



# CALIFORNIA LOVE:

## The State of MENTORing in CA



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword from MENTOR CA</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Letter from California Assemblymember, 6th District</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MENTOR California</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Evaluation and Assessment Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Assessment Findings</b>	
<b>California Livin'-California Landscape of MENTORing</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1 Luv- Mentor and Mentee Survey Analysis</b>	
Mentor Surveys	<b>10</b>
Mentee Surveys	<b>14</b>
<b>California Kings- Listening Session</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Hussle &amp; Motivate- MENTOR CA Partner Interviews</b>	<b>20</b>
Southern California: A Place Called Home	<b>21</b>
Bay Area: First Exposures	<b>27</b>
San Joaquin/Central Valley: Fresno Unified School District	<b>34</b>
Northern California: Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast	<b>40</b>
Greater Sacramento: Improve Your Tomorrow	<b>47</b>
<b>We Gon' Be Alright- Uplifting Promising Practices</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Westside Connection- Acknowledgements</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>A Word from Partnership for Children and Youth</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Assessment Team</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>60</b>

# Foreword from MENTOR California Executive Director, Marcus Strother



Dear Young People of California,

For more than 25 years, I have been an educator and mentor to some of the most beautiful Cis, Queer, Transgender and Non-Binary youth one person could be privileged to know. In your company, I have celebrated your most exciting moments and I have soldiered on with you in some of your most vulnerable. In all of your beauty, triumphs and trials, I see you and I know that we, as a community, have to do more to make your futures more just. We must make access to opportunity equal to the intrinsic value you bring to every environment you encounter. Despite the obstacles ahead of us — we must do more.

What I know to be true is that we cannot change the rules without you, our youth, having a seat at the table. What I know to be true is that even though we may feel tired or frustrated, together we have to answer to that emotion, work through that emotion and then get up and show up because we still have to fight for each other.

As we continue to move forward in this work, I will challenge all of my adult community and myself to bring youth to the table. **Cis, Queer, Transgender and Non-Binary youth must be at the table.** You must be a flashlight towards our next steps. We will look to you. Let us lead with love. Let us not be afraid to be vulnerable. Let us give you guidance and we will encourage your leadership in return. Let us remember that youth have always been at the center of change in this country. Let us be your Mentor and Mentee.

I see you. I love you. I fight with you and for you! It is education, understanding, love and patience that will create a culture of thriving, one caring relationship at a time.

MENTOR California hopes this state of mentoring report can be a blueprint, from multiple high performing mentoring organizations, on how we do this well but most importantly, how we do this with LOVE!

Leading with LOVE,

STATE CAPITOL  
P.O. BOX 942849  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0006  
(916) 319-2006  
FAX (916) 319-2106



December 20, 2023

RE: "California Love: The State of Mentoring in California"

To Whom It May Concern,

As the Assemblymember representing the greater Sacramento region, I am writing to highlight the importance of mentoring and youth development organizations all across California.

I am proud to have supported these organizations in my district and will continue to do so in my final year with the California State Assembly. In 2024, I am allocating \$250,000 to Improve Your Tomorrow, a local Sacramento non-profit dedicated to mentorship and their mission of increasing the number of young men of color in our colleges and universities.

The work of organizations like Improve Your Tomorrow ensures that we provide our youth with the agency, belonging, and opportunities needed to succeed. We must continue to lift up the countless school and after school programs, community based organizations, corporate partners, and faith-based organizations whose instrumental work has an immeasurable impact on our California youth.

As an elected official, I firmly believe that the work of these organizations are vital to the success of both our youth and the state as a whole. Given the benefits of these programs, I urge for the continued support for mentoring and youth development organizations in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin McCarty". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kevin McCarty  
Assemblymember, 6<sup>th</sup> District



# MENTOR California

Founded in 2020, MENTOR California is an Affiliate of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, the unifying champion of youth mentoring across the United States. MENTOR California (MENTOR CA) has a mission to increase both the quality and quantity of youth mentoring in California and close the mentoring gap for the one in three youth growing up without a mentor outside of their family. This is achieved through several key efforts to elevate the mentoring field, including providing training and technical assistance to mentoring programs, leading statewide recruitment efforts, advocating for increased local, state, and federal investment in mentoring, leading research in the field of youth mentorship, and fostering collaborations to transform systems.

The vision of MENTOR CA is **that every young person in California has the supportive relationships they need to grow and develop into thriving, productive, and engaged adults**. Accordingly, MENTOR CA's approach is intentionally equity-centered with a focus on social justice. This is reflected best in the organizational guiding principles:

- We are guided by **inclusivity**: we adopt a human-centric focus in everything we do, with young people at the core.
- We are guided by **love**: we exercise empathy and respect, prioritizing relationships and centering equity in our decision-making.
- We are guided by **self-care**: we honor and pay attention to our (shared) humanity to bring our best selves in our work with others.
- We are guided by **transparency**: we build trust through clarity of our vision and mission.

Recognizing the unique and diverse needs of communities across the state, MENTOR CA integrates

multiple approaches to support a variety of innovative mentoring models, examples of which include establishing communities of practice among K-12 Districts from different regions to build capacity toward Relationship-Centered Schools, collaborating with Appa Health to elevate 1:1 mentoring as a critical strategy to support mental health and wellness, providing specialized technical assistance and coaching services for seven organizations statewide in partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention grant program, and much more.

MENTOR CA has experienced accelerated growth, gaining nearly 300 mentoring organizations in their Mentoring Connector since 2020.<sup>1</sup> As an organization, MENTOR CA seeks to continue and expand upon that growth, building on a long history of commitment and capacity for mentoring in California. To inform future expansion and enhancement of supports provided to organizations, MENTOR CA engaged in a year-long assessment to better understand the current state of mentoring across CA.

This report outlines the process and key learnings from the point in time assessment on the State of MENTORing in California, conducted in 2023. As a nod to California's rich and youth-led hip hop culture, the title of the assessment, California Love, and headers throughout the report reference songs from some of California's most beloved homegrown hip hop artists.

The purpose of this summary report is to uplift promising strategies, promote effective practices and to further inform the field of mentoring statewide and nationally.

<sup>1</sup> MENTOR CA 2022-23 Impact Report, available at <https://mentorcaliforniayouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Impact-Report-23.pdf>

# INTRODUCTION

Mentors possess a constellation of qualities that enable them to provide effective guidance and support to their mentees. Foremost among these is empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, which allows mentors to connect deeply and meaningfully with their mentees.

Equally important is patience, as mentoring often requires a willingness to navigate challenges and setbacks alongside the mentee. Communication skills are essential, enabling mentors to convey advice, feedback, and encouragement in ways that are clear and inspiring. Quality mentorship is exhibited through mentors' reliability and consistency, creating a dependable foundation for the mentor-mentee relationship. Additionally, they often possess a balance of experience and knowledge in their field or lived experiences, coupled with a lifelong learner mindset that values growth and adaptation. These qualities, when combined, make for a mentor who is not just a guide but a trusted ally in the mentee's personal and professional development journey.

Incorporating empathy and compassion into youth mentorship is pivotal for establishing a supportive and effective mentoring relationship. Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, fosters a deep connection between mentor and mentee, creating a safe space where the mentee feels seen, heard, and understood. Compassion extends this understanding into genuine care and a desire to assist. According to Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002), empathy in mentoring relationships leads to stronger bonds and greater trust, facilitating open communication and a deeper understanding of the mentee's experiences and challenges. This empathetic approach allows mentors to tailor their guidance and support to the specific needs and circumstances of the mentee.

When a mentor's empathy and compassion are combined with dedication and commitment, their connectedness embodies "love." bell hooks' theory of radical love, as expounded in her writings, is a transformative approach emphasizing love as a





powerful force for social change, healing, and personal growth. bell hooks’ theoretical grounding in the integration of pedagogical practice and aspects of love guides the lens of MENTOR California’s evaluation and assessment of the state of mentoring coupled with Tuck and McKenzie’s (2015) critical place inquiry presented in a later section of this report. bell hooks’ theory transcends traditional notions of love, extending it to the realms of education, community, social interactions, and mentoring of youth. Table 1 below provides a cross reference of bell hooks’ key aspects of radical love with what an actualization of hooks’ theory involves when applying to mentoring youth.



**TABLE 1: APPLICATION OF BELL HOOKS’ CONCEPT OF RADICAL LOVE WITHIN YOUTH MENTORING**

Key aspects of hooks’ radical love	Applying hooks’ theory of radical love to mentoring youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Love as an Action:</b> Hooks defines love as an action rather than just a feeling. It involves actively working towards nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth, showcasing care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust.</li> <li>• <b>Challenging Oppression:</b> Radical love requires recognizing and challenging systems of oppression. It’s about creating a culture of openness and inclusivity, where issues of race, gender, and class are actively addressed and worked through.</li> <li>• <b>Education as a Practice of Freedom:</b> Hooks views education as liberating and transformative, believing in an inclusive, empathetic pedagogy that encourages critical thinking. As a practice of freedom, education empowers individuals to find their voice and challenge the status quo.</li> <li>• <b>Mutual Growth and Respect:</b> In a mentor-mentee relationship, radical love encourages mutual growth. The mentor respects and learns from the mentee as much as they guide them, fostering a reciprocal relationship.</li> <li>• <b>Empathy and Understanding:</b> Hooks highlights the importance of understanding and empathizing with others’ experiences. This empathetic engagement is crucial for mentors to connect with and effectively support their mentees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Practicing Empathy and Respect:</b> Mentors should strive to understand the unique experiences and challenges faced by their mentees, creating a supportive and respectful environment for their growth.</li> <li>• <b>Encouraging Empowerment and Critical Thinking:</b> Mentors can empower mentees by encouraging them to think critically, question societal norms, and find their own voice.</li> <li>• <b>Fostering Inclusivity and Challenging Biases:</b> A mentor should be conscious of biases and work towards creating an inclusive space that respects diversity and challenges systemic inequalities.</li> <li>• <b>Supporting Holistic Development:</b> Mentors should focus on the overall development of the mentee, including their emotional, intellectual, and social growth.</li> <li>• <b>Building Trust through Commitment and Care:</b> Demonstrating genuine care and commitment can help in building trust, an essential component of effective mentorship.</li> </ul>

## EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Through a mixed-methods design, the evaluation and assessment of the state of mentoring in California centered around two areas of exploration: 1) the current landscape of mentorship and 2) participant experience. To understand the landscape of mentorship, data collection strategies focused on differentiation in practice and approach of MENTOR CA partners, fundamental elements shaping promising practices for mentoring, and aspects of innovation. More closely connected to MENTOR CA's vision that "every person in California has the supportive relationships they need to grow and develop into thriving, productive and engaged adults" was an intent to explore the participant experience. In other words, youth mentee and adult mentor perceptions of engagement and impact through each respective narrative or stories told was information gathered to understand the individual experiences. The following questions guided the evaluation and assessment:

1. What are promising practices of MENTOR CA partnering organizations?
2. What elements define successful or impactful mentorship by youth?
3. What has participation in mentoring meant for youth and in what ways has engagement impacted adult mentors?
4. How are MENTOR CA partners differentiating their approach to mentorship based on age, gender, or geographic region?

In close coordination with MENTOR CA, five partnering organizations from across the regions of California – Northern California, Greater Sacramento, Bay Area, San Joaquin/Central Valley, and Southern California—were invited to participate voluntarily, in the qualitative components included in this report. Similarly, quantitative components were administered with support from MENTOR CA utilizing its network and various online platforms. Following is a summary of each MENTOR CA evaluation and assessment component.





**Landscape Assessment.** Critical to its work, MENTOR CA seeks to support “the effectiveness of new and existing MENTOR affiliates to scale MENTOR’s geographic footprint and deepen the impact of mentoring field by advancing the field of mentorship and leadership”.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the assessment efforts included a landscape assessment based on a critical place inquiry that recognizes the connection between people and place, including how a place is understood and experienced and the ways in which such a place informs practice and culture (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). The landscape assessment identifies the geographic locations of the MENTOR CA organizations that participated in the various qualitative components – interviews and surveys – in addition to indicating the counties where partnering MENTOR CA organizations are located in California.

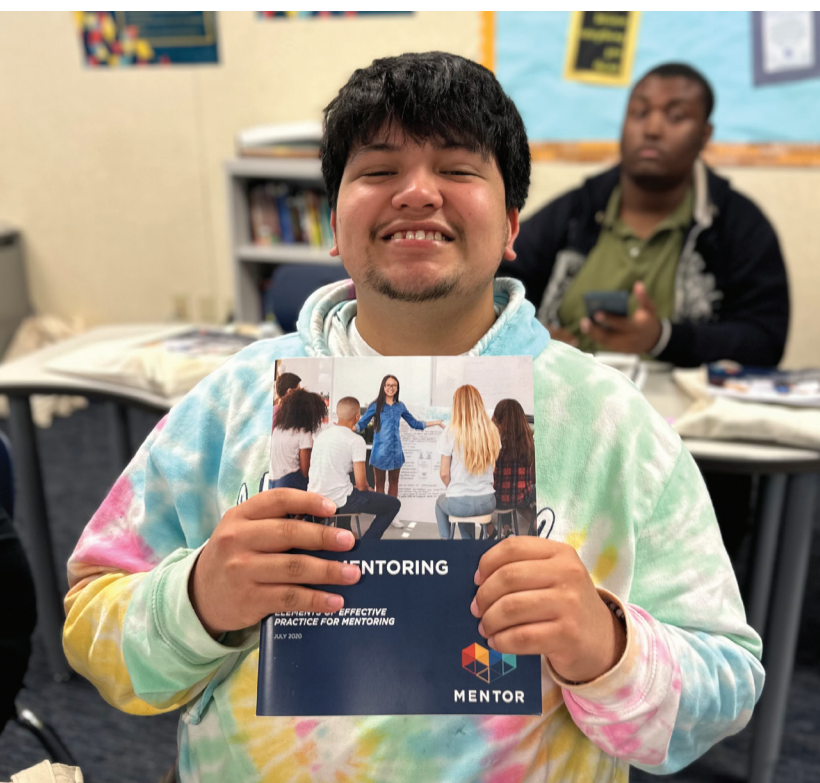
**Surveys.** Surveys were designed with respect to the MENTOR CA evaluation and distributed between May - November 2023 in English and Spanish, through direct communication with partnering MENTOR CA organizations and made available

through the MENTOR CA website. The surveys, customized for mentees (youth or adult) and for mentors (youth or adult), contained mostly multiple choice or Likert scale questions, with select open-ended questions. Survey indicators were designed to illuminate mentoring programming approach, offerings, engagement, and impact as a result of the participation in a mentoring organization within the MENTOR CA network. A combined total of 110 California mentees and mentors participated in the survey assessment; eighty-five (85) respondents completed the survey for mentors and twenty-five (25) respondents completed the survey for mentees. Findings from the surveys are presented in a subsequent section of this report.

**Listening Session.** A listening session (mentee focus group) to gather qualitative data was facilitated using a practice of storytelling that highlights the power of narrative or language in self-discovery and reflection (Labonte and Feather, 1996). Held in-person through partnership with one of the organizations uplifted in this report, twenty-one (21) youth mentees participated in the listening session guided by specific prompts aligned to the intended areas of exploration. Data gathered through the listening session was analyzed to identify emergent themes described in a later section of this report.

**Interviews.** Using the Zoom platform, five (5) virtual 90-minute interviews were conducted with voluntary MENTOR CA partners invited to participate based on their varying approach and expertise, and the regional location of the organization. An interview protocol with a set of 22 questions was developed and aligned to the intended areas of exploration for each interview. Rev.com, an online secured transcription service, was utilized to transcribe all five interviews.

2 <https://www.mentoring.org/who-we-are/mission-vision/>





# CALIFORNIA LIVIN'

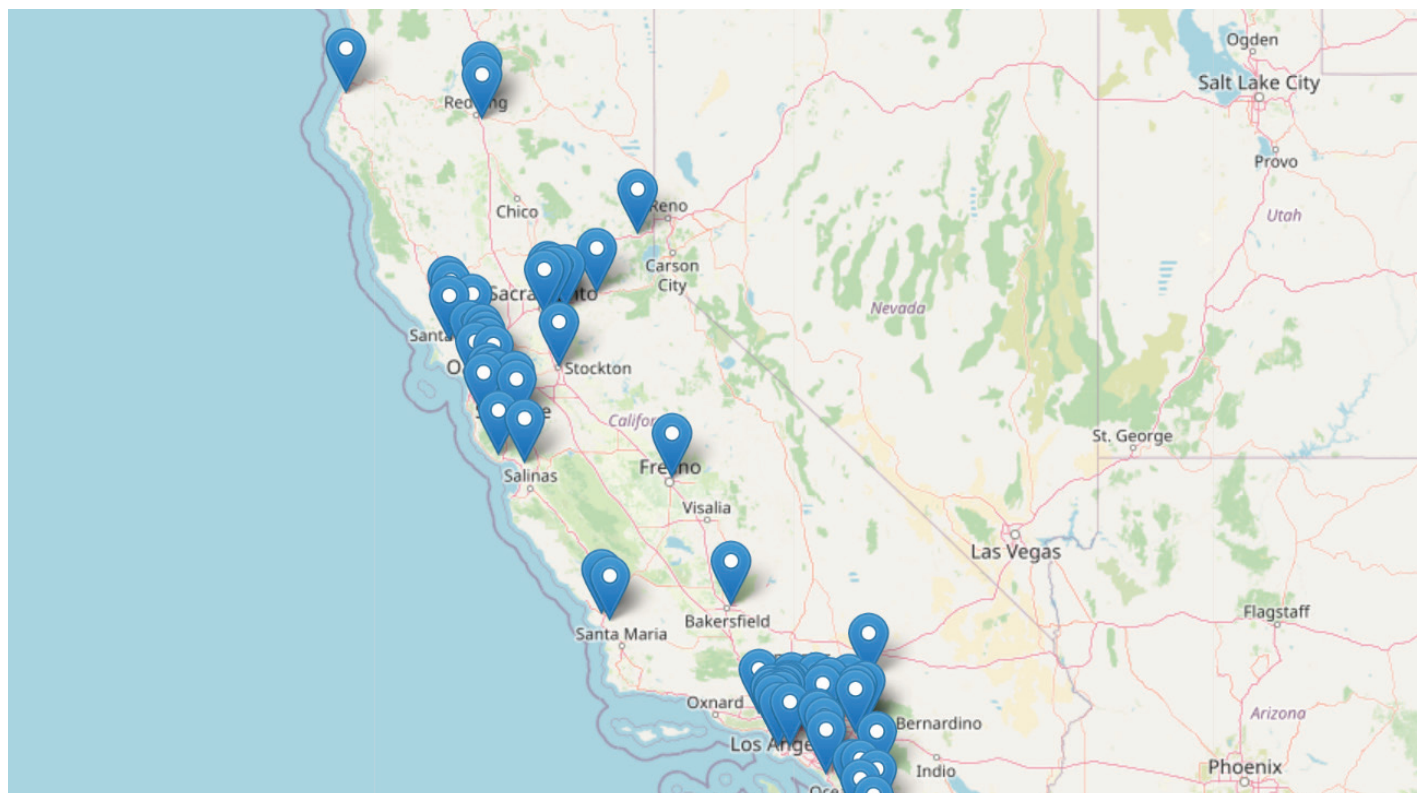
## California Landscape of MENTORing

Figure 1 below indicates the number (n=298) of MENTOR CA partner organizations identified by county in California. The drop pins indicate the vetted MENTOR CA partner organizations' geographic locations in California that have submitted their organization's general information. Each is listed in MENTOR's database exclusively for mentoring programs called Mentor Connector.

The landscape is intended to enhance the discourse of mentorship in California through an examination of the findings from the partnering organizations highlighted in this report and through an invitation to explore the following discussion questions.

1. Where are more concentrated interconnected MENTOR CA networks, and what might be the conditions contributing to such networks?
2. What steps can be taken to increase mentorship or mentorship-based programs in counties with more significant rural or non-urban communities where academic, social-emotional, and other community-based resources are often limited?<sup>3</sup> Conversely, what steps can be taken to increase mentorship or mentorship-based programs in heavily populated California counties to improve accessibility to trusted relationship-centered mentoring?
3. Consider the learnings gleaned from the MENTOR CA partnering organization featured in this report – what reported connections and practices between mentors, mentees, and the communities can help advance mentorship opportunities in California?

**FIGURE 1. MENTOR CA LANDSCAPE**



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Issue-Brief-on-Rural-Mentoring.pdf>

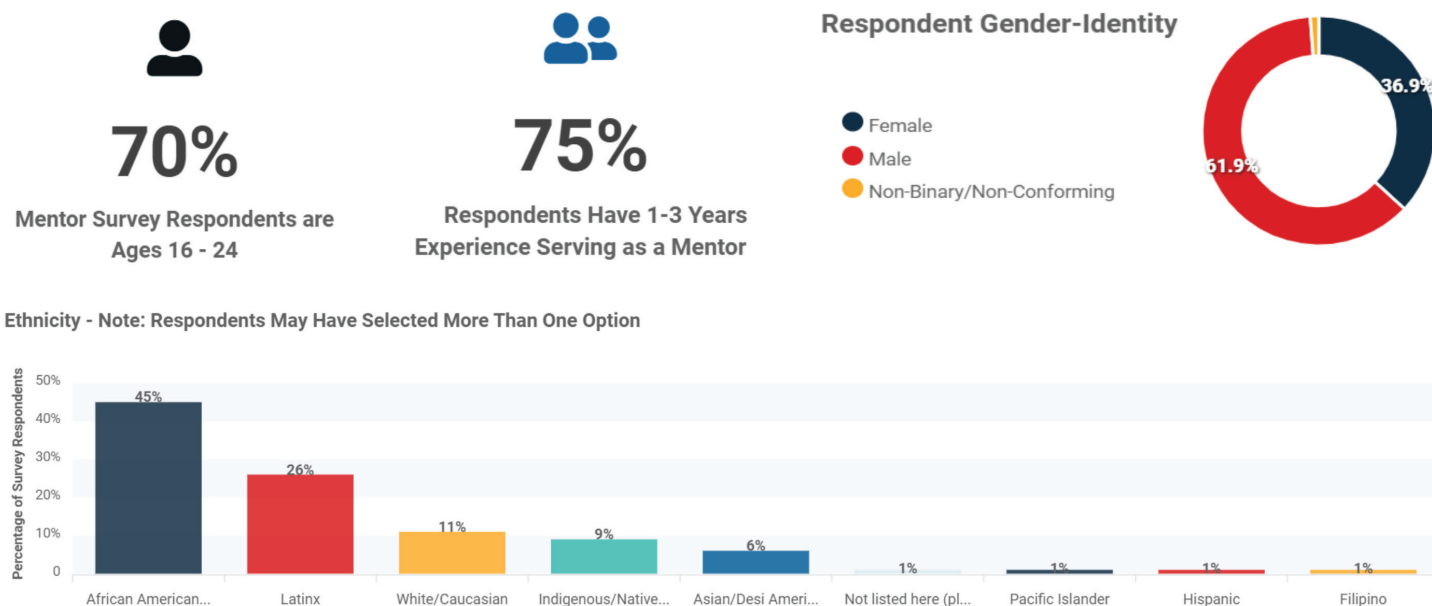
## MENTOR SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS, EXPERIENCES, AND PERSPECTIVES

Survey results for mentors contain a comprehensive collection of responses (n=85) from individuals mentoring within mentor-based programs across California. The survey encompasses a range of categorical questions about the respondents' demographics, experiences, mentoring engagement strategies and perspectives.

Respondents to the mentor survey represented the five California regions of focus for this assessment, with the majority of respondents from Northern California and the Greater Sacramento area. Approximately 62% of responders identified as male (n= 52), 37% (n= 31) identified as female, and 1% identified as non-binary/non-conforming.

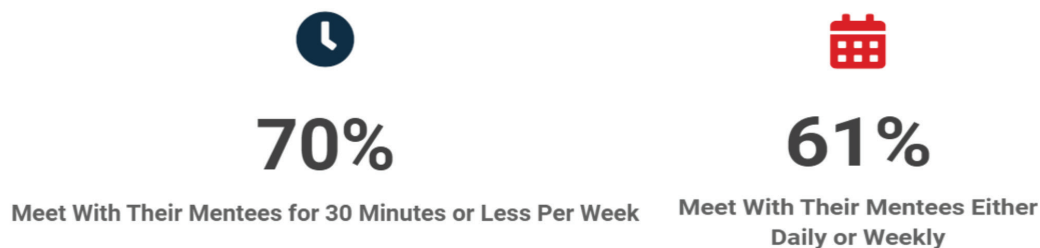
Figure 2 represents the demographic breakdown of mentor survey participants, as self-reported in survey indicators. Figure 3 represents select respondent reporting related to duration and frequency of mentoring.

**FIGURE 2. MENTOR SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**



**FIGURE 3. DURATION AND FREQUENCY OF MENTORING**

Responses Related to Mentee Engagement



## ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND TRENDS

The following information presents notable descriptive statistics and trends from the mentor survey.

### Areas Served by the Organizations

- Nearly half (47.56%) of the organizations serve multiple types of regional areas (Urban, Suburban, Rural).
- Urban areas are served by 26.83% of the organizations, followed by Suburban at 13.41%. A smaller proportion serves Rural areas (6.10%) and other specified regions (4.88%).

### Experience in Mentoring Programs

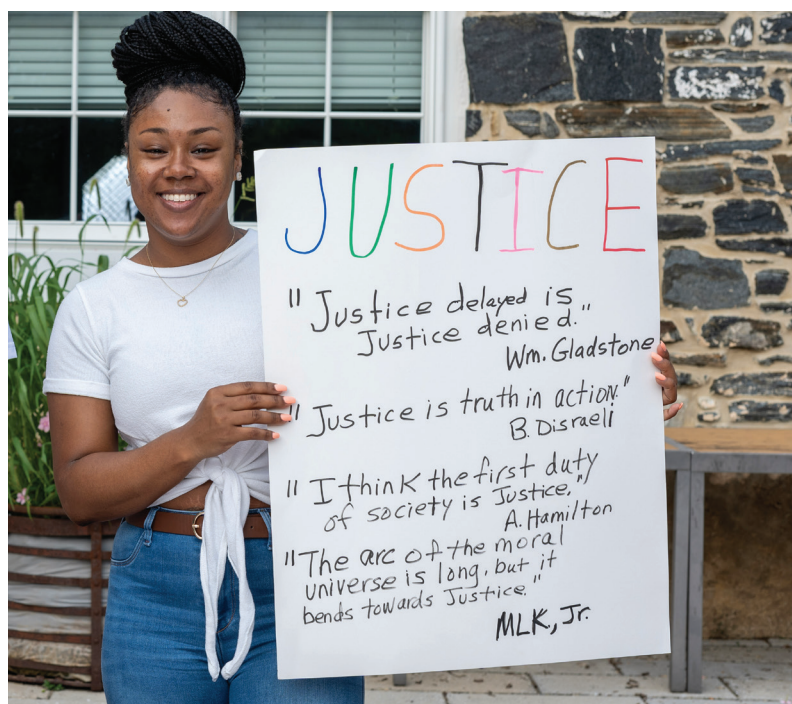
- A large majority of respondents have 1-3 years of experience (75.61%).
- Those with 4-6 years of involvement make up 13.41%.
- A smaller percentage have over 10 years of experience (7.32%) or 7-9 years (3.66%).

### Age Distribution

- The most represented age group among respondents is 16-20 years (46.34%), followed by 21-24 years (25.61%).
- Other age groups, including 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39 each account for approximately 6% of respondents.
- The age groups of 40-44 and 50+ are also represented, albeit in smaller percentages.

## FREQUENCY AND METHOD OF COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION

- The majority of respondents mentor multiple individuals at one time, with 64% indicating that they currently mentor ten or more mentees.
- Most respondents (61%) connect with their mentees more frequently (“daily” or “weekly”) for shorter durations of time, with 70% meeting with mentees for 30 minutes or less.
- Despite advancements in technology-based communications, in-person communication was noted as a “very effective” means of communication with mentees by most respondents (57%).
- In addition to connecting in-person, virtual, text, or phone, select respondents also uplifted using social media or video games to connect with mentees.
- While engagement with mentees is occurring frequently, there is variation in the degree of mentor-identified engagement with the extended support systems of their mentees, including parents, teachers, social workers, probation officers, etc., suggesting limited coordination with the structures of support surrounding individual mentees.



## SUPPORT TO MENTEES AND PERSONAL IMPACT

Mentor survey responses offer a rich perspective on the experiences and perceptions of mentors, focusing on areas of support provided to mentees and the personal impact of mentoring. This analysis specifically excludes demographic data to concentrate on the qualitative aspects of mentoring as experienced by the respondents. The following presents key findings and trends resulting from the mentor survey in the areas of support to mentees and mentor individual impact.

### Qualities of a Mentor

Mentors were asked about qualities or characteristics important in a mentor. The following were identified most frequently as “Important” or “Most Important” by survey respondents.

- Content-specific training/capacity building (87%)
- Personal lived experience (83%)
- Individual or family values (82%)

### Support Areas in Mentoring

Mentors were asked to indicate the frequency with which they provided specific types of support to mentees, ranging from “Not at all” to “Always.” The analysis below reflects supports noted as “Always” provided by a majority of survey respondents.

- **Social-Emotional Support:** A significant 80% always provide this support, underscoring the crucial role of mentors in the emotional and social well-being of mentees.
- **Wellness/Mental Health:** Similarly, 80% always engage in wellness or mental health support, indicating a high awareness of these critical issues.
- **Self-Identity and Individuality:** This aspect is strongly emphasized, with 71% always offering support, reflecting the mentors’ role in personal development.

- **Career Exploration:** 66% always assist mentees with career exploration, highlighting a key focus on future planning.
- **Job Readiness:** A majority (51%) always provide support in job readiness, indicating its importance in mentoring.

### Impact of Mentoring on the Mentors

Responses to questions about the impact of mentoring on the mentors themselves suggest a profound and multifaceted effect, often leading to personal growth, increased empathy, and a greater sense of purpose.

The following reflect select mentor responses to the following indicator “Please provide an example of the impact mentoring has had on you in your current role.”

**Mentoring has showed me that the world is bigger than just me and how important it is to bring up your community along with you if possible.**

**It’s helped me communicate better and improve in my leadership skills.**

**It has greatly changed how I view education and open my eyes to the different struggles people go through.**

**It has caused me to realize the importance of continuing on in my own life, and that my small actions can have big consequences.**



## INVOLVEMENT WITH MENTOR CA CONNECTOR

A portion of the organizations are part of the MENTOR CA Connector, suggesting a networked approach to mentoring across California, with opportunities for shared learning and resources. However, most respondents (68%) indicated that they are unsure whether or not their respective organization is part of the Connector, which may highlight a lack of shared knowledge about opportunities within the network among mentors within the organizations.

## OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

Data from the mentor survey responses presents a detailed picture of mentoring in California. The regional distribution, areas served, experience levels, and demographic profiles of the respondents highlight strengths within the diverse mentoring models, approaches, and services offered.

**Diverse Service Areas:** A large number of organizations serve a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas, indicating a diverse reach and possibly a varied approach in mentoring practices to cater to different community needs.

**Experience Levels:** The predominance of respondents with 1-3 years of experience could imply either a growing interest in mentoring or a high turnover rate in the field. This warrants further investigation to understand retention and engagement strategies within mentoring programs.

**Demographic Representation:** The gender and age distribution provides insights into who is engaging in mentoring roles. The higher representation of younger individuals (16-24 years) might reflect targeted recruitment strategies or the appeal of mentoring to younger demographics.

**Comprehensive Support:** The mentor survey data reveals a strong commitment to comprehensive support for mentees, encompassing not just career and academic guidance but also personal, social, and emotional aspects. Mentors view their role as extending beyond traditional boundaries, emphasizing the importance of holistic development.

**Impact on Mentors:** The self-reported impact of mentoring on the mentors themselves is profound, often leading to personal growth and a deeper understanding of societal issues. This reciprocal nature of mentoring enriches the experience for both mentors and mentees, creating a cycle of positive influence and change.

**Professional Development:** Professional development emerges as a key area of interest, with mentors seeking to enhance their skills and knowledge in professional learning topics that would strengthen mentoring capacity, with a diversity of areas identified as beneficial for further development and to better support their mentees. This indicates a dynamic field where continuous learning and adaptation are valued.

In conclusion, the mentor survey responses illuminate the complex, multifaceted nature of mentoring. The insights gained from this analysis can inform strategies to enhance mentoring programs, support mentor development, and ultimately lead to more effective and impactful mentoring relationships. Additionally, such insights can guide future strategies, policies, and research in mentoring programs. Further analysis, particularly into qualitative responses and open-ended questions, would provide a deeper understanding of the challenges, successes, and impact of mentoring across California.



# MENTEE SURVEY

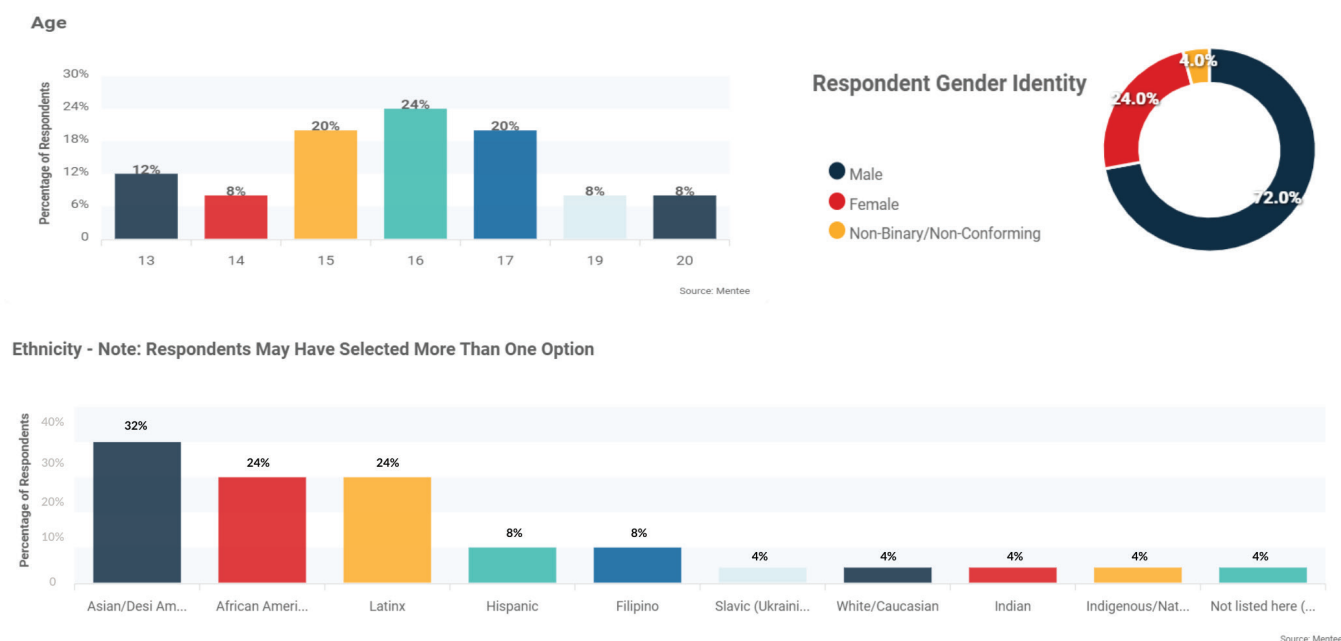
## DEMOGRAPHICS, EXPERIENCES, AND PERSPECTIVES

Twenty-five mentees from across California completed the mentee survey. Majority of respondents came from Northern California or the Greater Sacramento area, with approximately 16% coming from Southern California. Approximately 72% of mentee survey respondents identified as male (n=18). Mentees responded to various prompts related to their experiences, access, perspectives, and the impact mentoring has had on their lives.

Mentee survey responses offer a comprehensive view of the experiences, perceptions, and demographics of individuals participating in mentoring programs. This analysis includes both demographic data and responses related to the experiences and perceptions of the mentees.

Figures 4-5 represents the demographic breakdown of mentee survey participants, in addition to responses related to mentoring access, as self-reported in survey indicators.

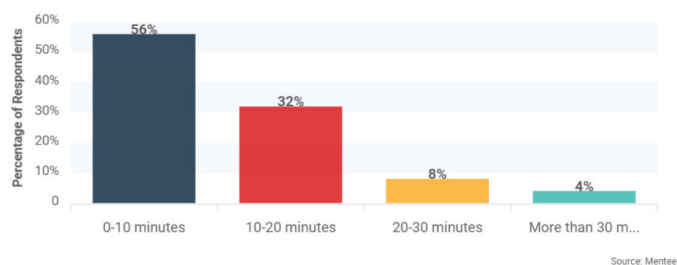
**FIGURE 4. MENTEE SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**



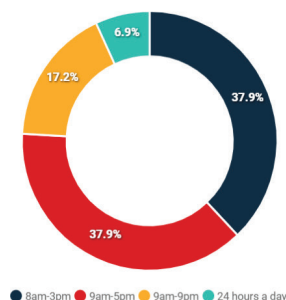
**FIGURE 5. MENTEE ACCESS TO MENTORING**

Responses Related to Access to Mentoring

Time To Travel to Mentoring Services



Availability of Mentors to Talk (Timeframe) - Note: Respondents May Have Selected More Than One Option



Demographics reflected as self-identified by respondents (

## Descriptive Statistics and Trends

The following presents notable descriptive statistics and trends in addition to individual perceptions and experiences reflected in Mentee survey responses.

### Age Distribution of Mentees

- The most represented age group is 16 years (24%), followed by 17 years (20.83%).
- The data includes responses from a range of ages, predominantly in the teenage years, highlighting the youth-centric nature of participating programs.

### Current Grade Level

- A significant portion of respondents represent secondary-aged youth, notably high schoolers, particularly in the 11th grade (41.67%).

### Ethnicity

- A diverse range of ethnic backgrounds is represented, with the largest group being Asian/Desi American (32%).
- Latinx and African American/Black communities are also significantly represented among respondents.

### Representation Among Mentors

- Overall, survey responses suggest that representation related to sexual orientation, language, and ethnicity is not frequently experienced within their respective mentoring programs.

## ACCESS TO MENTORSHIP

- Among those who responded to the survey, 92% engaged in a mentoring program at their school, and learned about the program or mentoring opportunity from someone at school (i.e. teacher, counselor, etc.).
- 56% of respondents travel 0-10 minutes to access their mentoring program.
- 63% of mentee respondents noted that there is at least one adult in their organization who is available in person if they need help.

- The majority of mentee respondents (70% or higher) noted that mentors were available to talk to if they needed help or advice related to life, school, jobs or mental health, however, most indicated that mentors were not as connected with their family unit, having less or little engagement with their parents and/or did not know their siblings.

## PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

### Resources and Activities

- Respondents expressed varying degrees of agreement with statements about resources and activities experienced in their mentoring programs, including technology access, traveling outside of their neighborhood, and visiting colleges.

### Qualities of Mentorship

- The survey responses shed light on the perceived qualities of good mentorship and the favorite aspects of the program, indicating what mentees value most in their mentoring experience.

### Relationships

- 67% of mentees indicated they trust at least one adult in their program.
- Relationships within mentoring organizations extend beyond mentor to mentee. Approximately 75% of respondents indicated that their engagement with other individuals (peers) in their programs feels respectful, and commonly integrates discussion around mental and physical health and success in and beyond school.
- It is significant to note that several mentee respondents- 20% or more- selected “Unsure” as it related to specific characteristics of their mentor, services the mentorship provided and the degree to which mentors engaged with

other adults in their lives, indicating a possibility that mentees may not know as much about their mentors, or have full awareness of the program offerings and intent.

### Personal Stories and Impact

Some respondents shared personal stories and reflections on the impact of their mentoring program, providing a deeper understanding of the personal and developmental significance of these experiences. Overall, receiving useful advice in various areas (life, school, etc.) was noted by most mentees as a valuable resource provided by mentors. Nearly 80% of mentee respondents indicated being exposed to positive experiences of receiving help preparing for their futures as a result of their mentoring program.

## OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

The findings paint a picture of a diverse and engaged mentee community involved in various mentoring programs. The emphasis on high school students highlights a focus on critical developmental years. The diversity in ethnicity and the range of responses about program experiences reflect the broad spectrum of needs and expectations of the mentees.

**Exposure and Experiences:** Mentees' feedback on resources and activities underscores the importance of practical experiences and exposure to new opportunities, such as technology and college visits.

**Qualities of a Mentor:** The qualities valued in mentorship, such as guidance and support, resonate across responses, emphasizing the role of mentors in shaping positive developmental outcomes.

**Relationships Matter:** Mentees indicated an established trust with mentors within their mentoring program, despite limited knowledge

about specific characteristics of their mentors as individuals. Respondents also noted the importance of relationships beyond the mentor-mentee connection, including engagement with other mentees in the program that is rooted in respect and mutual support. The suggestions for improvement and reasons for continuing in the program provide actionable insights for organizers to enhance the effectiveness and appeal of their mentoring initiatives. Personal stories and reflections add a rich, qualitative dimension to the data, underscoring the profound impact mentoring can have on individuals' lives. In conclusion, mentee survey responses offer a valuable lens into the experiences and perceptions of mentees in various mentoring programs. The findings highlight the diversity of participants, the range of valuable experiences provided by these programs, and the significant impact mentoring has on young individuals. This analysis can inform program improvements, mentor training, and policymaking to further enrich the mentoring experience and its outcomes.





## CALIFORNIA KINGS

### Listening Session (Mentee Focus Group)

Numerous California mentoring programs, service providers, schools, and systems are moving toward the integration of mentoring models customized to address the unique needs of specific populations. Among mentor respondents to the surveys within this assessment, 54% indicated that their mentees represent a specific targeted population. Through intentional engagement, authentic design, and population-specific outcome goals, mentoring for specific populations can be a key strategy to create safe spaces of belonging, increase representation, and provide relevant and responsive services that disrupt disparities in life outcomes for distinct populations.



To better understand the differentiation in mentoring approach and impact within programs for specific populations, a focus group was conducted to elevate the voices, experiences, and perspectives of mentees. An in-person focus group was held in September 2023 to directly engage mentees in sharing their perspectives through a process of open-ended reflection. The session was coordinated in collaboration with one of MENTOR CA regional partners, Improve Your Tomorrow (IYT), serving young men of color in the Greater Sacramento Area, Bay Area, and San Joaquin/Central Valley.<sup>4</sup> IYT's mentorship model focuses on increasing college attainment for young men of color through long-term mentoring; thus, the focus group participants were young males/male-identifying youth of color, ages 12-17. Designed with intention, recruitment for the listening session included representation of the breadth of IYT's program reach within the Greater Sacramento region; the twenty-one focus group participants represented students from ten different middle and high schools within four different K-12 districts.

Through customized prompts, a team of facilitators solicited input framed around the following focus areas:

- **Strengths**, or assets within their mentoring program
- **Aspirations** framed as what they might like to see or experience within a mentoring program
- **Challenges** or issues within the mentoring program and
- **Solution ideas**, or recommended actions to address challenges or issues identified

<sup>4</sup> Learn more about Improve Your Tomorrow in the Interviews section of this report, located within the Hustle and Motivate section.



The listening session participants identified the 1:1 engagement with mentors as a key strength of their program, noting a sense that their mentors authentically care about them. Mentees expressed valuing exposure and opportunities offered, including activities in their school or community, and wanted to ensure all mentees receive guidance, tools, and access provisions for their immediate needs like housing, food, and emotional support. Participants noted that engagement looks different for some of their peers, and expressed a desire for program utilization to increase, and be meaningful. Participants called for increased engagement with their mentors, in dosage, duration, and continuity of the mentor relationship. To address challenges observed, the mentees recommended improving

marketing and uplifting of the positive outcomes that can be achieved within the program, as well as structures for shared accountability and expressed interest in opportunities for ongoing mentee input to inform and shape programming.

Analysis of participant responses is further reflected by key themes represented in Table 2, alongside supporting direct quotes from participant responses to offer further specificity.





**TABLE 2. KEY THEMES AND DIRECT STATEMENTS FROM LISTENING SESSION.**

Emergent Themes (organized by prompt)	Significant Statements (aligned to themes)
<b>Something I Love... (program strengths or assets)</b> <b>Prompt:</b> Describe something you love about the mentoring program you are a part of.	
<p>Collective valuing of one-on-one conversations with mentors, including progress/accountability check-ins. A sense of belonging, safety, and acceptance. Opportunity for exposure to new opportunities (field trips, events, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The ability to freely talk to mentors about pretty much everything. No judgment. Just support.</i></li> <li>• <i>...I love that they check up on me and my grades... makes me feel like my future is important...</i></li> <li>• <i>...I feel absolutely safe in IYT because they make me feel like I am part of a family...</i></li> <li>• <i>The activities they do by helping you socialize</i></li> </ul>
<b>If I Ruled the World... (aspirations, hopes for the future of mentoring)</b> <b>Prompt:</b> What is one thing you would make sure is provided to, or experienced by all mentees?	
<p>Prioritization for all mentees to have provisions for their immediate needs, including structures for support. Expressed desire to receive guidance and tools for success. Opportunities for collective gathering, activities, and exposure to places within and outside of the community. Aspirations for all mentees to experience equity and fairness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I would make sure everyone in IYT has a place to stay because not everyone does.</i></li> <li>• <i>...to be able to experience a support system that lasts for a while.</i></li> <li>• <i>...have all chances like everyone else. Give us a guide of what to do to stay safe and succeed.</i></li> <li>• <i>...field trips to different places like basketball games, parks for BBQs,...summer college trips out of state</i></li> </ul>
<b>A Problem I See... (challenges, issues or barriers)</b> <b>Prompt:</b> Describe a challenge or issue you have observed, experienced or noted within your mentoring program.	
<p>Need for increased dosage and continuity with mentors. Identified challenges related to degrees of mentee and mentor engagement and program utilization. Perception of behaviors of some peers as disrespectful or distracting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The amount of times I see my mentor. I would love to see him more just not the mandatory meeting.</i></li> <li>• <i>A mentor we have a good relationship with will probably move schools.</i></li> <li>• <i>...The mentors only mentoring for 4 years, for me it would (be) a little more than 4 years.</i></li> <li>• <i>...Some people don't even come to IYT, even though they're at the school and in the program...</i></li> </ul>
<b>How I want to Move my Community... (solutions ideas for the future)</b> <b>Prompt:</b> : If something could be done right now to address the challenge or problem you mentioned, what would that be?	
<p>Uplifting and marketing IYT to increase engagement. Ongoing opportunities for mentees to provide input and inform the program. Structures and practices for increased accountability toward ensuring meaningful participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Show them the outcomes of being in IYT.</i></li> <li>• <i>...Show the kids that IYT is not just a homework place but a place where you can be yourself...and they will know that IYT really cares...</i></li> <li>• <i>Ask IYT brothers what they wanna see...</i></li> <li>• <i>...by stopping the program early to clean their mess and being more quiet.</i></li> </ul>

# HUSSLE & MOTIVATE

## MENTOR CA PARTNER INTERVIEWS

Virtual interviews with leaders and program administrators from MENTOR California partnering organizations from five regions across the state gleaned critical information into similarities and variations in mentoring approaches based on regional relevance, program model, population served, and more. The following uplifts insights from each interview, highlighting promising practices within each region.



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## A Place Called Home



In the heart of South Central Los Angeles, a beacon of hope shines for youth who often find themselves on the fringes of society through the organization A Place Called Home (APCH). The organization's journey, as narrated by Jewel Delegall, Chief Program Officer, Daniel Cendejazz, Mentoring Program Manager, and Juan Carlos Mora, Associate Director of Teen & Young Adult Services, offers a glimpse into its adaptive strategies, diverse demographic engagement, and a steadfast commitment to empowering youth.

### Diverse and Inclusive Approach

Committed to serving a diverse demographic, A Place Called Home has become a sanctuary for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) youth, those experiencing homelessness, and individuals with engagement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. Juan Carlos, emphasizes their inclusive approach, noting "We work primarily with South Central youth...serving those as young as eight up to the age of 22." Jewel explained, highlighting their focus on supporting BIPOC youth, understanding the unique challenges they face, noting APCH services are inclusive and multifaceted, catering to various educational, vocational, and personal development needs. Jewel expounds on this multifaceted approach as described below:

**Specifically, we also really target to support BIPOC youth...youth who may be homeless, foster, have been somewhat in the juvenile justice system. We are really serving a broad spectrum because right now currently we probably have about 120 elementary, a little bit more of middle**

**school and almost 150 teens...and young adults. We have a small cohort of young adults, maybe they have graduated high school, but they're still trying to figure out who they are. And then we have another group of young adults who are actually college students and we have about 83 of them who are offsite, but we still serve them and call them our members.**

Diversity and inclusion in mentoring practices are fundamental for creating an equitable and supportive environment for all mentees, regardless of their background. Embracing diversity in mentoring involves recognizing and valuing the unique perspectives and experiences of each individual, while inclusion ensures that every mentee has equal access to mentoring resources and opportunities. A study by Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby, and Muller (2011) highlights the positive impact of diverse and inclusive mentoring on the development of mentees from underrepresented groups, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Clutterbuck and Ragins (2002) further argue that diversity in mentoring relationships enhances learning and personal growth for both mentors and mentees by exposing them to different perspectives and experiences. These studies underline the importance of integrating diversity and inclusion into mentoring practices to promote a more equitable and enriching mentoring experience for all participants.

Jewel further elaborates on the diversity of APCH's membership, highlighting instances of serving foster youth of various ethnicities and mixed families, noting "We also have a lot of very ambitious youth, ambitious families who just need resources and [to be] pointed in the right direction. And that's what we're here for...". Jewel stated APCH is open to all in need, irrespective of race. APCH categorizes its youth into thirds: the most ambitious, those needing the most support, and those in the middle.

This balanced approach fosters a culture of mutual motivation, empathy, and support.

## Adapting to Community Changes

Shifting racial demographics in neighborhoods has profound effects on community dynamics, social interactions, and local economies. As demographic shifts occur, they often bring changes in cultural practices, economic opportunities, and social networks. A study by Hall (2013) highlights that increasing racial diversity in neighborhoods can lead to enhanced cultural exchange and greater tolerance among residents. However, these changes can also lead to tensions and challenges. Ellen, Horn, and O'Regan (2016) observed that rapid demographic shifts can sometimes exacerbate social divides and lead to feelings of displacement among long-standing residents. Furthermore, Freeman (2006) notes the potential for shifts in political power and resource allocation within communities undergoing significant demographic changes. These studies underscore that while shifting racial demographics can enrich neighborhoods culturally and socially, they also pose challenges that need to be addressed through thoughtful community engagement and inclusive planning. This type of racialized demographic shift has impacted who and how APCH serves its communities.

For example, Jewel recounts the early days when APCH primarily served African American youth, mirroring the neighborhood's demographic. As time progressed, the organization witnessed a significant shift to predominantly serving Latinx youth, now constituting about 95% of their demographic. This shift prompted APCH to conduct a community analysis, revealing profound changes in the zip code served. Despite these shifts, APCH's doors remain open to all, serving many youth within walking distance, underscoring its community-centric approach.

Similarly, Juan Carlos reflects on his experience

since joining APCH in 2012, noting the change in demographics from an almost equal split between African American and Latino youth to the current predominance of Latinx students. Recalling the challenges of cultural differences, including tensions around the use of language and the need for sensitive dialogue and understanding, Juan Carlos explains:

**We are servicing predominantly Latinx students, so a lot of them are from various regions in Latin America. I was under the assumption that most of them would be Mexicans, and I'm originally Mexican-American, so that is one of the biggest learning lessons for me when I started working at A Place Called Home is just even how diverse the cohort of Latinx kids it is that we serve. We're still working more or less with the same population where it's at-risk youth, high-need youth. We're very intentional in making sure that we're providing the resources that they need to set them up for success.**

Sharing his insights into the diversity within the Latinx cohort, Juan Carlos additionally emphasizes APCH's intentionality in providing necessary resources for success. He notes the organization's adaptability, especially in the post-pandemic world, where the needs of youth have evolved significantly.

## Intentional Resource Provision

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical need for providing comprehensive resources to students to ensure their educational continuity and well-being. With the abrupt shift to remote learning, access to technology and digital literacy became paramount. As highlighted by Donohue and Miller (2020), the digital divide significantly impacted students' ability to participate in online learning, necessitating targeted efforts to provide devices and internet access. Additionally, mental



health resources became increasingly important. Aucejo et. al. (2020) noted the pandemic's profound impact on students' mental health due to isolation and the disruption of normal routines. Furthermore, food security and health services, as emphasized by Kuhfeld et al. (2020), became critical needs for students who relied on schools for meals and health care. The pandemic brought to the forefront the multifaceted nature of student needs, demonstrating that educational support must extend beyond academic learning to address broader aspects of student well-being.

Jewel elaborates on the post pandemic shifts of APCH with this narrative explanation:

**It was literally within two to three weeks, we had flipped. And mind you, we offer up to 140 classes per week. We still had about 120 classes. In addition to that, staff also were offering one-on-one sessions, one-on-one, whether that was tutoring, whether it was music lessons, voice lessons, coaching sessions, and we brought a lot of that back into what's happening now. Now we actually have a commitment to technology transformation. During that time, we**

**were able to get a computer into every person's household. We understood during that period that we needed our parents to be way more involved...So now we have not only a parent advisory, but we have something called Parent Café...where parents get together just to talk to learn about each other and how to really support their youth.... In addition to that, we also had a food resource depot where we were delivering meals once a week. We have continued that for many of our families who still want that. Prior to the pandemic, we had maybe about 20 families who we were giving food to. During the pandemic, it was up to... I mean, it was almost the entire agency. I'm talking thousands of meals over the two-year period. Now we still do it once a week and we're giving to about 50 families. We've kept a lot of those practices. But the parents, the one-on-one sessions, we actually have realized the mental health support that our community needed, so we now have therapists on site. We used to have only two therapists, now we have three therapists and three case managers.**





## Robust Partnerships for Enhanced Opportunities

Corporate business and mentoring program partnerships play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the educational and professional worlds. These partnerships often involve corporations providing resources, expertise, and mentorship opportunities to students and young professionals. A study by Chatterjee and Sahasranamam (2018) highlights the benefits of such collaborations, including enhanced career readiness and professional skills development for mentees. Corporate mentors offer practical insights and guidance, facilitating a smoother transition from academic to professional life. Furthermore, Allen, Day, and Lentz (2005) emphasize that these partnerships can also benefit corporations by fostering a sense of corporate social responsibility and identifying potential future talent. The synergistic relationship between corporations and mentoring programs thus creates a mutually beneficial environment that supports both individual and organizational growth.

The APCH organization does not stand alone in its quest to uplift the youth. It thrives on robust partnerships with prominent entities like the LA Galaxy, the Los Angeles Dodgers, Bank of America, and others. These collaborations extend opportunities to the youth they serve. Jewel shares examples, detailing how experiences like these are invaluable, opening doors to a multitude of experiences.

**We have partnerships, for example, as large as the LA Galaxy, the LA Dodgers...and then we also have partners with smaller agencies and smaller, just even local businesses, whether it's with someone who's doing yoga, whether it's somebody who's bringing in Zumba or whether it's somebody who's bringing in financial literacy. We really depend on our partnerships quite often. I would say almost every week there's probably some event that's happening that's connected to one of our partnerships.**

Juan Carlos similarly details:

**Every summer, DBS Bank hosts 10 of our students and gives them an immersive experience into the world of banking, finance, learning building a portfolio, all the intricacies that comes with investing and all that good stuff. That is typically anywhere from a four to six-week program in the summer, and it culminates with a presentation of learning. That partnership has really been instrumental for us in helping us build those skill sets for our families to generate or to create generational wealth.**

Members of the APCH staff also expressed the need to build relationships with other important missing sectors. STEM-based entities that have a footing in modern businesses are of interest to both students and mentors who seek to develop the next 21st-century workforce in LA. Juan Carlos describes this partnership need below.

**One of the things that we're realizing is that we need to have clear pathways for our members that either want to pursue medicine, tech, coding, engineering, all that good stuff. I have a background in admissions, and one of the things that always kills me is when I see a member who expresses interest in one of those hard STEM classes without ever taking either a dual enrollment class in the sciences or an AP science class. Or they say they want to be a doctor or a lawyer without ever really knowing what that entails....**

These expressed partnership needs also create future opportunities for deepening APCH's mentoring network. Locating business professionals in this field and creating internship pipelines are innovative strategies that APCH is utilizing to bridge the professional gap between mentees and modern businesses. Juan Carlos details this strategy below:

**...we're bringing in established career professionals that want to mentor and connect with our**

members, but for our other two programs, ensuring that we have a pathway for them to either intern at a local hospital that's here located in South Central, (or) we're also leveraging our own robust internship program.

## Training for Excellence

Mandated safety training for mentors working with youth is of paramount importance to ensure the well-being and protection of young people in mentorship programs. Such training equips mentors with the necessary skills and knowledge to identify and address potential risks, including abuse and neglect. Wheeler, Keller, and DuBois (2010) emphasize the role of safety training in promoting ethical practices and establishing clear boundaries, which are crucial for creating a safe and trusting mentoring environment. Additionally, Garringer, Kuper-smidt, Rhodes, Stelter, and Tai (2015) highlight that comprehensive training in safety and child protection laws helps mentors recognize and appropriately respond to signs of distress or harm in mentees. The implementation of mandatory safety training underscores a commitment to safeguarding youth and upholding the integrity of mentoring programs.

Understanding the critical role of their staff and mentors, APCH invests heavily in comprehensive training programs. Daniel, who oversees mentor training, explains, "Our mentors...have to have mandated reporter training...We have our own orientation as well." Jewel adds that their training extends beyond technical skills, focusing on the 'five pillars' - respect, empathy, accountability, courage, and hope. This holistic approach ensures that every interaction within the organization is grounded in these core values. For instance, Jewel explains:

**We just actually went through a training called LAIRP, it's Los Angeles Institute for Restorative Practice. And at the end of the training, everyone received a certification, actually being certified in how to restore from anything being even**

**internal fighting with staff to the way members fight with each other, the way youth fight, and those kinds of practices, it's being really expressed throughout our staff to whoever they're in contact with.**

APCH also leans heavily on the power of youth mentors. Peer mentoring is a critical facet of APCH's approach to training their mentees. Peer mentoring, where individuals of similar age or experience level mentor others within their peer group, has been proven as highly effective in various settings, particularly in education and workplace environments. The effectiveness of peer mentoring is rooted in the relatability and mutual understanding that often exists between peers, which can foster a more open and comfortable learning environment. According to Topping (2005), peer mentoring in academic settings not only enhances learning outcomes for both mentors and mentees but also improves social skills and self-confidence. Additionally, a study by Colvin and Ashman (2010) suggests that peer mentoring can lead to increased retention rates and higher levels of engagement in educational institutions. These findings indicate that peer mentoring is a valuable tool for promoting personal and professional growth. These sentiments are echoed by an APCH staff member in the passage below:

**Something else that I think is very important that we didn't really bring up is that we do have peer mentoring groups. The success of those peer mentoring groups is completely because of the training of our staff. And I would say even the way that they train the youth to be peer mentors towards each other. We're always in this base of... The foundation is always love and respect. We are okay to use the word love, in a professional manner of course, but that the foundation is love and respect and that how we all interact with each other is more important than anything.**

## Redefining Success

Tailoring the definition of success for a youth-serving organization is crucial, as it directly impacts the effectiveness and relevance of the services provided to young people. Unlike businesses focused on financial returns, youth organizations must define success in terms of positive developmental outcomes for the young individuals they serve. Damon (2004) emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational goals with the specific needs and aspirations of youth, ensuring that programs are effectively supporting their journey towards adulthood. This perspective illustrates the importance of a nuanced and youth-centered approach to defining success in organizations dedicated to serving young individuals.

For APCH, success isn't just about numbers and statistics; it's about the profound, transformative experiences of both mentors and mentees. Jewel describes their vision of success as a mutual journey of change sharing, "Our whole agency is really built on healthy relationships with our youth. And for me, success looks like where both parties have been changed. The youth has been changed, and the mentor has been changed." Juan Carlos echoes this sentiment, focusing on the personal growth of the members, saying:

**I measure success by seeing our members develop an innate sense of self, specifically what perspective they have of themselves, their identity, their origin, and also possessing a degree of self-awareness, where they are able to be mindful of the space that they're occupying, and also leverage some of their own talents and skills in a way that is beneficial, not only to themselves, but also to their family and the community.**

**To learn more about  
amazing and innovative  
mentoring programs  
in the Southern California  
region, check out the  
MENTOR California  
partners listed below.**

**Youth Mentoring  
Action Network**

**Better Youth**

**Step Up**

## Conclusion

A Place Called Home has established and maintained impactful mentoring relationships centered around systems involved youth and young adults. By adapting their program model to be most responsive to evolving needs and a shifting community landscape, APCH remains relevant and highly effective. Leveraging community partnerships has been instrumental in the expansion of program offerings. A laser focus on equipping mentors through training and support positions APCH to sustain high quality mentoring for years to come.



First Exposures, a unique mentorship program, blends photography education with personal development. Such a blend creates a dynamic space where creativity and relationships flourish. Moreover, uniqueness of First Exposures delves into the program's approach to service, relationship-building, collaboration, training, and its perception of success.

## **A Creative and Educational Blend**

At the core of First Exposures' approach lies a commitment to nurturing creativity and technical skills in photography. Aneeta Mitha, Public Programs & Digital Strategies Manager, emphasizes the program's dual focus: providing a creative outlet and a supportive learning environment stating:

**What is very important to us is to work with communities of color, marginalized communities, working-class communities, immigrant communities, communities that generally don't have access to expensive arts programming. I didn't have that when I was young, didn't even know that was a possibility, I didn't think about art at all. And so it's just really lovely to see so many queer communities, young kids of color coming through and getting a taste of what it means to creatively express yourself.**

Such an approach allows young people to explore their artistic talents while gaining valuable life skills. Providing arts exposure to low-income youth is crucial for fostering equitable access to cultural and creative experiences, which play a significant role in holistic development. Engagement in the

arts offers a platform for self-expression, creativity, and critical thinking, skills that are essential in all areas of life. According to Catterall, Dumais, and Hampden-Thompson (2012), participation in the arts is linked to improved academic outcomes, particularly in low-income students who might otherwise have limited access to such resources. Stuckey and Nobel (2010) further assert that the arts can serve as a powerful tool for social and emotional development, offering young people a way to process and express their experiences and emotions. Providing arts exposure to low-income youth not only levels the playing field in terms of cultural access but also supports their academic, emotional, and social development. First Exposures utilizes an equity-based application process to ensure that resources, training, and opportunities are going to youth who are in the highest need. This application process utilizes multiple factors to create cohorts of artists, explained further below by First Exposures Executive Director, Erik Auerbach:

**We do look at things like what zip code they're in, generally prioritizing folks that are coming from Mission, Southeast parts of the city. But yeah, as far as the outreach goes, we do try to reach out to them as far as we can. It can get limited as to where we can go, but a lot of the community centers... So I live in Bayview, so Visitacion Valley is not far from where I am, so for me personally, I like to see that the southeast part of the city getting represented and getting services more...we try to base our acceptance and who we're bringing into the program on a variety of factors. So looking at the size of their household, if it's a single parent household, if it's not a traditional household, maybe it's a guardianship. We also look at how many adults are in the household. So even if it's a two-parent household, they might also say there's six adults in the house. So that tells us that there's probably multi-generations living there.**

First Exposures' unique application process is further described by Aneeta:

**Because we do this application, and we have gender inclusivity, language that's gender inclusive...we see how there's a lot more gender expansive youth that are applying to our programs. Also, our space is attached to affordable housing, so we reach out to the people in our affordable housing building to give this opportunity with the program.**

Importantly, First Exposures makes an effort to include neurodivergent populations into their programming. Providing arts exposure to students with special needs is immensely important for their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Engaging in the arts offers these students unique ways to express themselves, improve motor skills, and develop social interactions in a non-verbal manner. According to Deasy (2002), arts education plays a critical role in enhancing the learning experiences of students with special needs, offering alternative avenues for communication and self-expression. Moreover, Mason, Steedly, and Thormann (2008) highlight the inclusive nature of the arts, which can be adapted to various abilities, allowing students with special needs to participate alongside their peers. This inclusive engagement not only benefits students with special needs but also promotes understanding and empathy among all students, fostering a more inclusive school environment, as described by Erik below:

**More and more, we've had young folks coming through the program that are either on the autism spectrum (or) have learning disabilities... I feel like last year we had more kids in the program that were on the spectrum somewhere or went to schools that really focus on that than we've had in the past. And I think that was one of the strengths of the program of ours, we're having the mentor there for virtualized learning and attention. So it's not just an afterschool photography program.**

## **Blending Mental Health with Visual Arts**

The use of photography as a tool for mental health is gaining recognition for its therapeutic potential. Engaging in photography can offer individuals a way to express emotions, explore their identity, and capture their experiences, providing a creative outlet for processing complex feelings. A study by Krauss, Katz, and Bressi (2011) found that photography can facilitate self-reflection and emotional expression, making it a powerful medium for therapy. Aneeta described how First Exposures uses the practice of visual arts to support youth:

**We use photography, mentorship, and the creativity of young people...create a supportive environment, not just for them to learn, have a creative outlet. But also, just to support them in whatever's going on at home, however school is going through them, however their life is, their wins, their losses. So yeah, we really use photography.**

Gussak and Rosal (2016) highlight that photography, as a form of art therapy, can improve self-esteem and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. It allows individuals to externalize and visualize their mental states, offering a tangible way to communicate and cope with their emotions. The use of photography in mental health contexts demonstrates its value not only as an artistic medium but also as a tool for emotional healing and self-discovery as Aneeta further explains:

**Although we go into the technical, like, how to use the camera, the fundamentals of photography...it's a held in the same regard as the emotional support that young people need. So, if a young person is having a terrible day...they can either use photography to express themselves, escape, or just have a walk around the block and hang out with a mentor or hang out with their peers. So, we make sure that our environment is also conducive to that.**

## Fostering Relational Connectedness

Building mentor-mentee relationships through common interests is a highly effective approach to fostering strong, meaningful connections. Shared interests provide a natural foundation for the relationship, allowing both parties to engage in activities and discussions that are mutually enjoyable and engaging. According to Karcher, Nakkula, and Harris (2005), when mentors and mentees share common interests, it often leads to more sustained and satisfying relationships, as both participants are more invested and find the interactions rewarding. Furthermore, these shared activities can serve as a vehicle for imparting valuable skills and lessons, making the mentoring experience both enjoyable and educational for the mentee. In essence, leveraging common interests in mentor-mentee pairings can greatly enhance the quality and impact of the mentoring relationship, as elaborated by Erik below:

**Everyone, whether it's a mentor, mentee, get involved with the program because there's that common interest in photography and art making...But, really stressing the mentoring component of it has been very important for us**

**over the years, especially during the pandemic where... We always stressed it, but over the pandemic, we were seeing so much more of that need for support and connection....**

The program places great importance on the relationships between mentors and mentees, recognizing these bonds as crucial for self-expression and confidence development. Nick Haste, Lead Teaching Artist, reflected on the program's achievements, noting, "The biggest success for our program is just seeing that relationship between the mentors and mentees blossom." These connections provide a foundation for mentees to express themselves and grow.

## Building Confidence through Skill Development and Professional Exposure

Building confidence through skill development in youth is a pivotal aspect of their personal and educational growth. When young people acquire new skills, whether academic, artistic, or practical, it often leads to increased self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) emphasize the role of skill development in enhancing





intrinsic motivation and engagement, leading to a positive feedback loop where increased confidence fuels further learning and achievement. Dweck (2006) adds that fostering a growth mindset in youth - the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and hard work - is crucial in this process. This mindset encourages persistence in skill development, even in the face of challenges, thereby further bolstering confidence. Overall, the development of diverse skills in a supportive environment is essential for nurturing confident, capable young individuals. Describing First Exposures skill development of youth mentees, Aneeta shared:

**We're building our community... it was about fostering them and making them be proud of what they did. ...So, there's these amazing photos of all the mentees holding up their photos they printed that week. And we joke because it was this moment of excitement and some of those photos got damaged because [of the] way mentees handling them and we needed to reprint them for an exhibition...But that was secondary to the fact that they had this total boost of confidence, pride in what they were doing and that they felt that they could make something, that they could create something, and have this self-worth.**

Providing an additional example, Nick expressed, "From the instructor point of view, it's so exciting, and so rewarding to see them come in from the first day of class and seeing that confidence boost, seeing their relationship build with their mentors." Nourishing positive identity through skill development can be a fruitful tool in mentoring relationships. First Exposures intentionally integrates their mentoring practices through artistic methods while creating platforms for mentees to showcase their skills. Nick explains the organization's approach in the following excerpt:

**It's so rewarding to see how excited they are, how accomplished they feel when they come back from a photo walk, or they get to see their artwork hanging, or they're editing it on the computer on Photoshop, and then they print it and they're like, "Wow, I did create this."**

## Building Community

One of the major impacts First Exposures makes is its development of community. The organization fosters creativity of its members through art training and sustains that passion through building a network of artists and professionals who enjoy the medium of photography. Asked to describe examples of impact, Erik shared "Mentees are getting confidence, getting skills and creating community," further explaining "It also is a great way of them deepening their confidence and giving back to the community."

Providing further details, Erik expressed:

**Our relationship to the community, I think it's something that we want to keep building. I feel like we're always a little under the radar. We've been around for 30 years...But because we're small, we don't have the staff, the big marketing, we don't have a lot of it. So I think we always just want to connect more with the community and 'the community', that's a really broad term because there's the photography community, there's the mentor community, there's the Mission community, there's community upstairs from us here. So I think just all aspects of it.**

## Institutional Challenges

Finding good mentors for youth presents several challenges, primarily due to the need for a diverse pool of committed individuals who can connect with young people on multiple levels. One of the key challenges is recruiting mentors who not only possess the necessary skills and experience but

also share similar interests or backgrounds with their mentees. As highlighted by Garringer, McQuillin, and McDaniel (2017), matching mentors and mentees based on shared interests or experiences is crucial for the success of the mentoring relationship, but it can be difficult to achieve due to a limited pool of available mentors. Many potential mentors may be hesitant to commit due to time constraints or uncertainty about their ability to contribute effectively. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive strategies in mentor recruitment, training, and matching to ensure that youth receive the support and guidance they need. As noted by the First Exposures team:

**The big challenge for us is finding mentors. We have to find a mentor that knows photography to a certain level. Then that person has to, also need to, and want to, have an interest in youth development and mentoring. So, all of our trainings and everything we do are about mentoring, not about photography...And so, the photography becomes, I don't want to say secondary, but it's the idea of the relationship building and using the photography to build the relationship. And by giving a young person this chance to make a photo that they're proud of.**

## **Pandemic Adaptations**

The importance of organizations adjusting their practices in times of crisis cannot be overstated, as these periods demand flexibility, innovation, and a rapid response to changing circumstances. Crises, whether economic, environmental, or health-related, pose unique challenges that can disrupt traditional operational methods and impact stakeholders. These crisis-based adaptations are evidenced in ways that First Exposures navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently altered their business and mentoring practices, shared in detail by Aneeta in the excerpt below:

**Over the pandemic, we were seeing so much more of that need for support and connection...**

**our program changed so dramatically in that first couple of months...we really tried to create the breakout groups and the mentor, mentee alone time that they could have...**

**One of the things that we do is we have mentor meetings prior to our classes...we try to assess how are all the mentors doing with their relationships? Are they struggling? Whether it's virtual or not virtual, we want to know how the relationship is building.**

**...we also have a youth advisory board. And so, when we have co-chairs, two of the young people have voting power on our board, but we like to have them come together every two weeks to build leadership and have our young people really lead the way. ...But on a deeper level, when there are tragedies happening on a mass scale, we want to look to them to see, do you all want us to address this or do you want to escape from this? Every single time there was stuff happening with BLM, mass shootings, pandemic, we would look to them to be like, how do you want us to be as a leadership, as an organization, to be there for you? Because you all know what other young people need....**

## **Strengthening Through Collaboration**

Collaboration with community organizations is a vital aspect of First Exposures. These collaborations not only enhance the program's reach but also embed it more deeply within the community, creating a network of support and engagement. Erik highlights their partnership efforts, such as offering free portraits to community members, below.

**We have our mentees as the photographers, and we offer free portraits for members of the community... This last December, we actually partnered with the de Young Museum and the**

Women's Building. So the de Young basically financed the whole thing. We got them to host it and then also really support the Women's Building and their constituents to get to the museum to get their free portraits. So our mentees become photographers, they're the professionals and they're making portraits for people and it's really awesome. It's been a great way to extend our reach, the idea of giving back to your community. Mentees absolutely love it....

Finding the right business partners has been central to the sustainability of operations and the facilitation of new projects, as further noted by a First Exposures staff member:

Voice of Witness, we've partnered with them a lot. So during the pandemic, some facilitators would come through to teach oral history. So mentee would ask other mentees questions and interview each other and pair that with photography. So that was happening for a couple of semesters and it was a way for us to have a little more structured approach for young people to be able to talk about what's going on with them because it was such a weird and scary time. So that was a really fundamental partnership.

## Training: Merging Creativity with Mentoring

Training at First Exposures is uniquely tailored to merge creative skills with mentoring capabilities. This approach ensures that mentors are well-equipped to guide their mentees not just in artistic pursuits but also in personal development. Erik points out that their training sessions focus more on mentoring than on photography itself.

But ultimately, we want to give them the real core foundations of mentoring, talk about responsibilities, talk about outcomes, the commitment, communication, the boundaries, all

the basics are there. We will often do some role-playing to get them in that mode...

First Exposures' approach in focusing on the mentoring skills of their mentors helps to strengthen the adult partners' relationships with youth mentees. They acknowledge that the artists already have a deep skillset in arts and photography, what they need are the interpersonal and relational skills of being good mentors. If there is a skills gap, First Exposures encourages shared learning between the mentoring pair, as described by Erik below:

...One of things we do address with training is stress that you'll be learning together. If there's things you don't know, it's a great opportunity to show that you don't know that. The mentor is not the savior, the mentor is not the all-powerful...

## Screening Mentors

Importantly, First Exposures also addresses the impact that mentoring can have on both adults and young people. These emotional difficulties and triggers can complicate mentoring relationships and the organization attempts to screen for these issues prior to creating their pairings, as Aneeta describes below:

...we have an extensive interview process. So if someone applies to be a mentor, one, the application is long, very long.... there's three questions about photography and the rest is your childhood...Often they say you had people cry during art because they're emotionally going back into their childhood, talking about triggers that they still carry today...If your parents work, how did that impact you growing up? It is kind of like a therapy session. So we do this to make sure that it's both a safe environment that we're trying to pair them with mentees that will be a good match both emotionally as well as personality-wise. Really know what triggers



that mentors have so that we can be mindful of who they get paired with...

## Measuring Success in Personal Growth and Relationships

The program measures its success by the personal growth of its mentees and the strength of their relationships with mentors. This strength is evaluated by the mentee's tenure in the organization and their extension service as a returner, noted by Erik below:

**The biggest success for me is when I see a former mentee come back to become a mentor. This year we have had, I think, we had three former mentees... They came back as mentors. To me, that's huge because they're coming back however many years down the road.**

Additionally, Nick offered the following perspective on impact:

**But I think the biggest success for me that I can see for our program is the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Just seeing them develop that relationship through every Saturday. Just seeing them like, "Oh, yeah. We were texting about this," or "We were talking about that," or "These are the images that we collaborated."**

There are also important examples of personal, social, and developmental changes that First Exposures is able to witness in their mentees. Erik shares a poignant example, "To see somebody that's maybe started the year off completely withdrawn and quiet and then hearing them giggle." These transformations underscore the impact of the program beyond just the technical skills in photography.

## Conclusion

First Exposures stands as a vivid example of innovation and impact in the realm of youth mentorship. By integrating creativity with personal development, the program has fostered an environment where young people can explore their artistic talents and grow as individuals. The strong bonds formed between mentors and mentees, the collaborative spirit with the community, and the focus on holistic development, all contribute to the transformative experiences of the participants. The laughter and confidence of the mentees serve as a testament to the success of First Exposures, a program that not only teaches photography but also captures the essence of growth and connection.

**For more information  
about First Exposures, visit  
[www.firstexposures.org/](http://www.firstexposures.org/)**

**To learn more about  
amazing and innovative  
mentoring programs in the  
Bay Area region, check  
out the MENTOR California  
partners listed below.**

**[Kingmakers of Oakland](#)  
[The Hidden Genius Project](#)  
[Hack the Hood](#)  
[Friends for Youth](#)**

Mentoring within Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) stands as a cornerstone in its community, dedicated to guiding at-promise students toward success. The organization's unique approach, as described by Darrin Person, Manager of the District Mentoring Office, and Mentor Facilitators Judy Reynoso, and Fernanda Jusaino, encompasses a variety of services, all focused on fostering positive role models and providing safe, supportive environments for their program participants, over 4,000 FUSD students. This narrative synthesizes their excerpts from an interview conducted with the team, shedding light on FUSD's promising practices in mentorship strategies while highlighting their relationship with academic research about mentoring.

## **Connecting Students with Role Models**

The importance of providing students with positive mentors is well-documented in academic research, highlighting the multifaceted benefits of such relationships. Mentoring has been shown to significantly enhance academic performance, as evidenced by increased retention and graduation rates (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Mentorship also offers substantial social and emotional benefits, such as better interpersonal skills and a reduced propensity for engaging in risky behaviors (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). These studies collectively affirm the critical role of positive mentorship in supporting the holistic development of students.

Echoing these points, Darrin emphasized FUSD's primary purpose: to connect students with positive

role models. This fundamental goal encompasses academic, social, and emotional support, providing a holistic approach to mentorship. As described by Darrin, "I would say our primary purpose is to connect students that are at-promise students with positive role models that will help them to be successful academically, socially and emotionally and throughout life."

## **A Holistic Approach to Support**

Adding to what Darrin shared, Judy noted the importance of increasing positive relationships and role models for students, highlighting FUSD's commitment to serving any child in need of extra support, regardless of their background, describing the following related to their program goals:

**Increase their positive relationship(s) and also increase the number of role models supporting and holistic approach in interacting with the students. So our goal is to serve a blended approach, any child who needs somebody to be in their lives and to have some extra support.**

Providing well-rounded support to students is essential for their holistic development, encompassing academic, emotional, and social aspects. Research indicates that comprehensive support systems positively impact students' academic achievements and overall well-being. According to Rumberger and Lim (2008), addressing diverse needs, including academic support, health and psychological services, and social skills development, significantly reduces dropout rates and enhances educational outcomes. Additionally, Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) demonstrate that school-based social and emotional learning programs improve students' social behaviors, reduce emotional distress, and increase academic performance. These findings underscore the necessity of providing multifaceted support to students for their comprehensive development and success.

## Creating Safe Spaces

Aligned with this holistic approach, the significance of providing students with a safe space was underscored by Fernanda, stating “It’s definitely one of our [FUSD] biggest objectives.” This safe environment is crucial for students to explore their potential and face their challenges confidently.

The creation of safe spaces in educational environments is crucial for student well-being and learning. Safe spaces, characterized by an atmosphere of respect, understanding, and acceptance, allow students to express themselves freely and engage in learning without fear of judgment or harm. A study by Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz (2009) emphasized the importance of such environments for the academic success and mental health of marginalized students, particularly those from the LGBTQ+ community. Payne and Smith (2012) also noted the positive impact of safe spaces on students’ ability to explore and understand diverse perspectives, which is essential for fostering inclusive and empathetic communities. These findings underline the necessity of ensuring safe and supportive educational settings for all students.

## Diverse Mentoring Programs

FUSD offers a range of mentoring programs, including group mentoring, one-on-one, and peer mentoring, illustrating the organization’s commitment to varied mentoring approaches. Programs that cater to different gender-identities and needs, including “MBK Success Mentoring,” “Young Men of Character” and “Girl Power” were uplifted by the FUSD team as gender-specific models that allow mentors to develop tailored approaches to building programs and relationships with their mentees.

## Unique Features of FUSD

FUSD differentiates itself from other K-12 institutions by having an internal mentoring program office, supported by the FUSD School Board and, as Darrin proudly highlights, “funded to implement, operate, and facilitate mentoring programs.” This internal structure is complemented by partnerships with community-based organizations, showcasing a blend of in-house expertise and external collaboration.

## Empowering Peer Mentors & Shifting the Mentorship Paradigm

Peer mentorship plays a vital role in the educational and personal development of students. This form of mentorship, involving guidance from more experienced peers, has been shown to significantly enhance academic performance, social skills, and self-esteem. Karcher, Davis III, and Powell (2002) found that peer mentorship fosters a sense of belonging and community within the school, enhancing overall student engagement and reducing feelings of isolation, highlighting the multifaceted benefits of peer mentorship, and underlining its importance in supporting student success. As noted by Darrin, the programs experienced a significant shift in the type of mentors being utilized. Historically reliant on adult mentors, within FUSD there’s been an increase in employing students as peer mentors. This shift, backed by positive results, is expected to grow, integrating more students into the mentoring role, whether in group or one-on-one settings.

Fernanda echoes the uniqueness of FUSD’s peer mentoring programs, where high school students not only become peer mentors but also Fresno Unified School District employees. This opportunity allows them to gain work experience and contribute meaningfully to their mentees’ lives, as uplifted



by Fernanda, “time that they’re able to spend with their mentee, they are being paid for that time. So there’s a variety of things that not only are we able to involve our community in this, but also to involve their students.”

FUSD is also committed to preparing youth for positive job opportunities through peer mentorship relationships. The program equips peer mentors with skills for the interview process and work readiness, ensuring they are well-prepared for future employment opportunities, as emphasized by Judy in the following excerpt:

**And I want to add something very, very unique that we have in our programs. We open doors for positive job opportunities, including the Alliance. We prepare our kids with, like preparing for interview process, how you present yourself....and we’re also incorporating the same packet that every adult completed [at] Fresno Unified to be an employee. We provide it to the peer mentors, and they have firsthand experience about a very in-depth process for work opportunity....**

## Building Internal and External Partnerships

Internal partnerships within FUSD departments are a critical component to program success. Darin uplifts how these collaborations are crucial in aligning program expectations with the learning needs of students, particularly English Learners

(EL), noting: “We’re able to align like our program expectations with their EL learning expectations. So there’s a variety of things that we do, but just having internal partnerships has definitely just been able to just empower us a lot more...”.

Building community partnerships with schools is equally essential for enhancing educational experiences and supporting student success. These partnerships, which often involve collaborations between schools and various community organizations, bring additional resources and opportunities to students. Epstein (2011) emphasizes that such collaborations can significantly improve school programs and classroom practices, leading to better student outcomes. Sanders (2006) highlights the role of community partnerships in providing real-world learning experiences, which are crucial for developing students’ practical skills and preparing them for future careers. By fostering connections between schools and their surrounding communities, these partnerships play a pivotal role in creating a supportive and enriching educational environment.

The FUSD team speaks about their strong community ties, particularly with local colleges and businesses, highlighting partnerships with California State University, Fresno and Fresno City College, which provide students with positive role models and real-world work experience. These partnerships



are mutually beneficial, offering students hands-on experience while businesses gain enthusiastic young workers.

Judy elaborates on this collaboration below:

**We've been partnering with a lot of Fresno State and City College organizations... that they are in exposing college students to be in a community service mode. So we really established that foundation since day one... And we really opened doors for young people, opportunities to build relationships with our kids. And it's both sides. We're helping our students to bring positive role models, people who already are attending college, for them to follow the steps of those young people.**

Darrin elaborates on the vital role of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) including Hand In

Hand, Street Saints, Every Neighborhood Partnership, and Fresno EOC Youth Fellowship in providing intensive mentoring services. These collaborations are essential for the program's success, involving both contracted agencies and volunteers.

## **Innovations in Monitoring and Curriculum Enhancement**

FUSD introduced a new evaluation method for monitoring attendance in group mentoring programs like their Young Men of Character and Girl Power programs. This innovative approach is anticipated to streamline processes and yield better results. Fernanda highlights the continuous enhancement of their in-house curriculum, which is revised annually in collaboration with skilled partners. This ongoing development keeps staff motivated and engaged, fostering an environment of continuous learning and improvement.





## Enhancing Capacity with Training and Support

In response to the need for better preparation of mentors, FUSD has embarked on extensive training and capacity-building efforts, including training on ‘Elements of Effective Practices’ provided by MENTOR California, aiming to enhance the mentors’ capabilities and ensure more impactful mentoring relationships.

Continuous training and professional development are crucial for mentors, as they ensure the effectiveness and relevance of their mentoring practices. Ongoing training helps mentors stay informed about the latest developments in mentoring techniques, enhances their understanding of diverse mentee needs, and fosters their ability to provide meaningful guidance and support. Garringer, Kuipersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, and Tai (2015) emphasize that well-trained mentors are better equipped to establish strong, impactful relationships with their mentees. This underscores the value of continuous training and professional development to enhance the effectiveness and impact of mentorship. Judy reiterates the importance of ongoing training, including creating a training schedule, stating:

**We have a very structured curriculum that they need to be trained (in), but we first have an overview of the program, especially that every year we enhance and modify to better serve our kids. And then after they comprehend the structure and everything, we have a calendar for the whole entire year...and sometimes, it’s bi-weekly, depends on the program and depends the flexibility of each school site. But we do the check-ins, and we call it Learning Together. We wanted to expose every single one on the team to the successes, the challenges... and everybody learn from each other. So it’s very helpful...we build the calendar, and that way, everybody can block and be able to attend.**

## Barriers, Aspirations and Measuring Success

The unique school district setting also creates some barriers for the programs. Discussing barriers, Darrin acknowledges the difficulty in changing the narrative around mentoring outcomes, particularly in an academic setting where immediate results are often expected. Fernanda also noted that funding constraints pose challenges, especially given the district’s size and the increasing number of students benefiting from the programs.

Looking ahead, Fernanda expresses a desire for layered support for peer mentors, seeking to provide additional support and guidance. Darrin foresees a continued focus on quality relationships, safety, and sustained mentor-mentee connections. Judy expresses hope for more hands-on training approaches, enhancing the practical aspects of the program.





## Conclusion

Fresno Unified School District's (FUSD) mentoring approach, as illustrated through the insights of the FUSD Mentoring Office leadership team, stands as a shining example of impactful community engagement and student support. Key elements of the FUSD mentoring program include the creation of safe spaces, which are fundamental for student confidence and exploration, and a variety of mentoring programs that cater to diverse needs, including gender-specific initiatives. Another distinctive feature of FUSD is its internal mentoring program office, unique among K-12 institutions, and the shift towards peer mentorship, where students become mentors and even employees of the district. FUSD maintains a strong focus on continuous training and professional development for mentors, ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of their mentoring practices. Overall, the program is a testament to the power of comprehensive mentoring in fostering academic achievement, emotional well-being, and social skills among students.

**For more information  
about Fresno Unified  
School District's  
Mentoring Office, visit  
[https://dpi.fresnounified.  
org/mentoring/](https://dpi.fresnounified.org/mentoring/)**

**To learn more about  
amazing and innovative  
mentoring programs in  
the San Joaquin/Central  
Valley region, check out  
the MENTOR California  
partners listed below.**

**Street Saints**

# NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast



Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast (BBBSNC) represents a testament to the power of mentorship and community engagement in transforming the lives of youth, serving both rural and urban communities within their region. This narrative explores the organization's commitment to service, relationships, collaboration, training, and its impact on the community it serves, informed by an interview conducted with key organizational leaders.

Personalizing the mission “to build and support one-to-one relationships to ignite the biggest possible futures for youth” and the vision “that all youth achieve their full potential”, BBBSNC leaders share their perspective on the important work, specifying areas of impact as follows: “We serve Humboldt County as a whole, but truly the capacity that we’re able to serve is truly from the Eel River Valley or Fortuna all the way up to north of McKinleyville and Eastern to Blue Lake.”

Kiara Mixon, BBBSNC Resource & Match Support Specialist, explains that the youth who are part of their program come from a variety of communities in Humboldt County. Kiara notes that BBBSNC offers an expansive and inclusive range of services, tailored to meet the needs of these various youth populations:

**So our “littles” are usually aged from 6-18 years old. They’re all brought in through the program from their parents or some type of other mental health organization, social work, stuff like that. And they come to our program for mentorship,**

**some type of adult in the community to serve their child and bring them out in the community. And I should also note that their needs range from experiencing past trauma, to maybe they come from a one-parent household....**

It is important to note that BBBSNC is piloted a new program called “Big Futures” in 2023, focused on expanding their definition of youth services to people aged 25 and under.

Kiara emphasizes the role of the organization in providing mentorship to these ‘littles’. Program Leader Allie Brown describes their service focus as follows:

**...One-to-one mentoring. We do site-based mentoring as well, which is also one-to-one. But also a big service that I feel that we do is connect our families to resources that maybe we don’t provide but that they still need, through our contact with them, Match Support.**

## Community-Centered

At the heart of BBBSNC’s approach is its community-centric focus. Serving primarily in Humboldt County, as noted by Executive Director Florence Parks, the organization has become a vital part of the local fabric, adapting its national service model to the unique needs of local youth, and cultivating a strong community of mentoring in the region. This emphasis on local engagement and support is integral to the organization’s philosophy, ensuring that every initiative is deeply rooted in the needs and aspirations of the community it serves.

Community engagement is a vital aspect of youth-serving organizations, as it enriches the programs offered and enhances their relevance and impact on young people. This engagement involves collaborating with various community stakeholders, including families, schools, and local businesses, to create a supportive network for youth. Accord-

ing to Zeldin, Christens, and Powers (2013), active community engagement helps in understanding the unique needs and assets of the youth, leading to more effective and responsive programming. Checkoway, Gutierrez, and Saeger (2005) also highlight that community engagement fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment among young people, as they feel that their voices are heard and valued in the community. These insights underscore the necessity of community engagement in youth-serving organizations, as it not only bolsters the effectiveness of their programs but also contributes to the overall development and well-being of young individuals.

Florence elaborates on this approach, noting:

**I think one of the very special things about the Big Brothers Big Sisters model is that we're very focused on the community. So there are only 14 agencies throughout our state, and so we get to really cultivate our community of mentoring here in this region and serve the region as it needs to be served, or how participants and engaged community members want mentoring to show up in Humboldt County.**

## Mentoring Adaptations During a Pandemic

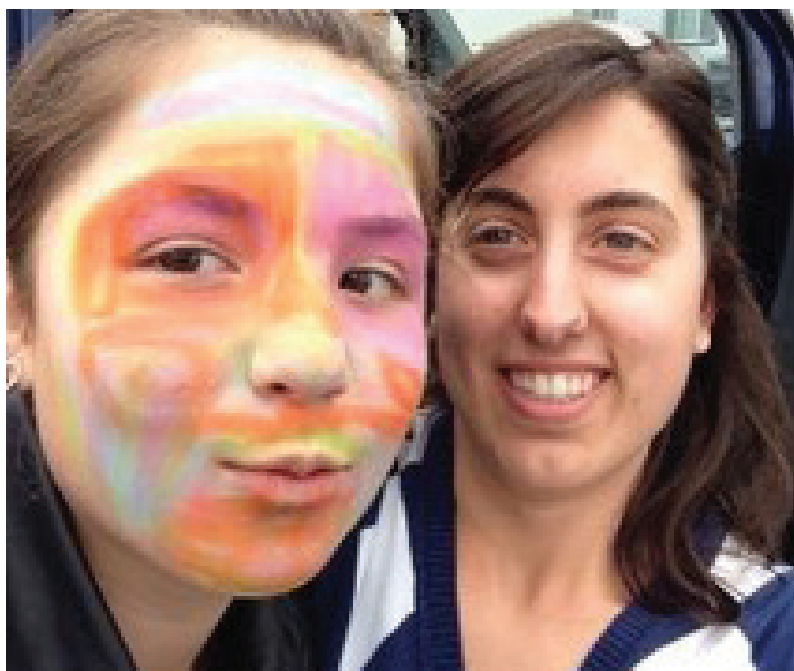
Adapting services during the COVID-19 pandemic has been crucial for youth-serving organizations to continue supporting young people effectively. The pandemic posed unique challenges, requiring these organizations to rapidly shift their strategies to meet the evolving needs of youth in a largely virtual environment. According to Raposa, Dietz, and Rhodes (2020), transitioning to online platforms was essential for maintaining mentorship and support programs, albeit with challenges in ensuring equitable access to technology, particularly within rural communities. These adaptations not only ensured the continuity of services but also underscored the resilience and flexibility of youth-serv-

ing organizations in responding to unprecedented challenges.

As noted by Florence:

**I think a huge part of COVID was responding first for safety. And so our team never skipped a beat. They didn't take time off. There were some industries that stayed home, but ours immediately shifted to develop a new program, which we call entering 2.0, and what we had funded through the Humboldt Area Foundation locally, we were able to provide. ...although there weren't as many new matches that were formed, supporting the matches that were already mentoring was first priority, making sure that they still connected, that kids weren't feeling isolated, that families were having the supports they need. So we were able also to leverage other resources in the community for our families...getting all of our children laptops that needed access to laptops and internet.**

There were just an array of many things that our team and our program team really developed, got really sharp on Zoom...creating group mentoring opportunities where everyone met and





did activities together...We also did drop off, so we dropped off materials and resources at families homes. So our team was out in the field when most people were sheltering in place to make sure that families had all the things that they needed.

## The Power of Collaboration

Collaboration is key to BBBSNC's success. Nicholas Higgins, BBBSNC Leader and Board Member, highlights the role of community engagement and partnerships in enhancing service delivery and awareness. Through word of mouth and successful fundraisers, BBBSNC has built a network of support that underpins its programs, showcasing the community's growing understanding and involvement in their mission.

Nick further describes this below:

**Word of mouth... It just spreads and then more people join, and it just seems like our fundraisers keep getting more and more people joining and understanding the programs...and then (they're) able to then say what we're doing for the community and our youth....**

This type of people-driven advertisement and marketing is useful in the type of rural area that BBBSNC serves within. Florence explains that rural areas can feel "isolated" and can deepen a "lack of services and resources". In order to combat this, BBBSNC leans heavily on other institutional partners in nearby towns with special regard to their college community, as noted by Kiara:

**I think being near to college campuses also helps, because we have students coming in and volunteering for us and then staying in the community and then they have kids, and they want to be part of the program. So again, the word to mouth thing...but I think being near those people coming into town all the time really helps too.**

Nick expanded on this, uplifting the pipeline opportunity collaboration with local colleges offers:

**...the internships through the college, like I went through and now I'm part of the Board, that's still happening...They either come to the organization, or they've worked for the organization (and) they can promote to other people and spread the word of the organization and what we're doing for the community and the youth**

In thinking about preserving and nurturing relationships of the past, BBBSNC is also embarking on new network-building efforts to reintegrate previous mentors and alumni.

Allie explains this in the excerpt below:

**We're really trying to access those relationships with the alumni, former volunteers. That's an entire community of folks that we have the potential to tap into. Also, I know that there's a large focus on millennial and Gen Z engagement that's super important that we connect with. As an elder millennial myself, I was also a "big". I was a "big" for four years previous to my employment here. And so speaking as a millennial myself and an alumni, I know that it's a pretty profound relationship that we can build with those folks in our community, and those will be rather new kinds of relationships.**

Maintaining relationships with alumni from youth-serving organizations is crucial for fostering long-term support networks and strengthening the community impact of these organizations. Alumni can serve as role models, mentors, and advocates, offering invaluable insights and support to current participants based on their own experiences. Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, and McMaken (2007) highlight that alumni, as former program participants, bring a unique perspective that can inspire and motivate current youth, showing tangible examples of the program's impact. Engaging alumni

not only reinforces the organization's mission but also contributes to building a sustainable and supportive community around its core objectives.

## Training as a Cornerstone

Recognizing the importance of well-prepared staff and volunteers, BBBSNC places a high premium on comprehensive training. Allie points to the learning exchange training platform, providing an extensive range of training resources, noting:

**Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America provides us with an up- feels like an endless amount of trainings that are at our fingertips; videos, webinars, some of the sometimes it's curriculum. It seems like anything I've ever been wondering about I can usually find on the learning exchange.**

This approach extends beyond the volunteers, encompassing their families as well, ensuring a holistic support system for the youth. Elaborating on this, Allie describes the foundational crux of BBBSNC training, which is safety, in the excerpt below:

**We do a lot of training with our volunteers, but we also do training with their families, so that directly relates to their child. But also when we train our bigs on mandated reporter training, when we train our parents on signs and what to look for, that goes into the community as a whole because those bigs interact with families and children all day every day in their community. Same thing with families. The child might have a friend who comes over to play and then if something is maybe red flagging, the parent then will have that knowledge that we provided...So I think child safety is a huge service that we provide that the general community benefits from.**

Teaching young people about mandated reporter training is a critical step in raising awareness about child safety and welfare. Mandated reporter training, typically required for professionals who work with children, educates individuals on how to identify and report cases of child abuse and neglect. By extending this knowledge to youth, organizations



can empower them to recognize and respond to potentially harmful situations among their peers. Melton (2005) argues that such training encourages a culture of responsibility and vigilance among young people, making them more proactive in safeguarding themselves and their peers. Additionally, Kenny (2004) highlights that educating youth about these responsibilities can also demystify the reporting process, reducing the stigma and fear associated with reporting abuse. This educational approach not only contributes to the individual well-being of young people but also fosters a safer and more informed community.

In addition to safety trainings, BBBSNC goes to great lengths to integrate professional learning that is centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion. BBBSNC's service area is located in the heart of unceded sovereign tribal areas, and a sizable portion of their members are affiliated with local tribes. Allie describes how this impacts both relationships and training focus areas for staff members below:

**We keep a very keen eye out for just local trainings in our community. I went to a training called Boys with Braids in May, and it was all about our local indigenous folks centering on boys with the tribal braids who tend to get bullied relentlessly and actually can be physically affected by it. And so I attended that, and I had no idea. If I had not gone to that training, I would've had no idea about the cultural impact, how some of our littles have even experienced that exact form of bullying.**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training is essential for youth-serving organizations to create an environment that respects and embraces differences while ensuring equal opportunities for all. This training equips staff and volunteers with the skills to understand, appreciate, and effectively interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

According to Bohnet (2016), DEI training helps in recognizing and mitigating unconscious biases, fostering a more inclusive atmosphere for both the youth and the staff. Sue et al. (2009) emphasize the role of such training in enhancing cultural competence, which is critical in effectively addressing the varied needs of a diverse youth population. Additionally, Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, and McCullough (2016) argue that DEI training is vital for developing an organizational culture that values diversity and promotes equality, which can significantly impact the mental health and well-being of young people. Implementing DEI training in youth-serving organizations not only supports the personal development of young individuals but also contributes to building a more equitable and inclusive society.

Kiara elaborates on BBBSNC's approach to this as follows:

**I think a good term to sum it all up is population awareness. So doing things like trauma-informed care and LGBTQ+ trainings, mandated reporter trainings, understanding developmental relationships, things like that I think help us be better mentors, but then have that information to teach our "bigs" to be better mentors also.**

BBBSNC also talked about the importance of being part of the MENTOR CA network and the abundance of trainings that it has afforded them, as further described by Florence below:

**MENTOR California has done a great job with the Mentoring Resource Center and the resource library...I'm registered for this month's focus on neuroscience and how it impacts mentoring, and there's just a library of different tools that are available to our fingertips that have been invested by Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention that can really inform our team, our staff... Whenever [there is] something specific**



we need, we know that we can tap in and find those resources at the Mentoring Resource Center as well as the National Mentoring Resource Center.

## Measuring Impact through Growth

BBBSNC leaders define success not merely in terms of service delivery but through the personal growth of its participants and the broader impact on the community, reflecting on the importance of the happiness and health of their matches, supported by consistent monthly contact.

Allie further explains below:

I know at the end of the day, personally, how I define it is the happiness and health of our matches. That's the beauty of the match support is that you're there contacting them every month... But the whole point is that if that happens, then you help navigate and you let folks know that there's obstacles in every relationship, and you help guide them and navigate them

through that, and then the match can go on and stay lengthy. So for me, I really look at that like, okay, I made my match support contacts this month, and it feels really good. I feel like our program has been really successful in that context...That we provide that love and support in so many ways in their life. So for me that that's success.

Kiara proposes that the real measure of success is evident in the stories of change and growth shared by the youth, a testament to the efficacy of their mentorship, stating:

When we think about why parents are seeking our services in the first place, we use our youth development plans to keep track of their goals in our program. So when we do those match support calls, it's one of the things we're monitoring. And when I hear the change in growth in the stories that they're telling me, that's how I know what the mentor's doing, what we're doing is successful and things are going in the right direction.



Monitoring change and growth in youth is a critical component of mentoring organizations, as it ensures that programs are effectively supporting the developmental needs of young individuals. Regular assessment and tracking of progress allow organizations to identify the strengths and areas for improvement in their programs, ensuring that they are making a meaningful impact on the lives of the youth they serve. According to Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003), systematic monitoring helps in understanding how different aspects of the program contribute to the social, emotional, and cognitive development of young people. Larson, Hansen, and Moneta (2006) emphasize that tracking growth also provides valuable feedback for continuous program improvement and helps in tailoring activities to the evolving needs of participants. Effective monitoring of change and growth in youth not only enhances the quality of mentoring programs but also reinforces the organization's commitment to fostering positive youth development.

## Conclusion

Through its dedicated service to youth, commitment to building strong community relationships, collaborative approach, comprehensive training programs, and a nuanced understanding of impact, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast has created a nurturing environment where young people can flourish. The organization's journey is a story of hope, growth, and community, a beacon of positive change in Humboldt County. As they continue to mentor and guide the youth, BBBSNC not only shapes individual futures but also fortifies the community, weaving a tapestry of support, understanding, and empowerment.

**For more information  
about Big Brothers  
Big Sisters of the  
North Coast, visit  
[www.ncbbbs.org](http://www.ncbbbs.org)**

**To learn more about  
amazing and innovative  
mentoring programs  
in the Northern California  
region, check out the  
MENTOR California  
partners listed below.**

**[Catalyst Mentoring](#)**

# GREATER SACRAMENTO

## Improve Your Tomorrow



Improve Your Tomorrow (IYT) exemplifies the power of belonging in the lives of young people. This highly effective model for mentorship, created by and designed specifically for young men of color, establishes a collective brotherhood among its members and mentors, focusing on academic achievement and attainment as a cornerstone for life-long success, in alignment with the organizational vision, “A nation in which men of color are overrepresented in higher education, underrepresented in the criminal justice system, and leaders in their communities.” With roots in the Greater Sacramento area, IYT’s reach is expansive throughout the region and extends beyond, including the Bay Area and San Joaquin/Central Valley within California, and pilot programming in Minnesota and Maryland. The narrative that follows synthesizes an interview conducted with Co-Founders, Executive Leaders, and friends, Michael Casper and Michael Lynch, illuminating promising strategies for a holistic and customized mentoring model for young men of color, blending direct and individualized supports, exposure and access, and systems change through policy advocacy.

## Brotherhood

At the core of IYT’s mission is a commitment to ensuring young men of color not only enter college but also successfully graduate. As Michael Casper, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer explains:

**We want to ensure that young men of color not only get to college but through college. And so a part of how we do that is through a near-peer mentoring model, where we start off with broth-**

**ers as early as seventh grade and continue with them until they graduate from college. So it’s up to a 12-year commitment.**

Central to IYT’s methodology is the cultivation of strong, supportive relationships, particularly through its near-peer mentoring model. Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Michael Lynch emphasized IYT’s 12-year commitment to each mentee, called ‘brothers’, and the implementation of near-peer mentorship are foundational to the program’s success. This approach creates a nurturing and relatable environment for the young men, as further described by Michael Lynch below:

**Member development is really an extension of mentorship...where we have our brothers go through a series of workshops that make them not only sound academically but just make them well-rounded young men. Parent engagement is a component...college tours...so exposing our brothers to colleges and universities, internships....**

## Tailored Educational and Developmental Support

Early college exposure for young men of color offers significant benefits, contributing to their academic and personal development. This exposure helps demystify higher education, making it more accessible and less intimidating. Harper and Griffin (2011) note that early exposure to college environments can increase academic motivation and aspiration among young men of color, who often face systemic barriers in education. It allows them to envision themselves in college, setting a foundation for future academic success. Strayhorn (2010) emphasizes that such exposure, particularly through programs like college visits or dual enrollment, can enhance academic preparedness and college readiness, providing these young men with a clearer understanding of college life and expectations. These benefits are crucial in addressing



the educational disparities faced by young men of color and in fostering their long-term success.

Elaborating on this approach within IYT's model, Michael Casper notes:

**...And the only thing I would add to that too is just our college to service pipeline... So we have about 45-50% of our mentors are former College Academy alumni. And so then they come back and support other brothers...They come back, share their lived experiences, to be able to ignite the other brothers that fall behind.**

When a mentee returns to the same organization to provide mentoring service, there are cycles of positive relationships that are developed. To facilitate this return, IYT focuses on building meaningful and impactful relationships and incentivizing the return to service as mentors. Asked to describe further, Casper shared the following:

**Our mentors are also paid. So often times it's hard for people of color to volunteer and be mentors. And so we make it a point to pay our mentors because we understand the importance of them needing the resources. And our brothers need to have people that have lived experiences.**

Financial barriers can significantly impact mentorship programs, affecting both their accessibility and effectiveness. Limited funding often restricts the resources available for mentor training, support, and program activities, which are essential for high-quality mentorship. According to Rhodes and DuBois (2008), insufficient financial resources can lead to larger mentor-mentee ratios, reduced frequency of mentoring sessions, and shorter duration of relationships, all of which can diminish the benefits of mentorship. Addressing these financial challenges is essential to ensure that mentorship programs can effectively serve all youth, regardless of their socioeconomic background. To address these socioeconomic barriers, youth-serving orga-

nizations have to build networks filled with community partners who can provide both resources and support.

## Expanding Reach Through Collaboration

IYT's effectiveness is further enhanced by its collaborations with educational and community organizations. Co-Founders Michael Lynch and Michael Casper highlight the value of having relationships with school district partners, providing IYT with direct access to the students they seek to serve. These partnerships are crucial in extending the program's reach and impact.

As noted by Lynch,

**We are a community-based nonprofit. So we are in service to the community and the community's needs. And to add upon that, we're helping to solve a community need by pertaining to the under-college achievement of our young men of color.**

Casper expanded on this, adding:

**We're just a piece of the village. And so yeah, we try to be able to go alongside families and just provide brothers with additional support and resources to propel them into success... one is school districts. We have access to exactly where young people are required to be every single day, and that's tremendously valuable to have relationships with school district partners. But we also exist within an ethos of other nonprofits. So we're a part of coalitions, like SAC Kids First and others [that] give us proximity to the policy work.**

Social work partnerships play a vital role in enhancing the effectiveness of organizations serving young men of color. These partnerships bring specialized knowledge and expertise in addressing the complex social, emotional, and environmental



challenges faced by this demographic. According to Lindsey, Korr, Broitman, Bonecutter, Lambert, and Mishna (2006), social workers can provide critical insights into the systemic barriers that young men of color often encounter, such as racial discrimination, socioeconomic challenges, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. These insights are crucial for developing tailored interventions that meet the unique needs of these individuals. Additionally, Abrams and Moio (2009) highlight that social workers' advocacy and policy work can help address structural inequalities and create more equitable opportunities for young men of color. Collaborations with social work professionals ensure that organizations are not only providing immediate support but are also equipped to effect long-term positive change in the lives of these young men.

IYT's Leaders elaborated on their approach, sharing:

**...we also have a referral network, whether it be through housing or for our college students that need access to EBT cards, to therapists... so we also have a community of other nonprofits that are doing work that may be outside of our scope...we can leverage our relationships with our brothers to be able to connect them to probably resources and opportunities that they otherwise wouldn't connect if that relationship hadn't been established.**

## Building Hope

Building hope in the lives of young men of color is crucial for their resilience and future success. Hope, defined as a positive motivational state, is particularly important for this group due to the unique challenges and systemic barriers they often face. Hurd and Zimmerman (2014) emphasize the role of hope in fostering resilience against adversity, noting that it can encourage young men of color to pursue their goals despite obstacles.

Related to IYT's role in instilling hope, Casper shared the following:

**I think we inspire brothers to have a sense of hope. And then we partner with them in being able to help them kind of connect the dots on how to make whatever that dream may be, become a reality... So I kind of see IYT... as being the connector or the bridge so to speak, to ensure that dream just doesn't falter, but that they can enact whatever that may be.**

This sense of hope can be nurtured through mentoring relationships, as mentors provide support, guidance, and positive role modeling. Additionally, Snyder et al. (2002) highlight that hope is linked to higher academic achievement, goal attainment, and overall well-being. It can also counteract the effects of negative stereotypes and discrimination. By instilling hope, mentors and youth programs can play a pivotal role in empowering young men of color to envision and work towards a brighter future, breaking cycles of disenfranchisement.

Describing such hope, Lynch stated:

**We're providing more mirrors. But more mirrors of what you can be, what you can do, like a path that you can create. And I think that's what we try to do purposely, is put our young brothers in front of people who can provide that path of the vision they have in their head.**

Shawn Ginwright's academic work significantly emphasizes the importance of building hope in the lives of young men of color, highlighting it as a critical factor in their development and empowerment. Ginwright's concept of "radical healing," involves addressing the systemic injustices that young men of color face while nurturing their sense of hope, agency, and resilience. Ginwright (2015) argues that creating environments that foster hope and healing is essential for young men to navigate and challenge the systemic barriers they encounter.

This approach goes beyond traditional mentoring, advocating for community-based strategies that acknowledge and address the social, economic, and political contexts affecting youth.

## Systemic Interventions

One significant difference between IYT and other mentoring organizations is its capacity to create systemic changes through policy. Partnerships within local governance systems have created opportunities for legislative advocacy and macro-level changes that impact the populations of young men of color that they serve. This approach used in tandem with micro-level relationship building has seen fruitful results, described by Casper in the following:

**We try to have...the direct service impact. But that's in a lot of ways putting a Band-Aid on the overarching problems. Through some of our policy and advocacy efforts, we try to push policy and legislation that's in the favor of the people that we serve as well....examples of that being the 1300 Campaign (a campaign whose goal is to increase college attendance for young**

**men of color) and things of that nature. So that's the hope too, to alleviate some of the barriers that we're trying to help our brothers navigate through altogether.**

### Comprehensive and Evolving Mentor Training

The training of mentors in IYT is both robust and continually evolving. Both Michael Lynch and Michael Casper emphasize the organization's strong training program that equips mentors with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively guide and support their mentees. This training is constantly refined to meet the changing needs of both mentors and students, as detailed by Casper below:

**Our training is constantly evolving and getting better... We have lead mentors four or five days. We went to UC Merced, stayed overnight and they went through offsite training that was around college advising because our lead mentors walk our seniors through FAFSA and applying to colleges, et cetera. And then this past week, we had both the leads and our half-time mentors take part in a week-long training that's centered around mentorship. And through**



our mentorship, we have four stages that we go through. Stage one is relationship building. Stage two is deepening relationships with the brothers. Stage three is around a growth mindset and accountability, and then stage four is around engagement...Biweekly, we also have training throughout the year to just continue to practice and continue to refine skills.

## Measuring Success Through Achievement and Leadership

IYT gauges its success not only through the academic achievements of its students but also their growth as leaders within their communities. As stated by Michael Lynch and Michael Casper, the true measure of the mentoring program's success is seen in the students' ability to graduate college and become community leaders. This focus on leadership and community involvement is integral to IYT's vision of success, as noted by the Co-Founders in the following excerpt:

Our success for our mentoring program is success for my brothers. So are they attending college and they're graduating college and they're leaders in their community? So we measure the success of the Mentor Fellowship, which is our mentoring program, through the success of its beneficiaries....

## Conclusion

IYT's journey is a remarkable example of the power of dedicated mentorship and targeted support. Through its specialized services, strong mentor-mentee relationships, strategic collaborations, comprehensive training, and a focus on leadership and academic success, IYT has created a transformative space for young men of color. The organization not only guides students through their academic journeys but also empowers them to become leaders and change-makers in their com-

munities. As IYT continues to evolve and expand its impact, it stands as a pivotal force in shaping the futures of with young men of color, fostering a generation of educated, empowered, and engaged young leaders.

**For more information  
about Improve Your  
Tomorrow, visit  
[improveyourtomorrow.org](http://improveyourtomorrow.org)**

**To learn more about  
amazing and innovative  
mentoring programs  
in the Greater Sacramento  
region, check out the  
MENTOR California  
partners listed below.**

**[Project Optimism](#)**

**[Architects of Hope](#)**

**[Aging UP](#)**

**[My Brother's Keeper \(MBK\)  
Sacramento](#)**



# WE GON' BE ALRIGHT

## Uplifting Promising Practices

bell hooks' theory of Radical Love, as described in the introduction of this report, can serve as a transformative framework, offering a profound and holistic approach to guiding and nurturing young minds. Hooks' framework has the potential to reshape the mentor-mentee relationship and create lasting positive impacts on the lives of young people. Findings from the information gathered through the various data collection methods presented in the previous sections of this report suggest multiple promising practices that can further enhance the current state of mentoring in California and advance mentorship nationally. The following section uplifts promising practices, highlighting how love is actualized within the practice of mentoring youth.

### Practicing Empathy and Respect

According to the mentor survey analysis, Mentors demonstrate empathy and respect, as indicated by their focus on personal development and understanding the different struggles people go through. This approach is reflective of their ability to connect with and respect the unique experiences of each mentee. The Mentee survey analysis showed Most mentees indicate trust in at least one adult in the program, indicating that mentors practice empathy and respect, creating a trustworthy environment. This reflects a deep understanding and respect for each mentee's unique circumstances and needs.

Regional mentoring partners engaging in the assessment interviews emphasized creating a safe and respectful environment where mentees feel heard and understood. By focusing on understanding the unique experiences of each mentee, they ensure that their programs are empathetic and

supportive. Examples shared by the organizations include creating a supportive environment where youth feel heard and understood, indicating an understanding of the unique challenges and experiences of each participant, tailored approaches toward each mentee, considering their individual backgrounds, experiences, and needs, including and especially youth from diverse backgrounds including BIPOC, systems-involved youth, and LGBTQIA+ youth, to ensure that programs are empathetic and supportive.

Overall findings suggest that empathy and respect form the cornerstone of any successful mentoring relationship. When mentors practice empathy, they step into the shoes of their mentees, understanding their worldviews, challenges, and aspirations. This empathetic approach breaks down barriers, creating a safe space where mentees feel valued and understood. It fosters a sense of trust and openness, crucial for effective communication and growth. Respect, in this context, is about acknowledging the individuality of each mentee, valuing their experiences, and recognizing their potential. It is about seeing them not just as recipients of knowledge and advice but as equal partners in the mentoring journey.

### Encouraging Empowerment and Critical Thinking

Survey responses revealed mentors' emphasis on career exploration and job readiness, which encourages empowerment and critical thinking. Mentors assist mentees in planning for their future, fostering self-reliance and the ability to navigate life's challenges. Mentee survey and focus group findings emphasize a valuing of resources and activities that encourage empowerment and critical thinking, such as access to technology, traveling outside neighborhoods, and visiting colleges. These experiences empower mentees to explore new opportuni-



ties and think critically about their futures. Findings from the interviews and focus group also indicate that encouraging students to become peer mentors empowers them to develop leadership skills and engage in meaningful activities that promote critical thinking and self-reflection. Some mentoring programs empower youth through arts, encouraging mentees to express themselves creatively, and to develop their skills as a means to promote critical thinking and self-expression, enabling youth to explore and communicate their perspectives through art. Others empower youth by facilitating mentor relationships that inspire growth and development, helping young people navigate their challenges, encouraging self-expression, and promoting critical thinking about their own lives and circumstances. Yet another approach empowers youth in academic skill-building and college preparation through mentoring, educational programs, college exposure, and peer tutoring, allowing youth to explore and communicate their perspectives and future aspirations.

Empowerment is a useful tool in the hands of a mentor. It nurtures confidence in mentees, enabling them to believe in their abilities, and motivating them to take charge of their lives. This involves fostering critical thinking - encouraging mentees to question, explore, and challenge the norms and structures around them. It also includes guiding youth to find their voice and use it effectively. In doing so, mentors prepare their mentees not just for immediate challenges youth may encounter but for life.

## **Fostering Inclusivity and Challenging Biases**

Analysis of Mentor survey responses focused on self-identity and individuality indicated an inclusive approach that respects and values the diverse backgrounds and experiences of mentees. This

emphasis helps in challenging biases and fostering a more inclusive mentoring environment. The Mentee survey offers a glimpse into the diverse range of ethnic backgrounds represented by California mentees, and mentee self-reported respectful engagement with peers indicate an inclusive approach, challenging biases, and valuing diversity. This inclusivity ensures mentoring services are accessible and relevant to a wide range of youth, fostering an environment where diverse experiences are respected and integrated. Diverse programs, responsive and relevant to the youth served by mentoring organizations, are better positioned to cater to different identities and specific needs, including California's beloved immigrant communities, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and challenging societal biases. Ensuring inclusivity in programs and challenging biases by providing access to arts education to those who might not otherwise have access, or by focusing on intersectionality and the needs of gender-expansive youth, or reaching out to communities in affordable housing are all example of love actualized through mentoring.

Intentionality matters, as indicated by the findings. Ensuring that mentoring services are accessible and relevant to a wide range youth, from outreach to youth in rural areas or youth from different cultural backgrounds to an explicit commitment to serving BIPOC or young men of color and other marginalized communities, contributes toward organizational adaptability, program relevancy and sustainability.

Radical love in mentoring means fostering an environment of inclusivity, where every mentee, regardless of their background, feels welcomed and valued. It is about creating a space where diversity is celebrated, and different perspectives are embraced. This inclusivity extends to challenging

biases - both within the mentor and the mentee. It involves addressing and dismantling stereotypes and prejudices that can hinder the growth and development of the mentee. By doing so, mentors create an atmosphere where growth is equitable and accessible.

## **Supporting Holistic Development**

Overall findings indicated a significant focus on social-emotional support and wellness/mental health. The Mentor survey highlighted mentors' commitment to the holistic development of mentees. This approach ensures that the emotional, social, and mental well-being of youth is nurtured alongside their career and academic development. Similarly, mentee survey and listening session participants reported receiving advice in various life areas, including school and future preparation, indicating a focus on holistic development. Such findings suggest that mentoring programs connected to MENTOR California cater to not only academic and skill development but also emotional and social growth, ensuring a well-rounded support system for the mentees. Partner interviews also reflect a holistic approach. Offering a safe space for youth to express themselves and cope with personal issues was a critical integrated practice that aligned to participants' reflective commitment to the overall well-being of the youth they mentor. Additionally, most mentoring organizations interviewed uplifted expanded services offered during and since the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting to deliver food, technology resources and various other supports responsive to the holistic needs of their mentees and families.

As indicated by the information gathered, holistic development is about nurturing all aspects of a young person's growth - emotional, social, intellectual, and sometimes, spiritual. It is recognized

that the development of a mentee goes beyond academic achievements or skill acquisition. It includes attending to their emotional well-being, helping them build social skills, and guiding them towards self-awareness and self-actualization. This approach ensures that the mentoring relationship contributes positively to the overall growth and well-being of the mentee.

## **Building Trust Through Commitment and Care**

The impact of mentoring on mentors, including increased empathy and a greater sense of purpose, suggests a deep level of commitment and care. This reciprocal impact of mentoring shows that mentors are invested in their role, which is essential for building trust in mentor-mentee relationships. The Mentee survey indicates that mentors build trust through their commitment and care. Such trust is built through consistent, caring, and meaningful interactions, demonstrating mentors' investment in the mentor-mentee relationship. A commitment from mentors for a full academic year or longer ensures consistency and stability in the relationships, thereby fostering trust and care. Providing a consistent and caring environment and consistency in mentor-mentee pairings contributes to trust and care in a mentor-mentee relationship. Long-term relationships between staff, mentors, and youth not only strengthens the practice of centering trust in mentoring but emphasizes the importance of equipping mentors to support youth in a caring and committed manner.

Trust is the foundation upon which the mentor-mentee relationship is built. Trust is cultivated through consistent commitment and genuine care. Trust includes showing up for the mentee, not just physically but emotionally and intellectually. It means being a reliable source of support and guidance; someone the mentee can depend on

without hesitation. Trust is crucial for creating a lasting and impactful mentoring relationship.

## Implementing Radical Love in Mentoring Practices

Implementation of Radical Love in mentoring practices was evidenced throughout the current state of mentoring in California, based on the data collected and presented in this report. Findings indicate that mentoring involves a conscious effort to embody the principles of bell hooks' theory around Radical Love in every interaction with mentees. It requires mentors to be introspective, constantly evaluating their approaches and ensuring that they align with the tenets of empathy, respect, empowerment, inclusivity, holistic development, and trust. It means being adaptable, ready to meet the changing needs of the mentee, and being committed to their continuous growth and development. The impact of utilizing this theory in mentoring can be profound, as suggested by voices of mentees and mentors that informed this report. Mentees nurtured under the umbrella of radical love are more likely to develop into confident,

critical-thinking, and socially responsible individuals. Moreover, they are better equipped to navigate the complexities of life and contribute positively to their communities. The mentoring relationship, underpinned by radical love, becomes more than just a means to an end; it becomes a transformative experience that enriches both the mentor and the mentee.

The current state of mentoring in California reflects a love that transcends conventional models, reaching into the depths of social, emotional, and intellectual realms. In the context of mentoring, this radical love is not merely about guiding youth through their academic or career paths, but about nurturing them as whole individuals, for lifelong success.





# WESTSIDE CONNECTION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MENTOR California would like to recognize the following for your valuable contributions to this project and dedication to supporting love-centered mentoring throughout California.

### **MENTOR California Board Members**

Anaya Bullard, Howard University Student  
Alejandro Galicia Cervantes, UC Davis Student, CalMetrics Consulting  
Rebecca Goldberg, Rebecca Goldberg Consulting  
Fiona Lu, University of California, Los Angeles Student  
Stephen Minix, UpMetrics  
Florence Parks, Big Brother Big Sister, North Coast  
Darrin Person, Fresno Unified School District  
Michael Ruiz, Ernst & Young - EY  
Andrew Shipp, Golden State Warriors  
Taryn Thomas, Stanford University Student  
Ragnar von Schiber, Genentech  
Miles Warren, US Community Giving-BMO  
Orlando White, Mindfulness Expert

### **Additional notable expressed appreciation to the following:**

MENTOR California Team  
MENTOR: The National Partnership  
UpMetrics  
AssemblyMember Kevin McCarty  
Partnership for Children and Youth  
Pomegranate Design

### **MENTOR California would also like to express gratitude to the following partners:**

ABBOTT Labs  
Appa Health  
CareerVillage.org  
Genentech  
Golden State Warriors  
Kingmakers of Oakland  
LinkedIn  
Los Angeles Clippers  
Los Angeles Lakers  
My Brothers Keeper (MBK) Sacramento  
Sacramento County Office of Education  
Sacramento Kings  
The California Endowment  
The Ever Forward Club/Million Mask Movement  
The Hidden Genius Project  
The Westly Foundation  
Youth Mentoring Action Network (YMAN)

A photograph of a young person with dark hair and a red and black plaid shirt, and an adult man with dark hair wearing a blue Columbia jacket. They are standing in front of a red brick wall. The text 'The Opportunity for Mentoring in California NOW' is overlaid in white on the image.

# The Opportunity for Mentoring in California NOW

Partnership for Children and Youth

## Increased public funds to support mentoring and youth development

California is investing \$4 billion annually in the [Expanded Learning Opportunities Program \(ELO-P\)](#). This funding is for schools and their partners to provide students with more learning opportunities outside of the regular school day (e.g. before and after school, during the summer, and more) and it can be used for mentoring. Most school districts receive ELO-P funding to serve elementary students first, but funding can be used for middle and high school students once state requirements are met.

Adolescence is a time of growth in many ways, and time in school alone does not provide sufficient opportunities and support that teens need such as connection and guidance from adult mentors, access to social capital, college and career exposure, and experiences that expand their horizons and skills. For more information on supporting teens and ELO-P, please see [Expanding Horizons: The Case for Investing in Expanded Learning for Middle and High School Students](#) by the Partnership for Children & Youth.



# ASSESSMENT TEAM

## MENTOR California Youth Researcher Intern Team

### Anaya Bullard

Anaya is currently a freshman at the prestigious Howard University in Washington DC. She is dedicated to uplifting promising practices for youth engagement and youth voice, with years of experience on various Advisory Boards, youth panels, and more, including serving as a Youth Board Member for MENTOR California. Additionally, in her hometown of Riverside, CA, Anaya volunteered with Music Changing Lives, a non-profit organization bringing music, arts and tutoring services to youth and Youth Mentoring Action Network (YMAN), advocating for youth centric conversations when discussing intergenerational spaces. Fueled by her passion for economic development and social equity, she is studying Political Science with a Community Development minor. Her goal is to drive sustainable growth in social, economic, and environmental aspects by integrating mental health and public policy.

### Alejandro Galicia Cervantes

Alejandro is Founder and Lead Consultant of CalMetrics Consulting, serving clients in California's capital region. A graduate of the University of California, Davis, and an alumni of the inaugural My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Sacramento Youth Fellowship and Peer Mentor programs. Alejandro is a community change-maker by craft, a youth programs developer by training, and an entrepreneurial storyteller at heart, with 5+ years of experience serving on statewide nonprofit and philanthropic foundation Boards of Advisors and Coordinating Committees. His mission is not only to curate a longitudinal study mapping legal status disparities but to build systems to support our most vulnerable communities. Alejandro is currently managing political candidate campaigns. He also serves on the Board of Directors for Mentor California, an organization that supports mentoring programs across the Golden State.

### Fiona Lu

Fiona Lu (she/her) is a first-year freshman at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) studying Public Affairs and Labor Studies with an Education Studies minor. Her hometown is in Orange County, California. Fiona is passionate about public policy that addresses issues in education, child-care, public assistance, and labor. Throughout her journey as a student advocate, she has worked on multiple California state bills that have addressed inequities within the state education system and social welfare programs. Some policy initiatives she's passionate about include building strong public schools, attending to the needs of impoverished women, youth, and families, expanding mentorship services, and promoting higher education accessibility. On campus, she serves on her External Vice President's State Relations Team and as the Secretary for Students United for Reproductive Justice (SURGE), a club dedicated to intersectional reproductive justice and advocacy. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career that bridges her interest in academia, the nonprofit sector, teaching, and policymaking.

### Taryn Thomas

Taryn Thomas, a sophomore at Stanford University, stands as a trailblazer in advocating for educational equality and youth empowerment. At Beaumont High School, she made history as the first Black Valedictorian, ranking top of her class. Recognized as the 2022 Community Hero by the Riverside County Office of Education, Taryn's dedication extends beyond academic excellence. Her commitment to fostering positive change led her to pivotal roles such as being California Department of Education State Superintendent's Youth Advisory Council member and a Youth Supervisor for Mentor Advisory Council, where she actively contributed to shaping mentorship initiatives. Currently, Taryn dedicates her expertise to an international K-8 educational program, where she teaches subjects like business, medicine, and STEM, guiding young minds to explore and excel in diverse fields. Her passion for community service and mentorship, coupled with research experience in health disparities at Loma Linda University, fuels her pursuit of a



major in Symbolic Systems with a focus on Neuroscience at Stanford University. Her goal is aiming to drive meaningful progress at the intersection of education, mental health, medicine and public policy.

## **Innovation Bridge**

### **bel Reyes, Ed.D**

Dr. Reyes is a Mexicana, Chicana, Latina educator, executive leader, community change agent, and innovator. With over a decade of extensive experience, Dr. Reyes has worked closely with various multisector partnerships. She brings many proven facilitation skills and leadership in developing community and school partnerships, strategic systemic change planning, organizational capacity-building, evaluation and assessment, and the innovative design of new programs driven by outcome-based change and inclusive practices and policies resulting in transformational impact. bel has also presented as an invited speaker at various national conferences and her leadership has contributed to several notable local, statewide, and national efforts. Ms. Reyes is a Co-Founder of ELITE Public Schools and Co-Founder of Centro Temazcal, an experiential healing center. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Innovation Bridge in Sacramento, CA, whose goal is to deliver high-quality technical assistance support that bridges innovative practices and collaborative partnerships for more just and equitable communities and schools. Ms. Reyes previously served as the Program Director of Community School Partnerships for the UC Davis School of Education. Born to immigrant parents from Guanajuato, México, and a mother herself, bel values the contributions that culture, language, and identity have on education and community.

### **Mark Carnero, Ed.D**

Dr. Mark Carnero is a social justice educator, youth organizer, and community advocate. His early years of mentoring first generation, Filipino youth, had a formative effect on his consciousness, pushing him to pursue a bachelor's and master's degree in Sociology, researching the Filipino-American identity at the intersections of race, gender, class, immigra-

tion, and colonization. Dr. Carnero fueled his passion for youth development by working for a local non-profit agency, teaching community organizing strategies, policy advocacy, and youth participatory action research to youth throughout multiple K-12 systems. He earned a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Sacramento State University. In 2017, Dr. Carnero earned the "Outstanding Dissertation for K-12 Award" for his study entitled "Upset the Setup: Exploring the Curricula, Pedagogy, and Student Empowerment Strategies of Critical Social Justice Educators." Currently, Dr. Carnero is the lead implementation strategist for Ethnic Studies at SCUSD and teaches multiple courses at Sacramento City College and Sacramento State University.

### **Brit Irby**

Brit Irby has served the needs of youth, families, and communities for more than two decades, in various capacities within K-12 and post-secondary education systems, and city leadership. She has been instrumental in developing and overseeing nationally recognized programs for youth, with extensive experience in expanded learning and intervention programming for youth of color. Ms. Irby currently serves as Deputy Director for Innovation Bridge, where she provides consulting, training, strategic planning and various technical assistance services in collaboration with educational and community-based partners, including K-12 school districts and non-profit organizations. She specializes in community engagement, and coordination of collaborative partnerships that are authentic, meaningful and impactful toward improving outcomes for youth and families.

## WORKS CITED

- Abrams, L. S., & Moio, J. A. (2009). Critical race theory and the cultural competence dilemma in social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 245-261.
- Allen, T. D., Day, R., & Lentz, E. (2005). The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships. *Journal of Career Development*, 31(3), 155-169.
- Blake-Beard, S., Bayne, M. L., Crosby, F. J., & Muller, C. B. (2011). Matching by race and gender in mentoring relationships: Keeping our eyes on the prize. *Journal of Social Issues*, 67(3), 622-643.
- Brennan, M. A., Barnett, R. V., & McGrath, B. (2009). The intersection of youth and community development in Ireland: The Young Ballymun Project. *Community Development*, 40(4), 353-368.
- Catterall, J. S., Dumais, S. A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). The arts and achievement in at-risk youth: Findings from four longitudinal studies. Research Report #55. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.
- Chatterjee, J., & Sahasranamam, S. (2018). Corporate mentoring in academia: A study of the EMentoring program at the University of Strathclyde. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 16(1), 126-142.
- Checkoway, B., Gutierrez, L. M., & Saeger, L. (2005). Youth participation and community change: An introduction. *Journal of Community Practice*, 13(1), 1-9.
- Clutterbuck, D., & Ragins, B. R. (2002). *Mentoring and diversity: An international perspective*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Colvin, J. W., & Ashman, M. (2010). Roles, risks, and benefits of peer mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentorship in Higher Education: Practical Advice and Leadership Theories*, 37-47.
- Cornell, D., & Mayer, M. J. (2010). Why do school order and safety matter? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 7-15.
- Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(6), 525-545.
- DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Sage Publications.
- DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(3-4), 294-309.
- Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Evans, S. C., Ng, T., & DuBois, D. L. (2008). Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72(2), 254-267.
- Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (2011). Schools as developmental contexts during adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 225-241.

- Ehrich, L. C., Hansford, B., & Tennent, L. (2004). Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(4), 518-540.
- Ellen, I. G., Horn, K. M., & O'Regan, K. (2016). Why do higher-income households choose low-income neighborhoods?: Pioneering or thriving? *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 60, 170-188.
- Freeman, L. (2006). *There goes the hood: Views of gentrification from the ground up*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Frierson, H. T., Hargrove, B. K., & Lewis, N. R. (1994). Black students' perceptions of the academic climate at a predominantly white university. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 65(1), 46-62.
- Garringer, M., Kupersmidt, J., Rhodes, J., Stelter, R., & Tai, T. (2015). *Elements of effective practice for mentoring* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.
- Garringer, M., McQuillin, S., & McDaniel, H. (2017). *Examining youth mentoring services across America: Findings from the 2016 Mentoring Program Survey*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.
- Ginwright, S. (2015). *Hope and healing in urban education: How urban activists and teachers are reclaiming matters of the heart*. Routledge.
- Goodman, M. R., & Schlossberg, N. K. (2009). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Diaz, E. M. (2009). *Harsh realities: The experiences of transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York, NY: GLSEN.
- Gussak, D., & Rosal, M. L. (Eds.). (2016). *The Wiley Handbook of Art Therapy*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Hall, M. (2013). Residential integration on the new frontier: Immigrant segregation in established and new destinations. *Demography*, 50(5), 1873-1896.
- Harper, S. R., & Griffin, K. A. (2011). Opportunity beyond affirmative action: How low-income and working-class black male achievers access highly selective, high-cost colleges and universities. *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*, 17, 43-60.
- Herrera, C., Grossman, J. B., Kauh, T. J., Feldman, A. F., & McMaken, J. (2007). *Making a difference in schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring impact study*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
- Hurd, N. M., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2014). An analysis of the role of mentorship and parental figures in moderating the impacts of racial discrimination on African American adolescents' mental health. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(3-4), 279-290.
- Johnson, L. C., & Howard, K. A. S. (2004). The impact of social work advocacy on racial and ethnic disparities in health care. *Health & Social Work*, 29(3), 225-233.
- Karcher, M. J. (2008). The study of mentoring in the learning environment (SMILE): A randomized evaluation of the effectiveness of school-based mentoring. *Prevention Science*, 9(2), 99-113.
- Karcher, M. J., Nakkula, M. J., & Harris, J. (2005). Developmental mentoring match characteristics: Correspondence between mentors' and mentees' assessments of relationship quality. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 26(2), 93-110.



- Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Kram, K. E., & Ragins, B. R. (Eds.). (2007). *The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research, and practice*. Sage Publications.
- Krauss, D. A., Katz, A., & Bressi, S. K. (2011). *PhotoTherapy and Therapeutic Photography in a Digital Age*. Routledge.
- Labonte, R. and Feather, J. (1996) *Handbook on Using Stories in Health Promotion Practice*. Health Canada, Ottawa
- Larson, R. W., Hansen, D. M., & Moneta, G. B. (2006). Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organized youth activities. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(5), 849-863.
- Lee, C. M., & Ward, K. P. (2020). Stress and coping among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of American College Health*, 1-8.
- Lindsey, M. A., Korr, W. S., Broitman, M., Bonecutter, F. J., Lambert, S. F., & Mishna, F. (2006). Toward the social work vision: An examination of public and private sector service disparities as they affect the health and well-being of African American children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 28(9), 1020-1034.
- Loades, M. E., Chatburn, E., Higson-Sweeney, N., Reynolds, S., Shafran, R., Brigden, A., Linney, C., McManus, M. N., Borwick, C., & Crawley, E. (2020). Rapid systematic review: The impact of social isolation and loneliness on the mental health of children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 59(11), 1218-1239.e3.
- Loewenthal, D. (2013). *Phototherapy and Therapeutic Photography in a Digital Age*. Routledge.
- Museus, S. D., & Neville, T. (2012). Diverse pathways to college for African American, Latino, and Asian American and Pacific Islander men. In *The state of males of color in the California Community Colleges: Recommendations for state and institutional leaders* (pp. 55-74). Washington, DC: Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California.
- Payne, E. M., & Smith, M. J. (2012). Safety in the ivory tower: Students' perceptions of hate speech and freedom of speech in higher education. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(1), 179-195.
- Raposa, E. B., Dietz, N., & Rhodes, J. E. (2020). Trends in volunteer mentoring in the United States: Analysis of a decade of census survey data. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 65(1-2), 179-190.
- Rhodes, J. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2008). Mentoring relationships and programs for youth. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(4), 254-258.
- Rhodes, J. E., Reddy, R., Roffman, J., & Grossman, J. B. (2005). Promoting successful youth mentoring relationships: A review of the empirical literature. *Mentorship in Higher Education: Practical Advice and Leadership Theories*, 37-47.
- Rhodes, J. E., Spencer, R., Keller, T. E., Liang, B., & Noam, G. G. (2006). A model for the influence of mentoring relationships on youth development. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(6), 691-707.
- Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Youth development programs: Risk, prevention and policy. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 32(3), 170-182.
- Rumberger, R. W., & Lim, S. A. (2008). Why students drop out of school: A review of 25 years of research. *California Dropout Research Project*, 15, 1-131.

- Snyder, C. R., Shorey, H. S., Cheavens, J., Pulvers, K. M., Adams III, V. H., & Wiklund, C. (2002). Hope and academic success in college. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94(4), 820-826.
- Spencer, R. (2007). "It's not what I expected": A qualitative study of youth mentoring relationship failures. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22(4), 331-354.
- Spencer, R., Basualdo-Delmonico, A., & Lewis, T. O. (2011). Working to make it work: The role of mentors in the lives of youth leaving foster care. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 39(4), 392-407.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital's influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males. *Review of Higher Education*, 33(3), 307-332.
- Stuckey, H. L., & Nobel, J. (2010). The connection between art, healing, and public health: A review of current literature. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(2), 254-263.
- Stukas, A. A., Clary, E. G., & Snyder, M. (1999). Service learning: Who benefits and why. *Social Policy Report*, 13(4), 1-19.
- Topping, K. J. (2005). Trends in peer learning. *Educational Psychology*, 25(6), 631-645.
- Vandell, D. L., Reisner, E. R., & Pierce, K. M. (2007). Outcomes linked to high-quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs. Policy Studies Associates, Inc. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- Wheeler, M. E., Keller, T. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2010). Review of three recent randomized trials of school-based mentoring: Making sense of mixed findings. *Social Policy Report*, 24(3), 1-21.
- Wright, R., John, L., Alaggia, R., & Sheel, J. (2006). Community-based arts program for youth in low-income communities: A multi-method evaluation. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 23(5-6), 635-652.
- Zeldin, S., Christens, B. D., & Powers, J. L. (2013). The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 51(3-4), 385-397.







[mentorcaliforniayouth.org](http://mentorcaliforniayouth.org)