



Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit

Create, implement,
deliver, and evaluate
group mentoring in your
community.

mentoringgirls.ca



Alberta Mentoring Partnership

This resource has been generously funded by :

THE W. GARFIELD WESTON
FOUNDATION

This Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit provides the tools, resources and support to create, implement, deliver, and evaluate a quality group mentoring program for girls, ages 9-13, in your community. The Toolkit is intended to be used in a range of communities, and can be adapted to the unique values, needs, strengths and challenges that each community encompasses.

Developed by:

Canadian Women's Foundation
Alberta Mentoring Partnership
2015

Acknowledgements

When embarking on a project you generally have an idea of where you will end up and how you will get there. This was certainly the case as the Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit was developed - we knew the end result would be a solid resource that would be valuable to any organization or individual interested in starting a group mentoring program for girls. We also knew the path that would take us there. But what we had not anticipated was how rich and powerful the journey would be. There are many people to thank for sharing this journey with us.

This toolkit was developed through a partnership between the Canadian Women's Foundation and Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP). Each partner brought so much to the table. Thank you to Alberta Mentoring Partnership for their willingness to collaborate and create a resource that is more thorough than either partner could have created separately. A huge thank you to AMP staff Corey Dodge, Ellyse Lambie and former staff, Michelle Anderson-Draper - all amazing contributors to this toolkit. Special thanks to Corey for his leadership, skill and creativity in the ongoing development and design of the toolkit as well as for his patience and diligence in the editing stages.

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We were fortunate to work with five amazing organizations to test and improve the Toolkit: Cornerstone Family & Youth Inc., Sarnia-Lambton Rebound, YWCA Lethbridge, Community Action Resource Centre and Inuvik Youth Centre. They were funded to pilot a girls group mentoring program by using the Toolkit and developing it from new. They were asked to give feedback on how the Toolkit provided support and the areas to improve, but they gave so much more. These five pilot sites had regular check-ins to give feedback on every section of the toolkit - they identified content that was helpful, highlighted gaps and made suggestions for reworking sections. The strength of the content is a tribute to their dedication and insight. We consider the leads of these pilot programs as joint-writers of this resource. Thank you Paige, Jen, Lindsey, Krystal, Marilia, Amandeep and Renee for sharing this journey with us.

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Of course, none of this would have been possible without the generous funding from The W. Garfield Weston

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Finally we want to acknowledge the girls and mentors across Canada who inspire us each and every day, and who will hopefully benefit from this resource as organizations use the tools to develop strong mentoring programs.

- Canadian Women's Foundation

“It is vitally important that girls have every opportunity to succeed and this innovative group mentorship approach is something I am very proud to be part of.”

- Nancy Baron, Founder - Nancy Baron Mentorship for Girls Program
The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

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Introduction

“I never used to talk a lot, I used to be quiet ... I’ve seen her talk, to not be afraid, I started learning from her, and I started to gain self-confidence.”

- Girls Group Mentoring participant

Girls in Canada represent a rich diversity of experiences and realities. Early adolescence is a particularly important time for girls as they begin to explore and develop their individual identities in the face of



Why is this important?

In order to make the most of this toolkit and to build a strong Girls Group Mentoring Program, it’s helpful to understand how the toolkit is laid out and the value of girls group mentoring.

the media and society’s expectations. It is a time of maturity, growth and change. Evidence has shown that girls are particularly susceptible to challenges related to their physical and mental health, body image and self-esteem. Many girls also face systemic barriers that can negatively impact their personal growth and development including, but not limited to, poverty, racism, homophobia, transphobia, marginalization and sexism. By engaging with girls between the ages of 9 and 13, communities can intervene at a critical time in a girl’s development.

Every girl should believe in herself and realize that she matters. Mentoring can be a valuable means of providing support and reinforcing the belief that we are all special and important. Mentoring is the presence of a caring individual who provides a young person with support, advice, friendship, reinforcement and constructive role modelling over time. Mentoring is about building relationships. Girls group mentoring programs work to create

a supportive environment where girls can make connections that foster their strengths and support them through challenges.

Group mentoring occurs when one or more mentors is matched with two or more mentees. According to Kuperminc & Thomason (2014), “group mentoring must involve an intentional focus on interpersonal relationships and incorporate the core elements of effective youth mentoring relationships: mentor(s) with greater experience offering guidance intended to facilitate growth and development of mentees, and development of an emotional bond between mentor and mentees.” Through the development of positive relationships, a safe space, diversity-positive messages and an opportunity to develop new tools, girls group mentoring programs help girls to thrive and succeed.

Girls group mentoring programs celebrate individuality while providing safe spaces for girls and women to connect and share their voices and common experiences. When girls are given tools, space and encouragement, they are empowered to develop their voices in their communities and navigate the

challenges of adolescence.

Girls benefit from gender-specific and gender-positive group mentoring programs. These programs have particular benefits that help girls build resilience and protective factors. Some of these may include:

- **Gained Confidence:** Girls specified that the mentors made them feel more confident, that they participated more often in group when the mentors were there, and that because the mentors were positive, encouraging and complimentary, they gained confidence.
- **Finding their Voice:** Girls reported finding their voices to speak up more and stand up for themselves.
- **Healthy Relationships & Positive Lifestyle:** Many girls reported learning a lot from their mentors about school, culture, getting along with others, dealing with conflict and leadership skills.
- **Sense of Belonging or Connectedness:** Mentors established positive relationships with girls which helped them open up about relationships or conflicts. These conversations helped the girls understand how to be a friend, how to resolve problems and how to reduce bullying.
- **Increased Community Connections:** Girls have a larger network they can connect with outside of the group and can feel empowered to take action on issues in the community

- Canadian Women's Foundation (2014)

This toolkit will present you with strategies and approaches that can guide you to support girls to achieve these same outcomes. We now invite you to read through the following sections to learn about how you can develop a girls group mentoring program in your community.

Purpose of the Toolkit

This dynamic toolkit will provide your organization with a concrete way to promote positive change for girls in your community. It will provide you with some of the resources needed to start your own Girls Group Mentoring Program for girls aged 9 to 13.

This toolkit is intended to be a starting point and will supply you with the key elements needed to develop a quality group mentoring program for girls. However, this cannot be a complete resource; organizations will need to take additional steps in order to be successful. This toolkit and its contents will need to be adapted to your specific community with the unique assets, values and challenges that your community and organization possess.

It is important to note and understand that although this toolkit uses the term ‘girl’ as a social category, gender is a spectrum and not limited to strict categories of ‘girl’ or ‘boy.’ The participants in a girls group mentoring program may fall anywhere along that spectrum. It’s necessary to be aware that although a program may target girls only, some participants may not necessarily identify that way (Girls Action Foundation, 2009). In order to be inclusive and to foster the human rights of all youth, expanding your programming to include diversity-positive spaces is crucial. Program staff should consider the gendered nature of the language and activities they utilize (Girls Action Foundation, 2009). Respecting the right for youth to self-identify and opening the door to gender variance is key. To explore this further, see the [Inclusive Programming: Gender Variance Considerations](#) document in the Additional Resources for this section of the Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit.

It is equally important to consider and embrace the differences and diversity of girls across race, ethnicity, family income level and culture. The Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit is intended to be a guide that can be adapted to a variety of contexts with the space to consider and celebrate the uniqueness of the population of girls involved in the program. See Section 2: Program Populations for more information.



“The toolkit pushed our program to new levels of reflection; we went from a linear program to a multi-dimensional one, as a result. And we achieved better results!”

- Girls Group Mentoring Program Staff



How to Use the Toolkit

The Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit is interactive and its sections are not necessarily meant to be used in a sequential manner. As you develop your program, you are encouraged to move between the sections in a way that works for and makes sense for your program. Please remember that this toolkit is intended to be applicable across diverse groups of people and the information included is meant to be adapted to your unique community context.

Sections of the Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit

- **Introduction to the Toolkit:** Provides an overview of the toolkit and the purpose and value of girls group mentoring programs.
- **Program Population:** Explores some of the realities facing girls in Canada across populations and includes key considerations for working with the girls in your program.
- **Assessment of Strengths, Needs & Collaborations:** Assists in considering the unique needs, strengths, challenges and opportunities that exist within your organization, community and the town/city/region.
- **Planning Your Program:** Outlines important elements to include when planning and evaluating your program.
- **Program & Meetings:** This section provides information on the early steps and planning required for developing your program foundations and meetings.
- **Recruitment, Screening & Matching:** Provides support for recruiting the right mentors and mentees for your program, screening them appropriately and matching them effectively.
- **Training:** Highlights key aspects of mentor and mentee training.
- **Support & Retention:** Shares best practices for the ongoing support and supervision of mentor/mentee relationships, as well as tips for mentor retention.
- **Managing the Group Dynamic:** Discusses strategies for keeping the program running strong and facilitating relationship building as well as solutions for potential setbacks or issues that may arise.
- **Reflecting, Learning & Improving:** Explores ways to integrate reflection, learning and continuous improvement into a girls group mentoring program.

Each section of the toolkit contains a short introduction and a table of contents for the subsections. You can return to the main home page at any time by clicking the Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit header in the top left corner of your screen. Each section is followed by a list of Additional Resources and Works Cited for that

section.

While the toolkit does not necessarily need to be read in sequential order, we recommend that organizations review the toolkit in full before launching their program. It is helpful to have a sense of all of the program components and best practices before starting to engage girls and mentors.

You will see a set of icons and text boxes throughout the toolkit. Each icon represents an important piece of information:



Highlights **why the section is important** to consider when creating a girls group mentoring program, as well as **key take-aways** from the section, and will appear at the beginning and end of each section.



Highlights **information from the literature and research** on mentoring, girls programming and more.



Showcases an **anecdote, story or experience** from the field of girls group mentoring.



Includes **additional considerations or suggestions** for girls group mentoring programming.

Background

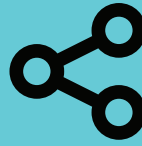
Why Girls?

Women have made vast strides over the past few decades. Women occupy higher levels of workforce participation and take on more leadership roles than ever before. These accomplishments should be acknowledged, celebrated and utilized in building programming for all girls.

Although women have more opportunities than ever before, many girls still face systemic barriers and oppressive practices that negatively impact their personal growth and development. On a daily basis, girls deal with issues related to their physical and mental health, body image, gender and self-esteem (Iglesias and Cormier, 2002). A large percentage of young Canadian girls also deal with poverty, racism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism on a daily basis. Violence against women and girls also continues to be a serious problem.

Early adolescence is a turning point for girls. It is a time of transition when girls begin to question and form their own individual identities. During this period, some youth may expand their ideas of gender expression. There are high expectations of what a girl should 'be like.' At this stage, girls often begin to deal with the gendered roles of adult femininity which can be confusing and restricting for many (Kaplan and Cole, 2003). By engaging these young girls in mentoring, programs can step in at a fundamental time in their development and exploration. Community programming that focuses on the strengths and successes already in the lives of adolescent girls can be a powerful way of supporting and empowering them further. By accepting girls for who they are and how they identify, and seeking to build youth capacity to navigate the challenges and experiences of adolescence, mentoring can support girls at the height of their development.

Girls-only programming allows girls a safe space to explore their identities, create positive relationships with others and focus on their unique strengths and capabilities. It provides a nurturing environment for girls



Girls-only programming offers a variety of benefits and positive impacts for girls ages 9–13. The following reasons were gathered from the feedback of 14 Girls’

Fund grantees through the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s (2014) common evaluation process from 2009–2012:

- Girls have different needs and interests
- All genders behave differently, and girls often prefer a space of their own
- Girls are more likely to be themselves in front of other girls
- Girls are more comfortable sharing and opening up in front of other girls
- Girls are more likely to discuss certain topics with other girls (e.g. sexuality, eating disorders, self-esteem, body image)
- Girls worry less about their appearance in girls-only environments
- Girls worry less about being teased/bullied when we create safe spaces for them
- Girls behave differently when boys are around
- Being only with girls helps girls to feel strong and special
- Having female role models shows girls they can be smart and powerful
- Girls find girls-only groups to be more positive and fun

to engage with older female role models, creating immense potential for growth, acceptance and support. Girls-only spaces can create space for discussion that encourages girls to question stereotypes, talk about bullying and speak up against oppression with their peers. This creates an atmosphere where girls can build the skills and confidence needed to challenge oppression for themselves and others.

A GIRL'S JOURNEY to RESILIENCE

1
MOST GIRLS START OUT STRONG IN LIFE...
 They score higher in **READING** and **WRITING**, they tend to **MAKE FRIENDS** more easily, and they have **STRONGER VERBAL SKILLS**.

2
 ...**BUT IN ADOLESCENCE, GIRLS ARE AT A HIGH RISK FOR...**
SEXUAL ASSAULT (girls aged 13 to 19 are at their highest lifetime risk), **DEPRESSION** (in grade 10, girls are 3X more likely than boys to be depressed) and **LOW SELF-ESTEEM** (between grades 9 and 10, girls' confidence plummets from 56% to 14%).


3
 ...**CAUSING THEM TO BECOME EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE AND LIKELY TO SAY THINGS LIKE...**
 Leave me alone!
 I don't have any choice.
 I blame myself for going to that party.
 The other girls say I'm fat.
 I hate the way I look.
 I'm too tired to go.
 I made a mistake. I'm an idiot.
 That looks too hard.
 I'm no good at anything.
 I don't like Uncle David.

4
 ...**BUT THREE ESSENTIAL SKILLS CAN HELP GIRLS TO REGAIN THEIR STRENGTH...**
1. CONFIDENCE 2. CRITICAL THINKING 3. CONNECTION

5
 ...**HELPING THEM TO BECOME RESILIENT YOUNG WOMEN WHO SAY THINGS LIKE...**
 Listen to me!
 I've got options.
 The assault was not my fault.
 Those girls are bullies.
 Those lingerie ads are so fake.
 I'm so excited about the trip!
 I did my best.
 Well, I can try!
 I can run fast.
 I need to tell you about Uncle David.

In 24 communities across Canada, the Canadian Women's Foundation funds programs that help girls to develop these three skills. Most of the programs incorporate a customized blend of the following:

- To build CONFIDENCE**
 - Leadership Training
 - Physical Activity
 - Art/Science/Technology
- To build CRITICAL THINKING**
 - Violence Prevention
 - Media Literacy
 - Healthy Choices
- To build CONNECTION**
 - Group Discussion
 - Peer Support
 - Mentors & Role Models



“Parents and girls reported several reasons why the program should be girls-only, including the following: girls are more comfortable sharing and opening up in an all-girls environment, boys and girls behave differently and boys’ behaviour could be disruptive, and boys and girls have different needs and interests at this age.”

- Canadian Women’s Foundation (2014)

Why Group Mentoring?

The American Psychological Association (APA) (2014) describes girls' experiences in early adolescence:

“Early adolescence appears to be especially stressful on adolescent girls’ friendships and peer relations, signified by a sharp increase in indirect relational aggression. More typical of girls and more distressful to girls than to boys, relational aggression, characterized by such behaviors as spreading rumors or threatening withdrawal of affiliation, appears to emerge as girls’ attempt to negotiate current power relations and affirm or resist conventional constructions of femininity ... Friendships can be a source of both knowledge and strength for adolescent girls. They can also be a source of struggle, hurt, and confusion, particularly as girls move into adolescence and begin to negotiate dominant cultural views of sexual relationships, femininity, and appearance. Directly engaging adolescent girls in conversations about such issues and encouraging them to explore together how current power relations are played out in the context of their relationships with other girls and women can provide support as well as opportunities to resist social separations.”


Group mentoring is an approach that affords young adolescent girls the opportunity to, as the APA suggests, engage in conversations about issues they’re facing in the context of both peer and adult supportive relationships. Group mentoring occurs when one or more mentors is matched with two or more mentees. Group mentoring sizes and match ratios vary, depending on the program goals, type of mentor and available resources.

All models of mentoring have benefits for children, youth and communities. Group mentoring in particular contributes to improvements in both horizontal (peer) and vertical (adult or someone more experienced) relationship development:

“Vertical relationships offer protection, security, and opportunities for the development of basic social skills. Horizontal relationships form the contexts in which social skills are practiced and elaborated. Though the nature of these relationships evolves with development, both remain important across developmental transitions from early childhood through adolescence.”

- Kuperminc & Thomason (2014)

It has been theorized that group-based mentorship practices are more accessible to marginalized youth



“It is possible that mentoring groups, over the long term, allow for the establishment of relationships that can open possibilities for new expectations, empathy, tolerance for differences, and mutual caring that may not have previously existed.”

- Leadbeater & Way (2007)

than traditional one-on-one mentoring partnerships (Herrera et al., 2002). Individuals who may not feel comfortable participating in one-on-one mentoring may be more likely to do so in the context of a group, where they might still benefit from having a supportive mentor and supportive peers. Girls-only group mentorship can provide a positive space where resources can be shared and discussed. There is strong evidence that suggests that girls, specifically as they enter adolescence, benefit from more intimate, psychosocial relationships (Denner & Griffin, 2003). Girls group mentoring can also be particularly valuable for organizations with limited resources or in communities with limited numbers of mentors. By matching the girls in groups, the program can include more girls and have potential for greater impact.

What is the Canadian Women's Foundation's approach to Girls Group Mentoring?

Since 2006, the Canadian Women's Foundation's Girls' Fund has supported dynamic programs for girls between the critical ages of 9 and 13 that engage their body, mind and spirit. Building on the Girls' Fund and creating greater opportunities for girls, the Nancy Baron Mentorship for Girls Program was launched with generous funding from The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. Mentoring is widely recognized as a highly effective way to promote leadership, increase exposure to diverse perspectives and experience, and build confidence through relationship building.

Commencing in 2012, the Foundation helped organizations provide group mentoring for more than 1400 girls in communities across Canada through 4 year grants. The Nancy Baron Mentorship for Girls Program combines unique elements to support group mentoring of girls within diverse communities. The program includes the following features:

- Mentorship participants are connected to a small peer group, then matched with a mentor or mentors, allowing the girls to form relationships with and learn from both their mentors and their peers.
- Program format is customized by each organization and based on the particular needs and assets of the community it serves. For example, some programs match high school age mentors to build leadership in teenage girls. Other programs pair elders or older mentors with youth to strengthen understanding and respect between generations.
- Program staff take on the critical role of running the program, recruiting and supporting mentors and girls, as well as overseeing the mentoring relationships to ensure they have a safe, effective and supportive impact. Volunteers take on the role of mentors.
- Every program uses a comprehensive, skills-based, girl-centred approach.
- Priority is given to the most disadvantaged girls, and opportunities for Indigenous girls and girls in Northern communities is a high priority.



“The support that the mentees and mentors gave to each other was crucial to help them through some very difficult problems.

These girls showed me the necessity of persistence and reinforced my belief never to judge on first impressions. It was a deeply rewarding experience for me to witness the formation of such a strong, positive peer support group.”

- Boys & Girls Club of London, Just for Girls Mentorship Project

Peer learning for service providers is an integral part of the program: half of the programs started their group mentoring in the first year of their four-year funding, while the other half used the learning from the first group to launch their mentorship programs in the third year of the funding cycle. Canadian Women's Foundation also prioritizes knowledge sharing. Organizations across the country have the ongoing opportunity to join in the discussion and learn about gender-based group mentoring through online learning and in-person trainings.

Through careful evaluation, there is greater understanding of how to develop and deliver group mentoring for girls between the ages of 9 and 13. It provides a comprehensive offering of best practices, learning opportunities and resources to help impact and improve services for girls across the country.

Girls group mentoring programs funded by Canadian Women’s Foundation for 2012–2016 includes:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saint John
Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton
Boys and Girls Club of London
Boys & Girls Club of South Coast BC
Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (CIWA)
Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta
Ka Ni Kanichihk
North York Community House
Sturgeon Lake First Nation
Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
Tsleil-Waututh First Nation
Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc.
Y des Femmes de Montréal
YWCA Cambridge
YWCA Muskoka
YWCA Toronto
YWCA Yellowknife

Canadian Women’s Foundation also worked closely with five community organizations to pilot this toolkit. These organizations partnered with Canadian Women’s Foundation to test the toolkit over a six-month period and actively participated in an ongoing reflection and evaluation process. The focus of the pilot was to evaluate the toolkit’s value and functionality, and to engage in a collaborative and continuous learning and improvement process. Through these learnings, we have been able to evolve the content of the toolkit to better meet the needs of the organizations looking to develop a girls group mentoring program.

Girls group mentoring pilot programs funded by Canadian Women’s Foundation for 2014–2015 included:

Community Action Resource Centre
Cornerstone Family & Youth Inc.
Inuvik Youth Centre
Sarnia-Lambton Rebound
YWCA Lethbridge



Key Take-Aways

Girls in Canada will benefit greatly from connections with a mentor (or mentors) and peers in a safe and empowering environment. This section offered information to help you better:

- Understand the impact a mentor/mentoring program can have on a girl
- Familiarize yourself with the various components of this toolkit
- Strengthen your understanding of the challenges faced by girls
- Recognize how group mentoring can be an effective tool for girls' empowerment
- Familiarize yourself with Canadian Women's Foundation's approach to girls group mentoring across Canada

Additional Resources

Go Girls and the Power of Group Mentoring: One Organization's Experience in Girls Group Mentoring
An Edmonton organization shares their positive experience running Girls Group Mentoring programs.

Inclusive Programming: Gender Variance Considerations

Additional information about gender variance and how programs can remain inclusive and accepting of all youth.

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Program Population



Why is this important?

It's important to understand the girls that you and your mentors will be connecting with. They will be best supported when their unique backgrounds and experiences are recognized and appreciated. This section offers a glimpse of what some girls in Canada may be experiencing, and also guides you to consider the uniqueness of the girls in your own community.

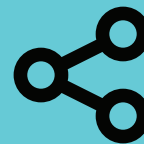
Since girls' lives are complex and uniquely experienced, a one-size-fits-all approach to programming for girls will not be effective. This section will highlight some of the realities experienced by groups of girls in Canada, as well as the strengths and resilience they possess. By no means are these groupings exhaustive; differences still exist within groups and between individuals that require consideration beyond the scope of the toolkit. If your organization is working with one specific group of girls, it is recommended that you invest the time necessary to conduct more in-depth research to better understand the unique experiences of this group.

As you explore this section, ask yourself: Does this relate and apply to the girls in my community? The **My Program Population** section, includes some questions to consider about your own program population. It is worth noting again that these lists aren't exhaustive, nor do they paint the whole picture of all girls across the country; rather, they are a compilation of statistics, experiences, challenges and strengths of groups of girls in Canada. This information is only useful, however, when we do not label or stereotype girls. It is imperative to recognize the uniqueness of each individual, community and region. When planning and operating a girls group mentoring program, create a positive space that celebrates diversity, whether that be cultural, gender, ability, race, religion, socio-economic or sexual diversity.

Before beginning, program staff should reflect on their own identity and the 'population' they are a part of. It is helpful to understand the uniqueness of one's own history and identity and how

this has created opportunities or privileges, as well as how this has presented barriers.

As program leaders we need to find ways for the girls to see themselves reflected in the program. If your program is not reflecting the community of girls you are working with, gaps should be addressed. Approaches to consider will be explored in the sections that follow.



“Although the current day risks and stresses in the lives of adolescent girls must be understood, they should not be the defining factors in discussions of adolescent girls.”

- American Psychological Association (2014)

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My Program Population

It is important to be clear about the groups of girls you intend to serve through your mentoring program. You may have already considered this while writing out your **Theory of Change** and in **Planning Your Program**. Note that each of the ‘populations’ explored is not an exhaustive description, nor does it include a complete needs analysis for working with this group. It is crucial to recognize that each and every community of girls (and individual girl within that community) has a unique story with their own set of needs and interests that should be considered.

In learning about the girls in your community, it is most helpful to go to the source. By consulting with girls in your community, you can learn about their interests and needs while empowering them. You might also want to consider speaking with community partners. Some methods you may wish to consider include:

Focus Groups: You can outreach to a small group of girls in your community and host an informal ‘focus group’. It would be ideal to set this meeting in a familiar and accessible space (such as school or community centre), hold it outside of school hours and provide food or a small honorarium to support their engagement. You can collaborate with local teachers or community partners to engage the group of girls and be sure they are a diverse representation of the community or population you wish to serve. If your organization already runs youth programming, think about consulting with girls who have participated in other programs.

Community Research: Contact community allies—community partners, local youth agencies, schools and other local resources—and gather their insights on the needs and experiences of girls in your community.

Community Survey or Scan: Consider developing a survey of a few questions and asking community partners/schools to cast it to girls or parents/guardians for feedback. This could also be done through an online platform.

Below are some additional thoughts and questions to consider when thinking about your program population:

Who are the girls you will target to be served by this program?

- What is unique about them?
- What strengths and assets do they have?
- What difficulties or barriers may they face?

What are some features and characteristics of the girls in your potential program population that aren’t addressed in this toolkit?

- In what areas would it be beneficial to do further research?



The needs of the girls in your program should be revisited when you are designing your mentor training and mentor supports. Additional information and training may be necessary for both staff and mentors who are working with diverse populations.

What features are listed in this toolkit that don't apply to the girls in your program/community?

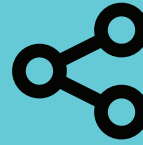
- Are there other programmatic considerations that should be taken into account?

When considering the needs of the girls in your community, it's critical to remember that they are the experts of their own experiences. Your program can be a place where they share their stories and gain their voices. When considering, researching and learning about the girls in your community, keep in mind that each girl is unique and not everything you read or learn will apply to each of them.

An Intersectional Approach

The term “intersectionality” comes from a metaphor coined by theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) to explain how race and gender oppression can interact:

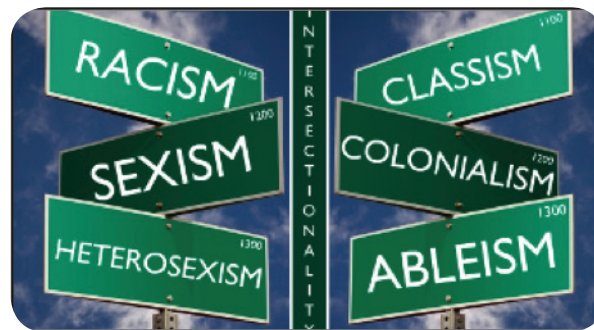
“Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them.”



“Using intersectional feminist frameworks, social categories such as race, class, and gender—among others—operate relationally; these categories do not stand on their own, but rather gain meaning and power by reinforcing and referencing each other.”

- CRIAW (2009)

Crenshaw goes on to explain that if a woman is harmed from being in an intersection, either sex discrimination, race discrimination, or both, could be the cause of her injury (Crenshaw, 1989). It’s not always possible to determine what caused the harm. In the same way, it is impossible to separate the ways that conflicting and interacting forms of oppression overlap in the girls’ lives. Each girl’s experience in the mentoring process is unique, as are her needs, strengths, resiliencies and challenges. It is critical for mentors to understand this.



It is important to apply an intersectional approach when talking about young girls in Canada. An intersectional approach highlights the simultaneous effects of factors such as race, class, ethnicity, status in society, sexuality, religion, age and ability on an individual’s life.

Community practitioners must be aware of these intersecting forms of oppression and adapt their approach accordingly. To ensure that barriers are not created within the program, leaders should recognize that activities and discussions will have different meanings for different girls. For instance, a discussion around what it means to be a community leader, the implications of mentoring or the challenges of being a girl may have different interpretations and carry with it different restraints for girls from different communities and circumstances.

Many marginalized groups do not see themselves reflected in the media or in the world around them, so we must ensure their needs and identities are not overlooked in a girls group or oversimplified by dominant assumptions. As a group facilitator, program coordinator or mentor, it is also critical to have an

understanding of your own power and privilege within systems (Clarke, 2011). Discussion and questioning of stereotypes can be used within the group mentoring context to evaluate the differences among girls and help them discover and celebrate their uniqueness. Girls should be encouraged to take part in activities that develop their talents, passions and strengths.

Girls in Canada

While it is true that Canadian girls share some similar experiences, there is not one universal experience of girlhood in Canada. Various factors impact the way that girls grow up, making their lives complex and distinct. Girls in Canada possess resilience, passion and strength. We must recognize the ways in which girls are thriving and the progress already made. As programs working directly with Canadian girls, you are encouraged to discover and highlight the ways in which the girls in your programs exhibit strength and passion.

Although girls in Canada are strong and resilient, they also experience a unique set of challenges. Recent survey results show that equity between girls and boys is thought to be an important Canadian value. More than nine in ten Canadians (93%) agree that “the belief that girls and boys should have equal rights and privileges is fundamental to what it means to be Canadian” (Girls Action Foundation, 2013). While progress has been made for both boys and girls in Canada in the last decades, many challenges remain for each gender—and new challenges have presented themselves. Girls, in particular, experience some of the following challenges:



- Between the ages of 5 and 12, Canadian females are approximately 5 times more likely than males to be diagnosed with an eating disorder (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003).
- As girls grow older, they experience a steady decline in their confidence that is not seen in their male counterparts. In 2002, 4.7% of Grade 6 girls reported not feeling confident compared to 17.5% of Grade 10 girls (Boyce, 2004).
- Boys continually outperform girls in mathematics (Kerr, 2010).
- Canadian girls' rates of participation in sports and physical activity continue to lag behind those of Canadian boys' (CFLRI, 2011).
- Higher rates of depression are consistently documented among adolescent girls and women than their male counterparts (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, Story & Perry, 2006).
- In Ontario, 27% of girls in grades 9 through 11 reported having been pressured into doing something sexual that they did not want to do (Wolfe & Chiodo, 2008).
- Girls under the age of 18 report a rate of sexual violence that is nearly 5 times higher than their male counterparts and substantially higher than that experienced by young adult females aged 18 to 24 (Statistics Canada, 2008).
- Girls are more likely to be bullied than boys (Freeman, King & Pickett, 2011).
- Young women are more likely to report feeling constantly stressed than young men; 44% vs. 28.7% (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2005).

The challenges that girls in Canada experience do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they occur within social,

political and historical contexts. Gender expectations for acceptable roles and identities have a significant effect on young girls in Canada. Many girls will benefit from teaching and support that allows them to deconstruct these gender roles, identities, expectations and stereotypes. During pre-adolescence, many girls in Canada become aware of what it means to be “popular” and how others perceive them. They often turn to mass media for cues about how girls and boys should look and act.

Because media often presents a narrow definition of boys’ and girls’ roles, the bombardment of these stereotypes can have a pervasive effect on how gender is understood and internalized. The media often works to control or limit gender expression. For example, the majority of the images seen in advertisements and in the media portray heterosexual women (and men) in stereotypical roles. Women are often shown as sex objects and/or doing traditional female work. Many of the images have been Photoshopped or altered to portray an unrealistic image of the female body. Variation of gender expression and sexuality in the mainstream media is almost non-existent, and when this variance is portrayed, it is often centred on stories of violence and oppression. As a result, many young people are left to explore gender, sexuality and identity on their own.

It is important to support young girls in Canada in deconstructing gender roles, identities, expectations and stereotypes. This will help them to think critically, challenge sexism and homophobia, and make decisions on how to look and act based on their own thoughts and feelings rather than on societal expectations. When female empowerment is strengthened through mentorship, the whole community benefits.

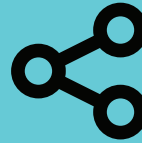
Aboriginal Girls

“Aboriginal peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: First Nations (referred to as Indian in the constitution), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs (Government of Canada, 2013). It should be noted that some girls may not identify with any of the terms Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Program leaders should be reminded that each Aboriginal community brings with it unique approaches, customs and traditions. It is important not to generalize these experiences and communities.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples comprise 4% of the population of Canada, or approximately 1.4 million people (Statistics Canada, 2011). Between the years of 2006–2011, the Aboriginal population increased at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population by 20.1% (Statistics Canada, 2011). Children aged 14 and under also accounted for 28% of the Aboriginal population, compared to 16.5% for the non-Aboriginal population, and their average age is much younger than the rest of the Canadian population (Totten, 2009).

Some additional statistics and things to consider about Aboriginal girls in Canada:

- The history and colonization of Aboriginal peoples, families and land, “has created a situation in which Aboriginal teenage girls are one of the most oppressed groups in Canadian society” (Czapska, Webb & Vasquez, 2008).
- The average child on reserve gets \$2,000 to \$3,000 less in education funding. More than 500 reserve schools lack access to basic amenities such as running water and libraries (Thorkelson, 2013).
- Half of status First Nations children in Canada live in poverty, which is unlike any other poverty rate for any other disadvantaged group in the country, and triple that of non-Indigenous children (Macdonald & Wilson, 2013).
- Aboriginal children are significantly overrepresented in child-in-care populations across the country, especially in western Canadian provinces (Blackstock, 2007; Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley, & Wien, 2005; Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, 2011).
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking of Aboriginal girls



“Historically, Aboriginal women commanded the highest respect in their communities as the givers of life and were the keepers of the traditions, practices and customs of the nation. It was well understood that women held a sacred status; they were revered for their ability to create new life and, by extension, create new relationships with the Creator.”

- Native Women’s Association of Canada (2014)



“The first—and most important—step towards understanding Aboriginal history is to recognize that Aboriginal people are strong people. In spite of the severity of the many issues that individuals, families and communities face, Aboriginal people are demonstrating their resiliency.”

- Alberta Education (2014)

continues to be a problem in Canada (Sethi, 2007). 1,017 Indigenous women and girls were murdered from 1980–2012, according to the RCMP. That number is likely much higher due to gaps in police and government reporting (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014).

- According to Native Women’s Association of Canada: “The number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is disproportionately high. NWAC’s research indicates that, between 2000 and 2008, Aboriginal women and girls represented approximately 10% of all female homicides in Canada. However, Aboriginal women make up only 3% of the female population.” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, date unknown).

Despite these staggering numbers, Aboriginal girls are strong and resilient! The Manitoba Research Alliance (2006) shares that “Aboriginal peoples unparalleled historical ties to the land puts them in a unique position to develop and understand their own cultural heritage. Aboriginal young women want and need supports that uphold their traditional cultures and teachings; it is crucial for their identity formation and well-being.”

To support and include Aboriginal girls in a girls group mentoring program, programs and mentors can:

- Respect and celebrate history and tradition in their practice and teaching to guide girls to embrace their identity and culture.
- Recognize the unique strengths each girl possesses and celebrate their talents.
- Consider including Elders in the mentoring program through cultural teaching, activities and crafts.
- Ask girls what their culture—whether they’re Aboriginal or not—means to them. Allow them to lead and teach about cultural practices or values that are important to them.

Historically, mentoring in Aboriginal communities was embedded in cultural practice, in which the entire community contributed to raising and teaching its youth. Many of these social and cultural structures have now been eroded, and reintroducing the practice of mentoring into Aboriginal communities can be a great support for youth and girls in these communities. Group mentoring in particular can be effective for Aboriginal youth because groups are fundamental to Aboriginal culture (Government of Alberta, 2007).

Immigrant and Refugee Girls

The number of new immigrants and refugees in Canada has been steadily increasing. Before 1960, over 90% of immigrants came from European countries. During the period of 2001–2006, almost 80% of newcomers were of Asian, African or Caribbean origin. Newcomer youth often face a number of challenges, including but not limited to exclusion, poverty and separation (Rhodes, Roffman, & Suarez-Orozco, 2003). Newcomer youth must adjust to a new culture and language, as well as new surroundings and peer expectations. Many immigrant and refugee girls also deal with a third cultural identity, after having moved more than once. For example, a girl may have moved at a young age from her homeland due to war or violence, lived somewhere for several years, then moved again to Canada. Immigrant and refugee youth may be forming and discovering their identity while considering several cultures' norms, expectations and experiences.

Despite these challenges, newcomer youth demonstrate high aspirations and skill in cultural negotiation (Girls Action Foundation, 2013).

Immigrant girls face potential subjugation and oppression which has a significant impact on their cultural and ethnic identity. Some of these oppressions and difficulties include:

- Tension can build as immigrant girls attempt to fit in with peer groups while simultaneously being pressured by their families to maintain more traditional values. This tension can result in family conflict which will likely impact a young girl's identity formation (Carranza, 2007).
- Immigrant youth face barriers in the unequal education opportunities they face, such as “teacher biases, economic inequality, and institutional or systemic discrimination” (Killbride, Baichman-Anisef & Khattar, n.d.).
- One of the highest ranked settlement challenges for immigrant and refugee youth is “a lack of proficiency in one of the official languages [...]. It affects the integration of youth into all aspects of Canadian life.” (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2009).
- In 2014, the unemployment rate in Canada for recent immigrant youth (aged 15–24) was 19.5%, compared to 13% for Canadian-born youth (Statistics Canada, 2014).
- The low-income rate for recent immigrant youth was 3 times higher than that of Canadian-born youth (Statistic Canada, 2009).
- One study found that “the majority of stressors, barriers and challenges faced by newcomer youth and their families are related to settlement and discrimination/exclusion” (Shakya, Khanlou & Gonsalves, 2010).

Research also shows that immigrant youth who are able to assert their cultural identity are more resilient



Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office delivers a girls group mentoring program to one of Canada's most diverse neighbourhoods. Girls are matched with high-school age mentors so they can share the challenges they face in balancing their competing cultural expectations at home and as part of a new Canadian community. The girls group mentoring relationship provides an opportunity to discuss and explore their too-often 'conflicting' identities.

in the face of adversity (Grossman & Liang, 2010). Immigrant girls also hold immense potential to resist assimilation and promote their own cultural identity for future generations. Formalizing the process of mentoring within immigrant communities and for immigrant girls will support immigrant youth to recognize, utilize and strengthen the assets they possess. In order to include and welcome immigrant and refugee girls, girls group mentoring programs and mentors can:

- Acknowledge the reality immigrant girls face in living with two conflicting identities and establish a safe platform for discussion within the group.
- Create space for girls to share their culture and experiences, whether that be by teaching the group traditions, enjoying a cultural meal, celebrating cultural events together or teaching their language.
- Reduce potential language barriers by making the program and materials more accessible. This could include translation of forms and program material, meeting with the girls and their families to discuss the program or involving an interpreter.
- Ensure strategies are in place to communicate effectively with girls' families/guardians where language barriers may be present.

Racialized Girls

Racialization refers to “the social process whereby certain groups come to be designated as different and consequently subjected to differential and unequal treatment” (Galabuzi, 2006). Unlike the term “visible minority,” which is generally restricted to those who are non-white, using the term ‘racialized’ makes clear that race is a social and cultural construct that can expose individuals to racism. This includes individuals that experience racism because of their ethnicity, language, religion, politics, culture, skin colour, manner of dress or accent. It points to groups of people who share the common experience of discrimination, whether based on skin colour, facial features, accents or histories of colonization and assimilation (Girls Action Foundation, 2010). For example, young women of colour see fewer images that look like themselves in the media and advertising campaigns. Mainstream media sources regularly depict women of colour either as oppressed victims, enemies or threats (Jiwani, 2010).

Racialized girls often face institutional and systemic forms of violence, poverty, and discrimination:

- Girls from racialized and impoverished communities are more likely to experience violence (Falconer, 2008).
- Black girls were approximately twice as likely as white girls to report physical dating violence (Howard & Wang, 2003).
- Children face additional powerful stereotypes, such as the message that white kids are smart and black kids play sports, leading to feelings of inferiority (Acton & Lloyd, 2008).
- Female minorities interact less with teachers than their white counterparts even though they attempt to initiate conversation more frequently (San Vicente, 2006).

Though racialized girls often face unique challenges due to racism and its impact on well-being and identity, they also show strengths such as higher rates of school enrolment (Girls Action Foundation, 2013). Despite some of the distressing facts listed above, there is evidence that acceptance of diversity among youth is improving. In 2006, the Girl Scout Research Institute found the following about youth in the US:

Most youth today value diversity and accept others. Fifty-nine percent of girls in grades seven to twelve say that being around people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is



YWCA Toronto runs a girls group mentoring program in the highly diverse Scarborough neighbourhood. They embrace diversity and celebrate visible and invisible differences through workshop activities and discussion. Two ways in which they accomplish this include:

1. Their deconstruction and analysis of media images. They consider not only the media emphasis on physical thinness and beauty, but also the lack of representation of different cultures.
2. Through food! Their program offers dinner to the girls each week, and they feature different cultural meals each time.

important to them. This is particularly important to girls (63% vs. 55% of boys).

Group mentoring programs can also positively impact such welcoming and open-minded attitudes. Girl-focused programs, policies and spaces, which are specific to culture and community contexts, provide crucial support for girls and young women from racialized communities (Girls Action Foundation, 2010).

Girls group mentoring programs can make their spaces safe and welcoming to racialized girls by:

- Creating space where girls can voice their experience and discuss their representation and identity.
- Utilizing the group to challenge stereotypes through discussion and analysis of the media.
- Taking part in community and advocacy projects to encourage the media to better represent racialized girls and reflect their diversity.
- Finding mentors from within their community so that girls can see themselves reflected as leaders in the program. This can be particularly valuable for bridging cultural or racial gaps between the girls and staff.
- Matching girls with diverse ethnicities, countries of origins and family backgrounds can allow for girls to learn more about one another, broaden their perspective and celebrate their similarities and differences.

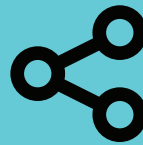
Girls With Disabilities

Almost 4% of children in Canada between the ages of 1 and 14 years of age have a disability (as reported by their parents). Between the ages of 6 and 11, 30% of Canadian children have one or more chronic physical health conditions, while 3.6% have activity-limiting conditions or impairments (McDougall et al., 2004). Partners for Youth with Disabilities (2005) underscore the reality that “youth with disabilities are in need of positive role models who have overcome barriers to become successful adults.”

Among school-aged children with a disability, chronic health conditions are the most common type of disability for girls (65%), followed closely by learning disabilities (63%) (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2006). However, professionals are not often educated or sufficiently trained to meet the needs of girls with disabilities. As a result, a girl with a disability is more likely to be uneducated about her rights and responsibilities. This lack of access to education increases her vulnerability to violence and abuse.

Contemporary research on girls with disabilities is sparse. It is clear, however, that girls with a disability are more likely to experience physical and sexual abuse:

- Violence and exploitation against women and girls with a disability occurs at a rate 50% higher than in the rest of society (Rosen, 2006).
- Police and community members may fail to respond appropriately to incidents of violence against girls with disabilities, doubting the credibility of the reporter (Rousso & Linn, 2001).
- Women with disabilities were twice as likely to report severe physical violence and 3 times as likely to be forced into sexual activity as women without disabilities (Brownridge, 2006).
- More than 60% of children in care are estimated to have a disability of some kind (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2003). The Canadian Incidence Study (Trocmé et al., 2010) found that the most common child functioning issues reported for children who had been abused were academic difficulties (14%), ADD or ADHD (11%), and intellectual or developmental disabilities (11%).



“Based on Partners for Youth with Disabilities experience in mentoring youth with disabilities, below are examples of potential outcomes [of youth programming] for youth with disabilities:

- Increased independent living skills.
- Improved motivation and self-esteem.
- Healthier relationships with family, friends, teachers, etc.
- Increased involvement in community and extracurricular activities.
- Increased interest in continuing education and the knowledge of how to do so.
- Increased interest in having a job/ career and the knowledge of how to do so.
- Increased disability pride.
- Increased knowledge of disability rights.
- Improved self-advocacy skills.”

- Partners for Youth with Disabilities
(2005)

Given this ableist cultural context, it is clear that girls with disabilities represent a group that would benefit greatly from the strengths that are built through mentoring, as well as the body-positive messages that are so important in diversity-positive spaces.

The way that ‘disability’ has been defined and understood has been the topic of much controversy. The World Health Organization (1980) refers to disability as “any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.” In *The Right to Be Safe*, Rajan (2006) outlines concerns that the WHO definition individualizes disability, rather than addressing how societal attitudes compound challenges for girls with disabilities:

“Disability activists ask us to acknowledge that it is the limitations or lack of accommodation that society imposes that limit advantage and access to full participation in society, rather than an individual’s characteristics. In this context, the problem of disability is not with the impairment, but rather ‘disability’ arises from the barriers to equal participation that are in place in society. When we are attempting to identify the barriers and strategies to eliminate those barriers, it is more constructive to focus on the areas where social systems and services have the ‘deficiency’ in meeting the diverse needs of all members of our communities, rather than the individual.”

Through program design, group mentoring programs for girls have an opportunity to proactively eliminate potential barriers for participation for girls with disabilities. Particularly in a group mentoring context, there is the opportunity to match girls based on diversity and facilitate learning and understanding of differences between the members of the group. Each girl has strengths and challenges that can be discussed through the mentor’s facilitation and own self-reflection. Finding an outlet for each of the girls’ talents is critical so they can all celebrate their strengths with confidence.

Mentoring programs do not necessarily have to direct their programming solely to children and youth with disabilities in order to serve this population. Partners for Youth with Disabilities (2005) explains that “agencies may take a few small steps to make their programs more accessible.” Some considerations for ensuring that girls with disabilities are welcomed and included in a girls group mentoring program include:

- Ensuring that mentors have the knowledge, training,



One organization shared that they promote accessibility without singling girls out by emphasizing cooperation and shared decision-making. Since all the girls are active and collaborative decision-makers in their mentoring groups, they plan and decide on activities that reflect their shared interests and abilities. With mentors guidance, they take on roles according to their strengths. When an activity feels uncomfortable to any one girl, they eliminate that activity and decide on something different. This way, all girls’ strengths are at the forefront, regardless of their abilities.

skills and support to build positive and impactful relationships with the girls.

- Adopting a strength-based perspective, expecting the best and highlighting the strengths and abilities of all the girls in the group.
- Creating space for each of the girls' talents to be shared and steering discussion among the girls to challenge ways that the media and other institutions are not inclusive.
- Ensuring meeting spaces are accessible for all, which includes considering physical layout, lighting, level of stimulus, acoustics etc.

Girls and Mental Health

When working with girls, mental health issues and challenges are increasingly common and should be considered in the early stages of program development. As girls enter adolescence, usually between ages 9–13, their confidence declines sharply and they experience higher rates of depression. In grade six, 40% of girls say they are self-confident but by grade ten this has plummeted to just 18%. These findings are mirrored for the measurements of girls' emotional well-being (Freeman et al., 2011). By grade ten, rates of depression in girls have jumped to three times that in boys (Girls Action Foundation, 2011). These are numbers that we cannot ignore and the experience of mental health is very clearly gendered.

For girls, depression typically stems from “low self-esteem, negative body image, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness and stress” (Boyce et al., 2008). This can affect the way they see themselves, the goals they work toward and how they envision their lives. Hypersexualization of girls is also a factor in low self-esteem. According to the American Psychological Association (2014), the widespread sexualization of girls and women in our society plays a major role in the deterioration of girls' mental health. Sexualization occurs when a person's main value is believed to come from their sexual appearance—rather than their intelligence or other qualities—and when they are held to unrealistic standards of physical attractiveness (American Psychological Association, 2007). Research links sexualization with the three most common mental health problems facing girls: low self-esteem, depression and eating disorders (American Psychological Association, 2014). Eating disorders have steadily increased for girls aged 10–19 and are a significantly larger risk for girls. From 2007 to 2013, the rate of females hospitalized for an eating disorder in Canada stabilized—except for 10- to 19-year-olds, whose rate increased by 42% over the last 2 years (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2014).

While depression, low self-esteem, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, negative body image and stress are common experiences, the range of mental health challenges continues to expand. Anxiety and suicidal ideation are also on the rise. This rise has been attributed to various factors, such as substance abuse, behavioural challenges, or most recently, the result of social media and the particular harmful pressures it causes (The Globe and Mail, 2012). Staff should stay aware of these issues and translate their knowledge to the mentors in the program.

Study after study shows that girls are more at risk of facing mental health challenges than boys. The 2011



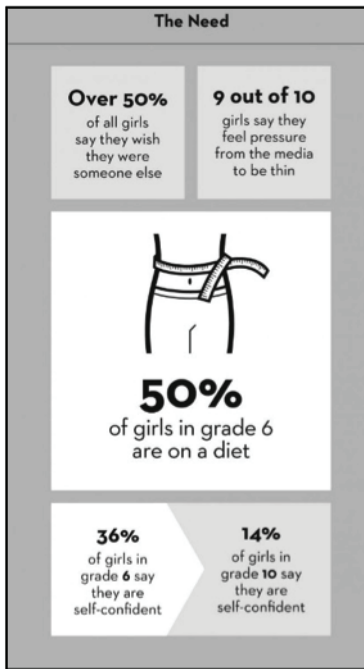
The Health of Canada's Young People: A Mental Health Focus & Key Issues of Concern

1. Regardless of how emotional and mental health indicators were examined, girls reported more negative emotional outcomes, while boys reported more negative indicators for behavioural outcomes.

2. Mental health suffers as adolescents move through the grades, especially for girls, with positive indicators decreasing and negative indicators increasing.

3. About one-fifth of boys and one-third of girls feel depressed or low on a weekly basis or more often.

- Public Health Agency of Canada
(2011)



Canadian Women's Foundation, 2014

Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children national survey highlights that, “girls consistently report more negative emotional health outcomes than boys. Mental health suffers as young people move through grades 6 to 10, especially for girls,” (Freeman et al., 2011). Furthermore, a Canadian Women’s Health Network study (2008) reveals the way processing mental health issues is very different between girls and boys: “Girls and young women are more likely to ‘act-in’ or internalize mental health issues and mental illnesses, while boys and young men are more likely to ‘act-out’ or externalize mental health issues.” Between grades 6 and 10, girls were more likely than boys to wish they were someone else (Freeman et al., 2011). Gender and mental health also intersect with other key factors, and some groups require more access to support and services since they face greater stigma and discrimination (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015).

As such, girls group mentoring programs need to consider the prevalent challenges girls face in their lives and reflect on how this will affect relationship building both with the mentor and their peers. The programs can also help build resilience and protective factors to counter this.

Creating positive spaces and incorporating learning around emotional wellness can support girls to deal with the challenges in their lives. If those capacities are not available within their organization, it is the responsibility of programs to have community partnerships or referral sources for girls in need of a more clinical or therapeutic intervention.

Based on the statistics, it is more than likely that your girls group mentoring program will include girls who are facing mental health challenges. These mental health challenges can often go unnoticed or can be difficult to identify so it is important to create space where girls can be supported without having to disclose. It’s especially important for youth that front-line workers have this knowledge because community workers, coaches and teachers are often where young people turn to first (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015).

There are many ways to be sensitive to these issues and a number of considerations to be made for the mentoring relationship. Furthermore, there are ways that the mentoring program can actually proactively work to prevent or buffer these issues. Things to consider to support your mentors to best work with girls with mental health challenges include:

- Mentors should be trained in these areas so they can identify the risk factors and warning signs and be sensitive to girls’ needs. These issues can translate into a range of behaviours and in order to

re-sil-ient/Adjective

1. (of a substance or object)
Able to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching, or being compressed.

2. (of a person or animal)
Able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions

manage the group dynamic, it is important to be knowledgeable of these issues. Consider bringing in an expert for mentor training from the outset.

- Establish a protocol for mentors who identify a girl in their mentoring group experiencing severe mental health challenges. They should not be expected to intervene with parents, and should instead report to program staff to address the issue.
- Be mindful that the girls' issues could stem from their family life. Consult with the girl first to identify how to best help. Sometimes there are larger issues at hand that could be further complicated through intervention.
- Support a strengths-based group culture of acceptance and support. Create a safe space for girls to share their feelings and feel validated. Reinforce group values from the outset that create this space but also invite girls to come forward with serious issues.
- Create programming that empowers the girls to take action on issues in their lives and enhances their knowledge and critical-thinking skills. This will help them develop their sense of self and self-efficacy.

Incorporate program content that explores emotional wellness and guides girls to engage in practices, thinking and behaviour that promotes emotional wellbeing. See the Boys & Girls Club of London's resource created for this: [My "Me" Journal \(online version only\)](#)



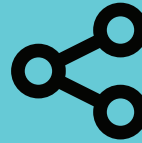
Boys & Girls Club of London uses art as the centre of their programming. One participant acknowledged that she had just started taking medication for her diagnosed mental illness. She shared that she was embarrassed by having to take medication. During the group discussions about emotional well-being, she came to understand that there is no shame in seeking to become healthier, both emotionally and physically. Through the safe space of the program and the support of her peers, she overcame her shame and became accepting of herself. This experience also served as a teachable moment for the other girls on self-care and mental health.

Girls and Sexual and Gender Variance

Youth are often exploring the question of “who am I?” Sexual and gender identity is part of that exploration. Gender variance refers to those expressions of gender that do not conform to the dominant gender norms of Western culture. **Sexual orientation relates to who you are attracted to romantically and sexually**, whether to the same sex, the other sex or both sexes. This attraction usually begins during preadolescence, as puberty begins the production of sexual hormones. **Gender identity is a different concept that involves an internal sense of being male or female** (Healthwise, 2013). Though the language of gender identity is contemporary, people have challenged the stereotypical categories of gender for most of human history. Some gender variant youth may struggle with their sexual orientation, but this is not always or necessarily the case.

LGBTQ is an acronym which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning. The term LGBTQ often encompasses additional terms such as Transexual, Two-Spirit, Intersex and Asexual. LGBTQ youth experience a range of challenges:

- The fear of rejection, the challenges of coming out, trying to understand or form one’s gender and sexual identity, and the burden of social stigma and discrimination, in addition to the everyday stresses of street life, greatly impact the well-being of LGBTQ homeless youth in particular (Ray, 2006).
- Lesbian and bisexual girls were more likely to report being bullied than heterosexual girls (Berlan et al., 2010).
- Sexual minority girls are among those most likely to report suicidality—suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts. (Russell, 2003).
- 82% of lesbian youth versus 60% of heterosexual girls sometimes feel unsafe at school (Saewyc et al., 2007).
- Sexual and gender minorities experience higher rates of bullying and harassment in school.
- In one recent study (Egale), LGBTQ students reported: 6 times as much verbal harassment about their sexual orientation; 5 times as much verbal harassment about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; twice as much verbal harassment about their gender



“Stories of at-risk sexual-minority youth are increasingly being transgressed by stories of resilient sexual-minority youth who survive and thrive amid the risks and barriers they face daily.”

- Grace (n.d.)



Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta runs a girls mentoring program in several northern, rural communities. In one of their groups, a participant shared that they did not identify with being a girl. It was requested that they be referred to as “he” and “him” and start using the male version of his name. The group created a space for him to talk about this and to share the challenges of addressing it with his family. The other participants provided support and he continued to participate in the group. It also created a valuable teaching moment for the other participants on diversity and inclusion.

and twice as much verbal harassment about their gender expressions of masculinity or femininity, as compared to non-LGBTQ students (Taylor & Peter, 2011).

- LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population. It has been estimated that approximately 25–40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ, meanwhile only approximately 5–10% of the general population identifies as LGBTQ (Josephson and Wright, 2000).

Mentoring for LGBTQ girls can offer support through what can be a difficult, unsupported or stressful transition. Rummell (2013) summarizes how mentors can support and advocate for gender and sexual minority youth:

- **Advocacy through community access:** Mentors can introduce mentees to additional community resources and networks, aiding the youth in building connections with others who are experiencing similar things and increasing their sense of belonging.
- **Advocacy through role modelling:** Mentors can share their own stories and demonstrate to a mentee new ways of thinking about themselves and their experiences.
- **Family advocacy:** A mentor can offer support during the “coming out” process to family members by sharing tools to prepare youth for the conversation and by providing ongoing support as the family processes their understanding of what this means for them.
- **Foster self-advocacy:** When mentors build a trusting, caring relationship with a youth, a real opportunity becomes available to help youth find their own voice.

In addition, to support and include LGBTQ girls, programs and mentors can:

- Create diversity-positive rules that do not tolerate homophobia, transphobia, bullying or discrimination.
- Participate in training on sexual and gender variance in order to empower through education and awareness.
- Be positive role models that demonstrate acceptance and inclusion of all girls.
- Support the youth’s self-definition and identity.



“Youth are also more accepting of others than they were 20 years ago. Among youth in grade 7–12 today, 59% agree with the statement ‘Gay or lesbian relationships are okay, if that is a person’s choice’,” compared to 31% who agreed with this in 1989.

- Salmond & Schoenberg (2009)



“Silent no more, [LGBTQ youth] represent a new generation of queer youth who have the knowledge, support, and confidence to speak out against homophobia and transphobia and demand that their human and civil rights are not only protected, but also respected.”

- Wells (2012)

Mentoring opportunities for LGBTQ girls can be a positive and powerful way to encourage, empower and support youth.

Girls in Rural and Remote Communities

The 2011 Canadian Census reported that approximately 6.3 million Canadians lived in rural areas. Their definition of rural is an area with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants and a population density below 400 people per square kilometre (UFCW Canada, 2014). Girls in rural and remote communities often have less access to supports and programs. Girls aged 5–19 living in rural areas have an overall mortality rate 2.5 times higher than girls who live in cities (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2006).

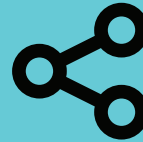
The Girls Action Foundation (2012 & 2013) reports some key facts about girls in rural Canada:

- Rural girls face many challenges related to living in remote or isolated communities, such as lack of access to supports and vulnerability to violence (Girls Action Foundation, 2013).
- Girls and young women—who often already face social, economic and geographic barriers when attempting to access services—are disproportionately feeling the burden of service reduction in rural communities (Girls Action Foundation, 2012).

Other frequently cited challenges for rural youth include:

- geographic and social isolation;
- continuing effects of colonization and residential schools (for rural Aboriginal girls);
- anonymity, confidentiality and privacy issues;
- prejudice across community norms, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism and transphobia;
- lack of accessible and anonymous or confidential health care resources and services;
- lack of public transportation and lack of spaces and activities designed for girls and young people;
- lack of access to shelters and services for those who have been victims of abuse;
- poverty and lack of employment.

- Girls Action Foundation (2012)



“In Canada, rural women and girls experience difficulties with jobs and opportunities, unemployment, underemployment, education and training, transportation, and a variety of governing and corporate business practices that affect them in their everyday living and working.”

- UFCW Canada (2014)

Girls group mentoring can be an important support to counteract the potential feeling and experience of isolation for rural girls. Eustis (2012) points out that “isolation for vulnerable rural youth is literal, not figurative.” Mentorship opportunities help to reduce that isolation, both physically and emotionally.

Outreach to girls in rural communities can have added challenges, particularly when trying to engage more marginalized girls. The school system provides access to girls and provides a space where girls are already gathered. Many rural programs have found local schools to be a helpful resource when developing their programs. It is best to have a ‘champion’ in the school system early on to facilitate the development of programming. Tying the program into already established school initiatives or priorities can offer additional incentives for the school’s active participation and promotion of the program.

Also carefully consider the appropriate steps for setting up a rural program in a community that you are not a part of. If you are coming from outside of the community to host a group within their community space, take the time to first seek permission from community members. This ‘permission’ should extend beyond the formal consent of decision-makers and include many discussions. You might consider speaking with teachers, checking in with youth and empowering stakeholders at all levels to consent to, and support, the implementation of the program. Engaging the community as partners in this process will support a more seamless acceptance and integration of the program.

In order to ensure that girls in rural communities are welcome and have access to programs, mentors and staff can:

- Plan the programs to take place where girls are already gathered. Leverage school space and/or arrange for mentoring programs to take place during lunch hours or directly after class.
- Source out a champion in the community and seek their partnership in outreaching and gaining the support of other community members and stakeholders.
- If transportation is proving to be a barrier to participation in the program, consider hiring a bus or taxi, or organizing a carpool. Be sure to explore what liability requirements exist when transporting youth.
- Coordinate group travel for mentors to a shared site to meet with the girls (via public transit or by carpooling).
- Consider using technology as an add-on to in-person meetings. In this case, it’s important to ensure that appropriate safety and security measures are in place to monitor any electronic communication between mentors and mentees.



Running a girls group mentoring program in a rural community can present additional challenges, especially in terms of transportation. Some organizations manage this challenge by utilizing technology. In addition to in-person meetings, they utilize social media and online platforms to allow for continued dialogue and relationship-building with mentors. To ensure program and participant safety, policies around the use of technology in mentoring relationships should be created.

Girls in Care

Families become involved with the child welfare system due to a range of factors and often reflect complex family dynamics. A child or youth is placed in care when it is determined that it is not safe for them to live at home. Statistics Canada measured that 47,885 children were living in foster care in 2011 (Kirkey, 2012). The majority of children in care are 14 years of age and younger (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Children in care can be vulnerable from disrupted attachments and may also suffer the effects of maltreatment by parents or caregivers (Bruskas, 2008). Youth in care also face an increased risk for poor outcomes as they transition to adulthood including poor mental and physical health, delinquent and risky behaviour, and lower educational attainment or employment status (Ahrens, DuBois, Richardson, Fan & Lozano, 2008).

However, high-quality foster care, quick and safe transitions to permanent living arrangements, and other factors—for example, extended family, informal support systems and personal resilience—can produce a different set of outcomes (Rhodes, 2013). Mentors can act as an important part of the support system to encourage and build resilience in children and youth in care. Youth in care reported that a relationship with a non-parental adult contributed to their socio-emotional, cognitive and identity development (Ahrens et al., 2008). The nature of the impact of mentoring relationships on children in care can also be shaped by the length and quality of the relationship, the mentor's background, the child's past relationships with parents and caregivers, their competency in social situations and developmental stage, and their current family and community context (Rhodes, 2002, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). A responsive mentoring program that reflects the young girl's dynamic context can be an important support for her long-term future success.



Sarnia Lambton Rebound developed a partnership with their local Children's Aid Society to launch a girls' group mentoring program for girls in care. The collaboration with this agency was essential in ensuring mentors had the understanding and tools to forge healthy relationships with the girls in the program. The CAS partnered with Sarnia-Lambton Rebound to provide mentor training around the Duty to Report. CAS also informed the mentors of different situations that may arise when working with Girls in Care/Kin Care which better prepared the mentors when working with this population. Extra support was provided by the Program Coordinator to ensure and manage healthy boundaries within the relationships. In the recruitment stage, priority was given to mentors who had experience in state care and this proved particularly valuable in the relationship development process between girls and their mentors.

To include and support girls in care to participate in a girls group mentoring program, programs and mentors can:

- Be consistent and fulfill the full commitment of the program. Programs may want to ensure that youth in care, in particular, are matched with mentors who are reliable.
- Have the ability to be flexible, should a mentee's living or family situation change. This could include connecting with new caregivers or social workers to share information about the program and completing additional permission forms should the legal guardian change.
- Provide appropriate training to mentors about the children's services system and the impact of the experience of abuse and neglect on children and youth.
- Pay special respect to confidentiality, examining what information can be shared and with whom in relation to a youth in care.



Key Take-Aways

Girls' lives are uniquely experienced and programming should be adapted to reflect the strengths, challenges and experiences of the population of girls you are serving. This section offered information to help you better:

- Familiarize yourself with some of the unique considerations for working with different groups of girls
- Celebrate diversity and reflect on the ways that mentoring programs can address barriers and embrace differences
- Develop practices you can include in your program to be more sensitive, more inclusive and more effective to girls in your community

Additional Resources

Girls in Canada:

Child Development Handout

This handout can be downloaded, and contains information about the developmental stages of girls in the 9-13 age range, as well as mentoring tips for girls.

Girls in Canada 2005: A Report Prepared for the Canadian Women's Foundation

This report highlights the trends, statistics, challenges and opportunities for girls and girls' programming in Canada. <http://www.canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files/PDF%20-%20Girls%20in%20Canada%20Report%202005.pdf>

Beyond Appearances: Brief On the Main Issues Facing Girls in Canada

The Girls Action Foundation shares this report, which covers three main topics: The main issues facing girls in Canada, girls who face multiple barriers and what girls need to succeed.

<http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/beyond-appearances-brief-on-the-main-issues-facing-girls-in-canada>

Aboriginal Girls:

Handbook for Aboriginal Mentoring: What. Why. How. Who?

A guidebook to setting up a mentoring program for Aboriginal Communities.

<http://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/themes/albertamentors/library/amp-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program-toolkits/tools-for-mentoring-in-aboriginal-communities/pdf/Handbook%20for%20Aboriginal%20Mentoring.pdf>

Tools for Mentoring in Aboriginal Communities

A toolkit of basics for starting a mentoring program in an Aboriginal Community. <http://albertamentors.ca/create-a-mentoring-program/tools-for-mentoring-in-aboriginal-communities/>

Prospects for Aboriginal Mentoring: A Preliminary Review

An Alberta study that explores the mainstream concepts of mentoring and Aboriginal perspectives. Key elements for Aboriginal mentoring program are shared. <http://albertamentors.ca/research-portal/prospects-aboriginal-mentoring-preliminary-review/>

Northern Girls Research Review: A Compilation of Research on Northern, Rural and Aboriginal Girls' and Young Women's Issues

The Girls Action Foundation provides this resource to share information about the realities facing Northern, rural and/or Aboriginal girls and young women in Canada. <http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/northern-girls-research-review-a-compilation-of-research-on-northern-rural-and-aboriginal-girls-and-young-womens-issues>

Immigrant & Refugee Girls:

Creating Successful Programs for Immigrant Youth

Based on the population of youth in New York, this article describes the assets that immigrant youth possess and useful strategies for three kinds of program development: with youth themselves, their parents and their schools. http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/pm/pm_creatingsuccess_1204.pdf

Mentoring Immigrant and Refugee for Youth: A Toolkit for Program Coordinators

An American toolkit that outlines the important aspects and considerations when mentoring Immigrant and Refugee youth. http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1197.pdf

Tools for Mentoring Immigrant Communities

A Toolkit that guides you through the basics for starting a mentoring program in an Immigrant Community. <http://albertamentors.ca/create-a-mentoring-program/tools-for-mentoring-immigrant-communities/>

Resources for Working with Newcomer Youth

A guide for organizations working with newcomer youth. Includes many additional resources and links. http://www.cin-ric.ca/PDFs/Resources_for_Working_with_NC_Youth.pdf

Immigrant Girls Research Review: A Compilation of Research on Immigrant Girls' and Young Women's Issues

The Girls Action Foundation provides this report, which summarizes recent research and information about immigrant girls in Canada. http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/files/Immigrant_Girls_RR_Web.pdf

Racialized Girls:

Racialized Girls Research Review: A Compilation of Research on Racialized Girls' and Young Women's Issues

The Girls Action Foundation provides this research review, which shares innovative research about the realities that racialized girls face and the factors that impact their lives. <http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/racialized-girls-research-review-a-compilation-of-research-on-racialized-girls-and-young-women-s-issues>

Youth Mentoring: Do Race and Ethnicity Really Matter?

As part of the Research In Action Series, MENTOR provides this resource, which includes information about fostering cultural sensitivity in mentors. http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_390.pdf

Girls with Disabilities:

Partners for Youth with Disabilities - Resources

This website contains a number of valuable resources for working with and mentoring youth with disabilities, including a Best Practices guideline and a training manual mentors. <http://www.pyd.org/organizations-and-nonprofits.php>

Creating Mentoring Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities: Issues and Suggested Strategies

This report outlines some good questions and considerations to ensure that your program is accessible by all. <http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=704>

Girls and Mental Health:

Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls

This report contextualizes the reality that girls face today and the various forces and factors contributing to the sexualization of girls. <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-summary.pdf>

Healthy Behaviour in School-Aged Children

This report draws from extensive research to identify trends and issues in the behavior of young children, evaluating results across age cohorts and gender.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/publications/hbsc-mental-mentale/assets/pdf/hbsc-mental-mentale-eng.pdf>

The Mental Health Strategy for Canada: A Youth Perspective

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's Youth Council developed this comprehensive strategy and resource guide for organizations to hear how to support youth's mental health from their perspective.

<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/initiatives-and-projects/mental-health-strategy-canada/youth-perspective>

Girls and Sexual and Gender Variance:

Inclusive Programming: Gender Variance Considerations

Additional information about gender variance and how programs can remain inclusive and accepting of all youth.

Forum: How can mentors serve as advocates for GLBTQ youth?

A discussion about how mentors can advocate for and support sexual and gender minority youth. <http://chronicle.umbmentoring.org/forum-how-can-mentors-serve-as-advocates-for-glbqt-youth/>

Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS)

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) conducts research focused on helping sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth to mediate life in family, school, healthcare and other environments. <http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca/research>

The Genderbread Person

This graphic explains the concepts of gender identity and expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation. <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Printable-Genderbread-Person-11X17.pdf>

LGBTQ Inclusion in Youth Program Environments

Provides some insightful strategies to ensure your program is inclusive. http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/pm/pm_lgbtq_0613.cfm

LGBT Inclusion Audit

Directs organizations to look at their space and materials while asking the question: Is what I am seeing and reading congruent with messages of pluralism, acceptance, diversity and respect of LGBT people, families and allies? http://www.outforhealth.org/files/all/out_for_health_lgbt_inclusion_audit.pdf

Girls in Rural and Remote Communities:

A Compilation of Research on Rural Girls' and Young Women's Issues

The Girls Action Foundation provides this compilation of research about girls and young women in rural communities to strengthen the programs that serve them. <http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/a-compilation-of-research-on-rural-girls-and-young-womens-issues>

Northern Girls Research Review: A Compilation of Research on Northern, Rural and Aboriginal Girls' and Young Women's Issues

The Girls Action Foundation provides this resource to share information about the realities facing Northern, rural and/or Aboriginal girls and young women in Canada. <http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/northern-girls-research-review-a-compilation-of-research-on-northern-rural-and-aboriginal-girls-and-young-womens-issues>

Girls in Care:

Mentor's Corner: Mentoring youth in foster care.

A discussion about mentoring a youth who is currently in foster care. <http://chronicle.umbmentoring.org/mentors-corner-mentoring-youth-in-foster-care/>

Alberta Education and Human Services: Success In School for Children and Youth in Care

Alberta Education and Human Services have created a number of resources for support children and youth in care in Alberta. <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/supportingstudent/collaboration/ppf.aspx>

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Assessment of Strengths, Needs & Collaborations



Why is this important?

It is critical to understand the strengths and assets that will support and sustain your program and to have a clear idea what needs to exist in order to be successful. We are stronger together, so considering your opportunities for collaboration will strengthen your program.

This section of the toolkit will assist you in considering the unique strengths, needs and potential collaborations within your organization/group, your community, and the larger scope of city/town/region.

It is important to be very clear about the nature and extent of the need for a girls group mentoring program in your community. The answers to the following questions will also help you begin to design your program. In larger communities, a complete strengths and needs assessment may be required. Consider bringing community partners together to explore some of these questions.

This section acts as a guide and can prompt your thinking around several critical issues. This process, however, is very community- and organization-specific. As such, it will be up to you and your team of partners to delve deep into your own organizational assessment. Beyond the strengths, needs and collaboration questions listed below, you should also assess potential risks and barriers. Note the future

directions you may take based on local initiatives, policies or organizational changes you are facing in your unique context.

You may have already answered some of these questions while **Planning Your Program**, or you may use them to contribute to the development of your program. This section will be helpful in making sure you are thorough in your analysis.

Contents of this Section:

Tool to Assess Strengths, Needs & Collaborations: Use this reflection tool to identify resources, gaps, and potential partnerships that can help address these gaps.

Fostering Effective and Engaged Partnerships: Once partnerships are forged, you will want to keep them! These considerations will guide you to foster effective relationships with collaborators.

Gaining Support from Your Organization: Consider these tips for gaining the support of key decision-makers from within your organization.



Tool to Assess Strengths, Needs & Collaborations

This tool includes questions and considerations regarding the strengths, needs, potential collaborations and champions both internally (within your organization/group) and externally (within your community and city/town/region). Many communities would benefit from a girls group mentoring program, however it is important to first establish whether there is a need for it and what assets are present to support the program.

The following chart evaluates the strengths, assets, needs and potential opportunities for collaboration in your organization, community and city/town/region. Using the examples and questions in the table below, complete your own internal & external assessment. Brainstorm a list of strengths, needs and potential collaborations present in your organization/group, community, and city/town/region:

	Your Organization / Group	Your Community	Your City/Town/Region
Strengths & Assets	<p>Some examples of organizational or group strengths and assets that contribute to successful programming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable and experienced staff in the area of programming for girls or mentoring • Networks of organizations that can link you to potential mentors • Networks of organizations that can link you to girls that are the target participants of your mentoring program • Experience in group programming for youth 	<p>Some examples of community strengths and assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong feeling of community and of helping one another • There is a community of volunteers with experience in supporting girls (e.g. sports, arts or other recreation activities) • Mentoring is encouraged as an important skill in the high-school curriculum; this is a potential pool of female mentors • Mentoring is regarded as a valuable cultural practice with many benefits for the well-being of the community 	<p>Some examples of strengths and assets in your city/town/region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funding available for non-profit programs for children and youth and government investment for mentoring initiatives • Already established youth serving or mentoring-specific networks • Canada’s non-profit and voluntary sector is the second largest in the world (Imagine Canada) • Over 13 million people in Canada volunteer for charities and non-profits (Imagine Canada)

	Your Organization / Group	Your Community	Your City/Town/Region
<p>Needs</p>	<p>List the structures and processes you need to put into place. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures for the program • Staffing, including recruitment, supervision and training of staff • Mentor recruitment processes, as well as mentor training and ongoing supports • Program evaluation <p>What do you require from outside of your organization/ group? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections with other youth-serving organizations and schools to access participants • Meeting space • Donations or access to equipment and supplies • Transportation to mentoring activities 	<p>Determine whether there is a community need by reflecting on some of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a gap in services, or are there girls not being served by other programs? • Are there any similar programs in operation? • Would this program duplicate any existing services? If yes, what will an additional program add to the community? • How will the community benefit from the program? 	<p>Assess the broader sector and reflect on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are any similar programs in operation? If so, what gap will your program address? • How will your city/town/region benefit from the program?

	Your Organization / Group	Your Community	Your City/Town/Region
<p>Potential Collaborations</p>	<p>With whom could you consider collaborating to address the needs that your organization/ group can't meet alone?</p> <p>Are there existing programs within your organization that you can work with to recruit mentors? (For example: youth advisory council, teen program, women's program)</p> <p>Are there other youth or girls programs that you can consult with to inform your processes around engaging girls and maintaining girl-directed mentoring programming?</p>	<p>Consider which community members, organizations, schools, universities and institutions you could connect and collaborate with to aid in a successful program. Questions to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there community groups, agencies or individuals that you could collaborate or partner with in creating, facilitating and supporting a program? • What other organizations, community groups, services and schools are working with these girls that can help to recruit and retain program participants? • Is there a safe, clean, and dependable program site available? • What informal structures are present in your community that could support and strengthen this program? • What sources of knowledge can you tap into to inform better program practice and development? (for example: focus groups of girls, Elders, community leaders) 	<p>Are there opportunities to share resources or partner with other organizations, government ministries or businesses that have similar mandates? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other family-serving organizations • Other youth-serving organizations • Other community organizations with an interest in the population of girls you are serving • Other community organizations with an interest in the success of young girls <p>Who can you engage to be a champion for your program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local leaders? (e.g. school principals, faith-based leaders, politicians, social workers, coaches) • Local businesses? • Local media? • Local community or service groups?

Fostering Effective and Engaged Partnerships

Starting a new program in your community is a major undertaking, but luckily it can be supported by fostering strong partnerships with other agencies. By following the steps suggested in the **Tool to Assess Strengths, Needs & Collaborations** section you can begin to think about who you can approach and how you can work together. However, the partnership can extend beyond this initial exchange. Once you have engaged partners within the community, continue fostering these relationships and creating space for ongoing engagement. The more dedicated your partners are, the stronger and more sustainable their support will likely be.

Some community partners will not want to extend their involvement beyond offering space, providing referrals or other supports. However, space for partners that do wish to have a stronger connection with the program should be created.

Begin by asking the partners how they would like to be involved and gauge the level with which they are looking to be connected. Be sure from the outset to manage their expectations and be clear that some limitations will exist and certain boundaries will preserve the safe space created in the program. Then meet with your team and develop a few opportunities for them to select from.

Some engagement opportunities that programs have created for partners in the past include:

- Invitations for partners to sit on an advisory committee or steering group.
- If the community partner can offer a relevant training opportunity, you may invite them to present to the mentors or girls.
- Providing recognition for partners by using their logo or name on promotional materials or highlighting their role in a media piece.
- Creation of a volunteer or collaborative role for partners when gathering in large groups or when hosting an event or outing within the mentoring program.

When engaging new partners, remember to not only emphasize the value to the community or girls but also the value the partner organization will receive in their involvement in the program. A partnership can be a mutually-beneficial relationship that will have positive impacts for both organizations as well as the community at large.

Gaining Support from Your Organization

Launching a girls group mentoring program can present many opportunities within your organization, but it can also trigger some disruption. For many organizations, starting a girls group mentoring program marked a shift in programming from a less structured and less gendered approach to a very intentional, long-term and continuous program designed for a very specific set of youth in the community. Whenever major change is afoot, it is normal to expect some resistance or pushback as change typically presents both opportunities and potential risks. Rather than seeing this as a roadblock, we would encourage groups to embrace this as a valuable opportunity for mutual learning, discussion, shared planning and goal setting within your organization.



We have experienced a paradigm shift in delivering this pilot. We've gone from programs that are full and intent on keeping kids busy to a program that is designed to empower girls. This is a big change for our organization.

- Girls Group Mentoring Program
Staff

While this process will look very different from one organization to the next, there are some suggestions from the field that can guide program leaders to navigate some broader discussions when developing a girls group mentoring program:

- **Gather the facts:** Having current statistics and information to support your proposed program approach can help to demonstrate its value and proposed outcomes. The **introduction** to this toolkit includes a wealth of current research that supports the value of girls group mentoring. You can also draw on Public Health Agency of Canada or Statistics Canada research to build the case for why your community needs this program. Use research that is current and specific to the neighbourhoods you will be serving. You might also link this program approach to future funding opportunities as a way of monetizing the potential value of the work.
- **Start out small:** Adjusting your approach to programming can mark a major shift within an organization and making a long-term commitment to something new and uncharted might feel uncomfortable for your team. If you are being met with resistance, you could propose starting the program on a smaller scale, perhaps with only one or two matched groups, and then incrementally scaling up the program after the first few months.
- **Make connections:** Connect the program you are proposing to the broader vision and mission of the organization. Find ways that the girls group mentoring program will address a gap, fit within a continuum or support and complement other programs within your organization's portfolio of work. This will help it to be seen as a new and complementary piece to the stable and existing big picture of your organization.
- **Establish a working group:** By including different organizational stakeholders and external partners in the early decision-making stages, you can help your team to create a foundation for success that incorporates the perspectives of different affected groups. Involving both your senior team and trusted partners in this process can help build comfort and credibility.

- **Emphasize value and impact:** Every new endeavour can create some uncertainty and involve potential risks but with that comes an extraordinary capacity for value and impact within your community. Be sure to frame this opportunity as a means of addressing a real need within the community and an existing gap within programming. Consider consulting with community members, prospective mentors and girls to identify this impact. See [My Program Population](#) for ideas on how to achieve this.



The Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton has a longstanding history of providing effective programming to the youth in their community in a co-ed space. They received a granting opportunity from the Canadian Women's Foundation to run a girls-only program and quickly learned the value of this gender-specific approach. Girls were more actively participating in sports, speaking up more and their overall engagement was stronger in the safe space created. The learning that the Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton gained in their program allowed them to influence other program approaches and for different age groups. The organization as a whole shifted their thinking around gender-specific programming and furthermore shared their learning with other clubs across Canada. By testing out the approach, evaluating its impact and sharing the results, they gained the support of their organization and influenced a transformational shift in programming.

While this process can feel daunting and require a great deal of discussion and negotiation upfront, the rewards are great and will be well worth the challenge. Many organizations have celebrated the impact of their girls group mentoring programs and continue to see their organizations evolve and adapt to have more inclusive programming with more structured and long-term impact.



Key Take Aways

Your program will be stronger if you consider the strengths, needs, and possible collaborations that exist within your organization or group, your community and your wider city/town/region. This section should have provided information to support you to:

- Determine your strengths and assets and why they are important
- Recognize your organizational needs and how you can fulfill them
- Assess how your program can fill gaps in services at the organizational, community and local/regional level
- Consider working with others to ensure the success of the program. When working with partners, think about ways you can involve them in the program to strengthen their commitment and engagement
- Take the time to prepare information, arrange conversations and build the case for the value and impact that your organization will have when developing a girls group mentoring program

Additional Resources

Tool: Assessment of Strengths, Needs & Collaborations

A tool in which to complete your assessment of strengths, needs and collaborations.

Community Tool Box

The Community Tool Box was created to help people build healthier communities and bring about the changes they envision. It provides educational modules and tools to help people work together to make their communities what they dream they can be. Example of modules include: Creating and Maintaining Partnerships and Assessing Community Needs and Resources.

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/about>

Mind Tools: Stakeholder Analysis

Walks you through an in-depth process to determine your stakeholders (who will support and advocate for your program, as well as who may create barriers for your program). http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_07.htm

Works Cited

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Planning Your Program



Why is this important?

Planning and evaluating a program is important because:

- It will help to determine if the program successfully achieves what you set out to do
- It ensures that you can identify where changes need to be made to allow you to continuously improve your program
- It assesses whether program and financial resources are being used effectively and efficiently

You likely have great ideas on the “what” and “why” of your girls group mentoring program—how it could run, who would participate and what the results might be. However, much more detailed planning is required in order to effectively bring all of the important elements together: the mentees, the mentors, the space, the supplies and the activities. These plans will be essential in the management and delivery of the program. They will also be important to attract funders and program champions. Ultimately, they will provide the foundations for the evaluation of your program; this is a critical element for continued effectiveness and long-term sustainability of your program.

The following sections outline important elements to assist you in planning and evaluating your program.

Contents of this Section:

Start With the Outcome in Mind: Follow these first steps to identify key goals and objectives for your girls group mentoring program.

Theory of Change: Learn how to develop a theory of change for your program.

Logic Model: Explore the features and value of a logic model to help you develop, measure and improve your program.

Start With the Outcome in Mind

When embarking on a journey, it is important to begin with the outcome in mind. Before you begin to plan program activities, step back and be very intentional in identifying who the program is for, the outcomes you wish to foster through your program and how you will deliver these results. Investing time in setting out a clear focus at the beginning will pay dividends later; you will be more effective in setting objectives, designing program elements and choosing specific activities that achieve the results you intend. You will also be better equipped to complete reports on the results of your program.

Some of the questions posed when designing your program plan may have already been covered in other sections of this toolkit in more detail. In planning your program, you want to be sure you have given due consideration to these questions. The following steps offer a series of questions that can assist you in thinking through parts of the program plan.

a) Define the target group for your program

Begin by defining who the program is intended for.

- Who are the girls the program is intended to serve? For example:
 - Girls in a specific geographic area? Neighbourhood or city-wide?
 - Girls from a specific cultural group?
 - Girls already attending specific schools?
 - Girls with existing relationships to specific community or cultural organizations?
- What age group are you choosing to serve?
- Why were these groups chosen?
- What are the needs of these specific groups?
- What assumptions are inherent in your needs assessment (e.g. barriers to attendance)? How can these assumptions be confirmed with girls themselves, other partners or stakeholders to ensure an accurate view of needs (e.g. talk with parents, community groups or schools)?
- What is the anticipated demand? How is this determined? (e.g. historical enrolment, wait lists, estimated number of families in an area or attending a school, etc.). How can you test the accuracy of this forecast (i.e. how will this translate into actual registrations)?
- How will you conduct outreach to these groups?

Investing time in this analysis and in dialogue with important stakeholders (e.g. community groups, schools, parents and families) can strengthen the credibility of requests for funds, space, partner supports and other resources.

b) Define the desired outcomes for the program.

The desired results of the program should be very clear. Girls group mentoring programs may have multiple levels of outcomes both for girls and for communities. It is important to be clear on the outcomes for each level in order to be effective in setting and achieving the goals required to meet these outcomes. Some things to consider include:

Individual	Description	Program Outcome Examples
Girl Participants	The mentees in the program receiving mentorship from older girls or adults	Increased self-confidence, increased physical activity, increased communication skills, more positive attitudes toward school, broader awareness of their geographic or cultural community, increased connections in the community.
Mentors	Older girls or adults providing mentorship to girls	Experience in mentoring, increased leadership skills, meaningful volunteer experiences to reference in their resume, increased connections in the community.
Program Staff	Paid staff providing leadership and facilitation within the program	Greater understanding of girls, stronger leadership capacities, increased connection to community, increased facilitation/ organizational skills.
Community Members	Program partners, trainer, program presenter, volunteer, etc	Increased connection to community, greater sense of leadership, greater understanding of girls, new skills development.

c) Outline the vision for the program

Given the outcomes identified, it is important to describe the program model and program objectives that will enable you to deliver these outcomes. Specifically:

- What is the focus of the program?
- What is the duration of the program (i.e. start and end date)?
- What is the projected scale and size?
- What are key resources? What tasks must be undertaken for these resources to be secured, managed, and where relevant, evaluated? These resources could include: facilities, staff, volunteers, training, equipment, food, transportation, activity materials and supports.

d) Develop your plan for acquiring the program’s required resources

Ensuring that your program has sufficient resources to achieve the intended outcomes is an important step. Consider the following questions:

- Who are potential partners that are already doing similar work, or are already working with this target population? Are they willing to work together for the enhanced effectiveness of all?
- Who are the key partners needed for the delivery of the various components of the program? (e.g. schools contracted for facilities, community groups for referrals of girls or guest speakers). Do relationships exist with these partners? If not, can these relationships be brokered by another community partner?

- Who are the relevant funders that could help address any shortfall of resources? What are their funding criteria and timelines? What is their application process and requirements (e.g. a partnership)?

Theory of Change

An important part of planning your program is to illustrate your theory of change. A theory of change is a specific and measurable description of a social change initiative that forms the basis for strategic planning, ongoing decision-making and evaluation (Centre for Theory of Change, 2013).

A theory of change identifies:

- What kind of impact you want to have
- Who you will impact/change
- How you plan to achieve this change
- How you will know if you were successful

A theory of change is developed to help you think through what change you wish to affect through your program and why. It is best developed as a collaborative activity with key program stakeholders, as it is your roadmap for change.

Thinking through your theory of change will help guide how you organize different aspects of your program and inform your actions. Theories of Change are fluid documents, and as your program evolves over time, it will be useful to reconsider and reflect upon what has been articulated and adjust it as necessary. Some Theory of Change examples to consider:



Why should I invest the time in creating a theory of change?

Although the process can take time and resources, developing a theory of change will allow you to design a program that is effective, efficient and evaluated. By thinking through your goals and objectives in advance, you can design program processes and features that will have the best impact possible. This can also be an appealing resource when approaching partners or engaging prospective funders. “Stakeholders value theories of change as part of the program planning and evaluation because they create commonly understood vision of the long-term goals, how they will be reached, and what will be used to measure progress along the way” (Centre for Theory of Change, 2013).

IF girls feel connected to other girls through mentoring opportunities and are supported,
THEN they will become more actively involved as leaders in their communities or cultural groups. They will experience greater success and an enhanced sense of belonging. They will have a strong sense of identity, along with greater confidence and enhanced critical thinking skills.

IF girls take part in a girls program,
THEN their critical thinking skills and feelings of connectedness are strengthened and positively impacted.

To create your own theory of change, keeping the above considerations in mind, complete the following statement:

IF _____,

THEN _____.



“The truth is that getting from activities to outcomes is a lot more complicated than we often want it to be. Which is why programs really should develop (and continually revise) a rock-solid theory of change. A theory of change model articulates all of the assumptions that go into your thinking about why your program works. It forces you to work backwards from your long-term BIG outcomes to explain all of the preconditions that need to be met to move participants toward those outcomes.”

- Garringer (2014)

Logic Model

Once your Theory of Change is developed, the next step in program planning is the creation of a program logic model. “Logic models are rooted within theories of change and use words and/or pictures to describe the sequence of activities thought to bring about change and how these activities are linked to the results the program is expected to achieve. The process for thinking through change includes:

- Identifying the problem(s) (What is the community need?)
- Naming the desired results (What is the vision for the future?)
- Developing the strategy for achieving the goal(s) (How can the vision be achieved?)”

- Evaluation Toolkit (2014)



Why should I invest the time in creating a logic model?

Crafting a logic model at the outset of planning is useful to identify the many details that will be added as program components and practices are identified. Establishing a visual representation can create a familiar blueprint for all stakeholders and provide a framework for building, implementing and evaluating the program.

The ‘logic’ behind the model, similar to the Theory of Change, is a series of ‘if, then’ connections. In a logic model, if certain inputs are provided, then specific activities can be performed. If those activities are performed, then outputs will result. If outputs are produced, then short-term outcomes will be achieved. If short-term outcomes are achieved, then long-term outcomes will be realized.

Similar to the Theory of Change, a logic model is a fluid document that should change regularly. Include the date at the top of your logic model, because it is an accurate depiction of your program on that day. Revisit it in 6 months and ask: Is it still accurate? After months of experience in the program, have things changed? Include those changes in the model, and then make sure you put the new date at the top. Once again, a logic model is most useful when created in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Key elements of a Logic Model:

Logic Model Components	Questions to Consider	Additional Information	Examples
Identified Need(s) & Assumptions	What needs will the program address?	Includes program reach, which is the extent to which a program attracts its intended audience. Consider the characteristics of the participants and the focus of the program.	To create leadership opportunities for girls ages 9–13; To support girls in “x” neighbourhood to develop healthy connections with adult role models
Inputs (Resources)	What goes into the program?	Inputs describe the financial, human, and material resources used for the initiative. It is also helpful to consider time as an input and ‘in kind’ inputs, too.	Staff time, community meeting space, grant, programs, community leaders, etc.
Activities	What goes on in the program?	Activities are what the program does with the resources. Activities are the processes, tools, events and actions that are an intentional part of the program implementation. These activities are used to bring about the intended changes or results.	Weekly structured mentoring sessions; sessions & workshops on “x” topic; small group discussion & sharing on personal goals; community outings & volunteer opportunities; leadership activities; large group gatherings.
Outputs	What happens as a result of the program?	Outputs refer to the tangible products developed for the initiative.	Deliver 10 sessions; host 3 large gatherings; match 5 groups of girls with a mentor.
Reach	Who is the direct beneficiary?	Reach refers to participants, clients and beneficiaries of the program. This could include the program participants (girls and mentors), the community, the school, the family, etc.	Girls aged 9–13 in the community; adult women/older teens (mentors); community stakeholders (if there is a volunteer component).
Outcomes (short-term)	What positive impact does the program have?	Outcomes describe the achievements of an initiative and its immediate or direct effects on those who participated in it. Short-term outcomes include changes in awareness, knowledge, behaviour, and decision-making.	Increase confidence; increase knowledge of gender stereotypes; media literacy skills; positive attitude toward school; stronger understanding of healthy relationships.
Outcomes (long-term)	What significant impact will result from having a program in place over the long term?	Includes achievements of an initiative and its long-term effects on those who participated in it. Long-term outcomes include changes in behaviours and broader lifestyle and societal changes.	Increase number of positive relationship in girls’ lives; decrease school dropout; increased community engagement; improved health and well-being.

Once your draft logic model has been developed, it can be helpful to test the accuracy of the information. This can be done as a team exercise or individually, but you want to ‘check the logic’ and ensure that it makes sense to everyone involved.

When planning a program, inputs should be given lots of consideration. The Evaluation of Phase 2 of the Canadian Women’s Foundation Girls’ Fund Highlights Report (2014) found that most of the program delivery challenges related to logistics such as transportation, attendance, difficulty in finding program space, and scheduling mentors and guest speakers. For further support on planning these types of logistics, check out the **Program & Meetings** Sections of this toolkit.

Examples of other inputs include:

- **Program Structure:** How will mentors and mentees sign up for the program? Who is responsible for the referral process? How often will the matches/ group meet? How long will the program last? (one semester, the whole year)
- **Staffing:** Who oversees the program? What type of supervision will they provide?
- **Stakeholders and Partners:** Is there any community involvement in the program? Provide a list of partners and how they will be involved.
- **Resources:** What is the program’s budget? What outside resources will be required to deliver the program? What resources can be accessed at your school? What will it cost to run your program?



What is the difference between an output and an outcome?

An output involves something being produced (e.g. number of sessions, brochures, awareness campaigns, etc.). It could be in the form of the quantity of a good or service.

Other than the creation of the actual ‘output’, no measured change in behaviour, attitude or societal improvement takes place.

Examples of outputs include: number and composition of matches; number of group meetings; length of the program; number of staff; documents created for the program (e.g. administrative, training); media releases; public awareness documents (e.g. posters, bookmarks, postcards).

On the other hand, an outcome is the result of the activities and action. The outcome answers the question: “So what?” Outcomes are another way to identify long-term or ultimate impacts, yet outcomes look beyond the immediate results of an initiative and identifies longer-term effects, as well as any unintended or unanticipated consequences.

Examples of outcomes include: Knowledge of a certain topic; increased confidence; greater community engagement; and increased school attendance.

It's important to remember that not all logic models look the same. Although all models represent a logical connection between inputs, activities, outputs and intended outcomes, they are also representative of how a particular group understands and sees their program.

See the online version to access logic model examples

Key Take-Aways



Preparing for and operating girls group mentoring programs involves completing several key activities. This section shared instruction on creating a logic model and theory of change. Remember the following:

- An important place to start is to identify the outcomes or the change you want to see take place as a result of the program.
- You can develop an “if ... then” statement to describe how the change will take place.
- Creating a logic model is a great way to depict the theory of change and it will show a connection between activities and desired outcomes. Don't forget to include key stakeholders when planning the program.

Additional Resources

Theory of Change Resources

United Way of Toronto Theory of Change

The following site by the United Way of Toronto presents quick and easy Theory of Change worksheets to support you in thinking through your own theory of change:

<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/QuickAndEasyTheoryOfChangeWorksheet.pdf>

Logic Model Resources

Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

This guide provides the underlying principles of “logic modelling” to enhance program planning, implementation, and dissemination activities. <http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

This site provides links to several evaluation resources.

<http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources/#logicmodels>

United Way - Evaluating Steps

The United Way provides information about how to create a logic model, a logic model template, and two sample logic models.

http://strengtheningfamilies.unitedway.org/evaluating_steps.cfm

University of Wisconsin - Extension

The University of Wisconsin - Extension provides templates of logic models, examples of logic models and power point presentations.

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>

American Evaluation Association

Click on the ‘Read’ tab and then on the ‘Public eLibrary’ link and search for Logic Models for many resources.

<http://www.eval.org/>

Logic Model Worksheets can be found at

<http://cyfernetsearch.org/sites/default/files/LOGIC%20MODEL%20WORKSHEETS.pdf>

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Program & Meetings



Why is this important?

This section will help you to design the logistics of your program—from where your participants will meet, to how many participants you'll engage, as well as identify the stages of mentoring relationships.

It is helpful to define the logistics of your program, including the mentoring model you use, the mentor/mentee ratio, the duration of your program, the frequency of meetings and the process for creating a safe space for program participants. You should also consider strategies for building relationships within your program, including how the girls' families can be engaged. The topics and questions listed here can ensure that important program pieces have been considered and incorporated into your planning. Take your time navigating this section and be sure to read each of the sections.

Contents of this Section:

Developing Your Program Foundation: To get started, tackle these first five steps to develop the foundation of your program.

Planning Your Meeting Logistics: Follow this list to make sure you have covered all meeting logistic needs.

Creating Safe Space: Ensure your program has considered the emotional and physical components necessary for the magic to happen.

Planning Your Activities: Develop activities that keep participants there while reinforcing the goals of the program.

Family & Parental/Guardian Involvement: The program is almost ready but how will family be involved or connected?

Planning for Relationship Closure: Plan to safely and effectively close the relationship once the program concludes.



Developing Your Program Foundation

Choosing the appropriate model for your program will depend on your program population, your vision for your program and the resources at your disposal. These models reflect different approaches to mentor and staff involvement, as well as the appropriate mix of mentors and mentees. There are several key steps that an organization should take in conceptualizing and developing the foundation of your program. Here are five early steps that will help you proceed to planning the logistics and detailed components of your meetings:

Step One: Choose your Mentor Type

A considerable amount of thought should be put into identifying who is the ideal mentor for your program. This will in many ways shape the kind of learning focus and relationship building that drives your program. This should reflect the program goals you wish to work toward and the girls who will be participating from your community. Some key questions you should consider include:

- What are the girls' primary needs and interests?
- What are the learning goals or desired outcomes of the program?
- Who would best meet these needs and support the girls to achieve them?

The type of mentor you wish to engage for the mentoring relationships will help you frame out the logistics of your program and your strategies around recruiting, training and retaining mentors. There are several models that you can choose from that are outlined below. It is important to also note that these 'models' can be blended and are often used in combination with one another. Though this list is not exhaustive, it provides four key mentor types you could consider for your girls group mentoring program:

Adult Mentors:

Adult mentors provide youth with concentrated adult attention and build confidence as youth are supported by the adult world (Community Toolbox, 2013). Some programs have highlighted the particular value of adult mentors when working with girls from single parent families or girls in care. This can be particularly valuable when girls could benefit from more adult support. This should also be considered when the girls you are working with have multiple or extreme barriers to relationship building. Adult mentors could be college and university students, adults working in professions of interest to the girls, active interested citizens or senior "grandparents" in the community. Many Aboriginal communities incorporate Elders into their program to share history and cultural learning.



Adult Mentors: Wabnung Abinoonjiiag Inc., in Winnipeg, Manitoba, engages adult women from the community to mentor girls. The women often come with lived experience and cultural teachings that benefit the girls. The women in mentor roles are passionate about community work as it provides opportunities to give back.

Teen Mentors:

Teen mentoring brings together mentors and mentees who are relatively close in age, such as utilizing high-school students as mentors to younger girls. This is also known as Peer Mentoring and Cross-Age Peer Mentoring. Mentees are able to look up to girls in high school while still relating to them. This has been particularly valuable in programs where newcomer and immigrant girls are exploring their Canadian identity. This relationship has helped newcomer girls that have difficulty navigating conflicting identities (Canadian identity with traditional views of girls at home). Teen mentors could include older girls in the community, high-school girls or other youth leaders.

Co-Mentoring:

This type of mentoring occurs when more than one mentor work jointly to provide mentorship to a group. They typically share the mentorship role equally and work as partners to provide support for the girls they work with. They can work collaboratively and actively mentor alongside one another or they may divide up the role or assign themselves separate core pieces. Co-mentoring can be particularly strategic for establishing sustainability within your programs. By having two mentors matched with a group, there is coverage and continuity if one mentor can no longer fulfill their commitment. Additionally, by using co-mentors, mentors themselves have an opportunity to develop a close relationship with their peer and to learn from and feel supported by the other mentor they are matched with. It is important to note, however, that by using co-mentors you are introducing another layer of ‘matching’ within your program and those matches will need the same level of support, supervision and potential conflict management as needed with the mentees. Sometimes a more ‘senior’ mentor will be matched with a more ‘junior’ mentor to support their development. See tri-mentoring below for information on matching mentors with different levels of experience.



Teen Mentors: Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association in Alberta operates a mentoring program in which older girls, usually in high school, mentor younger girls. The mentoring program is centred around the relationships developed between girls and their older peer role models in community housing within vulnerable neighbourhoods. They relate to one another not just in terms of their age but also their experience in their community and often share their immigrant experience.



Co-Mentoring: The Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton in Ontario engages co-mentors in their program, Senior and Junior Athletes. This allows for joint leadership and consistent meetings (given schedules of the athletes). It promotes leadership among mentors and succession planning, with two different mentors for the girls to learn from.

Tri-Mentoring:

This type of mentoring occurs when a mentor in one relationship becomes a mentee in another relationship.

Tri-mentoring layers mentorship and provides leadership training across different levels. For example, a program may utilize high-school students as mentors to girls in elementary, middle or junior high school, and then engage a few adult mentors to support and mentor the high-school students. This format is often used to engage more experienced mentors to support less experienced mentors, but can also be utilized when a less experienced mentor is not quite ready for the commitment of being a full-time mentor. Tri-mentoring can also be very valuable for scheduling purposes, as tri-mentors can be engaged as support people to fill in when a mentor is not able to attend a meeting with their mentee. The tri-mentors are typically older than the main group of mentors or bring with them an elevated level of leadership to help guide the mentors.



Tri-Mentors: YWCA
Toronto in Ontario employs a tri-mentoring approach with high-school and university-aged mentors.

This allows university students to mentor the teen mentors and bridges gaps of peer understanding between staff and mentors. The program provides the opportunity for older youth to be mentors and has a more profound community impact by creating a stronger network of female leadership.

Step Two: Consider a Program Format:

How you format the program meetings will depend largely on the needs of the girls, the type of mentor(s) you're providing and the space available for your program. There is no prescribed format or one-size-fits-all approach for developing your program. It is crucial to reflect on the uniqueness of your community and organization, and the following list captures some of the considerations you should have in the early development of your program:

Program Content: Locate your program across the continuum

Program content exists along a continuum: on one end, you have a completely structured, curriculum-based program; on the other end, you have no planned content but rather an open space for organically-developed learning. Determine how much pre-developed content you would like to include in your program. Many programs find that a balance is key, using some preplanned curriculum while leaving space for content to develop organically. This often includes preplanned topics for each week with predetermined opening activities, but leaves space for girls to discuss and apply the learning. In other programs they might choose a long-term goal or project to work toward, while also making space to organically develop the incremental steps and project pieces across each session.


Organizations might develop their curriculum in-house or purchase a resource from existing organizations. When purchasing pre-developed curriculum be sure to take the time to adapt the pieces to reflect the girls in your program. It is also helpful to consider whether the curriculum has been developed with a gender lens, which would reflect gender differences in experiences, needs and priorities.

If taking an ‘organic’ approach, this does not mean simply winging it. When it comes to letting content organically develop, a significant amount of planning and consideration is still necessary. Programs must ensure the proper mechanisms, prompts and facilitations are in place to guide the development of sessions. See **Planning Your Content** for more information on developing content.

Program Format: Determine which components will be structured

Every program should include structured elements when it comes to establishing safety within the program and incorporating policies around screening and training. There should also be differentiation of stakeholder roles including which responsibilities fall onto the mentor and the staff. Clarity around these roles will allow mentors to participate more comfortably and promote a more positive and safe experience for the girls. Beyond this, your program can determine how much structure you want to have in other day-to-day processes.

Organizations should also consider how structured each session will be. Beyond the content itself, it can be helpful to have regular practices that introduce familiarity and prompt participation. This can include regular check-ins, debriefs, opening activities, journaling and time for reflection.



By having debriefs or check-ins every session, girls know there will be a space at the end to share a concern or exciting piece of news with the group. Similarly, mentors need a designated time and space to address any issues.

Site-based, Community-based or School-based?

Most of the Canadian Women’s Foundation girls group mentoring grantees have found it helpful to plan the mentoring to take place on-site in their organization’s space. This helps address youth safety and is ideal when working with teen mentors. Having site-based mentoring allows for greater staff involvement and in many cases, provides easier access for parents. Other organizations have had meetings take place in the community, where they are centred around planned activities (such as bowling or going to the movies) or volunteering. This is more typical when working with adult women as mentors.

Some mentoring programs take place at schools. This is particularly common and valuable in rural communities as it eliminates travel and increases accessibility for many girls that would otherwise face transportation barriers. If opting to host your program at a school, you must establish a strong partnership with the school personnel and also ensure the school can provide a space for the group that is safe both physically and emotionally. See the **Collaborations** section and **Safe Spaces** segment for more information.

There are many programs that combine these approaches by having the program meetings start and operate out of a specific site or school, but incorporate outings and events at periodic times.

Will you gather as a large group first?

Many programs have all of the mentoring groups meet in a large gathering to start off the session. By having all of the smaller, matched mentoring groups come together in the same space they can feel connected to a larger community. This is helpful when working with teen mentors or when building the mentoring off of an existing girls group program. They sometimes do a group icebreaker or activity and then break off into smaller mentoring groups to foster discussion and build relationships. This can also be a useful strategy from the staff perspective. By gathering all matched groups in one space they can easily take attendance, note any absences and shift mentors as needed to account for such absences.

Large group gatherings can also take place throughout the program. Many programs incorporate special events or gatherings at different periods (monthly, quarterly, etc.) to create connections across the group and facilitate space for girls to move outside of their mentoring groups, develop other relationships and broaden their experience. These events can take place on-site or off-site and typically have budget implications and requires additional staff time.

Step Three: How will staff be involved?

The staff role in girls group mentoring focuses on the coordination of the mentoring relationships and gatherings. Typically, mentors are volunteers from the community and responsible for direct interaction with girls. Staff involvement can range from high involvement (including relationship building and facilitation when the mentoring groups gather) to low involvement (where the primary focus is on supporting the mentors and monitoring visits). Often, programs utilizing younger mentors (for example, teen mentors) will employ a staff member to be present at, and take responsibility for, overall facilitation of meetings.

The involvement of staff in girls group mentoring has a profound impact on the ongoing monitoring, supervision and retention of mentors. Organizations should take considerable time in defining this role and assign a staff person with the demonstrated ability to adapt and evolve this capacity as the program takes form. Since each group of girls and each cohort of mentors will come with different strengths, needs and dynamics, the staff role may require a different focus from group to group.

Consider the following questions when determining how the program will be managed by your team:

- Who will oversee the actual delivery on the day of the program?



Inuvik Youth Centre always starts their girls mentoring program as a large group first. They typically take part in a group activity to introduce the theme of the week and then break off into their smaller matched groups to continue exploring the topic. These activities have included hands-on activities like cooking together or instruction-based discussions like breaking down gender stereotypes. Through building a pizza together, sharing stories of how they can overcome stereotypes, or numerous other activities, within the smaller groups the girls learn from each other and have a space for their voice.

- What are the roles/responsibilities of the staff in this delivery?
- What are the roles/responsibilities of the mentors in this delivery?
- What are the roles/responsibilities of other volunteers (e.g. preparation of snacks)?

Step Four: What will the mentee/mentor ratio be?

The optimal group mentoring ratio is often debated in the literature, and at times, research has found conflicting or inconclusive numbers. Some literature proposes a one-mentor-to-four-mentees model. Kuperminc & Thomason (2014) note that “with regard to the mentor-to-youth ratio, we would agree that ratios much larger than 1:4 risk becoming counterproductive, but argue that research is needed to provide better guidance on this issue.” Larger groups can potentially be ‘counterproductive’ in the sense that the dynamic essentially shifts from a mentoring relationship to group programming. If the group is not focused and strong relationships are not being developed with each participant, then mentoring is not happening. The ideal ratio is specific to site and community, and should reflect the needs of the girls, the ease of forged relationships and the purpose of the program. Additionally, logistical considerations must be factored as well, such as how many mentors are available and also what the content is most conducive to. For example, some program content will require smaller intensive groups if taking on complex activities or exploring heavy topics.



Canadian Women’s Foundation’s evaluation report (2014) found that both mentees and mentors involved in girls group mentoring programs expressed the value in having smaller groups since it allowed for more focused time with mentors. While these mentoring programs focus on the group dynamic and its many gains, they still voiced an added-value in having individualized access to their mentor.

Mentoring relationships can also involve more than one mentor. Co-mentoring typically involves two mentors matched with a group of girls. This can also be a valuable strategy for managing complicated schedules and for helping establish security and continuity with mentor attendance. If one of the ‘team’ mentors falls ill, cannot attend or withdraws from the program, girls will not experience as much disruption to the mentoring group if the other mentor they have been matched with is still present. Additionally this can be a valuable approach for facilitating leadership development among the mentors. Some programs choose to match ‘junior’ and ‘senior’ mentors together to



Keep in mind that there are added considerations and potential setbacks when matching girls with co-mentors. For example, it introduces another layer of matching and another relationship that needs support and supervision. Mentors may also experience conflict, particularly if the matched mentors have different leadership styles. Programs must be strategic in matching their mentors since they must work collaboratively with one another. Personality, leadership style and skill level/ experience should be considered.

create a succession of leadership development where the younger mentor can learn from their older peer.

The needs of the girls in each program will largely dictate an effective ratio. When working with girls with multiple barriers to relationship-building, a program may need to adjust to a smaller group. This might also be ideal for groups where there are behavioural issues and increased challenges affecting the group dynamic. It is also important to note the needs of the mentors, particularly when working with older girls as mentors.

When determining your mentor/mentee ratio, it can be helpful and constructive to approach this number with flexibility. Establishing a positive group dynamic and building relationships within the group should be prioritized over adhering to a predetermined ratio. Sometimes a group will fit better with one more or one less girl. Other times, it may benefit from a pair of mentors instead of just one. It is best to approach the ratio as a guiding principle but adapt as needed to the girls you are working with.

Note that these ratios do not include staff. Staff resources will be likely focused on program logistics and effectiveness, and they may not have the time or attention to give to the essential task of relationship building.

Step Five: What will your budget look like?

Developing your program budget is a necessary step that should be completed early. In order to start planning the details around your program meetings and logistics, have a sense of the budget for each area of your program. As your planning comes along, you will likely tweak sections and specific budget lines but try to roughly allocate funds to each major area once the foundation of your program (steps 1–4) is established.

It is likely you already have a fixed amount or set grant that will be used for this program. Start working that amount into program components such as staffing, administration, facilities, transportation, program supplies, food, costs for screening or background checks, etc. Take time to reflect on each of these budget lines and build in a buffer for critical parts of the program. For example, staff time will increase if there is a crisis or if mentors leave and additional recruitment is needed. Transportation could include not only travel to and from the program for staff, but may also be required for mentors and girls. You should also consider whether group events will require additional costs outside of regular programming. It is important to build in costs to ensure the program is accessible to girls and does not present barriers or restrictions to their participation.



Never underestimate the importance of food! Offering food is a great way of encouraging participation as well as addressing a need for many girls. Be mindful of budgeting enough food, offering options that reflect dietary restrictions and providing healthy sustenance. The time of day when you host your program will also affect how much food to budget. If you are holding your program over the dinner hour or right after school, for example, expect girls to arrive hungry!

Planning Meeting Logistics

Your program should be tailored to your own community, needs, goals and resources. Below is a list of considerations and questions to help you define what your program is going to look like on the ground.

See the online version to download your Meeting Logistics Checklist.

Program Participation

From the outset, it is crucial to determine when girls can join and how many can be involved in the program. Take the time to reflect on the following:

Will the group be an open group (allows for continuous enrolment of girls) or closed group (the same participants for the full length of the program)?

- Both have benefits and drawbacks. An open group allows you to accept new members throughout the year, giving you the ability to grow your program past your initial start date and beyond your original scope. If you choose to operate an open group, you will need to consider the process for introducing new participants, the effect that has on current participants, and how you can best support the mentoring relationships to grow and flourish when participants begin at different times. A closed group allows for one mentoring group to build close relationships because of the consistency of the group.

How many participants will be involved?

- The number of participants may depend on the scope of your program, the resources available, the space you have access to, the size of your community, the mentor/mentee ratio chosen and many other variables.

Program Duration and Frequency

A critical factor you must determine is how long and how frequently you will run your program. Be mindful of the following considerations:

How often will the participants get together? How long will each meeting be?

- Some programs run their girls' group mentoring program every week for one hour, or every week for two hours. Others run it for two hours every two weeks. Visit frequency will depend on the availability of your meeting space, your participants, your program staff and other variables.
- Ongoing communication allows girls to build trust with their mentor and fosters the dynamics of the group. Some programs in rural locations, or those with limited access to space, use technology for ongoing communication between meetings. For example, this has included weekly emails between mentors and mentees or a closed Facebook page, both carefully monitored by program staff.
- Some programs allow an extra half hour either before or after the mentees have arrived or departed to prepare and debrief with mentors. This is an excellent opportunity to provide extra support and monitoring for mentors.

How long will your program run? One semester? A school year? A full calendar year? Two full calendar years?

- Generally, research on mentoring suggests that the longer the mentoring relationship, the more effective it is. Grossman & Rhodes (2002) found that “youth who were in matches that lasted more than 12 months reported significant increases in their self-worth, perceived social acceptance, perceived scholastic competence, parental relationship quality, school value, and decreases in both drug and alcohol use.” Girls group mentoring programs should strive for a minimum of a one-year relationship. This allows girls to forge stronger relationships that result in greater impact.
- It is common for girls group mentoring programs to work alongside the school and subsequently run the course of a school year. If you choose to run a program for the school year, considerations can be taken to facilitate meetings and ongoing relationship-building throughout the summer months. While the summer can present scheduling conflicts due to vacation and camps, some programs have opted to include large group gatherings such as picnics or outings or use technology to bridge the communication when physical distance presents itself.



For many programs, gathering girls and mentors regularly throughout the summer months can be difficult. One program decided they would fuse a regular pen pal exchange with monthly summer gatherings. Girls and their matched mentors continue to participate on their closed Facebook group every week to stay connected. In addition, all of the mentors and all of the girls in the program are invited to take part in monthly summer gatherings. These events included a picnic, a scavenger hunt and a campout in the community. Everyone was invited to attend and participate as a large group. This way, girls did not feel left out if their mentor was not available and mentors could provide support and company for girls outside of their matched groups.

Program Sessions

Thinking about your unique program population and participants, consider the following questions about your mentoring program sessions:

When are the best times for girls to attend?

- Consideration should be given to transportation, community schedules, space availability and parental schedules. Some possibilities include directly after school or during the lunch hour.

When are the best times for mentors to attend?

- This will largely depend on the mentors you wish to engage in your program. If you are working with students, school schedules must be considered; if you're working with adults, their other

commitments will be a factor.

Will you host mentor trainings, separate mentor meetings or mentor debriefs outside of program hours?

- Time should be allocated for meetings outside of the matched mentoring group meetings. These often work best when attached to the meetings and when hosted in the same space.

What will they do when they meet?

- The possibilities are endless! See the **Planning Activities** subsection below for considerations.

Will meetings be planned ahead of time?

- Will you create a schedule in advance with planned topics and activities, or will you determine this as you go? Some programs decide to schedule planned topics and activities in advance so that mentors know what topics will be discussed each week. Other programs determine activities and topics week to week, often based on issues that came up in the previous week's meeting and discussion. Flexibility can allow for programs to be more girl-directed and create space for their voice to shape the mentoring experience. It can also allow for increased leadership opportunities for the mentors to have an active role in planning.

How will session activities be meaningful and exciting in order to motivate and engage the girls involved?

- See **Planning Activities** for ideas and considerations.

What resources or materials will need to be prepared ahead of time for the sessions?

- Preparing materials can be done by staff or mentors, or a combination of both. Who does the preparation will depend on a number of factors, including the staff time allotted to support the mentoring groups, the experience of the mentors and whether one of the goals of the program is to build leadership skills of the mentors.

Will you provide a snack or a meal during the program?

- This will depend on your program population, the time and duration of your program and the resources available. Food is particularly important if running a program over a meal time or after school. Ensuring the girls are well fed will allow for better engagement throughout the session, particularly in communities where food access is an issue.

Program Site

To locate space and plan sessions that will accommodate the schedules and safety needs of the girls in your community, be sure to consider:

How will you make your program site safe and accessible?

- Ensuring that your program site is safe and accessible is of critical importance when developing a girls group mentoring program. See the **Safe Spaces** section below for further instruction on creating safe spaces.

Where will the program take place?

- Does your organization/group have an appropriate space? Does a school, university, college, community centre or youth-serving organization have a space that you can utilize?

Where can meetings be held so girls can participate easily?

- Is the meeting place big enough for the number of girls in the group? Is it safe? Does it allow for privacy?

Are there any barriers to transportation for participants? How can you manage these?

- How will participants get to and from the program? Can you hire a bus or a taxi? Are you able to drive them? Will their parents be in charge of transportation? Will they walk? What liability issues will you encounter with any of these options?

Creating Safe Space

Mentees will learn and grow best in a safe space—a place where they feel physically and emotionally safe. This will depend on the physical environment where the mentoring takes place, as well as the leadership and skills of the staff and mentors in addressing difficult issues and ensuring that inclusivity and respect are practiced at all times. Participants need to feel that they can be open and honest with their feelings and opinions. There are many considerations that must be addressed in creating a safe space for girls. These include:

Ensuring physical safety

- All participants—including mentees, mentors, other staff and facilitators—identify as female and a girls-only space is provided (at least while the program is running).
- The program location is central and easily accessible for all participants.
- The facility or meeting space is secure.
- Consider how participants will get to and from meetings safely. For example, if participants will be walking home, what would be a good start and end time to ensure their safety? What measures should be put into place to ensure they travel safely to and from the location?



One strategy to create a safe space is to invite the girls to participate in creating group guidelines or rules. This is something you can review and modify regularly as new topics and issues come up.

Some examples of topics to cover in your guidelines include:

- Confidentiality
- Putting away or silencing cell phones
- Speak when it's your turn to speak; listen when it's your turn to listen
- Homophobia, transphobia, racism or sexism is not acceptable

Ensuring personal safety for sharing and discussion

- The girls feel they can share their experiences, stories, strengths and difficulties in the group where their peers and mentors listen and respect confidentiality. Mentors, other volunteers and staff can play important roles by modelling and coaching.
- Confidentiality is discussed, agreed upon and maintained throughout the group meetings. Participants understand that what they say, and what their mentors and peers say, is to be kept within the group, except when someone is at risk of harm.
- Boundaries and ground rules are clearly established by mentors, by staff, and by mentees themselves. The mentees understand and take ownership of the boundaries and ground rules.
- When developed as a group, additional guidelines on how the group will operate can prevent oppressive comments and encourage communication, problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Develop these guidelines together and determine how they will be enforced. Post the guidelines in a visible place during every session.
- Hold participants to standards designed specifically with them in mind.

Ensuring the experience is accessible and inclusive

- The program is accessible, regardless of ability level, economic situation, gender variance, sexual orientation or culture.
- Consider the girls' differences including their abilities, races, religious affiliations, socioeconomic status, gender identity and sexual orientations when planning activities and facilitating discussions.
- The girls must feel that the space belongs to them. If possible, put up posters and pictures on the walls and provide opportunities for the girls to take ownership of the space by decorating it, even if you have to take them down between sessions.
- Allow girls to opt out of participating in an activity or discussion.
- Create a space with gender equity. Try to erase genders stereotypes in your surroundings—from the posters you hang to the language used during your meetings.
- Ensure the program creates a diversity-positive space that is inclusive of all gender expression.



When partnering with other organizations/schools or hosting the meetings off-site, creating and maintaining a safe space can be more difficult to manage and ensure. It is important to establish policies with partners to ensure your requirements are met. For example, rules and regulations of a school or organization should align with your program vision.

Some of the suggestions in the above section can help when supporting girls to claim the space such as encouraging girls to put up decorations each session or moving the chairs into a circle. You should reflect in advance on how you will facilitate a 'safe space' when travelling into the community. Sometimes you won't have control over the physical space but you will always have some level of control over the group. Reminding girls that the rules around personal safety and inclusion still apply is a first step. You should also establish where to go and what to do if they get lost or feel unsafe. A buddy system is also helpful with this.

Creating a safe space can be an ongoing process. Safe space has to constantly be maintained and the reality is that sometimes we can only create 'safer' spaces. It is important that groups are gentle but also vigilant with constantly checking in.



"Many mentees are extremely sensitive about talking in front of others, so programs should train mentors to never force a young person to share or participate."

- Sherk (2006)

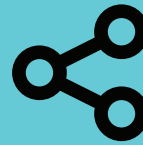
Planning Your Activities

Meetings should be regular and scheduled in advance to allow for greater attendance. Activities and discussions should be founded on the strengths and passions of the participants. They should be of interest to the participants and be both inclusive and fun. Remember that while it is important to set up your program and activities, in the end your focus should be supporting the mentoring relationship. Activities are just a way to support the relationship.

When developing any program, always reflect upon best practices. Best practices for youth mentoring programs are outlined throughout this toolkit. Along with the considerations outlined in this section of the Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit, we encourage you to apply the Best Practices from Canadian Women's Foundation (2014) throughout your program design and delivery. Canadian Women's Foundation is dedicated to ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement to support programs that reflect best practices when working with girls. Through surveys, focus groups and interviews, girls, parents and program staff have had the opportunity to identify critical elements that help shape the success of the girls' programs.

These Best Practices work to ensure that programs embrace girls' strengths, celebrate diversity and establish conditions for safe, accessible and inclusive group experiences:

- Pay explicit attention to gender equity
- Be asset-based with a positive focus
- Be participant-directed and/or participant-involved
- Be interactive and fun
- Provide a safe, friendly space for girls
- Be accessible and address any possible barriers to participation
- Respect and celebrate the diversity of girls, including all who identify as female



“Empowerment of and investment in girls ... is key in breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence and ... empowering girls requires their active participation in decision-making processes”

- United Nations (2011)

Activities can be planned by program staff, mentors and mentees. The activities that mentoring groups participate in will depend on your participants and your program goals. Often, more facilitation and structure are necessary in the beginning when participants are getting to know each other. Below are some tips for planning fun, inclusive and girl-directed activities:

Create space for girls' voices and decision-making:

- Provide mentees with an opportunity to share their input on the activities and take the discussions and activities in the direction that are most helpful and interesting to them.
- Debrief after activities and sessions to help the girls reflect upon their experiences, share their learning and integrate what they are learning.
- Allow time for relationships and connections to develop. Allow the participants time to share about their lives and experiences.

- Give each participant the opportunity and encouragement to take on a leadership role. This could be helping to design or lead an activity, leading a discussion, preparation of a snack or assuming responsibility for setting up and taking down the space.
- Involve the girls in decisions about the program and allow them to take ownership so their specific needs and desires are accommodated.

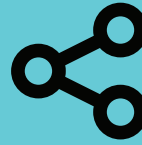
Manage group dynamics:

- Ensure that mentors are fair and treat everyone equally so that they feel like a part of the group.
- Similar interests between the girls should be highlighted and appreciated. At the same time, the uniqueness of each individual should be celebrated and valued.
- Manage girls' input to ensure that the topics or activities are best for the whole group and ensure all of the girls can participate in the activities.
- Take time to get to know the girls so that you can help to tailor the activities to their interests and personalities. Work within your group dynamics.

Ensure activities provide a positive and inclusive experience:

- Address conflict as it arises and support the girls to take leadership in resolving any issues
- When/if providing snacks or meals, check to see if there are any dietary restrictions or other health concerns that must be taken into account.
- Make the sessions interesting by organizing a field trip, using creative forms to express ideas and inviting guest speakers to share special knowledge.
- Plan for the visits and set achievable goals.

There are an immense variety of ideas for group activities and discussions. If mentors will be planning the activities, be sure to share the above tips with them. The range of topics and



“Without opportunities to share what is happening in their lives, group mentoring sessions could become just another activity-filled program.”

- Sherk (2006)



Some girls group programs open their visits with a talking stick, used in some Aboriginal Communities. The stick is passed between members to share about what's happened since they last met and what's on their mind.

“A Talking Stick is a very special tool that gives us the courage to speak the truth and the power to speak from the heart. It is a symbol of respect for the thought, stories, and individual histories of each member participating in a circle. When a person is holding the stick in a sharing circle, they speak from the heart without interruption. Other people in the circle respectfully listen to the speaker and take in their message. Everyone in the circle gets a chance to hold the Talking Stick and share their thoughts and feelings. If the receiver chooses not to speak, he or she respectfully hands it to the next person until the item has been passed to everyone participating.”

- Murphy (n.d.)

activities could include: social media, safety, bullying, healthy relationships, positive youth development, women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), among others. There are many online guides and resources available to support mentors, parents and youth-serving programs.

Be inclusive of different learning approaches:

Incorporating a variety of learning approaches can help to best meet the diverse needs of girls in your program. It would be considered a best practice to diversify the types of learning your program will use and reflect on the learning strategies best suited for different learning styles. The Eight Intelligences organize the different kinds of aptitudes that we all possess, and we should create content, space and programming that draws on all eight areas so each girl has a platform to share their talents and use their skills. You might consider having girls complete a quiz in the beginning of the program to determine the different intelligences and talents within the room.

Learning Approach	Description	Learning Strategies
Verbal/ Linguistic	You make sense of the world through language and can use words effectively either speaking or in writing. When you make puns and tell stories, you exhibit this intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read material before going to lectures • take notes of what you hear and read • describe what you have learned to others • listen to what others have learned • write out the steps/instructions to a procedure or experiment • use crossword puzzles, puns and imaginary conversations as memory devices • use your verbal/linguistic knowledge to help you study. For example, if you are taking a course in music, make up a story based on what you hear.
Logical/ Mathematical	You appreciate abstract relationships and can use numbers effectively. When you enjoy statistics and analyzing the components of problems, you exhibit this intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take notes in outline form • rank different items of information in order of their importance • organize information into different categories to aid memory • use your logic to predict outcomes based on your knowledge of the past • figure out the procedures to complete a task • create goal-setting charts for your learning objectives • use your logical/mathematical skills to help you study. For example, if you are learning about the earth, look for cause-and-effect relationships among geological events.

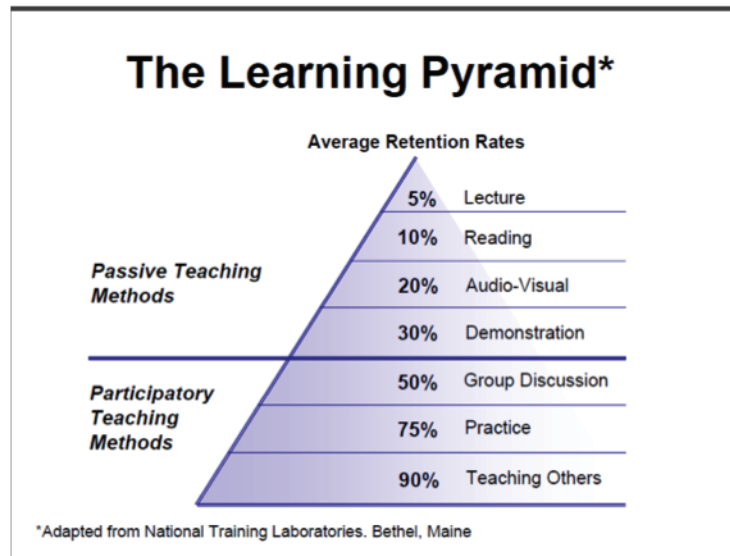
Learning Approach	Description	Learning Strategies
Visual/ Spatial	<p>You are able to perceive visual/spatial information and can create effective mental pictures. When you like doodling, you exhibit this intelligence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the visuals in your learning situation—images, shapes, designs, colours—to help you remember • create a mental picture of what you are being told • use highlighters to mark important text • when taking notes of what you hear and read, use images as well as words • draw diagrams, graphs or patterns to describe/ explain things to yourself • use visual/spatial topics in your studies. For example, if you are studying a different culture, write an essay exploring their art and paintings.
Inpersonal	<p>You are able to recognize and understand the motivations and feelings of other people. When you enjoy being on a team/group, you exhibit this intelligence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek out group learning where you can interact with others • use your knowledge of others to help you be a better participant on a team • be aware of how others feel when you ask questions and listen • explain what you have learned to other people • be sensitive to the needs and wants of your teacher/instructor/professor—you will be better able to predict his/her expectations on essays and exams • use interpersonal topics in your studies. For example, if you are studying history, write an essay in which you role play with an historical figure.

Learning Approach	Description	Learning Strategies
Intrapersonal	You are able to distinguish among your own feelings, build accurate mental models of yourself and draw on these models to make decisions about your life. When you can capitalize on your strengths and know your weaknesses, you exhibit this intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aware of the way you are thinking as you learn and evaluate its benefits • notice your emotional state when you are in a learning situation and assess how it helps or hinders you • use your ability to go “inside” to alleviate stress when you are surrounded by too much noise and activity • evaluate your personal strengths and weaknesses for different subjects • take concepts and relate them to your life/ understand how they make you feel • use intrapersonal topics in your studies. For example, if you are studying history, analyze the effect of leaders’ decision-making styles.
Bodily/ Kin-esthetic	You use all or part of your body to create products or solve problems. When you enjoy sports and dance, you exhibit this intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek out ways to learn through hands-on experience • act out the meanings of what you learn • connect body movements, gestures and facial expressions with different kinds of information • use games, mime and simulations to better understand and aid recall • learn about biofeedback methods to better understand how you learn • use your bodily/kinesthetic intelligence in your studies. For example, if you are learning mathematics, use different parts of your body as measuring tools.
Musical	You can create, communicate and understand meanings made out of sounds. When you notice sounds and tap out rhythms, you exhibit this intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the moods of different types of music to help you study different topics • make up sounds that you can attach to items of knowledge for better recall • create songs and rhythms about subjects you are learning • use music to help you reduce stress • use music topics in your studies. For example, if you are studying a different culture, ask if you can write an essay about its music.

Learning Approach	Description	Learning Strategies
Naturalist	You can distinguish among, classify and use features of your personal environment. For example, if you build collections of items such as stamps, films or musical recordings, you exhibit this intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw images of your environment when you take notes of what you hear and read • relate what you are learning to patterns in your environment • use your “collecting” ability to help you classify and organize ideas/concepts that you are learning • if the outdoors is an important part of your environment, study in a nature setting or have plants in your study location • use examples of your environment in your studies. For example, if you are studying literature and you work in an auto body shop, ask if you can write an essay about the automobile in poetry or a novel.

Chart adapted from Service Canada, www.jobsetc.gc.ca

It is also important to reflect on the most effective ways of learning information and engaging with activities. The Learning Pyramid, developed by the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine, outlines the different methods of learning and the respective percentages of retention of information. The first four levels are labelled 'passive' learning methods; the bottom three are active 'participatory' learning methods that elicit higher levels of retention or engagement. With this concept in mind, the research suggests that designing activities and content for your program should ensure space is created for learners to actively engage with the process through discussion groups, collaboration, application, practice activities and by teaching to one another.



<http://thepeakperformancecenter.com/educational-learning/learning/principles-of-learning/learning-pyramid/>

Activity Approach Description:

The following list offers some examples of different activity approaches and their associated considerations. Note these are not exhaustive categories and present just some areas to explore. Some approaches are used in isolation, while others are combined within the programs.



Topic-based activities focus on discussion of specific themes and topics, whether preplanned or directed by the girls and their interests. Some programs will start with a large group discussion/exercise/learning and then break off and explore the topic through concentrated small group discussion and real-world application. This allows organizers to explore specific themes and can be helpful to make the learning exciting and applicable.

While bringing a gender-equity component with discussion prompts, topic-based activity can create space for girls to learn voice, form opinions and openly reflect on experience.

Curriculum-based activities use preplanned session guides for the duration of the program. Typically there is a progressive nature of the sessions leading toward an end learning goal. Curriculum can explore one main learning focus or a number of key themes, but a goal should be established and curriculum should be set in advance to work toward the goal. While this structure can be helpful, it can also hinder the girl-directed nature of the mentoring programs. Be mindful of leaving space for this by having time each week for girl-directed discussion or sessions that will be determined by the girls themselves.

Goal-focused group work is used by some girls group mentoring programs to work toward a long-term goal without the presence of a formal curriculum. This is usually a large culminating project, art collaboration or community event where there is plenty of opportunity for ongoing development toward the end goal. The goal should have multiple components so girls can collaborate and work toward it—and so there is space for their varied skills, talents and interests. Room should be made for girls to direct this process, and the planning/activities should take place within the smaller mentoring groups so relationships can forge and discussion can freely take place.

Large group with smaller break-off groups. This approach is often used in combination with the other activities outlined, and organizes sessions around two main activities: an initial large group activity or discussion and then a smaller group activity or discussion that relates. This allows for structure while still leaving room for girls to direct the smaller discussion, and it provides the opportunity to schedule in specific topics and learning themes while still facilitating the fluid relationship building within the matched mentoring groups.

Community-based outings take place off-site and in the community. They usually involve external activities such as bowling or attending the movies but can also include community service work. These activities require greater consideration around youth safety, liability and screening. Since staff cannot typically take part in each of the small mentoring group outings, the mentors are taking on significant responsibility for the girls. As such, it is usually adult mentors that take part in this approach.

Recognize that the success of certain activities rests on many factors and is often specific to the girls in your group. What works with one set of mentors and girls may not be as well-received with another. Be ready to adapt and test different approaches to find out what each of the groups are more interested in and receptive to.

Family & Parental / Guardian Involvement

Research in mentoring relationships has demonstrated that mentoring relationships are stronger when parents are supportive and appropriately involved. According to the AED Centre for Gender Equity (2009), “It is very important that parents and guardians understand the important role that mentoring will play in the lives of girls. If parents and guardians are supportive, they will encourage their daughters to attend the meetings. They will ask the girls to talk about what they learned in the mentoring sessions so that the whole family can learn from the mentee.”

Gauging how much a program should involve the parents and guardians can be difficult. It is important to remember that ‘involvement’ doesn’t mean ‘participation’ in the program. Their involvement can mean parents and guardians understanding the program, knowing what the girls are doing in program, knowing how to communicate with the staff and/or mentors and supporting their daughter in the program. The community context will guide you to better understand this, as parental and guardian involvement may look different in each community. It is also often helpful to consult with other local programs. In determining this, we suggest asking the following questions:

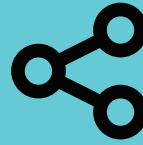
- Are there safety barriers that need to be addressed?
- Are there cultural components that may be conflicting?
- Are there opportunities to strengthen the girls’ relationships with parents/guardians?

It is also important to gauge from girls how much they want parents or guardians to be involved. The 9–13 age range is a sensitive time and the program itself is supposed to be a safe space for girls. Gaining their feedback on this component—while empowering them with decision-making in this process—will help for more positive outcomes.

You may wish to consider increasing the involvement of family, guardians and parents when:

- Parents/guardians request it
- Barriers could present if parents/guardians don’t understand the program
- There are safety issues within the community
- Parents/guardians are engaged and interested in learning more
- Girls indicate they would value and appreciate this

It is also a good idea to consult with the parents/guardians to gauge their expectations and hopes for the program. Sometimes you won’t have control over this piece since you cannot manage the dynamics at home or the availability of family members to participate. Offering multiple mediums of communication



“Rather than filling some void in the child’s life with regard to positive adult role models, these parents hoped a mentor could expand their child’s horizons, offering a range of positive experiences that would enhance their child’s well-being and expand his or her sense of self and future possibilities.”

- Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico & Lewis (2010)

can be helpful to address the varied schedules and availability of parents and guardians. You want to be mindful not to create a situation where some girls feel left out if their guardians are unable to attend in-person meetings or sessions if that is the only method of contact offered. Programs in Canadian Women's Foundation's Girls' Fund made the following suggestions for improving parental involvement:

- Invite parents to come to an information session
- Send out a regular newsletter by email that showcases photos, highlights from the program and quotes from the girls. The girls can take an active role in producing the newsletter.
- Provide parents with regular schedules of activities
- Hold a special event for parents/mothers and their daughters
- Invite parents to volunteer to speak at a meeting
- Provide regular emails/telephone calls for updates (which can be particularly helpful to accommodate schedules)

Some programs have engaged parents and guardians to help in specific volunteer roles, such as helping prepare snacks, coordinate program supplies (e.g. organizing craft materials) or providing extra supervision on field trips. Parents, guardians and other family members can also be invited to attend celebrations as special guests, or to be spectators at special events (e.g. a talent show).



Perhaps try out one of these suggestions from the field:

Family events: North York Community House hosts regular potluck meals, which provide an opportunity for parents to make a contribution, transcend language barriers and celebrate different cultures. The girls in the program also hosted an International Women's Day Celebration that gathered women from the community and provided an empowering forum for girls to showcase their learning from the program.

Holiday celebrations: Calgary Immigrant Women's Association has participated with kickoff events and holiday parties at various Calgary Housing Company locations, plus other community engagement events with the girls and their families.

Email updates & introductions: The Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton uses email correspondence with parents to facilitate ongoing communication in a way that is accessible and sustainable. The process involves a preliminary introduction of the staff person, and eventually the mentor, as well as ongoing telephone conversations and email updates. When they match the girls with mentors, they send parents and guardians a biography of the mentor as well as a photo so they feel connected to this new influence in their daughters' life.

Parental and Guardian Barriers & Resistance

While many measures can be taken to encourage and support positive parental/guardian involvement, sometimes barriers or resistance can exist beyond what a program can address. While parental/guardian involvement presents many opportunities and is a best practice, it is not a make-or-break component that should limit a girls' participation. When involvement cannot be achieved, programs should strive to keep open lines of communication and continue to offer various methods of engagement if and when the opportunity presents itself.



“Where relevant to the mentoring design or the needs of a specific child, parents may have greater involvement (e.g. accommodating activities for the needs of a child with a disability.)

Parents may play three kinds of roles in mentoring relationships:

1. **Collaborator:** Takes an active role engaging at the start of the mentoring relationship, working together with the mentor to helpfully facilitate the development and promote the efficacy of the relationship.
2. **Coach:** Coaching to ensure a productive mentoring relationship. Often this occurs when the mentor is considerably younger than the parent.
3. **Mediator:** Feel they need to take action to protect their child's best interests by trying to either preserve the mentoring relationship or end it when it becomes unstable.”

- Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico & Lewis (2010)

It can be difficult to find an approach to parental/guardian engagement that meets the needs of every single girl in your program. When creating space within program activities or events for parents/guardians, you may wish to broaden the invitation to any woman that is important or special to the girl. That way, girls will be more likely to find someone they can bring, such as an aunt, teacher or babysitter. Programs must be mindful to not exclude girls when their parent or guardian cannot attend by matching them with a staff person or volunteer and by having a conversation prior to the family/guardian event.

There is a final important consideration when planning the role of parents and guardians in your program. Within the matched mentoring groups, girls may disclose barriers, issues or a crisis that should be shared with their guardian and that requires attention and/or intervention. This can be a difficult and complex issue to navigate and your organization should have guidelines on disclosure that clearly indicate when parents/guardians should be involved and how this should be facilitated. This responsibility should rest on the organization and should not place any accountability or onus on the mentor.

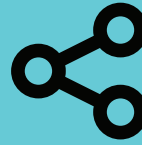
Planning for Relationship Closure

Planning for the closure of a group and the termination of relationships is an important piece of program preparation. Relationship closure implies the healthy and planned ending of a mentoring relationship. This takes place when a program communicates a clear end date from the outset and when this plan is followed through.

When developing your program, specific policies and processes should be outlined for managing positive relationship endings, whether planned or unplanned. Information on managing unplanned relationship termination can be found here in the **Managing the Group Dynamic** section.

Some suggestions for managing the positive closure of mentoring relationships include:

- Frame closure as a “graduation” from the program.
- Celebrate the time you’ve had together and all that you’ve achieved.
- Acknowledge that the program is ending and validate the feelings of participants.
- Count down until the end of the program.
- Include family or community champions where appropriate.
- Thank one another for the time, friendship and energy invested in the group.
- Develop a way to close each meeting. This will allow for some closure should a participant not return to the group prior to the official end.



“Raising the issue of closure at the beginning introduces endings as a normal phase in the mentoring process and lays the groundwork for participants to know what to expect and to prepare for this phase - whether it occurs sooner or later. It also offers the opportunity for agencies to inform all participants about the expectations regarding closure and the importance of planning and preparing for ending and saying goodbye.”

- Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico
(2014)



Closure Activities can be a fun and engaging way to give participants the opportunity to say thank you and goodbye. Below are examples of possible closure activities:

- Create ‘Warm Fuzzies’—each member gets a card with their name on it, which are passed around for everyone to write a compliment or goodbye message.
- Take a picture of the group and decorate a picture frame as a memento.
- Make friendship bracelets for each other.
- Plan a celebration party with music and treats.
- Collectively evaluate what the program has accomplished and the outcomes that were achieved.

Tips from the field for preventing early relationship termination:

Create a system for ongoing support:

Creating structured and unstructured program components that encourage ongoing dialogue and support are one of the best ways to support mentors to feel comfortable and confident in their role. Meeting debriefs, separate mentor meetings and regular check-ins are all critical pieces for preventing unforeseen early termination.

Have a backup mentor as part of your program:

Many programs have found it useful to have a backup mentor take part in the program from the beginning as a 'floating' volunteer. They undergo the same screening and training process as the other mentors and are involved in the large group activities on a regular basis. This allows for a familiar face to step in and take over a group of girls if a mentor terminates their program involvement early. Be mindful that it is important to make that 'floating' mentor feel valued and to find meaningful roles for them if they are not always needed within the matched groups. This will encourage their ongoing commitment to the program.

Consider incorporating a co-mentoring or tri-mentoring element:

By having co-mentors assigned to each small group of girls, there is a buffer if one mentor falls ill, cannot attend or withdraws from the program. They can lean on one another for support and actively share the role of mentoring the girls. Similarly, by having a tri-mentoring component, there will always be an extra mentor who can step into the role and cover a matched group if needed. This type of mentoring occurs when a mentor in one relationship becomes a mentee in another relationship. The tri-mentors are typically older than the main group of mentors or bring with them an elevated level of leadership to help guide the mentors.

Consider a buddy-system between mentoring groups:

You may want to pair off each of the small mentoring groups (matches of one mentor and several girls) into a buddy-system. While the girls and mentors will meet separately and forge their own bond and connection within their small, matched group, they might occasionally or monthly join their buddy group for an activity. This allows the girls to become familiar with another mentor in the event that their assigned mentor has to withdraw from the program.

Have each mentor write a letter as part of the early training process:

You may wish to have each mentor write a letter to the girls in their group as part of their early training process. This letter can frame their excitement for the program and their enjoyment getting to know each of the girls. It can also thank the girls for all that they share with the mentor. In the event that the mentor can no longer participate, and is unavailable for a formal goodbye, the letter can be shared with the girls to offer them validation, appreciation and closure. An added benefit is that through this activity, the mentor will be reminded of the importance of their commitment and the impact of their unplanned exit from the program.



Key Take-Aways

Taking the time to plan the logistics of your program will alleviate many bumps and questions that will arise later on. Be sure to keep in mind the following strategies:

- Familiarize yourself with the different types of mentors and mentoring models
- Explore the extent and manner in which staff can be involved in programming
- Consider various ways to establish a safe and nurturing space for girls
- Recognize the importance of parental/guardian involvement to mentoring programs and explore ways to involve them more

Additional Resources

Planning Activities

YWCA GirlSpace

Outlines and provides some information on different topics for discussion for teen and 'tween girls. <http://ywcagirlspace.ca/index.php>

Girls Action Foundation: Amplify Toolkit

Shares best practices, tips and activities for anyone wanting to start or strengthen a girls program. <http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/amplify-toolkit-1>

Dove Self Esteem Project: Self Esteem Workshop Guide for Teachers of Girls & Boys aged 11–14

Materials that will help to “open the eyes of your class or group to the way that they feel about themselves and give them a set of tools that will help them to raise their own self-esteem.” http://www.dove.ca/en/docs/pdf/WkshpGuide4TeachersBooklet_11-14yrs.pdf

Empower Young Women to Lead Change: A Training Manual

World YWCA

A resource designed to support the development of young women’s skills and to enable them to provide leadership. Includes engaging activities and is a flexible tool for learning and exploring issues like human rights, violence against women, body image and self-esteem. http://www.iwtc.org/ideas/1_empowering.pdf

Building an annual budget:

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/finances/managing-finances/annual-budget/main>

Family & Parental/Guardian Involvement

Parents as Partners: Research and Strategies for Engaging Parents in Youth Mentoring Programs (May 2014)

Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series

An archived webinar with discussions around engaging parents and guardians in mentoring relationships. http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/training_opportunities/collaborative_mentoring_webinar_series

Closure/Termination

Mentoring Fact Sheet: Avoiding Early Match Termination

This resource outlines the characteristics of failed mentoring matches and what research indicates

contributes to strong mentoring matches.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet18.pdf>

Mentoring Relationships: 7 Tips for coming to closure

This resource discussed the importance of closure, some tips for bringing mentoring relationships to a close, and some pitfalls to avoid.

<http://www.leadsevs.com/documents/article3.html>

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Recruitment, Screening & Matching



Why is this important?

Proper recruitment, screening, selecting and matching of program participants will support you in achieving your program goals, ensuring participants' safety and maximizing program effectiveness.

The recruitment and screening of mentors and mentees is a very important element of your program. In the recruitment phase, the community is introduced to your program and to your vision for the program. The screening of mentors and mentees is a critical piece of risk management. Your recruitment and screening strategies will help to ensure you have the right participants for your program and the best possible mentors to work with them. This section is designed to assist you in developing recruitment strategies, establishing screening practices and creating an approach for matching girls within mentoring groups.

Contents of this Section:

Recruiting Mentors: Get started by developing your own recruitment plan through reflecting on these major questions and planning key activities.

Engaging Mentees: Use this guide to effectively outreach and engage girls in your community.

Screening Mentors: In order to increase mentor retention and promote youth safety, follow these steps for screening mentors into your program.

Screening Mentees: Reflect on ways to ensure the girls you have recruited will be the right fit and benefit most from the mentoring program.

Selecting Mentees & Mentors: Now that you have completed the recruitment and screening, you are ready to select your mentors and girls for the program.

Matching: Use these tips to facilitate promising matches within your program.



Recruiting Mentors

When recruiting mentors, it is important to consider who you are targeting to be involved in your program and how they might best be engaged in a mentoring opportunity. Knowing who your potential mentors are and what type of mentors you want for your program will modify your recruitment strategy. Recruitment should not be a one-time activity. Since mentors' lives can change and circumstances can lead to early relationship closure, it is important to maintain ongoing communication with the community about the ongoing opportunity to get involved. Some organizations have found it helpful to have a small reserve of ready-trained and screened mentors that take on smaller volunteer roles until a more formal mentor position becomes available.

There are important considerations when recruiting volunteer mentors for a girls group mentoring program. Group mentoring programs have been shown to attract volunteer mentor applicants who might be uncomfortable with the level of intimacy and commitment needed for one-to-one matches. However, group mentoring also requires mentors who have the confidence and experience to navigate and facilitate a group setting. Group mentoring is unique in that mentors have to manage relationships with and between several mentees, and often with other mentors as well. The characteristics required in a group mentor go beyond proficiency in a specific activity such as a sport or craft.

A coordinated and planned approach to recruitment will be the most successful. The following list will guide you in creating your **Mentor Recruitment Plan**. Using the questions, considerations and examples below, complete your own Mentor Recruitment Plan using the template located in the online toolkit.

Recruitment Questions, Considerations & Examples

Who are you targeting to be a mentor?

- Will your program engage youth, university or college students, professionals, corporate sector employees and/or seniors as mentors?

What attributes will your mentors possess?

- Take time to list and prioritize the most important attributes for mentors in your program. This should reflect the girls you work with and the uniqueness of the community you are working within. For example, you may want mentors who have demonstrated consistency, the approach to connect with others and specifically young people, those who take on a strength-based attitude or those who will fulfill the commitment of the program. Engaging in targeted recruitment will ensure that your program engages the right mentors. Depending on the population of girls you work with, you may prioritize other skills sets such as conflict management, knowledge of behavioural disorders or



Many mentoring programs have expressed that recruitment efforts took more energy and time than they expected.

The best way to avoid recruitment difficulties is to assess your community, make a plan and start the process as early as possible. Don't simply wait for responses to your media, but be proactive by promoting to volunteer-rich locations such as a university social work class.

experience living in a vulnerable neighbourhood.

What are the common motivations of your target mentor group?

- Consider key motivations: What will your mentors receive from the experience? What kind of impact can they have on girls and their communities? What would be appealing to attract the participation of your desired mentor pool? For example, high school students may be looking for volunteer hours whereas university students may be interested in taking on more responsibility to gain professional development. Consider why you're running this program and how you can best express that to others and get them excited too. Passion and excitement are contagious!

What are the common constraints of your target mentor group?

- Ensuring the program is accessible for your desired mentors is critical, so consider key constraints. Among them, scheduling needs should be considered. For example, university students are not typically available during exam time and often live in a different location during summer months. Similarly, corporate sector employees may not be available during the day or conversely, may have to balance in work commitments if their mentor meetings take place during work.

How will you recruit mentors?

- Consider engaging in both formal and casual tactics. For example, presentations to groups of potential mentors about your program, as well as more casual one-on-one conversations. Some other tactics to consider: Advertisements or press releases (in local newspapers, community or school newsletters, flyers, e-bulletins, posters in community and shopping centres, etc.); booths at community service fairs, shopping centres, community events, conferences or educational institutions; presentations to classes and/or staff meetings; and word of mouth (encourage those who are eager about the program to share about it).
- Utilize and ask for support from your program champions, such as board members, advisory committee members and/or community liaisons. Often, these individuals have strong networks of adults that they can tap into. Ask for their support in developing appropriate messaging for particular target groups and then work through their contacts to recruit mentors. Use common accessible and strength-based language in your recruitment materials. Consider including testimonials and/or



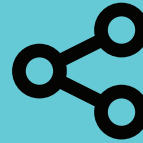
“A mentor is a woman role model from the community. A ‘role model’ is someone whom girls can admire and look up to because she leads a good life ... A mentor can be almost anyone—mother, young woman, religious leader, community leader or professional woman in any field. A mentor has real concern for the young women in the community. She builds trust. She speaks wisely and listens closely. She plans mentoring sessions and activities. A mentor is willing to do what she can to help girls succeed. A mentor inspires girls to do their best and helps them to succeed.”

- AED Centre for Gender Equity
(2009)

statistics about the program or the other work you've done in the community. Ensure that you include a call to action and information about how potential mentors can get involved.

When will you recruit your mentors?

- Keep in mind that recruitment always takes longer than we can expect or plan for. Programs should build a timeline that includes deadlines for screening and training to ensure the program start date will stay intact. Work backwards to plan out your recruitment period and always build in buffer time. For example, if you are planning a program start date for September, it would not be unreasonable to start recruitment in June given the chaotic schedules in the July and August summer months. Provide yourself with enough time to recruit all of your mentors before proceeding to training. This will save you time and resources by hosting a combined, large group training as opposed to ad-hoc individual sessions.



Research by Deloitte has suggested that there's a powerful link between frequent participation in workplace volunteer activities and several measures of employee engagement that, in turn, contribute to employees' perceptions of positive corporate culture.

- Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey (2011)

Where will your recruitment efforts take place?

- **High Schools, universities & colleges:** Depending on your target mentors, school-based recruitment can include advertising to the general public or involve more strategic engagement of prospective mentors within a specific area of study or with a specific skills set as identified by school personnel. In order to work effectively within schools, it is useful to access and develop a relationship with a champion in that school whether it be a teacher, guidance counsellor or administrator. Cultivating a strong, strategic relationship with a school representative (or two) can often allow for more internal movement and more directed recruitment than generally promoting your program widely.
- **Corporations, businesses & government offices:** Many employers will support their employees to give back to the community, whether that be by distributing information about opportunities, allowing staff to alter their work schedule to accommodate volunteer activities, allowing employees paid time off to volunteer or by matching employee volunteer hours with a financial donation to the local organization. When recruiting mentors, it can be useful to target and approach a specific staff person in the corporation/business/government office to share information on the value of mentoring and the impact on work culture. It is ideal to have a preexisting relationship with the staff person and you are encouraged to do this through your existing networks and contacts.
- **Community locations (e.g. shopping centres), events (e.g. fairs, pancakes breakfasts) & conferences:** These locations typically involve widespread, public promotion through posters, signs, in-person promotion, advertising through booths and general networking.

Who will be doing the recruitment?

- Will this be the responsibility of staff? How much time and labour will be required of them? How can

you utilize volunteer resources to support this process? For example, could a staff member and an experienced volunteer champion with your organization work together at a booth or presentation?



Sample Volunteer Mentor Job Description

For distribution as necessary, create a Volunteer Mentor Job Description to give potential mentors additional information about your program and what would be expected of them.

Equip potential mentors with the information they need about your program to make an informed decision about their involvement. This will ensure that mentors are able to fulfill the commitment you ask of them. Organize the Volunteer Mentor Job Description in an accessible and easy to follow format.

For example, a Volunteer Mentor Job Description can include:

- The key activities, tasks and responsibilities expected of mentors.
- A defined time commitment and frequency of meetings.
- Expectations of general conduct (for example: positive role modelling, investment in the girls and the program, reliability and communication with program staff).
- Events that mentors are expected to attend, such as orientation, training, banquets and/or retreats.
- Important program rules (these will be very program-specific, but could include restrictions on contact between mentors and girls outside of scheduled meetings, non-tolerance for discrimination against girls, process for closing or terminating a mentoring relationship).
- Qualifications (for example: strong listening skills, sensitivity to differences among girls, non-judgmental attitude).
- Information on next steps and how they can get involved in the program.
- It can also be helpful to distinguish what a mentor is NOT. Consider listing out qualities that better suit a staff person or general volunteer.

The Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring has great benefits to the young person being mentored, but mentors also benefit from the experience of mentoring. Keep this in mind as you are recruiting volunteers! Mentors in Canadian Women's Foundation's Girls' Fund (2014) programs shared that the experience of mentoring a girl provided them with:

- A way to give back to the community
- Affirmation of their knowledge and expertise
- A sense of hope for future generations
- A way to stay on track with their own healing/goals
- A way to practice their skills and/or get experience towards a future career
- Increased self-esteem
- A way to connect to the community and contribute
- Lessons in becoming more patient with their own daughters
- A boost to their spirits and increased happiness

Your mentor recruitment messages should highlight what the mentor will receive from the experience, including training, support and other benefits listed above.

Engaging Mentees

Just like recruiting mentors, it's important to consider whom you are targeting as mentees and how to best engage them in the program. Successful mentee recruitment means knowing your community and the girls in your community. If you're unsure about who the girls in your community are, speak with other community members for support and input. Reaching out and connecting to the potential mentees' parents or guardians, as well as organizations that may be in their personal or professional networks, is just as important as reaching the girls themselves. When planning your recruitment strategy for mentees, consider the following:



Set criteria or guidelines for your target mentees

- It is important to set criteria for mentee eligibility and referral based on your program's mission, goals and objectives (Sherk, 2006).
- Reflect upon what girls will benefit most from this opportunity. Who are you targeting and what are the program goals?
- If your program is tailored to a specific population, there will be participants with certain characteristics that will likely gain more benefits. This is not intended to be exclusive, rather to ensure girls are getting the most valuable experience possible.

Establish key connections or community partners as referral sources

- Who can help get the word out, especially to any communities your organization is not sufficiently connected with?
- Most group programs receive assistance recruiting mentees from school counsellors, teachers or other community-based organizations (Sherk, 2006). It's important to share the mentee eligibility criteria with these partners.
- Ensure these partners understand the goals of your program and are connected to diverse groups of girls that reflect your criteria

Develop promotional materials

- How are you going to get girls excited about this opportunity? What promotional materials can you create to advertise the opportunity?
- Help girls relate to your promotional material by using youth-friendly language, graphics that appeal to girls and images that reflect different ages, sizes, races and abilities.



Avoid adding stigma to participants by using strength-based language. For example, ask community partners to “nominate” girls for the program, rather than “refer.” Promote the program as a “leadership and learning opportunity” rather than a program for girls “at risk”.

- Include information in your material that is important to parents/guardians, such as the program's purpose, objectives and topics.
- Referral forms can be helpful in spreading information about your program. It's important to note that a family's right to privacy should also be protected when using referral forms.

It's imperative to carefully consider how you are going to recruit the right participants for your program. As you develop this plan, review the goals, outcomes and program participants that you have determined earlier.

Screening Mentors

It is the responsibility of the mentoring program to ensure the maximum protection of the participants involved in the program. Effective mentor screening is a crucial factor in determining the success and safety of your program. Research suggests that within group mentoring programs, the “initial screening of potential mentors should follow the best practices developed for one-on-one mentoring programs”, (Kuperminc & Thomason, 2014). Consideration should be paid to the uniqueness of a girls group mentoring program. Girls face particular challenges during pre-adolescence and mentors should be equipped to support the girls and comfortable discussing these issues.



Screening your mentors will also directly affect the level of retention in your program. Asking the right questions up front and assessing mentor expectations will allow you to select individuals that will thrive in the group mentoring format and work toward the program goals. If mentors enter the program with realistic expectations there is a reduced chance of early relationship closure.

Comprehensive screening is an essential part of any responsible mentoring program and includes aspects such as:

1. An Application Form

This may include

- Name, contact information and other relevant details
- Reason for applying and expectations
- Availability
- Employment and volunteer history

In addition to these standard components, it can be helpful to think about the girls you intend to work with and what they would best benefit from in a mentor. If they have certain interests, hobbies, goals or needs, you can use this application to identify and prioritize these relevant details. Some programs have used checklists for mentors to identify hobbies/areas of interest, knowledge of certain populations or career goals. Ensure that the information you are collecting on the application form is relevant to the mentor role.

2. Interview/Assessment with a Qualified Staff

Interviews allow for an opportunity to get to know the applicant better and gather more information to assess their suitability for the program. Develop questions that will allow you to better understand the prospective mentor’s interests and values, history of relationships, motivations for involvement, suitability to engage in a mentoring relationship and ability to manage a group dynamic. This also creates an opportunity to give the applicant some initial information about the program and the program expectations.

You can ask direct questions and have discussion across a number of topics. These topics might include:

- motivation for participating in the program
- expectations of the program
- interests and favourite activities
- attitudes and belief systems
- experience working with children, youth and adults
- level of flexibility, time commitment and ability to sustain relationships
- strengths and weaknesses
- experience working in and facilitating groups

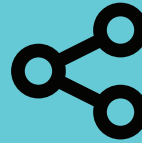
There are other topics that are relevant to a prospective mentor's suitability or fit for the role that may carry sensitivities and must be approached accordingly. These topics can be explored through indirect situational or behaviour-type questions. Program staff must be mindful of how questions are framed to avoid questions that are inappropriate, illegal or daunting enough to scare them away from continuing the process. If gathering their views or experience on more sensitive areas, be careful to ask questions generally or in a situational context. For example, you may want to find out their view and use of drugs and alcohol. If exploring this subject, you could first stress the importance of being a good role model and then ask "Do you feel the use of drugs and alcohol is inappropriate when working as a mentor?" A prospective mentor's relationship history may also be relevant as well as their ability to handle stressful situations, level of sensitivity to rejection or experience managing a crisis.

3. Security Checks

Security checks should include a Criminal Records Check, a Vulnerable Sector Check, as well as a Child Intervention Check. These checks may have different names, depending on your location, and are usually completed by police or RCMP as well as your local Children's Services Office. Your organization may already have policies in place around security checks so confirm with your organization that you are following the required process.

4. Reference Checks

Completing reference checks on potential volunteer mentors helps to verify past employment and volunteer positions, as well as ensure suitability of the individual as a mentor. Questions should be open-ended, with additional probing questions used to garner further information that will be helpful in assessing the safety



According to Spencer, "unfulfilled mentor expectations are one important contributing factor to mentoring relationships that terminate early." During the interview stage, program staff have the opportunity to discover a mentor's expectations for the mentoring relationship, as well as coach the applicant if they have unrealistic expectations. Programs may see longer matches if they "offer greater assistance with identifying and articulating preferences for and expectations of the mentoring relationship"

- Spencer (2006)

and suitability of the applicant. Applications should include a signed release agreeing that references may be contacted.

5. A Signed Mentor Agreement

By creating a formal agreement for the mentor to sign, you are reiterating the importance of their commitment and ongoing participation in the program. This can include a commitment to:

- complete the duration of the program
- attend training sessions
- create a safe space
- provide non-judgmental leadership
- seek and accept support from the organization and/or program staff as necessary
- work cooperatively with other mentors if applicable

By creating and implementing a strategy to screen volunteers, programs can manage some of the risk involved in connecting adults and older youth from the community with younger youth or children. It's important to note that many programs also use the initial mentor training session(s) as an additional step in the screening process for mentors. The training session can be a helpful opportunity to observe a mentor's interactions with other mentors and to gain a better sense of who they are and what strengths they possess. It also allows you the opportunity to look out for difficulties or issues that may present themselves when the mentor is in a mentoring role.



Tips from the field when screening mentors:

Be mindful of competing commitments: One of the most common reasons for early relationship termination is that the mentor had too many other commitments. Be sure to inquire about their other commitments, how much time these take and be clear about the level of commitment and hours required for the mentoring role.

Avoid mentors mentoring for the wrong reasons: During the interview process, pay attention to why the mentor is interested in joining the program. If they are focusing on their own material gains—an honorarium, reference letter, volunteer hours, etc.—they may not be the best fit. If they are approaching the relationship seeming to fill a void, this is a warning sign of potential boundary-crossing to come.

Leave your biases at the door: We have often heard that sometimes the best mentors are those you may have initially least suspected. Each mentor brings with them life experiences and histories that will be unique and in some cases complicated. Sometimes this provides the greatest platform for learning and relationship building with the girls in your program. If they have navigated life challenges that the girls are also experiencing, they will bring understanding and advice from lived experience that can be incredibly impactful.

Prioritize diversity/common interests/shared values: We know that shared interests are the best way of matching mentors with girls. If you have already engaged the girls for your program—or are familiar with girls that are interested in joining—try to look for mentors who have shared interests and values. You might also consider the value of diversity within the group and the benefits of exposing girls to mentors of different backgrounds and cultures. Take time to reflect on these issues before you start your mentor recruitment.

Use orientation & training sessions to flag potential challenges: The next step in your program development will be the training of mentors. This presents an opportunity to see the mentor in action and to observe their uptake of the material as well as their interactions with others. Be sure to use this space to dig deeper with any tough topics and realities the mentors will face in the program. It is better to manage expectations from the outset in order to flag potential challenges.

Screening Mentees

Setting criteria for and screening the children/youth in your program is as important as the mentors themselves. Your program should be clear and intentional about the girls you wish to serve, and should do what it can to ensure the right girls are participating. This is particularly important in group mentoring, where the relationship development is not only guided by the mentor but by the peer mentees. Screening processes can also help to ensure you are including girls that can benefit most from the program (and may exhibit higher needs) and not simply engaging the 'already engaged' girls in your community.

Application and permission forms are important pieces of the mentee screening process. Referrals or nominations for youth participation can be solicited from parents/guardians, teachers, guidance counsellors, youth workers, churches, youth-serving agencies, community centres, etc. Consider the collaborations identified in the **Assessment of Strengths, Needs and Collaborations** section of the toolkit and how you can engage those in your community to involve girls in your program. Additional activities that can be included in your mentee screening process include: an interview with the child/youth; an interview with the parent(s)/guardian(s); a consultation with the person who referred/nominated the mentee; the training and orientation session(s) for both the mentee and their parent(s)/guardian(s). Parent/guardian relationships can have an impact on the involvement of girls in your program. Gauging the parent/guardian's interest early on can help determine whether barriers might be created or what types of engagement and communication would best support the girls' ongoing involvement.

Selecting Mentors & Mentees

After you have recruited mentors and mentees and completed the screening and assessment process, how do you select your participants and mentors and inform them of their acceptance?

Girls should be selected based on the goals of your program. Take a look back through the Theory of Change or Logic Model that you created in the **Planning Your Program** section, and consider how each participant fits. Also consider the strengths and needs of the potential mentors and mentees, and how these can contribute to the success of your program. When you have made a decision, inform your participants.

When selecting mentors, your organization should take time to prioritize what is most important and rank the must-have criteria accordingly. Among other factors, mentors should be selected based on their fit with program goals, their appropriate expectations, ability to relate to girls and demonstrated reliability.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada shares the following piece of advice when informing participants of their acceptance:

“It is important to promptly let applicants know whether or not they are accepted. Sensitivity is essential in communicating non-acceptance. This is particularly true with a mentee who is not suitable for the program. It is usually preferable to make and to communicate a decision not to accept a mentee as early in the process as possible, (while still giving fair consideration to the application), so that the young person’s hopes are not heightened and then crushed. Non-acceptance must then be communicated to the child or youth honestly and in a manner that he or she can understand.”

(Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 2005)

It is highly recommended that you offer referrals and suggestions to other organizations and services to girls who are not accepted. For mentors who are not accepted, you might suggest other volunteer opportunities or possibly present other volunteer roles within your program or organization—even if short term. This is especially important when working with older teen mentors whose potential feelings of rejection may be particularly sensitive. Frame the experience positively by suggesting you have another opportunity that might better fit their interests or skills set. You might also consider providing a letter for those turned away at this stage. This provides clarity for the reasons why they were determined to not be the best fit, and also a continuity of information within your organization which can be helpful if you face staff turnover. If a new staff person comes on board, they should be informed of who has previously applied and been turned away from the program since it is possible these individuals will reapply. This is particularly applicable if safety concerns were identified.



When selecting your program participants, be sure to have a wide lens. Ensure that your program is accessible to both mentors and mentees who may be facing barriers to participation. Often the most unlikely and overlooked mentors and mentees make wonderful program participants!

Mentee and mentor applicants who pass your screening and fit within the goals of your program can be congratulated and invited to the program.

Matching

After you've selected your participants, you can begin the process of matching mentors with mentees. Consider the difference between matching individuals in a one-on-one mentoring relationship versus a group mentoring relationship. As Sherk (2006) asserts: "staff will need to match peers-to-peers (in deciding the make-up of each group), mentor-to-mentor (if there are two or more mentors in each group), and mentors to specific groups of mentees." Matching within groups requires additional consideration as to how each participant will relate and engage with the others.



Some group mentoring programs try to place siblings and friends with different mentors, to allow them the space to grow and develop in new relationships.

In any mentoring program, matching program participants should be intentional. It is important that mentees are visiting with the same mentor each visit as it is the consistent positive relationships that makes the difference, fosters resilience and empowers young people.

Criteria for Matching Participants with a Mentor

When selecting your participants:

- Match skills, strengths, and experiences of both mentors and mentees
- Consider how the group can be formed in ways to utilize each person's skills, strengths and experiences
- Align shared interests, such as hobbies and preferences
- Balance similarities between participants, such as attitudes and temperament
- Prioritize shared life experiences, neighbourhood or community
- Reflect upon motivation for engagement from both parties



The Meet & Greet Process

This approach involves input from the mentors and the mentees and gathers everyone initially in a large group orientation to observe potential matches:

"Mentors should be instructed beforehand (i.e. at the start of the Orientation) to make note of with which children they meet and seem to feel a natural connection. Mentees will only be told to try to remember the names of the adults they meet. Program staff will make notes throughout the Orientation about the interactions and natural pairings that occur as well; but the program staff will pay most attention to those children who do least well because of being overly shy or active, aggressive, or demanding—as these are the least likely to be selected by mentors."

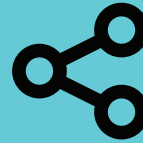
- Michael Karcher (2007)

Process for Matching Participants with a Mentor

There are many different processes for matching participants in a Girls Group Mentoring Program. Two common approaches are highlighted below:

1. Girl-Directed Matching

- Staff facilitate activities and expose the girls to each of the mentors during a large group session. Staff take note of how the girls and mentors interact, as well as how the girls relate with one another. Upon leaving, girls are asked ‘who stood out to them?’ and staff record this. Mentors are presented with similar questions like ‘who did you best bond with?’ Staff will make the matches based on the feedback from both parties. The matched groups begin meetings in the following weeks.



“In long-term, relationship-based (developmental) mentoring programs the importance of intentional matching procedures cannot be underestimated. Building the foundation for lasting, quality mentoring relationships begins with effective matching.”

- Oregon Mentors (2014)



“The mentors-mentees were given small activities to do in the beginning and staff would monitor who worked well together. As well, the mentors and mentees themselves were asked who they worked well with. This gave us an opportunity to let them create meaningful relationships based on their own experience.”

- North York Community House

2. Developmental or Activity Matching

- Developmental matching is typically staged over a series of sessions. Girls and mentors all take part in large group activities for several weeks. Staff create space for the girls to get to know one another and observe which natural relationships are developing. After three or four large group activities over a series of weeks, staff break them up into ‘trial’ matched small mentoring groups based on the natural relationships formed. Girls are not informed that these are trials, rather they are informally tested out in case they do not work as hoped for. They ‘trial’ these matches for two to three weeks before announcing the formal match. This allows time to make changes as needed since sometimes it takes several weeks before conflict arises or issues form between mentees or with the mentor.



“We chose to match the mentor and mentees through introducing the mentors to the girls in the regular girls group programming and observing who was bonding and connecting with whom. This allowed us to see if any connections were forming naturally. Along with this we also asked the mentors what skills, talents, or hobbies they may have and compared this to hobbies and interests the girls stated they had when starting in the girls program.”

- Wahbung Abinoonjiiag Inc. (2013)

Remember to consider the girls' compatibility with the mentor and with the other girls in the mentoring group. In order to manage group dynamics, it is important to balance out different behaviours, temperament and attitudes. Some programs have found it helpful to break up good friends to avoid cliques and to encourage new relationships to form. It is also important to know which girls are in the same class/school, who is entering as friends and where conflict currently exists between the girls at school or in their community. Facilitating diverse groups can also be strategically done so girls can learn from one another's perspectives—such as consciously matching girls of different cultures, sexualities, life experience, community, countries of origins, etc.

Additionally, when using co-mentors, it is important to be mindful of who you are matching. In addition to the above listed points, consider their goals for the program, leadership and personality type. The bond and positive relationship they forge will set the tone for the group dynamic.

The process you choose for matching participants will depend on your program goals, the resources available, and your program participants.



Key Take-Aways

The energy spent recruiting, screening, selecting, and matching mentors and mentees will lead to a stronger, healthier and safer program for all your participants. When developing these program pieces it is helpful to:

- Utilize a variety of strategies to recruit both mentors and mentees to your program
- Understand the importance of a thorough screening process for both mentors and mentees
- Consider what will lead to strong matches between mentors and mentees, between the girls, and, when applicable, between the mentors

Additional Resources

2011 Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey

This report highlights research by Deloitte suggests a powerful link between frequent participation in workplace volunteer activities and several measures of employee engagement that, in turn, contribute to employees' perceptions of positive corporate culture.

http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_US/us/About/Community-Involvement/volunteerism/impact-day/f98eec97e6650310VgnVCM2000001b56f00aRCRD.htm#

AMP Mentor Application/Screening Process Overview

Outlines the key aspects in the Mentor Screening process.

<http://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/themes/albertamentors/library/amp-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program/pdf/%20Tool%2009%20-%20A%20-%20Application%20screening%20process%20overview.pdf>

AMP Mentoring Program School Referral Form

An example of a form that can be used when asking schools to refer mentees to a program.

<http://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/themes/albertamentors/library/amp-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program/pdf/Tool%2009%20-%20B%20-%20Mentoring%20program%20referral%20form%20for%20schools.pdf>

AMP Promotional Material

AMP offers free promotional material that can be used for mentoring programs.

<http://albertamentors.ca/about-us/download-amp-promotional-material/>

AMP Recruitment Guidelines & Tips (Mentors & Mentees)

Shares considerations for recruitment in your own community, as well as tips to recruit mentors and mentees.

<http://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/themes/albertamentors/library/amp-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program-toolkits/create-a-mentoring-program/pdf/Tool%2008%20-%20Recruitment%20guidlines%20and%20tips.pdf>

Charity Village: The Top 10 Places to Find Volunteers

Charity Village describes the best places to discover volunteers for a program or event.

https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=the_top_ten_places_to_find_volunteers&last=552

Charity Village: Volunteer Recruitment resources

Contains a list of resources, including articles and websites, to aid in the recruitment of volunteers.

<https://charityvillage.com/topics/volunteer-engagement/volunteer-management/volunteer-recruitment.aspx>

Employer Support of Volunteering

Statistics Canada published this article about employee-supported volunteering, which provides information about the ways in which employers support volunteering in Canada.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11670-eng.htm>

Marketing for the Recruitment of Mentors: A Workbook for Finding and Attracting Volunteers

A comprehensive guide to marketing for mentors.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/marketing-1.pdf>

Qualities of Successful Mentors: MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership

A downloadable word document that describes the characteristics of successful mentors.

http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_592.doc

2011 Statistics Canada: Volunteer Rate and Distribution of Volunteer Hours

Shares the Canadian statistics for who volunteers and how many hours they engage in volunteer work.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-649-x/2011001/tbl/tbl21-eng.htm>

Volunteer Recruitment

This document highlights the basics of volunteer recruitment, including additional information on the four P's of marketing and a worksheet to create a Recruitment Plan.

<http://volunteeralberta.ab.ca/varc/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/rcvo-volrecruitmt.pdf>

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Training



Why is this Important?

Research has demonstrated that effective training for mentors strengthens their mentoring relationships. Training for mentees prepares them for the mentoring relationship and encourages them to make the most out of the opportunity.

Training is one of the most important steps in mentoring program development. Early training of mentors strengthens mentor effectiveness and establishes a foundation for positive relationship development, which in turn enhances mentee and mentor satisfaction and directly impacts their retention. By supporting your mentors to feel prepared from the outset of the program, they can more easily navigate the role and any challenges that arise.

It is also important to incorporate a training component for mentees in your program. Mentee training can prepare girls for what they can expect from a mentor and the role that

they, as a mentee, play in contributing to a quality experience. The following section highlights some key aspects of mentor and mentee training.

Contents of this Section:

Mentor Training - First Steps: Get started by exploring five key steps you should consider when developing your mentor training program.

Mentor Training - Content Development: Create a comprehensive training program drawing on these suggested topics and supporting materials.

Mentee Training: Don't forget that training mentees is an important step in setting the program up for success. Consider these training ideas for preparing the girls in your program.



Mentor Training: First Steps

Training prepares mentors by providing a foundation of knowledge so that they have a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities and characteristics of a successful mentor. Mentor training provides useful skills and frameworks, helps mentors gain confidence in relationship building and supports them to understand the dynamics of mentoring girls in a group setting.

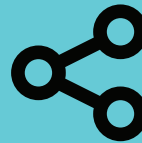
Training should be used as a part of the screening process; some mentors are better suited for one-to-one mentoring and the training process should reveal this. In-person training allows staff to observe how mentors communicate and interact. It also allows for the opportunity to observe a mentor's understanding of content in order to determine whether potential mentors have the qualities and interests that make them suitable for girls group mentoring programs. Training also helps potential mentors to determine if the program and commitment is right for them.

Training will look different from one organization to the next based on the goals of your program and the girls and mentors you are engaging. There are five key steps to consider when developing your training program:

1. Determine how much training to offer
2. Create a positive space
3. Develop your initial training content
4. Devise a plan for ongoing training
5. Create a community among mentors

1. Determine how much training to offer

Research indicates that more training is better. Mentors who attended less than two hours of training reported the lowest levels of relationship quality while those who attended six or more hours reported the strongest relationships with youth (Herrera, Sipe & McClanahan, 2000). Much of the available research for training mentors is based on one-on-one mentoring programs, however, and group mentoring requires additional skills and training for successful relationships such as facilitation and group management skills. As such, one could infer that the amount of training required for mentors in a group mentoring program may actually be more than that of a one-to-one program. In the 2013–2014 evaluation of Canadian Women's Foundation's funded girls group mentoring programs, organizations with 10–20 hours of training (including ongoing training) reported the strongest feedback from their mentors in terms of feeling prepared and satisfied with the training provided.



What we learned about training in girls group mentoring programs:

Girls group mentoring programs funded by Canadian Women's Foundation took part in an evaluation process. Mentors were asked to measure their feelings of preparedness and satisfaction of the training provided. Based on their responses, 100% of mentors with 10–20 hours indicated they were 'completely' or 'very' satisfied with the training provided. Those who received between 5–10 hours also had positive feedback, whereas those with less than 4 hours reported mixed feedback on how prepared or satisfied they felt.

- Canadian Women's Foundation
(2011)

It is important to consider the various degrees and types of training as well. While much of the training captured in the Canadian Women’s Foundation evaluation focused on formal, structured learning sessions, it also included informal learning and training that can be equally valuable when preparing a mentor for their mentoring role. This can take the form of shadowing a seasoned mentor or learning from staff through informal discussion.

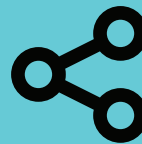
When determining the number of hours for mentor training in your program, space, staff time and supplies will all need to be factored into both your logistics plan and your budget. See the **Program Logistics** section for more considerations when planning your training practices. You should also consider constraints related to scheduling and availability of mentors. When developing your training program, check in with the community to ensure you are requiring a commitment that is realistic. Be ready to adapt when some mentors cannot attend every session. Having a ‘buddy system’ or a comprehensive training manual can be helpful in bringing those mentors up to speed.

2. Create a positive space

The mentor training sessions will be best received in an environment where the mentors feel comfortable to ask questions and engage freely with the material while feeling supported by staff and one another. Mentors will be more receptive to training in a physically and psychologically safe space. Reflect on how you can create a space that will be conducive for a positive learning experience for mentors.

Start with a platform of transparency and trust. Be sure that the materials are clear and easy to follow. Mentors will enter the program with varied levels of learning, so ensure materials are simplified, accessible and connected to real practice. It can also be helpful to incorporate a variety of learning approaches to accommodate the different kinds of learners within the group. Reflecting on the material in the **Planning Activities** section can be helpful when determining your approach.

The use of icebreakers, opening activities and fun ‘get to know you’ exercises are valuable in creating a positive space for mentor training. This not only helps to foster the personal and social aspects mentors are seeking, as well as keeping the process interactive and engaging, but also serves to create a community among the mentors where they are learning together and from one another. Breaking out of a structured, school-like format will encourage mentors to feel more excited about the training. These opening activities can take many forms and there are a wide variety of resources available to help you generate ideas. See the online version for an example of an **opening session plan**.



The Girls’ Fund Evaluation revealed that mentors place a great amount of value on training that:

- Incorporates a personal and social element where they could meet and interact with other mentors
- Is interactive and engaging
- Involves hands-on participation and open discussion
- Teaches useful ways to deal with different situations with girls in the mentoring groups

- Canadian Women’s Foundation
(2014)

The physical meeting room itself is an important consideration when developing a positive space for mentor training. Source out a training space that is open enough to allow for interactive activities and small group discussions if this is a part of your training program. Consider having groups meet in a large open circle rather than meeting across tables. Incorporating the opinions, views and learning needs of mentors can help them feel ownership over the space and process, which in turn can support mentors to feel comfortable to ask questions and feel in control of the learning they are experiencing.



You can also incorporate an opening ‘check-in’ and ‘debrief’ where each member of the circle shares their hopes for the training from the outset and reflects on the training at the end.

3. Develop your initial training content:

While the content of initial mentor training will vary depending on the particular program and community, in girls group mentoring programs two key elements should exist:

- **General Mentoring Concepts**
- **Skills for Facilitating Girls Groups**

General mentor training may be conducted online, in person or a combination of both approaches. This piece of the training should equip your mentors to be effective (e.g. how to build strong relationships with mentees), as well as provide them with important information about the program and your organization. The majority of these topics are typically addressed in the pre-match phase of mentor training, though they can be revisited in greater depth at later sessions.

Training mentors on facilitation skills is another critical area that should be delivered before the mentors start meeting with their groups. This will ensure that mentors are prepared and positioned to steer the healthy development and progression of their matched mentoring groups. While some facilitation training should be raised in the initial mentor training, it is often more of a focus in the ongoing training plan. This allows mentors to continue building these skills within the context of their programs and can support them to collaboratively address and work through any issues that arise in the relationship development stages.

4. Plan for ongoing mentor training:

In addition to the training that mentors receive at the outset, ongoing training opportunities are beneficial and, in most cases, essential. Ongoing training allows mentors the opportunity to continue to develop and share their skills, and helps them to remain connected to the organization. This kind of supplementary training can present opportunities for mentors to hear guest speakers on topics relevant to their mentees (e.g. young girls and bullying), discuss challenges and successes in the mentoring experience, receive support from staff and other mentors, brainstorm new activities and share other learning. These opportunities can take a less structured form and serve more as informal, ‘on-the-go’ training. This might include shadowing a more seasoned mentor or sitting in on a staff meeting. Ultimately, investing in

ongoing training opportunities will make for more engaged and knowledgeable mentors who are better positioned to effectively perform in their role. The designated staff person responsible for the mentoring program should have time built into their role to develop and maintain this ongoing training component.

A major focus of ongoing training should be incorporating a mentor-directed element that encourages input and leadership. Often programs deliver quite structured training in the initial sessions, but programs should create flexible space for mentor input. Some tips include:

- Ask the mentors what they want to learn about.
- Train on emerging topics while mentoring relationships develop. Make it relevant to what’s happening in the relationship and with the girls.
- Consider what expertise your mentors have that could be shared. Allow them to be involved in leading activities based on their own interests, knowledge and skills.
- Facilitate conversations to stay abreast of what is taking place within the community and whether there are any emerging opportunities, challenges or barriers that should be discussed and explored.



The Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton trains university athletes to be mentors in their program. Mentors participate in at least 6 hours of pre-match training in the form of workshops and discussions that cover topics related to mentoring and relationship building, but also specifically for working with girls. Such topics include gender-positive language, female empowerment and diversity—particularly for understanding the income-related challenges in the surrounding neighbourhood. The training also has a strong focus on team building through fun events and activities, such as participating in circus school. This helps to build the sense of camaraderie among mentors and increases their feelings of support and engagement before diving in to the mentoring relationship.

It is recommended that you take the time to reflect upon and evaluate your training program. Groups should leverage the feedback of mentors to ensure that



Training new mentors partway through the program:

At times you may have to add a new mentor partway through the program as a result of another mentor having to leave their commitment early. When bringing on a new mentor partway through the program, it is important that they have the opportunity to be trained on all of the topics covered in the initial mentor training sessions. For this reason, it is recommended that learning or information materials are created from the outset of the program and available if you face this situation. You may offer the new mentor ‘shadow training’ by matching them with a seasoned mentor they can observe. This can offer them a sense of the role and ways to facilitate positive group development. Be sure to create space for new mentors to meet and feel connected to other mentors. A welcome meeting or welcome celebration can be helpful in achieving this.

future training is meeting the needs of those involved. Some programs have found it helpful to conduct an evaluation survey to generate feedback on specific topics in an anonymous format. This can be conducted after the initial mentor training to help inform the plans and topics for the ongoing mentor training plan or it can be conducted halfway through the overall program to determine the actual utility and retention of the training information.

5. Create a community among mentors

Training mentors in a group format presents the valuable opportunity for mentors to connect with one another. There are significant gains from facilitating camaraderie between mentors. Some of these include:

- **Increased support system:** Connecting mentors provides them with more people to bounce ideas off of, seek advice from and gain new perspective or feedback.
- **Increased rewards:** Mentors are not only forging relationships with mentees but also with their peers.
- **Increased retention:** When mentors feel more connected with one another, they can gain a greater sense of belonging, a stronger network and greater satisfaction.
- **Increased time:** Running large trainings as opposed to many individual sessions will save time in the long run.

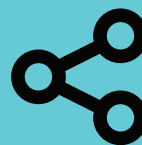
Peer-directed mentor training should always be guided by program staff to eliminate misinformation. Be sure to set clear instruction and policy for when mentors should come to staff for training and clarification. Topics related to safety, program design and organizational policy should always be reinforced and directed by staff.

Developing a strategy to intentionally create a community among mentors will require an added dimension of planning but will be well worth the effort. Consider these tips when organizing your group mentor training:

Schedule the training dates well in advance. It is ideal to offer two options—an evening session during the week and a day session during the weekend. This will accommodate most schedules.

Provide ongoing training opportunities!

Create a space for continued conversation. While you may



Facilitating peer support among mentors has benefits for mentees too!

Marshalla, Lawrence & Peugha's study (2013) of peer support in the Young Women's Leadership Program explored the value of facilitating support and training between college-aged women matched in girls mentoring groups. Among their findings, they noted that mentor peer support can be linked to group cohesion, which can increase mentee engagement. Furthermore, this type of peer support can also increase mentors' confidence in their abilities in the relationship development process. Mentors were more comfortable setting limits in their relationships and taking risks associated with intimacy and closeness when supported by their peers.

- Marshalla, Lawrence & Peugha
(2013)

have weekly debriefing sessions and ongoing training, it can also be helpful to have a Facebook page or similar online platform for further communication.

Provide fun opportunities beyond training where they can celebrate their progress and forge stronger connections with one another. This could include outings, dinners, events and movie nights, among other ideas.

Consider a buddy system. If you aren't using co-mentors, consider pairing mentors to fill each other in on missed information and cover one another as needed. If you are using co-mentors, be sure to intentionally facilitate conversations between them early on so they can discuss their shared role and develop plans of how they will collaborate.

Mentoring Training: Content Development

The content you develop for mentor training should reflect the goals of your program, the mentors you work with and their level of knowledge and experience, as well as the particular realities of the girls in your community. It is highly recommended that organizations develop a mentor training plan and framework at the beginning of the program to ensure that all key topics will be delivered at appropriate times.

Before beginning to develop content, review the topics with the perspective of your mentors in mind. When working with teen mentors you must consider the level of language, scope of information and framing of certain topics to ensure they are accessible and comfortable. When working with adult mentors, you should consider the level of life experience or professional experience they bring as well as their literacy levels to ensure the information will resonate and not feel too overwhelming. There should be a balance between the technical training on policies, safety and positive behaviours while still ensuring plenty of space for mentors to get excited and have fun. Be sure that you are communicating the rewarding and fun experience the mentors will have in the program.

Mentor Training Content: General Concepts

There are a wide variety of training concepts that can be explored through your mentor training. The list below highlights some of the most important categories that programs should include. The list might look daunting when first starting out, but remember that some of this training can be simply introduced in the beginning and revisited later in the ongoing training. Some organizations have found it helpful to create a PowerPoint presentation that covers a number of the information-heavy topics. This is typically presented at the beginning of the session before the interactive components of the mentor training.

The following list, though not exhaustive, summarizes some important topics to incorporate in mentor training:

Training Topic	Activity Ideas	Handouts / Tools
Specific program details: Orientation to the program should include details about scheduling, location, policies and goals of the program and the host organization.	Include a tour of the space to help mentors connect with the organization. Encourage mentors to exchange information to connect with one another. If using a group training format, include an icebreaker	Circulate a copy of the schedule and contact information for their staff point of contact.
Specific details of the stakeholder roles: Discuss the responsibilities, purposes and expectations of mentors, mentees and staff. Parents or guardians should also be considered.	Ask mentors to talk about the impact a mentor has had on their life and pull out the qualities that made that relationship impactful. Generate a comprehensive list from the group and apply these to the role. You might encourage mentors to generate a contract to themselves stating the impact or qualities they aspire to have in their mentoring relationship.	Have a handout that outlines group rules or a mentor contract and code of conduct. Roles of a Mentor Activity - Training New Mentors , National Mentoring Center (2007) http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1133.pdf

Training Topic	Activity Ideas	Handouts / Tools
<p>The importance of their role and relationship closure: Mentors should understand their role and the positive impact they will have on the girls’ lives. They should also understand that this can result in a negative influence if the ending is not managed carefully. This should not intimidate mentors with the commitment they are undertaking, but should instead focus on the importance of healthy closure when the role ends.</p>	<p>Review scenes from common movies that show emotional outcomes for an individual that do not experience the benefits of proper relationship closure. Have the mentors write a letter to their future mentees thanking them for the opportunity to work together and learn from one another.</p>	<p>When introducing material that could be potentially distressing or evoke difficult emotions, such as this topic, be sure to offer a ‘trigger warning’ so participants are prepared for the material and have the option to excuse themselves. This helps to maintain a safe and positive space for participants.</p>
<p>Youth development: Trainers should introduce concepts of cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. This will help them have a sense of what positive youth development looks like and how the relationship and individual might progress in the relationship.</p>	<p>Use the 40 developmental assets to do exercises that demonstrate positive youth development and address strengths-based engagement (below).</p>	<p>40 Developmental Assets, Search Institute (1997, 2007) http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18</p> <p>Mentoring Fact Sheet, Mentoring Resource Center (2007) http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet14.pdf http://www.gotassets.net/developmental-assets.html</p> <p>What Supports do Youth Need?, Training New Mentors, National Mentoring Center (2007) http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1133.pdf</p>
<p>Strength-based engagement: Mentors should participate in strength-based practices to build on capabilities, knowledge, skills and assets that already exist to help develop the resiliency needed to overcome challenges.</p>	<p>See above for activities related to the 40 developmental assets</p>	<p>See above for 40 developmental assets handout.</p>

Training Topic	Activity Ideas	Handouts / Tools
<p>Diversity, inclusion and cultural competence. Mentors will benefit from a basic background of relevant key concepts such as racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as gender variance, sexual orientation and disabilities.</p>	<p>In addition to structured training on these concepts, bring the learning to life by some of the following: deconstruct media to show the lack of representation; incorporate different cultural food each week to explore different cultures; and celebrate a range of holidays in the program from different countries, cultures and religions.</p>	<p>Amplify Toolkit, Girls’ Action Foundation (2009) http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/files/Amplify_2010_LR_0.pdf</p>
<p>Strategies, issues and considerations for relationship-building: Understanding the relationship development process—particularly in the context of the mentoring relationship—can be very helpful. It is also important to have clear guidelines on how to handle certain behaviours within the group when conflict arises in the relationship building process. (see Managing the Group Dynamic section).</p>	<p>Discussion and role-playing scenarios can be helpful to practice managing conflict, healthy communication or active relationship-building strategies. Role-playing activity Examples: http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/training.pdf</p>	<p>Overcoming Relationship Pitfalls - Mentoring Fact Sheet, Mentoring Resource Centre (2006) http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet10.pdf</p> <p>Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors, National Mentoring Center (2007) http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/building_relationships.pdf</p>
<p>Child safety: Training must include what to do if you suspect a child is experiencing abuse as well as considerations for keeping yourself (as a mentor) safe.</p>	<p>Provide clear guidelines and instructions on the steps a mentor should take if they suspect a mentee is experiencing abuse. You might also consider discussing the warning signs of child abuse in training. Child abuse can also include the risk of girls that are being groomed for trafficking, which is particularly relevant for young girls.</p>	<p>It is recommended that you consult with your local Children’s Aid Society to gather more information that is relevant and specific to your community.</p>

Training Topic	Activity Ideas	Handouts / Tools
<p>Disclosure: What steps must mentors take and how they should best respond if a participant or fellow mentor discloses sensitive personal information regarding abuse or other issues of concern.</p>	<p>Consider inviting a member of the local Children’s Aid Society to speak to the mentors and present on the Child Protection Policy and when it is appropriate to report. This can also provide a space for mentors to ask questions and voice any concerns.</p>	<p>It is important to have clear guidelines on disclosure and be informed of the policies. Be sure to check the policies specific to your province or region.</p> <p>Sample background information on disclosure: How to Respond to a Disclosure, Canadian Red Cross, 2015 http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence--bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators/child-abuse-and-neglect-prevention/how-to-respond-to-a-disclosure</p>
<p>Confidentiality: Be sure to discuss the importance of protecting sensitive information regarding youth, families and mentors within the mentoring relationship.</p>	<p>Present your organization’s policy on confidentiality. Provide mentors with different conversation scenarios that they may encounter within the mentoring groups. Ask them to identify which conversation topics should remain confidential and discuss the reasons for this.</p>	<p>Example - Confidentiality Form, Sarnia-Lambton Rebound (2015) <i>See online version for download</i></p>
<p>Boundaries: Discussion should include physical boundaries (what physical interactions are allowed and not allowed); communication between mentors and mentees outside of the group (is it allowed?); how to set boundaries as a group; and how mentors can set boundaries with the girls.</p>	<p>It is helpful to offer clear instruction on the dos and don’ts for maintaining healthy boundaries since this topic can be complex. Consider incorporating a reflection activity that helps mentors think about their own boundaries.</p>	<p>Healthy Boundaries: Working Closely with Youth and Families, Mentoring Partnership of Massachusetts (2011) http://www.iyi.org/resources/doc/IYI-Webinar-Healthy-Boundaries2-23-2011.pdf</p> <p>Establishing and Maintaining Boundaries - Training New Mentors, National Mentoring Center (2007) http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1133.pdf</p>
<p>Skill development: Training should facilitate and support team collaboration, leadership, communication, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution.</p>	<p>Incorporate training for mentors to develop new skills that support them in their mentor role and beyond. Consider having mentors complete self-assessments in the beginning of the program to identify their strengths and desired areas of growth.</p>	<p>Amplify Toolkit, Girls Action Foundation (2009) http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/files/Amplify_2010_LR_0.pdf p. 438 - 440</p>

Mentor Training Content: Skills for Facilitating Girls Groups

Group mentoring, in particular, requires that mentors have the skills and knowledge to appropriately navigate the group setting and facilitate positive group dynamics. Mentors need to be aware not only of the relationships they are forming with the girls, but also of the relationships that are forming between girls and their peers.

Some important topics to incorporate in girls group facilitation training include:

- **Group facilitation skills:** Provide skills-based training related to communication, problem solving, conflict management and relationship management.
- **Benefits and objectives of group mentoring:** Highlight and discuss what the program hopes to achieve. Invite participants to share benefits they hope to gain from being a mentor.
- **Stages of group development:** Review the **stages of group development** to guide mentors to understand the process for healthy relationship-building and the highs and lows they may encounter. Understanding this process helps prepare mentors for challenges that may arise and manage their expectations for better outcomes.
- **Working with a co-mentor:** If your program includes an approach with co-mentors, your training should address expectations and recommendations for how this partnership will work. It can be helpful to leverage mentors' suggestions in this process. Incorporating team-building activities can help them break the ice with one another and forge strong connections.
- **Handling difficult situations:** Difficult situations can arise with the group such as disclosure, conflict between girls or a mentee's personal crisis. Having clear policies around these processes is very important and addressing this early on is paramount. The **Managing the Group Dynamic** section looks at some of these issues in greater detail.
- **Creating safe, positive and inclusive spaces:** Reflecting on the **Program & Meetings** section, incorporate discussion on the importance of safe space. Brainstorm with mentors on practical strategies for achieving this based on the specific setting of your program.
- **Strategies for ensuring the experience is girl-directed:** Brainstorm and provide concrete examples of how to ensure the program is girl-directed.

If you do not have the skills and knowledge required to train mentors on group facilitation, consider asking someone from your community to assist (Sherk, 2006). This could include a youth psychotherapist, a group counsellor, a youth group leader or a child and youth worker. Many programs have also emphasized the value of asking experienced mentors to co-lead sessions.

Mentee Training

Training mentees allows them to get the most out of their mentoring experience and is very valuable in setting and managing the expectations of participants. Training should therefore take place before the group begins their roles as mentees, and should be used as an opportunity for participants to meet one another as well as to introduce and start building relationships with the program staff.

Remember that you are working with young girls aged 9–13 who are coming to these programs for a new and fun experience; long training sessions may intimidate the girls or feel too structured or school-like, causing their interest to wane. Consider breaking up your mentee training into short workshops and dividing them across the first few sessions of the program.

Including an intentional ‘girl-directed’ component of the mentor training can also be valuable for addressing the girls’ interests and needs while promoting their engagement. Where possible, create space for girls to direct some of the learning topics or leave room within training sessions for their decision-making on how to address or explore certain topics. Mentee training topics may include:

- Program orientation, goals, policies and expectations.
- Understanding the role of a mentor and their role as a mentee.
- Basic communication skills, including what kind of discussion and conversation is appropriate or inappropriate in a group mentoring setting.
- Problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills.
- Healthy relationships.
- Child safety, including identifying abusive or inappropriate behaviour and how to protect themselves.
- Reporting policies and who they can go to if they have a concern or issue either in or outside of the program.
- Maintaining healthy boundaries.
- Confidentiality and understanding the importance of keeping discussions within the group private, as well as understanding the mentor’s obligations around disclosures.
- How to get the most value out of the program—encouraging girls to speak up, actively participate and make connections.



Consider using a question box!

The Boys & Girls Club of South Coast BC created a question box that is introduced at the beginning of each year and is present for every session. Girls can voice concerns or ask questions about the program or their mentors in a way that is safe and anonymous.

If it suits your community and your participants, parents or guardians can also be involved in a portion of this training. If timing is an issue, you could have the parents or guardians join just at the beginning or at the end. This can be an effective way to engage parents or guardians in the group and make a connection with them. It can also alleviate any concerns they may have and inform them more about the group.

There may also be space for ongoing training that involves both the mentors and the mentees together. This can be a way of supporting the group dynamic while also covering information pertinent to the program.



Key Take-Aways

Training for both mentors and mentees is an important component of a Girls Group Mentoring Program. It ensures that participants are well prepared and supported in their program experience. This section provided information to help you:

- Remember that mentor training sets the foundation for a successful mentoring program and a positive experience for mentors and mentees.
- Review important topics to incorporate in mentor and mentee training sessions.
- Develop training material that will provide your mentors and mentees with the skills and knowledge needed for positive, sustainable mentoring relationships.

Additional Resources

Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) Online Mentor Training

This online training for mentors provides an overview of some of the core concepts of mentoring and what it means to be a mentor. It takes approximately 45 minutes to complete, and includes the course on mentoring, a quiz and a completion certificate.

<http://albertamentors.ca/for-mentoring-organizations/training-mentors/>

AMP Strength-Based Mentoring Resources

AMP offers a variety of resources that highlight strength-based mentoring, including a Practice Guide for Organizations, a Practice Guide for Mentors and a Practice Guide for Classrooms and Schools.

<http://albertamentors.ca/for-mentoring-organizations/strength-based-practice/>

Building Blocks of Quality Mentoring Programs

Mentoring Canada outlines the tasks, topics and format for training mentors.

http://www.mentoringcanada.ca/training/Mentors/Modules/3_3_training.html

Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors

This resource is designed to give practitioners a set of tools and ideas that can be used to build quality mentoring programs, including ready-to-use mentor training modules.

http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_345.pdf

In Person Training Framework

When used in addition to the AMP Online Mentor Training, this framework will give mentors an overall training to prepare them for their role as a mentor. It allows individuals and organizations to assess where the information would be best delivered and in what setting.

http://albertamentoringpartnership.cirrusvps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/InPerson_Training.pdf

Mentoring Fact Sheet: A Mentor's Guide to Youth Development

Gives an overview of positive youth development and how a mentors can strengthen a youth as they develop.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet15.pdf>

Mentor Event Training Toolkit

This Toolkit provides a framework and supplementary resources for hosting a mentor training event. It provides guidelines for planning and hosting an event that equips mentors with the training and tools to become successful mentors.

<http://www.albertamentors.ca/training/mentor-training-event-toolkit/>

Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota: For Mentees: Preparing for a Mentoring Relationship

<http://www.mpmn.org/resources/menteeresources.aspx>

Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development

A resource by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services that provides up-to-date research and information about youth development to guide the delivery of high quality supports and services for youth aged 12–25.

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthopportunities/steppingstones/youth_policy.aspx

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Support & Retention



Why is this important?

Support and supervision of mentoring relationships ensures that program participants are safe and that the mentoring relationship is progressing well. It also allows participants the opportunity for guidance and coaching.

The group dynamic in group mentoring programs makes ongoing support of both mentors and mentees especially important. This section will share suggestions and best practices for the ongoing support and supervision of mentors, as well as tips for volunteer retention.

Contents of this Section:

Ongoing Mentor Support & Supervision: Get started by exploring the various support systems you can put into place for your mentors.

Retention & Recognition: Review these strategies to maintain the positive involvement of mentors.



Ongoing Mentor Support & Supervision

The support and supervision of mentoring relationships is critical to ensure the success of the program as well as the safety of participants. In group mentoring programs, mentors are not only managing their own relationships with the girls, but also the relationships between the girls. Should your program match groups of girls with more than one mentor, mentors will also be building friendships with the other mentors in the group. Monitoring of the program must include monitoring the dynamics of the group. It is the organization's responsibility to support its mentoring matches to evolve into healthy and productive relationships.

In their chapter on Group Mentoring in the Handbook of Youth Mentoring, Kuperminc & Thomason (2014) share the following thoughts and recommendations for the supervision of group mentoring relationships:

“We recommend a two-pronged approach including periodic observation (e.g. by program staff or mentors serving as guest observers to other groups), and consistent logging of group activities and impressions of the group process by mentors. These processes are useful for documenting basic program information (e.g., attendance) and charting progress of individuals and the group as a whole. Such information can be used to identify problems and strategize solutions (e.g. working with a disruptive mentee), monitor the stages of group development, reflect on what is working and what needs to be changed, gauge youths' levels of energy and engagement, and plan for the ending of the group.”

Herrera, Vang & Gale (2002) found that group mentors who had strong relationships with their mentees demonstrated behaviours consistent with strong one-on-one mentoring relationships. When monitoring matches in a group, there are some standard things to watch for. These include:

- Mentors are meeting with their mentees regularly and according to program expectations (in terms of frequency, duration and location of meetings).
- Mentors demonstrate sensitivity to youth's preferences for activities and discussion topics.
- Mentors make efforts to get to know youth personally, rather than exclusively focusing on the program's planned activities.
- Mentors demonstrate openness to one-on-one conversations with the youth when needed.
- Mentees feel safe, secure and comfortable with their mentor(s) and within the larger group.



Some recommended strategies for ongoing mentor support and supervision include:

Open Door Policy: Regular conversations with mentors and mentees about their experiences in the group will reveal how they feel the relationships are progressing and if they feel comfortable and safe. It is therefore critical for program staff to clearly identify who mentors and mentees should go to first in the event of an issue. More importantly, staff should ensure that this person identified as the first point of contact makes the effort to establish trust and forge connections with both mentors and mentees early on in the process.

Separate Mentor Meetings: Gather mentors together regularly to debrief, share challenges and encourage one another. This could occur for a half hour before or after the mentoring group meeting, at ongoing training sessions, by going out for coffee or through any similar casual meeting.

Ongoing Mentor Training: Provide ongoing opportunities to engage in training and learning. This can include bringing in a speaker, facilitating a workshop or taking mentors offsite for training. It is ideal to let the mentors identify areas they would like to learn more about or to leverage what they have said in the mentor debrief sessions. Be sure to build this into the program budget.

Mentor Community Support: Creating space for the mentors to develop relationships with one another can be a valuable strategy. Some programs use an online platform to allow them to connect in between sessions.

Ongoing Staff Supervision: Attend the group mentoring sessions regularly or on occasion. Be present and check in with the mentors individually to make sure they are comfortable and can handle the discussion within the groups. In addition to having an open door policy, consider including scheduled check-ins for mentors to address needs. One-on-one check-ins are important to create the space for mentors to disclose issues that are difficult to address within the larger group or raise potential concerns about their own performance, compatibility with girls or conflict with other mentors.

Retention and Recognition

Volunteer mentors are more likely to stay involved in the program if they feel that their time and energy is valued. According to Volunteer Canada (2012), “Research reveals that volunteer recognition is tied to volunteer retention rates. Volunteers who feel their contributions are appreciated are more likely to uphold their volunteer commitments.”

Mentor retention is often related to how supported and well-prepared mentors feel in the program. Therefore, retention involves more than just thanking mentors (though that is an important piece). The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre (2009) explains further:

“People who volunteer need an experience that is personally satisfying, with an organization that shows its appreciation by providing the tools, training, and support needed to do the job well. They need to feel:

- *Appreciated*
- *Useful*
- *Successful*
- *Involved/empowered*
- *Committed/connected to your organization*
- *Fulfilled by the experience*
- *Important - the work they do is recognized by the larger community*

It’s important to remember that volunteer retention is an outcome, not a task. Unlike recruitment, you can’t set out to “do” volunteer retention. Your success in achieving this outcome will be the result of a comprehensive set of approaches, strategies, and activities that help keep your volunteers engaged.”

The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre (2009)



You may consider some of the following recognition tactics:

- Celebrations such as a celebratory dinner for mentors.
- Team-building opportunities such as circus training or movie nights.
- Guiding mentors to develop a support network through separate mentor debriefing sessions.
- Certificates or other professional development opportunities.



“Poor volunteer management practices result in more lost volunteers than people losing interest because of changing personal or family needs. The best way for volunteer organizations to receive more hours of volunteer service is to be careful managers of the time already being volunteered by people of all ages and from all strata of our volunteer society.”

- McCurley (2005)

One of the best strategies to retain your volunteers is to run a quality program. In addition, it is very worthwhile to give additional thought to how your organization can thank mentors for their contribution and investment. This could include: A celebration or banquet event; personalized cards to celebrate holidays and birthdays or to just say thank you; engaging the mentees to participate in a thank-you activity such as writing a poem or creating a piece of art for the mentor; sharing the positive outcomes that you see from the program; and regularly sharing positive feedback about what the mentors are doing well.



Key Take-Aways

Supporting mentors and mentees well is a critical step in retaining program participants and ensuring program safety. When developing this program component, be sure to reflect on the following:

- The methods of supervision and support provision and how these components will strengthen your program and manage risk.
- The importance of volunteer recognition and the role it plays in retention.
- Approaches and strategies to aid in volunteer recognition and retention.

Additional Resources

2013 Volunteer Recognition Study

This Volunteer Canada Study outlines best practices in volunteer recognition and key drivers that lead to volunteer retention.

<http://volunteer.ca/content/2013-volunteer-recognition-study>

Volunteers: A Guide to Retention

This book outlines the important pieces of volunteer management, including retention, volunteer burnout, creating meaningful opportunities for volunteers and moving volunteers from short- to long-term commitments.

<http://www.library.macewan.ca/eBooks/5-218-KeepingVolunteers.pdf>

Mentoring Fact Sheet: Managing Risk after the Match Is Made

This fact sheet offers guidance in managing risk after your mentoring matches have begun, including the common problems and strategies for handling them, as well as tips for assessing and resolving risks that may arise.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet11.pdf>

More than Saying Thank You: Comprehensive Approaches to Mentor Retention

This fact sheet explores practical ways to mentors engaged, motivated and committed over the long term.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet27.pdf>

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Managing the Group Dynamic

Managing the group dynamic takes ongoing work and supervision. Even when program staff have put all of the measures into place to recruit the right mentors and mentees and to screen, train and match them appropriately, sometimes things don't go according to plan. This section will explore some of the most common issues that arise in girls group mentoring programs and share strategies for managing the group dynamics.

Contents of this Section:

Understanding Relationship Development: Get started by developing a foundation in relationship development theory and understanding the stages of mentoring relationship development.

Common Questions for Managing the Group Dynamic: Review these questions and corresponding suggestions for managing common issues that might arise in your group:

- What to do when conflict arises in the group
- What to do when a matched group isn't working
- What to do when co-mentors aren't working well together
- What to do when a mentee has developed an unhealthy relationship or attachment
- What to do when a mentee or mentor is in crisis
- What to do when girls aren't showing up
- What to do when mentors aren't showing up
- What to do when relationships end early



Why is this important?

Managing the group dynamic is critical to ensuring program success. It is important to support the groups' navigation of the early stages of relationship development so a healthy group dynamic is formed. At times, you may need to guide participants and mentors to uphold their commitments, so you must know how to respond when things are not going according to plan.

Understanding Relationship Development

In order to manage the group dynamic effectively and help steer the healthy development of positive mentoring relationships, it is helpful to have an understanding of the stages and features of relationship development.

With regard to group mentoring, there are two bodies of knowledge that can be explored for information on the development of relationships and groups: Group Development Models and Stages of a Mentoring Relationship. Highlighted below are two models that you may see play out in your girls group mentoring experience.

Tuckman's Theory of Group Development (1965):

Tuckman's Theory on stages of group development proposes that groups develop and change as they pass through five stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. This model may be helpful when considering program development, activity selection, mentor training, group facilitation and conflict management. These stages are beneficial to understand as some unexpected behaviours you observe in participants can often be symptoms of a normal group process. Tuckman's stages of group development are:

- **Forming:** As groups come together, there is the initial, formal and sometimes awkward or uncomfortable stage as participants meet and get to know each other, come to understand what the group is for and how they will work together.
- **Storming:** As participants start to interact, and seek out their place or role in the group, conflicts can start to emerge. This is a natural part of any group process.
- **Norming:** As groups continue to work together, ways of operating and norms of expected behaviour begin to be clarified and people assume relevant roles. Acceptance of the process and each other grows.
- **Performing:** With time, experience and intention to their purpose, groups enhance their effectiveness in accomplishing the task that has drawn them together.
- **Adjourning:** Groups end either by concluding or evolving into something new (i.e. the purpose changes or members transition on to something else). This time of adjourning can also be vulnerable or uncomfortable for some.

Program staff and mentors should be aware of these stages, and have ideas, tools and processes to help the group successfully transition from one stage to another. As each group will be different, there is no step-by-step formula; groups may need to try different things to see what works for their program as well as their specific group of participants. In girls group mentoring programs, Tuckman's Theory can be an important component of staff and mentor training. For more in-depth information about Tuckman's Theory, what to expect in each of these stages, as well as tips for applying this framework to your program, see *Tuckman's Theory of Group Development* in the **Additional Resources** for this section.

Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

As in all relationships, mentoring relationships have a life cycle. As time passes and individuals spend

more time together, and get to know one another, they will become more comfortable and engaged. It's helpful to know what to expect as mentoring relationships develop, but keep in mind that each relationship involves unique individuals and that relationships don't always develop as predicted. Remember that each relationship develops at its own pace, and the length of time it takes for each relationship to pass through each stage is different. Below is a guideline of how mentoring relationships often progress:

Stage 1: Getting to know each other

This stage is characterized by:

- Developing rapport and building trust
- Getting to know each other
- Trying to “figure each other out”
- Youth may be looking for approval or seeking to impress mentors and peers
- Youth may “test” mentors and program staff to measure trustworthiness
- Groups can begin to set goals

In this initial stage, mentors must be consistent, reliable and follow through on their commitments, as the youth are deciding whether or not the mentor can be trusted. It's very important to be patient; in some relationships, this stage lasts a few weeks, and in others, it could last several months. Consider the population of girls you are working with during this phase of relationship development. Girls facing multiple barriers may take longer to develop these early connections.

Stage 2: Hitting your stride

This stage is characterized by:

- Demonstrating commitment and reaching goals
- A sense of genuine closeness developing
- Engagement in meaningful conversations
- Rough patches and conflict that may arise

As with the first stage of relationship development, it's important that mentors continue to be reliable and consistent throughout this second stage.

Stage 3: Closure

This stage is characterized by:

- Celebrating the friendship
- Reminiscing about the time together
- Saying goodbye

Closure is a natural part of the mentoring relationship and therefore must be part of the planning. It is just as important a step in mentoring relationships as the relationship initiation, and it's crucial to differentiate

between ‘planned closure’ from ‘early closure’. Planned closure is in place from the early program stages and enables a healthy resolution for mentees and mentors; early closure is the unforeseen dissolution of the relationship. Please see the **Program & Meetings** section for suggestions and strategies for planning healthy relationship closure in your program.

Common Questions for Managing the Group Dynamic

It is crucial to recognize that every mentoring group will likely face some level of challenge or conflict over the course of the relationship development process. As outlined in the above sections on relationship development theory, conflict is normal and to be expected and can be constructive in facilitating honest, open connections between the girls and their mentors. The following list provides suggestions from programs in the field for some of the common issues you might come face-to-face with in your program.

What to do when conflict arises in the group

Even when intentional efforts are made to match the girls carefully, interpersonal clashes between girls can take place and must be managed to promote healthy relationships and ensure each girl feels safe and positively connected to the group. When conflict does arise in the group, it can be used as an opportunity to learn and practice conflict resolution in a healthy way, rather than lashing out, name-calling, ignoring or other unhealthy patterns that can often develop.



Some common conflicts and suggestions

Girls disagreeing with one another: When there is conflict directly between girls in the group, you should address and diffuse the situation immediately. If the behaviour is recurring, then the girl(s) who are instigating the conflict may need to be met with separately to uncover the issue. Often there may be an underlying issue or insecurity that is causing the frustration.

Mentors disagreeing with girls: Separate mentor meetings or debriefs can provide a space to explore some of these conflicts. If a mentor is taking too much of a directive role and not allowing for girl-directed planning and content, the issue can be approached in the debriefing meetings. Instead of calling out the mentor in question, the entire group can collectively brainstorm how to handle the situation. Ongoing mentor trainings can also allow space for revisiting topics such as ‘how to be a facilitator’ and ‘communicating effectively within a group.’

Girls forming cliques and excluding their peers: Mentoring groups will include a variety of personalities, and inevitably some relationships will forge more quickly and easily than others. As a result, sometimes the other girls in the group feel left out. It is important to do group activities that promote equal involvement from all of the girls. If two of the girls have bonded closely, consider activities that involve splitting them up to work individually or pairing them off with other girls. You may also plan activities that involve full group collaboration or more hands-on work and less discussion.

Girls who don’t want to compromise: Some girls just do not want to be led or will be resistant in compromising their ideas. This is a huge challenge, especially for the mentors. How do you balance a group when one individual is constantly (loudly) expressing that her ideas should be the only ideas? One suggestion might include rotating decision-making among the girls. Each session, one group member can suggest a topic to discuss or an activity to do and this could rotate regularly to ensure everyone gets a

turn without singling out the mentee unwilling to compromise. If you prefer to have the girls collectively develop activity ideas, consider employing formal methods for brainstorming.

What to do when a matched group isn't working

Even when you have taken time to screen and match mentors and girls, sometimes the relationships will face roadblocks in developing positively. There are basic interventions that can be explored and taken as first steps. When this is not effective, you should consider redistributing or re-matching the girls if necessary. Identifying whether the challenges are resting with a single mentee or mentor will be helpful in developing the most effective course of action.

The first warning sign that a matched group isn't working is recurring participant conflict followed by program withdrawal. Some other common signs include breaking group cohesion, hindering relationships, excessive group conflict, behaviours that did not occur before, self-sabotaging of the group, sabotaging the group for others, mentors or mentees quitting the group and mentors or mentees not showing up. Remember that if the group is in a state of conflict and lacks connectivity, participants will not feel attached to the group. In rare cases, some girls may actually be better suited to a one-on-one mentoring model.

If early efforts are not resolving the conflict or lack of connection within a matched group, you may consider reassigning the girls and mentor. This can be difficult since you don't want to disrupt other successfully matched groups. If the challenges seem to rest mostly with the mentor, consider assigning them a general role in the program—sometimes an individual might not be the right fit for the mentor role. If the dynamic among the girls is not working, consider strategically distributing them among the other groups. Reassigning a group shouldn't be a reaction; it should be planned so mentees and mentors do not feel that it was a failure or someone's "fault." Having a fun activity planned to initiate the new groups will help with this. Consider an outing, a special meal or a get-to-know-you activity.



Some suggestions from the field for managing a matched group that isn't working:

- Open the dialogue with mentees or mentors for feedback and discussion around the group dynamic.
- Open the channels of communication and close the door to complaints. Teach mentors communication builders and busters.
- Build in-program checkpoints for the small groups. A checkpoint is a period in time that a group could conclude a relationship if appropriate and allow for a new beginning as needed. Checkpoints should occur roughly every 6–12 weeks.
- If the decision is to switch the composition of the mentoring groups, you may consider arranging another whole group activity to see who matches well together before reassigning.

What to do when co-mentors aren't working well together

Co-mentoring presents a variety of benefits to a girls group mentoring program. From a staff perspective, there are many gains in coverage, scheduling and succession planning. From the girls' perspective, it offers two supportive mentors to look up to and build relationships with. When matching two mentors to take on this collaborative process, however, sometimes conflict can arise. It is first important to try to diffuse and manage the conflict. The staff person should address the issues in a private conversation and a plan should be collectively agreed upon between all three individuals. This could include dividing up the role's responsibilities or developing a list of principles to guide their collaboration moving forward, which could function like group rules. Staff should have check-in meetings pre-scheduled to monitor their progress. If there is a fundamental issue with their leadership styles or personalities that cannot be rectified, consider reassigning one of them to a different role within the program.

What to do when a mentee has developed an unhealthy relationship or attachment

Maintaining boundaries within the girls group mentoring program is critical for supporting the healthy and positive development of relationships. At times a girl may develop an unhealthy attachment to a member of the program whether it be a mentor, staff person or another mentee.

First identify that the mentee is safe and clarify that the attachment is not linked to an external issue or crisis that needs to be addressed. Staff should have a private conversation with the girl to ensure her life circumstances are not presenting risks. In the absence of external issues, instead of explicitly reprimanding the girl, try to redirect her involvement in the program in different ways.

If the girl is attached to a staff person, for example, create opportunities for her to do special activities of interest within her matched group to entice her engagement elsewhere. You may consider setting up a separate session with her mentor to forge a stronger connection. If the attachment to the mentor is disruptive to the other girls in the group, try arranging activities that focus more on team-building and relationship-building with the girls only. Strengthening her connections to other group members can take the emphasis off of her attachment to the mentor. If these early interventions are not successful, you may consider matching her into a different mentoring group.

What to do when a mentee or mentor is in crisis

There should be processes in place and training that covers what a mentor should do in the event that a girl in their group is faced with a crisis. It is important that from the outset, the responsibilities of mentors are clearly distinguished from the staff person. The mentor should be responsible to report the concern and from there, staff should be responsible for taking action, making a referral or speaking with the girls'



“Be consistent. Young people need boundaries to feel safe and understand social expectations. If you are not consistent, it can be confusing and uncomfortable”

- Bottomley (2012)

guardian, school or the Children’s Aid Society. It is helpful to have a referral list and processes identified before starting the program so all staff are clear on the agencies available in their community to help a girl or mentor in crisis.

Finally, when there is crisis intervention for a girl or mentor in the group be sure that the staff engage in open dialogue with the other group members to ensure they are not vicariously affected and to reassure that these steps have been taken in the best interest of the girl’s or mentor’s well-being. Debriefing or supporting each group member when emotions are affected is of paramount importance.

What to do when girls aren’t showing up

You may encounter an issue with girls not showing up regularly for the program. This affects not only their experience, but also the other girls’ experiences in the group as well as the mentor(s) that they have been matched with. It is important to recognize that their inconsistent attendance may be due to a variety of reasons—many of which can be outside of their control. Some common challenges might include:

- Not feeling connected to the mentor
- Not feeling heard or valued in the group
- Conflicts with other girls in the program
- Barriers to transportation
- Parents or guardians are not supportive of the program
- Childcare within the home—some girls are relied upon at home as babysitters to younger siblings
- Illness or facing challenges to well-being, either physical, mental or emotional
- A disability or inaccessible location
- Cultural barriers
- Feelings of insecurity or inadequacy within the group

Many of the challenges above can be rectified through conversation and action. It is first advisable to contact the girl to find out why she is not attending. Use the method of communication that she prefers and determine whether the irregular attendance is based on a conscious personal choice or from reasons outside of her control. You might also contact the parents or guardians since the absence may be attributed to them not fully understanding the commitment required for the program. Ensure parents or guardians understand the importance of ongoing attendance and that her absence affects how their daughter experiences the program and also the experiences of the other girls. Find out if you can help if there are barriers in place and if the parents or guardians need more ongoing communication to help keep them engaged.



At Sarnia Lambton Rebound they use a 5-second or 5-minute rule: Can the information wait a couple minutes to be addressed or is it urgent that the information be shared with the Program Coordinator or Staff in charge right away? This is used in their volunteer training and orientation so that all mentors can use this as a guiding principle when facing a potential crisis within the group.



“You are all RICH! I live on the POOR side of town...”

A staff person from a girls group mentoring program stumbled upon this issue after driving the girls home after a field trip. When the first girl was dropped off, one of their mentees pointed out the obvious difference in the size of home her fellow mentee lived in compared to her own. This was the beginning of a withdrawal from the program for this mentee. Following this incident, the mentee continually compared herself to her peers and began skipping sessions to spend time with a friend that she felt closer with. It was difficult to re-attach this girl to her group, however they found it helpful to create space for her friend to join so she could feel more comfortable within the group. This has also informed future conversations and discussion around ‘privilege.’ The group subsequently had discussions about the things that made them ‘rich’ to identify that fortune came in different ways and that it didn’t make any single girl more valuable than any other.

What to do when mentors aren’t showing up

When mentors fail to show up at meetings, it creates a major challenge and can negatively affect the group of girls. This is sometimes beyond the mentor’s control when faced with crisis, illness or other issues. You can put practices into place to avoid this situation through the use of co-mentors, tri-mentors or backup mentors (see **Program and Meetings** section for more information). You should also be sure that your training and orientation process reinforces the importance of the mentor’s role and the need for their ongoing attendance and commitment.

If a mentor routinely misses meetings, connect with them directly to have a conversation about the reasons for their absence. Reinforce the importance of their role and confirm that they are able to continue the commitment and that the meetings still work with their schedule. Approach this in a sensitive and non-accusatory way since sometimes the mentors are facing challenges in their lives they cannot control. Find out how you can support them to regularly attend.

In the meantime, it is imperative that girls are not left without a mentor. This reinforces the importance and value of having a backup mentor available. If this is not an option in your program, have staff or another mentor take over the group. Recognize that having a new mentor or staff take over the group will alter the group cohesion in both positive and negative ways. To guide the girls during this adjustment, it can be helpful to engage them in the process, acknowledge the change and thank them for their cooperation. It is best not to break up the group of girls among different groups, but to keep them matched together.



If they cannot be present in the moment because of conflict or issues they are experiencing in their own lives, mentors should inform the staff person so they can better support them. They should know that it is okay if they need to take a break or focus on a crisis in their own lives.

What to do when relationships end early

Planning for the closure of a group and the termination of relationships is an important part of the mentoring model. Relationship closure implies the healthy and planned ending of a mentoring relationship. This takes place when a program communicates a clear end date from the outset and when this plan is followed through.

When developing your program, specific policies and processes should be outlined for managing positive relationship endings, whether planned or unplanned. See **Program & Meetings** for details and suggestions on planning healthy closure.

Relationship termination implies an unplanned relationship ending between a mentor and the girl(s) she is mentoring.

This can take place for a variety of reasons, recognizing that both mentors and mentees have complex lives of their own.

Engaging in a clear closure process can model healthy endings

for youth who have experienced poorly-handled endings in prior relationships. This raises the importance of creating healthy discussion and activities that celebrate and close the relationship when it ends early. Conversely, poorly-ended relationships can reinforce negative working models of relationships and diminish optimism that things will go well or differently in future relationships. If a relationship ends early and is not handled properly, it can actually do more damage for the girl than if the mentoring relationship had never been initiated.

The best way to avoid early relationship termination is to ensure mentors are screened properly and have realistic expectations, and to run a well-structured and well-supported program. However, in a case when a relationship ends earlier than planned, it is important for program staff to facilitate a closure process for mentors and mentees. It is valuable to celebrate the learning that occurred from the relationship and to allow the participants a chance to say goodbye.

Take time to reflect on the reasons that led to early termination and how to best learn from the unplanned



“When handled well, it is believed that the termination process can solidify gains made, resolve issues that have arisen in the ...relationship itself, and prepare the [youth] for maintaining healthy functioning without the support of [mentor]”

- Spencer and Basualdo-Demonico
(2013)



Some suggestions for managing the unplanned early termination of mentoring relationships include:

- Have a discussion with the girls about the best part of the mentoring experience.

Encourage them to celebrate their favourite moment and the thing they liked best about their mentor.

- Reassure the girls that the early termination was not in any way their fault and speak honestly about the reason for the termination, if possible.
- If a face-to-face meeting to say goodbye and celebrate the relationship is not possible, encourage participants to write letters to each other.
- Take part in a group activity that celebrates change and discuss how the change will bring about new learning and new experiences. This could include brainstorming, drawing future visions or journaling about goals and dreams both individually and for the group.
- Consider hosting a ‘Who I am?’ event. Have the girls celebrate their identities, think about how they have grown in their time together and who they want to become in the future. Photograph the event. Have the girls write letters to their future self. Have the mentors write letters to the future mentees to be opened on a set date.

situation. Sometimes the early termination of relationships cannot be avoided, such as when a mentor faces a sudden crisis or has to move, however in some cases there are certain supports, training or information that could have been provided to mitigate the closure. It is important to embrace this as a learning opportunity to strengthen the experience of girls in your program moving forward.

Take the time to reflect on what was unique about this particular scenario:

- Was their reason for leaving based on external changes beyond their control?
- Was the early termination due to relationship conflict or from a challenge the mentor felt in carrying out the role?
- Could their expectations of the role be better or differently communicated from the outset?
- Could greater measures be taken to support their ongoing involvement and management of the mentoring group dynamic?



Karcher (2012) highlights steps when managing the termination of mentoring relationships:

1. Explain the reason for the ending
2. Discuss what worked and what didn't
3. Highlight what each found special about the other
4. Share how each other feels—both sadness and thankfulness for their year together
5. Hopes for each other about how each will take lessons learned to their next relationship'

- Karcher (2012)

- What were some of their unique qualities or characteristics that seemed to conflict with the role or program?

Where there is the option, consider conducting an exit interview with the mentor to better understand their reasons for leaving. This would allow you to address some of these concerns or improve parts of the program to prevent future early endings. If a face-to-face interview isn't possible, you can request their feedback through a survey shared by email. Emphasize the value they can add to the program by sharing their input.

Within a group mentoring context, there is also disruption to cohesion when a girl has to leave the program early. The group dynamic can be altered and a loss will likely be felt by both the girls and mentors. It is important to celebrate her participation in the program and to make space for the girls to say goodbye. You might also consider encouraging their continued communication as a 'pen pal' with the group either traditionally through letters or with the use of social media.



At Cornerstone Family & Youth Inc., they find ways to celebrate the early departure of girls. When one of their mentees had to move, the group threw her a going-away party and had a chance to celebrate their time together and to say goodbye. They put together a gift bag with activities for her drive to her new town and an item that she could remember them by. They had cupcakes and all wrote special notes to her on a big poster card that she could hang on her wall. Every girl in the program had a photo to remember the day. A short while later, the group informed staff that they were keeping in touch through texts and Facebook.



Key Take-Aways

Managing the group dynamic is an important ongoing task in a girls group mentoring program. The key is to be prepared to handle common challenges that could arise once the program is up and running. When planning this component, keep in mind:

- There are many stages of the relationship development process. Conflict may arise between the girls but can be used constructively as a learning experience.
- Gain awareness of the different approaches to Relationship Development, Tuckman's Theory and the 3 Stages of a Mentoring Relationship.
- When mentors or girls aren't showing up, there may be a variety of reasons for this. Understanding and addressing the root cause is paramount.
- When a mentoring relationship is terminated early, it is important to facilitate a closure process to celebrate the learning and to give girls the chance to say goodbye.

Additional Resources

Additional Information: Tuckman's Theory of Group Development

Additional information about Tuckman's Theory and how it can be applied in a Girls Group Mentoring Program.

Mentoring Fact Sheet: Avoiding Early Match Termination

This resource outlines the characteristics of failed mentoring matches and what research indicates contributes to strong mentoring matches.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet18.pdf>

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Reflecting, Learning & Improving



Why is this important?

Overall, good monitoring and evaluation helps to chart the success of a program—to tell the story of how girls benefit from participating in the program. It responds to the questions:

- Is the program making a difference?
- What kinds of changes take place in girls because they participate in this program?

Embedding reflection, learning and improvement—in other words, evaluation and evaluative thinking—throughout the Girls Group Mentoring Program is critical to building an information base that supports effective, sustainable programming. The purpose of this section is to describe how to integrate reflection, learning and continuous improvement into a girl’s group mentoring program.

Contents of this Section:

Understanding Evaluation: Reflect on how your girls group is going—and how you can improve.

Evaluation Activities: How to track, record and analyze what you have learned.

Outcome Evaluation: Assessing the program’s impact on the girls in your group.

The Broader Benefits of Evaluation: How a girls group can impact the wider community.

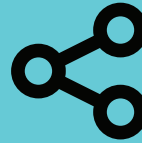


Understanding Evaluation

Evaluation is about being intentional when reflecting on what is working and what can be improved. Information from the evaluation can be used to share the program’s story—what it is about and how it worked when you implemented your logic model and tested the theory of change statement. Evaluation can also tell the story of the impact of your program for the mentees as well as for the mentors and the larger community. It is very important to be mindful of the story of your learning journey—what you learned about group mentoring, as well as what you learned about the girls, volunteers and partners in your community. Documenting your learning journey is particularly helpful when you are implementing a new program or a program innovation.

Evaluation has two primary components: process evaluation and outcomes evaluation. Process evaluation involves recording what happened as you implemented your program plan, and your observations on why those things occurred. Unforeseen events can often occur; things not going “according to plan” are important learning opportunities to refine your program model or practices. Outcome evaluation looks at the degree to which outcomes were achieved, and the results or impacts of the program.

As part of the evaluation you will be recording data and generating information that describes what you saw, experienced and learned in your program. This data collection and analysis also enables you to better understand and communicate the value that your program contributes to your community. By systematically collecting information about the program, you will be equipped to communicate with and educate those interested in your program as to why they should continue to support it (e.g. mentors, mentees, parents, your program and agency managers, funders, community stakeholders or champions like school principals, social workers or recreation staff).



“Many programs back away from evaluation because they find it overwhelming, they do not know where to start, or because it is not valued as a management or decision-making tool. Sometimes, just the day-to-day tasks of keeping a program running can keep you so busy that there never seems to be any time for it. However, evaluation is important because it helps you better understand what your program does and does not do for the girls who participate, and allows you to be able to tell that story with confidence and evidence to other people (whether they be parents, donors, or other partners).”

- Austrian & Ghati (2010)

Evaluation Activities

Evaluation requires some upfront planning in order to be able to effectively track, record, analyze and report on what you have learned. Some evaluation activities may include:

- Identifying questions that are important to you and to your program stakeholders about the program, how it's working and what difference it is making.
- Assessing participant change over time. This is generally done through use of a pre- and post-survey based on the program outcomes, but can also be collected through narratives and stories.
- Including processes for staff to review and evaluate the effectiveness of program implementation and activities in support of the intended program outcomes. This can be done by collecting staff and participant's observations and reflections of the programming experience.
- Encouraging ways for all program stakeholders to contribute, whether through a survey, focus group, community discussion or simply asking them how they feel this program is making a difference.
- Bringing mentors together to discuss program implementation and effectiveness. Such processes also continue to build relationships with staff, demonstrate a commitment to the quality of their mentoring experience and can promote mentor retention.
- Tracking and recording relevant data. This can include how often the group mentoring occurs and attendance at each of these sessions, as well as frequency, duration and total length of time that specific mentors and mentees interact.
- Tracking and recording the involvement of community partners (e.g. Who referred mentors or mentees? Who provided resources or supplies?).
- Noting what unfolded differently than planned (e.g. certain processes like mentor recruitment took longer than expected; mentees bonded more strongly with other mentors in the group than the mentor with whom they were matched). This can provide clues to program improvements, or ideas on how the program can be modified to better fit the preferences or experiences of mentors and mentees. Community partners or stakeholders can also then be engaged to understand the importance of their roles and how they can help enhance the program effectiveness (e.g. more active distribution of mentor recruitment information).



It is important to remember that evaluation activities should be girl-friendly and use mediums for data

collection that will interest and reflect the girls participating in the program. It's also important to consider literacy and language accessibility, so that evaluation measures accommodate different levels of literacy and language ability for all participants. Some programs may need to translate evaluation documents into other dominant languages, depending on the community.

It will be important to create some evaluation tools *before you begin to implement your program plan*. These can include: charts to record consistency of attendance; journals or logs to summarize and

record what happens at each group mentoring session; participant feedback opportunities; and pre- and post-surveys. For instance, asking participants for their feedback at regular intervals can contribute to program improvement and help you track changes in participants over time. A sample participant evaluation form can be found in the **Additional Resources** of this section as an example of what kinds of questions could be asked in evaluation activities.

Outcome Evaluation

The primary purpose of the Girls Group Mentoring Program is to contribute to the healthy development of mentees. As part of your evaluation, it is important to spend time assessing the nature of these impacts on the girls in your program. However, the impact of group mentoring will likely be different than one-on-one mentoring. When evaluating the outcomes of your girls group mentoring program, you can expect to measure relationships, rather than skill-building, and to measure those relationships at all levels (girls-to-mentors, girls-to-girls and mentors-to-mentors).

The program will also have outcomes for mentors and the community. Mentors may also have increased confidence in their relationship-building skills and feelings of connectedness to their community. It is important to get their perspectives on the impacts they've experienced, as this information is relevant and helpful for your program's volunteer retention. It can also be of interest to others (e.g. agency boards, funders and partners).

The following table is an example of an evaluation question.

It includes data collection methods, activities needed to successfully collect data, divisions of responsibilities and workable timelines. Generally evaluations have 2-5 overarching evaluation questions; this table provides an example of one question. Usually your evaluation questions are created through your program planning, derived from your logic model and through discussions with your stakeholders. Your evaluation questions should be carefully chosen and relevant to those involved in the program (e.g. staff, participants, funders and other stakeholders).



The Canadian Women's Foundation (2014) evaluation of the Girls' Fund examined what contributed to the success of the funded programs. The evaluation measured whether there was a relationship between different program elements (such as separate mentor sessions, hours of training or frequency of meetings) and each of the three main protective factors in girls (confidence, connectedness and critical thinking skills).

Using a typical evaluation question to work through an example evaluation plan:

Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Method	Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Timelines
To what extent have the outcomes of the Girls Group Mentoring program been achieved?	Pre/post survey	Create tool specific for our program outcomes (research existing tools available)	Program Manager/ Evaluator	Prior to the program beginning
		Have tool ready to administer (on line and/or paper copies)	Program Facilitator	First group session and final group session
	End of session Participant focus group	Determine questions, schedule focus group, identify facilitator	Program Manager	Second last session
	Facilitator documented observations	Design template, based on description for each outcome.	Program Manager and Facilitator	After each session, facilitator completes template

Broader Benefits of Evaluation

As a result of your program, your larger community can experience many benefits. New partnerships may be developed or strengthened, and the number of citizen volunteers may have increased. These are important impacts to assess and note, as they will be meaningful to internal and external stakeholders (e.g. boards, funders, champions and other community stakeholders). Measuring evaluation outcomes can be leveraged to request and obtain additional funding and/or community support. When stakeholders and community members see the concrete benefits to the program participants, leaders and the community, they are more likely to invest and contribute to the success of the program. As such, it is advantageous to regularly communicate findings from your learning through word of mouth and discussions, presentations, newsletters and reports.



Key Take-Aways

Reflecting, learning and improving are key pieces of evaluation. Undertaking evaluation will help to tell the program's story and determine what is working and what can be improved. To continuously improve girls group programming it is important to systematically collect program information and report on how the process unfolded and the degree to which outcomes were achieved.

Additional Resources

Sample Evaluation Plan: Girls Action Foundation Amplify Toolkit

Provides an example to help establish an evaluation plan.

<http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/amplify-toolkit-/section-1-appendices/ix-sample-evaluation-plan>

Sample Workshop Evaluation: Head Heart Hands—Girls Action Foundation Amplify Toolkit

Provides an example of a simple evaluation tool to gain feedback.

<http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/amplify-toolkit-/section-1-appendices/x-sample-workshop-evaluation-head-heart-hands>

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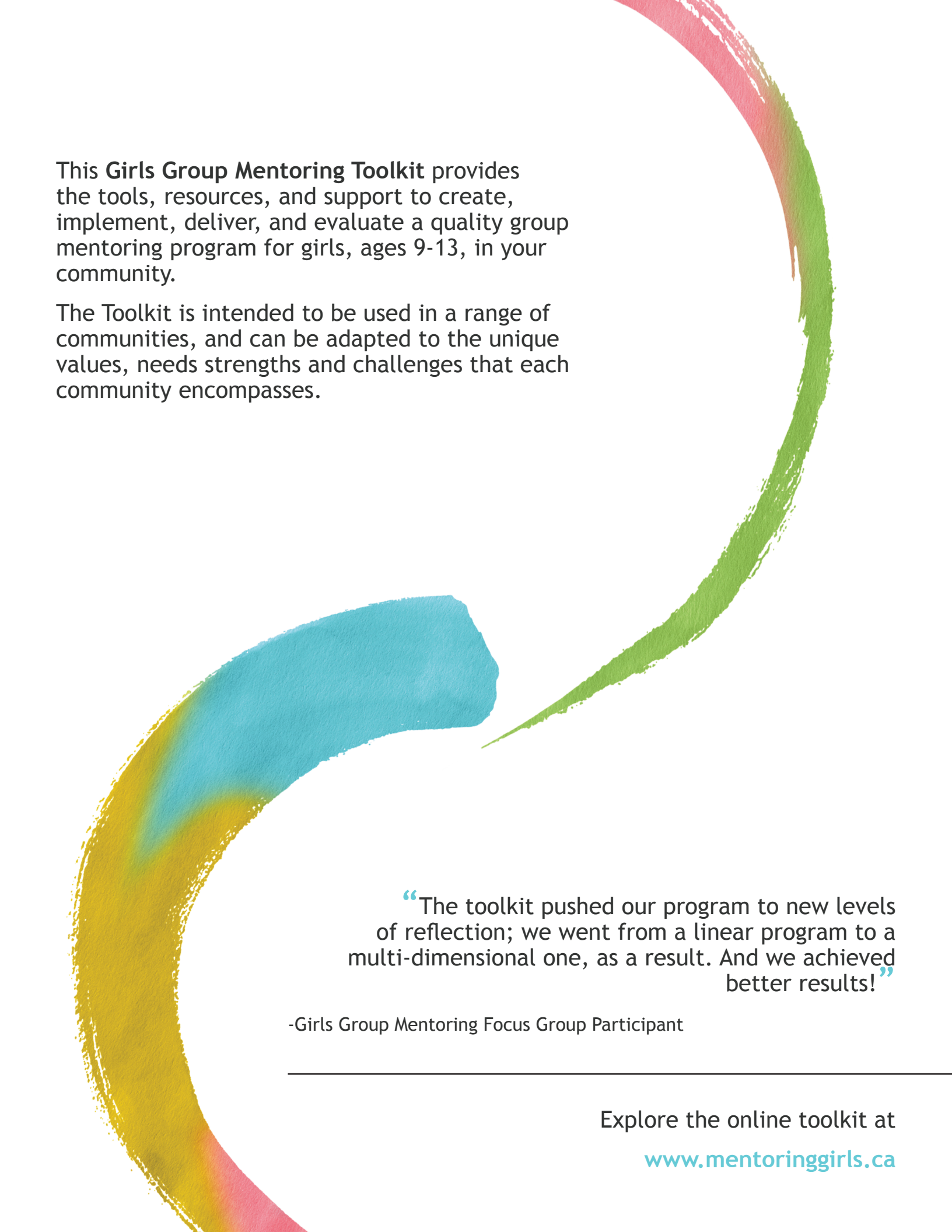
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This **Girls Group Mentoring Toolkit** provides the tools, resources, and support to create, implement, deliver, and evaluate a quality group mentoring program for girls, ages 9-13, in your community.

The Toolkit is intended to be used in a range of communities, and can be adapted to the unique values, needs strengths and challenges that each community encompasses.

“The toolkit pushed our program to new levels of reflection; we went from a linear program to a multi-dimensional one, as a result. And we achieved better results!”

-Girls Group Mentoring Focus Group Participant

Explore the online toolkit at

www.mentoringgirls.ca