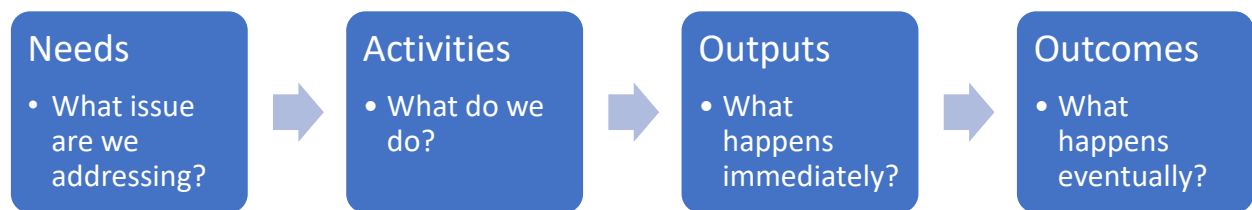
Below is sample content for each component.

Sample Needs for a Youth Mentoring Program

This component of a logic model specifies what needs are addressed by the program. It should be supported by evidence: how do we know there is a problem? It should spell out the consequences of the problem, rather than leaving them implicit. Examples:

- Sister to Sister knows of at least # of households in community X headed by a divorced parent. Parental divorce is a demonstrated risk factor for emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- Testing showed that # percent of upper elementary-aged children in school X are not reading at grade level. Lack of proficient literacy is associated with behavioral issues and low self-esteem, as well as long-term consequences including low educational attainment and low earnings.
- Rabbis in community X report that increasing numbers of teenage boys are abusing substances. Teen substance use leads to an array of problems, including health-related problems and family crises.

Sample Activities for a Youth Mentoring Program

This component of a logic model details the activities of the program. These should be very specific—"run the program" is not sufficient. Ideally, the activities should follow the best practices outlined in our best practices document. There should be some basis for believing these activities will lead to the desired outcomes, e.g., existing research on similar programs. A sample set of activities:

1. Recruit children who…
   a. Are between the ages of X and Y.
   b. Have divorced parents.
   c. Have a formal diagnosis of ADHD.
   d. Have a household income below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level.
   e. etc.
2. Recruit mentors who…
   a. Are at least 21 years old.
   b. Have a close relative who is divorced.
   c. Are excellent students in subject X.
   d. etc.
3. Screening, orientation, and training process for mentors.
4. Match mentors and children based on shared interests.
5. Facilitate initial meeting between mentor, child, parents.
6. Mentor-child pairs meet weekly for 1 hour. They…
   a. Engage in fun social activities together.
   b. Work together on…
      i. Homework
      ii. Chesed project
      iii. etc.
7. Regularly occurring staff support check-ins w/mentors, children, parents.

Sample Outputs for a Youth Mentoring Program

Outputs are the immediate, tangible, or direct results of the activities. They are the *means to the end*, not the end. Program organizers should be able to track these and report them without help from an outside evaluator. Sample outputs:

- # of children recruited & enrolled
- # of mentors recruited & accepted w/desired characteristics
- Average # of meetings per quarter
- Average duration of meetings
- % of time spent on …
    - Homework
    - Chesed project
    - etc.
- % of time spent on fun social activities
- Quality of mentoring relationships
  Note that relationship quality is an output, *not* an outcome. Many valid, reliable measures of the quality of the relationship between a mentor and child are available through the National Mentoring Resource Center,[6] and a sample measure can be found on page 31.
- % of matches with support check-ins completed on-schedule with mentor, youth, and parent
- % of mentoring relationships sustained minimum expected length of time (e.g., 2 years) and average overall relationship duration

Sample Outcomes for a Youth Mentoring Program

Outcomes are the meaningful, long-term social changes the program is trying to make. It is resource-intensive to determine impact; often, an outside evaluator is needed. Examples:

- Increase self-esteem as measured by the [Global Self-Worth Scale](.).
- Reduce Pediatric Depressive Symptoms as measured by the [Short Form from the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS)](.).
- Improve academic behavior, prosocial skills, and emotional regulation as measured by the [Teacher Social Competence Measure](.).
- Earn a grade of at least B- in all classes.
- Complete the school year with no disciplinary infractions.
- Successfully complete a substance abuse treatment program.
- Go to seminary in Israel after high school.
- etc.

Many valid, reliable measures of many possible desired program outcomes are available through the National Mentoring Resource Center,[6] and a sample measure can be found on page 33.

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[6] https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/measurement-guidance-toolkit/

Tool 2: Sample expectations document for mentors

Mentor Guide

What is the GOAL? The basic goal of mentoring is to serve as a role model and friend to your mentee by helping your mentee develop self-confidence and achieve goals. In order to achieve this, you must establish TRUST, which takes time. So be patient…

What do I need to become a mentor? YOURSELF! You don't need to feel that you are responsible for providing constant entertainment. Just find a common interest and start there!

How do I build up my mentee's self esteem? Self-esteem is comprised of two parts. A person feeling loved and a person feeling accomplished. Ideally, there is a healthy amount of both. You should encourage and take an active interest in the mentee's accomplishments in both school and home and set some kind of goal to work towards. Even if it's small…

What if my mentee is having a hard time keeping up in school? If a child is sitting in class for 8 hours a day feeling bad about himself, it can be incredibly difficult. Taking time to do some schoolwork/learning with the child can build up your mentee's confidence and lead to success. If your mentee needs extra homework help, speak to your volunteer coordinator to arrange services for him/her.

What if I have to cancel our outing? You may not realize how much your mentee looks forward to hanging out with you, but you are a **HUGE** part of your mentee's life. Canceling last minute should be avoided at all times unless an emergency comes up. CONSISTENCY is crucial! If you do have to reschedule, make sure to do so 48 hours before you were scheduled to go out.

What if I can't continue as a mentor? A mentor must understand that by getting involved he/she is making a commitment to be a part of the child's life and ending the relationship prematurely can have a very negative effect on the child. This is especially true if the child is going through, or has been through, a difficult situation in his/her life. However, circumstances may arise that may force the relationship to come to an end. Never cut off the relationship abruptly. Make sure to inform the coordinator immediately that you cannot continue and discuss the process of ending the relationship with the child.

What if my mentee is asking me too many personal questions? It is best to establish a rule at the beginning of your relationship, if either of you does not want to answer a question, you will both respect each other's right to refuse to answer. It is important for your mentee to learn appropriate boundaries.

What if my mentee is complaining to me about his/her parent? It is important to respect the values and choices of the mentee's family. If your mentee complains about a parent, you should

try to help the child understand the reason the parent may do what he/she does and find positive things about that parent. Do not take sides! You can say, "I can see why that can be tough, but I think your parent is trying to……" or just acknowledge the complaint and move on.

What am I allowed to tell other people about my mentee? Nothing! It is very important to maintain confidentiality for your mentee no matter what.

What if my mentee keeps asking me to buy him/her stuff? The focus of your relationship should be on spending quality time together, not about buying whatever your mentee wants. Each month you will be given a budget, and you can come up with activities together with your mentee, but it is important to let your mentee know that you are required to stick to the budget. Gifts are discouraged, but if you want to get your mentee something for a birthday or a special occasion, make sure to check with a parent first.

Should I give my mentee advice? Only if your mentee is specifically asking you for advice on an issue that you feel comfortable responding to, should you offer it. Make sure to tell your mentee that the advice is just your own opinion, and he/she may want to ask a professional for help with a specific problem. Speak to the coordinator if you feel that additional follow-up is needed.

What is my mentee is super quiet? You may feel like your relationship is one sided and your mentee doesn't care about you, but that is never the case. Some children need time to open up, and always appreciate it when their mentor reaches out even if they don't show it. Try to find out what he/she is interested in, and start there!

What if my mentee is doing something I don't approve of? This can definitely be a challenge since you want your mentee to feel comfortable telling you things. But what happens when you don't like what you are hearing? If the mentee is doing something dangerous or concerning, a good way to respond without judgement is to say, "When you do this, it worries me."

SAFETY- This is the most important aspect of the mentor/mentee relationship. These guidelines are EXTREMELY important and cannot be ignored under any circumstances.

- You may never pick up the child without the consent of the parents beforehand.
- Don't just wait in the car. Walk to the door and say a proper hello and goodbye to the child's family before leaving and when dropping off.
- Make sure to inform parents where you are going and let them know when to expect you back. If you are running late, make sure to let parents know.
- Seatbelts must be worn and any reckless driving can put the mentee in serious danger.
- After each outing, make sure to log your visit with your coordinator.
- Mentors and mentees should never be in a closed or locked room alone.
- Mentors should not touch mentees below the shoulders.
- Foul, obscene or profane language of any sort (verbal, written or electronic) is unacceptable.

- Mentors should not communicate electronically past 10 PM with mentees or mentees' parents.
- If a parent is constantly texting or making you feel uncomfortable in any way, please reach out to your coordinator immediately.
- If you suspect your mentee is being abused in any way, please contact your coordinator. You may have access to seeing things in the child's life that no one else does. This is a big responsibility to ensure that your mentee is safe. Your coordinator will handle the rest of the process.
- Overnights with mentees are not allowed.
- Mentors should not interact on social media with mentees.
- Mentors are not therapists! If your mentee brings up an issue that requires professional involvement, make sure to let the child know this seems like something they should talk to their parent, teacher, or therapist about.

Most importantly, remember you are not in this ALONE. Your coordinator will be checking in regularly to make sure you and your mentee are enjoying your time together. Feel free to reach out with any questions that come up. This process is definitely a group effort!

Tool 3: Sample commitment agreements

Sample text for commitment agreement for children and mentors to sign, consenting to the program's rules and requirements. Courtesy of Scotland's Coalition of Childhood Umbrella Organisations, with some revisions.

We are both voluntarily entering into this partnership.

We agree that:

1. The mentoring relationship will last for _____ months.
2. We will meet at least once every _____ weeks. If we need to cancel a meeting, we will inform our partner at least 24 hours in advance and arrange an alternative date.
3. Each meeting will last a minimum of _____ minutes and a maximum of _____ minutes.
4. In between meetings, we will contact each other by phone, text, or email no more than _____ times per week.
5. We agree that the mentor's role is to:

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. We agree that the mentee's role is to:

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. We agree that the content of these meetings will be confidential, with the exception of concerns about behavior that is unsafe or detrimental to the mentee or mentor. If these types of issues are encountered, mentors or mentees will raise them with the program organizer.
8. We agree to forward any necessary documentation to the program coordinator. We understand that it will be used to evaluate the program.

_____   _____

(Mentor Signature)   (Mentee Signature)

_____   _____

(Date)   (Date)

I (Parent Name) agree to have my child (Child Name) participate in (Name of Program) mentoring program. I understand that the mentor is a volunteer who wants to help my child be successful academically and socially, and that the mentor will act as a friend, role model and advisor. I also understand that no monetary assistance is provided by the program.

I understand that the mentor agrees to meet with my child for (Specified Amount of Time) at least (Frequency) for the duration of the program.

In return, I agree to the following:

- Try hard to have a good relationship with the mentor
- Keep all appointments with the mentor
- Notify the mentor at least 24 hours in advance if I cannot keep the appointment
- Abide by the rules and regulations of the program
- Will not electronically communicate past 10 P.M. with the mentor
- Will communicate with Program Coordinator if I feel uncomfortable for any reason
- Will not ask mentor to babysit or to come over outside of set outings as part of program
- Will not ask mentor to run errands or to complete any task outside of set mentor outings

I understand that if I do not fulfill these expectations, my child may lose the privilege of participating in the (Name of Program).

_____
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

_____
(Date)

Tool 4: Sample measure of relationship quality

Many valid, reliable measures of the quality of the relationship between a mentor and child can be found here: [Measurement Guidance Toolkit - National Mentoring Resource Center](#). Below is the Strength of Relationship Measure (SoR), which was developed for and introduced to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America in 2008.

Youth Strength of Relationship Scale (YSoR) – for child to complete

For each of the sentences below, **decide how true each statement is for you**. Then, circle one number that fits best. If you think the statement is NEVER TRUE, circle "1"; if you think it is HARDLY EVER TRUE, circle "2"; if the statement is SOMETIMES TRUE, circle "3"; if you think it is MOST OF THE TIME TRUE, circle "4"; and if the statement is ALWAYS TRUE, circle "5."					
	(Circle One)				
	Never True	**Hardly Ever True**	**Sometimes True**	**Most of the Time True**	**Always True**
1. My Big has lots of good ideas about how to solve a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My Big helps me take my mind off things by doing something with me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I'm with my Big, I feel ignored.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I'm with my Big, I feel mad.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I am with my Big, I feel safe.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I'm with my Big, I feel disappointed.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My relationship with my Big is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When I'm with my Big, I feel bored.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When something is bugging me, my Big listens while I talk about it.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel close to my Big.	1	2	3	4	5

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	(Circle One)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am enjoying the experience of being a Big.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I expected that being a mentor would be more fun than actually it is.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My Little and I are interested in the same things.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel confident handling the challenges of being a mentor.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Being a Big is more of a time commitment than I anticipated.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel overwhelmed by my Little's family difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My Little has made improvements since we started meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I sometimes feel frustrated with how few things have changed with my Little.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My Little and I are sometimes at a loss for things to talk about.	1	2	3	4	5
10. It is hard for me to find the time to be with my Little.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I think my Little and I are well-matched.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I get the sense that my Little would rather be doing something else.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My Little has trouble sticking with one activity for very long.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel close to my Little.	1	2	3	4	5

Tool 5: Sample measures of desired outcomes

Many valid, reliable measures of many possible desired program outcomes can be found here: Measurement Guidance Toolkit - National Mentoring Resource Center. Below are sample scales designed to measure youth attitudes toward the future and treatment adherence.

Abbreviated version of the Hopeful Future Expectations (HFE) Scale

Think about how you see your future. What are your chances for the following?					
	Very low	Low	About 50/50	High	Very high
1. Being involved helping other people.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
2. Having friends you can count on.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
3. Being healthy.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
4. Being safe.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

4-item treatment adherence measure

A health care provider is a health professional whose job it is to understand and care for a person's physical, behavioral, or mental health. Please read each statement and check the ONE box to the right that describes your experience with your health care provider.					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I go to all of my scheduled appointments with my health care provider.	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
2. I follow my health care provider's specific treatment instructions for my condition.	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
3. I follow my health care provider's recommendations for taking care of myself.	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
4. I miss appointments with my health care provider.	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4