



# Mentoring Youth in Foster Care: Considerations and Strategies



*Photo courtesy of Midlands Mentoring Partnership*

December 21, 2017

# 2017 Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series Planning Team

The Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series is funded by the **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention** through the National Mentoring Resource Center and facilitated in partnership with MENTOR:  
The National Mentoring Partnership



# Good to Know...

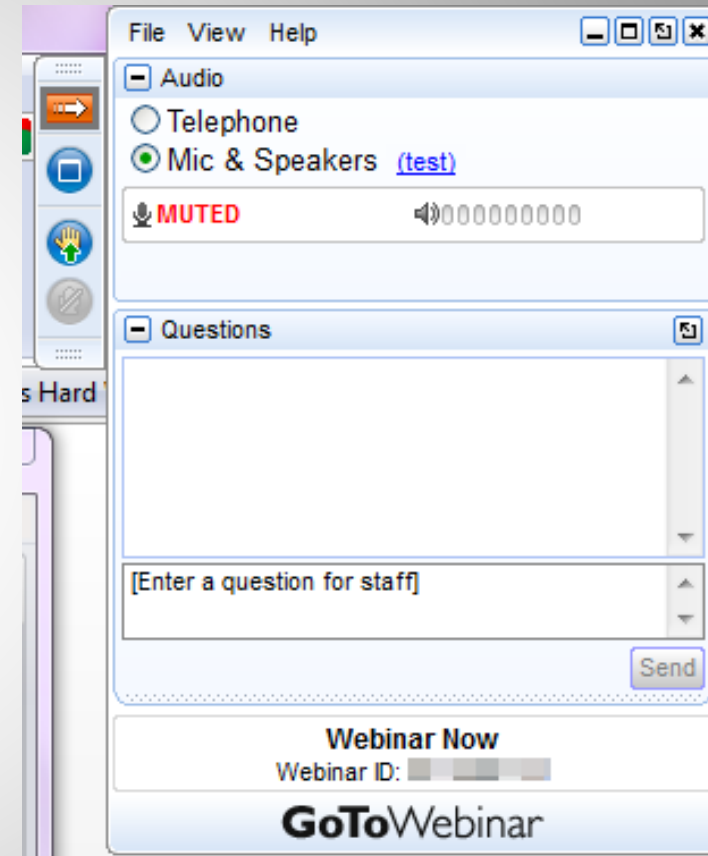
**One week after the webinar, all attendees receive an email with:**

- Instructions for how to access a PDF of presentation slides and webinar recording
- Link to the Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series webpage, where all slides, recordings and resources are posted

**Please help us out by answering survey questions at the end of the webinar.**

# Participate in Today's Webinar

- All attendees muted for best sound
- Type questions and comments in the question box
- Respond to polls
- Who is with us today?



# Today's Webinar

- Heather Taussig, PhD, University of Denver, Fostering Healthy Futures Mentoring
- Colby Swettberg, Ed.M, LCSW, Silver Lining Mentoring
- Tangina Sanders, Youth Villages Mentoring Program

**Q & A throughout the presentation  
(use the Q & A panel)**



# Heather Taussig, Ph.D.



- Professor and the Associate Dean for Research at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work
- Developed and directs the *Fostering Healthy Futures* program
- Serves on the Research Board of OJJDP's National Mentoring Resource Center

# Population Review – Mentoring Youth in Foster Care

Review focused on 4 questions:

1. What is the effectiveness of mentoring for youth in foster care?
2. What factors influence the effectiveness of mentoring for youth in foster care?
3. What pathways are most important in linking mentoring to outcomes for youth in foster care?
4. To what extent have mentoring initiatives for youth in foster care reached and engaged these youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained?

# Population Review – Mentoring Youth in Foster Care

- This review included 30 studies of:
  - Natural mentoring
    - Someone, other than a parent, whom a young person identifies as a mentor, rather than someone they are formally matched with through a mentoring program
  - Program mentoring
    - Individual and group mentoring, with or without other program components
    - Contexts included site-based, community-based, e-mentoring, etc.
  - Mentees
    - Children and adolescents in any type of court-ordered out-of-home care (i.e., non-relative foster care, kinship foster care, or congregate care) due to maltreatment
    - Transition-age youth (16 to 25 years old) as long as the studies included some participants under the age of 18



# Population Review – Mentoring Youth in Foster Care

## CONCLUSIONS

Both natural and program-based mentoring appear to be highly acceptable to youth in foster care, and mentees generally report high satisfaction with their mentoring experiences.

Mentoring, across a range of ages and formats, can have positive impacts on many, but not all, targeted outcomes, including mental health, educational functioning and attainment, peer relationships, placement outcomes, and life satisfaction.

# Population Review – Mentoring Youth in Foster Care

## CONCLUSIONS

Most formal mentoring programs that have been evaluated to date are multicomponent (that is, they include components other than one-to-one mentoring, such as skills groups) and utilize mentors who are agency staff members or university students.

The impact of mentoring may differ based on demographic and placement characteristics. Key processes, such as improvements in self-determination and prosocial skills, may be the mechanisms through which mentoring outcomes are realized for this population.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Although there are many conceptual reasons why mentoring is an excellent fit for youth in foster care, there are pragmatic challenges that make widespread implementation difficult and no studies have examined program expansion or adaptation.

# Population Review

- You can access the full population review here:

<https://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/what-works-in-mentoring/model-and-population-reviews.html?id=298>

Recruitment

Screening

Training

Monitoring and Support



# Colby Swettberg, Ed.M, LCSW

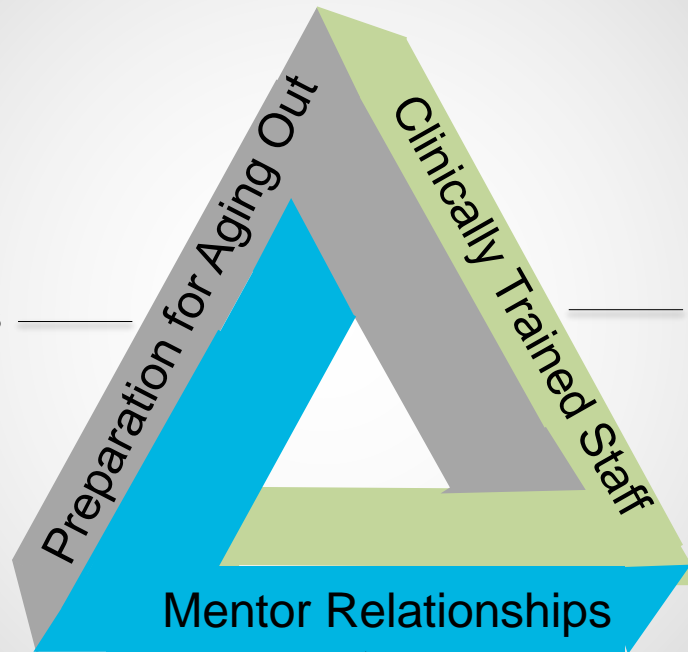


- CEO at Silver Lining Mentoring
- Prior to Silver Lining Mentoring, Colby opened and oversaw a group home for LGBTQ teenagers
- In 2012, Colby was chosen by Senator John Kerry for the “Angel in Adoption” award



# Silver Lining Mentoring's Integrated Service Model ©

**Life Skills and Housing Support:** Life skills curriculum includes matched savings. Young adult services offers access to resources including rental assistance/housing support.



**Program team comprised of social workers:** Providing trauma-informed clinical expertise and resources.

**Mentoring:** Committed volunteer mentors provide consistent, long term 1:1 relationships.



# Silver Lining Mentoring Overview

## **SLM was founded by an alum of foster care**

- Silver Lining approaches our work from a strengths-based perspective in which we value youth's voices

## **Integrated Service Model**

- Community Based Mentoring – long term 1:1 mentoring for youth in foster care (ages 7+)
  - Volunteer mentors participate in extensive screening & training. Mentors commit to at least 8 hrs/month for at least 1 year
  - No upper age limit for mentees, youth who have aged out can participate
  - LGBTQ specific mentoring offered
- Learn & Earn – life skills workshops and 1:1 mentoring support for youth (ages 16+)
  - Curriculum begins with 12 week bootcamp focusing on employment and financial literacy
  - Young people learn alongside their mentors
  - Matched Financial Savings – youth earn and save \$ toward independent living goals
- Young Adult Services – support for young adults who have aged out of foster care (ages 18+)
  - Includes housing support and rental assistance
  - Resource brokering and referrals to mental health, employment, educational & vocational resources
- Clinical Support – program staff are clinical social workers
  - Utilize a trauma-informed approach
  - Population-specific expertise benefits youth and mentors

## **SLM's unique successes**

- ✓ SLM is the only mentoring organization in MA exclusively focused on youth in foster care
- ✓ Average match length is 55 months
- ✓ Youth never age out of SLM's services

# Recruitment

## Essential elements:

- Committed
- Stable lifestyle
- Self-aware
- Can meet rejection/challenge/change with consistency



# Screening

## Essential elements:

- Responsible
- Open
- Able to “unpack” identity



# Training

## Essential elements:

- Clear expectations
- Understand factors of risk & resilience among foster youth
- Don't ignore red flags
- Talk about closure



# Mentor Training Messages

## Themes throughout mentor training

- **Consistency, consistency, consistency:** It's a marathon, not a sprint.
- **Strengths-based, youth-focused:** Consistent positive relationships are a necessary part of healthy development for ALL youth.
- **Youth do well if they can:** Youth are doing the best they can with what they have to work with.
- **Families do well if they can:** Families are doing the best they can with what they have to work with.
- **Learn, don't judge.**
- **It's more about transition (internal process) than change (external event).**



# Matching

## Essential elements:

- Meet youth where they are
- Communicate with stakeholders
- Youth has final word



# Monitoring and Support

## Essential elements:

- Regular check-ins
- Ask for help
- Over-communicate around transitions & crisis
- Predict developmental changes/milestones
- Be relationship historian



# Closure

## Essential elements:

- DON'T AVOID
- Participate in healthy endings
- Set realistic expectations for future



# Youth Message to Mentors

*“Lots of people may have dropped out on me — my teachers, my family. Don’t you do it. That doesn’t mean that you can’t ever leave. I understand that you have other commitments and other things to do. But at least be my friend. Sit down and explain to me why you can’t be with me any more. Don’t just desert me. If you’re not willing to stick with me when I’m obnoxious, don’t start in the first place.”*

*-Don Shaw, youth*



# Tangina Sanders



- Mentor Program Manager, Youth Villages
- Training Institute Facilitator for the Memphis Grizzlies Youth Mentoring Partnership
- Developed and directed the LIFT Mentor program for former Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen

# Youth Villages Overview

- A private nonprofit organization, Youth Villages' mission is to help children and families live successfully.
- Youth Villages will serve more than 22,000 emotionally and behaviorally troubled children and their families this year through a variety of programs. Services include:
  - Intensive in-home services
  - Foster care and adoption
  - Residential and intensive residential treatment
  - An emergency shelter for homeless and runaway teens
  - Specialized Crisis Services
  - YVLifeSet
- Youth Villages provides services from 72 locations in 58 cities across 12 states and the District of Columbia.
- Youth Villages has been cited as a national model by the American Youth Policy Forum and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.
- *U.S. News & World Report* in 2006 featured Youth Villages CEO Patrick W. Lawler as one of "America's Best Leaders"



# Recruitment

- Employees of community organizations that partner with Youth Villages as donors, volunteers and supporters
- City of Memphis employees, who can use up to five work hours per week to mentor
- Youth Villages website
- Youth Villages employees mentor and recruit their family and friends



# Screening

Applicants are required to:

- Be 21 years of age or older
- Complete written application
- Pass a mandatory screening that includes a background and fingerprint check, as well as verification of references
- Participate in a one hour face to face interview
- Attend 2.5 mandatory introductory training
- Complete a pre-placement survey
- Attend quarterly trainings
- Commit to spending four to six hours per month one-on-one with a young person
- Attend an initial training session
- Be a willing listener
- Be encouraging and supportive
- Be patient and flexible
- Be tolerant and respectful of individual differences



# Training

- Understanding the youth we serve and how to provide proper supervision
- Common terms used in the industry
- Who their support team is and how/when to contact them
- Confidentiality and social media rules
- Guidelines for scheduling/cancelling visits
- Mandatory child abuse reporting
- Healthy boundaries
- Understanding different communication styles and how to effectively communicate with the mentee
- Safety
  - Carry auto insurance with you at all times
  - Do not take the youth to your home or anyone else's home, for your protection and theirs; **there are NO exceptions**
  - Refrain from taking the youth out of the state of **Tennessee**
  - Don't use **alcohol or tobacco** in front of the youth
  - Be mindful of items in your car to which the youth may have access (medications, checkbook, tobacco, sharp objects, etc.)
  - Be aware of your surroundings
  - When picking up your mentee, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason, call the guardian or parent so they can meet you outside

# Training

- Refrain from cell phone use, unless it is an emergency.
  - Do not allow the youth to use your **cell phone** or **other personal electronic devices**.
- Closely monitor any internet usage when with your mentee.
  - No social networking websites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
- If your mentee runs away while with you, do not attempt to run after them. Call the authorities and your Mentor Liaison immediately.
- If your mentee gets involved in an altercation, do not attempt to stop it. Call the authorities and your Mentor Liaison immediately.
- Carry your support card with you at all times. This card will contain contact information for the entire support team.



# Monitoring and Support

- Each mentor liaison is assigned to a caseload of 50 mentor/mentee relationships.
- The liaison interviews and trains each applicant as well as works with them through the matching process.
- The liaison contacts the mentor, mentee, parent and any other support staff twice during the first 30 days of the match and once in following months throughout the length of the match.
- The liaison is available 7 days a week to the mentor and mentee.

# Monitoring and Support

## Mentee Contact Note Template:

- When was the last time you saw your mentor? Have you seen your mentor last/this month?
- What did the two of you do the last time you were together? What are some of the things you and your mentor have been doing?
- Do you like talking to your mentor?
- When you are on outings with your mentor, who is usually present during the visit?
- Is there anything you would like to tell me about your mentor or anything you would like for me to talk to your mentor about?



# Monitoring and Support

## Mentor Contact Note Template:

- When was the last time you saw your mentee?
- What did the two of you do the last time you were together? What time did you pick them up and drop them off?
- Are you experiencing any difficulties scheduling visits?
- When you are on outings with your mentee, who is usually present during the visit?
- Do you have any concerns regarding your mentee? Is there anything we can do to better support you?
- What volunteer hours do you have to report this month?



FOSTERING  
Healthy  
Futures

# Fostering Healthy Futures®

- Fostering Healthy Futures (FHF) for pre-teens is a 9-month mentoring program for children, ages 9-11, who have recently been placed in foster care
- In addition to 1:1 mentoring, children attend a skills group for 30 weeks, which was specifically designed for children in foster care
- FHF has been tested in two randomized controlled trials funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and is listed on several registries of promising and evidence-based programs
- Key finding from the research on FHF indicate that children who participated in the program (compared to those who did not) evidenced:
  - Fewer mental health problems (including trauma symptoms)
  - Fewer placement changes
  - Less placement in residential facilities
  - Greater permanency
  - Cost savings
- An adaptation of FHF for teens is currently being tested

# Recruitment & Screening

- Graduate students in social work and psychology serve as mentors; they each mentor 2 children
- The students' participation (18-20 hours/week) for the academic year counts as their field placement or practicum and they receive course credit for their work with the FHF program
- Our program staff recruit graduate students from several local universities and academic programs
- Students apply to be mentors and we conduct in-depth interviews, as well as background and reference checks
- We search for students who:
  - have experience working with children and families
  - are open to learning, culturally aware, creative, flexible, motivated, etc.
  - can be resilient when confronted with difficult situations

# Orientation and Training

- **3 full-day orientation covering the following topics:**
  - Fostering Healthy Futures theoretical model
  - Child abuse and neglect: Types, causes and consequences
  - Foster care system
  - Working with vulnerable families
  - Cultural lens
  - Mentor role and responsibilities
  - Group curriculum and lifebooks
  - Confidentiality and boundaries
  - Mandated reporting
  - Accessing resources for children and families
  - Documentation

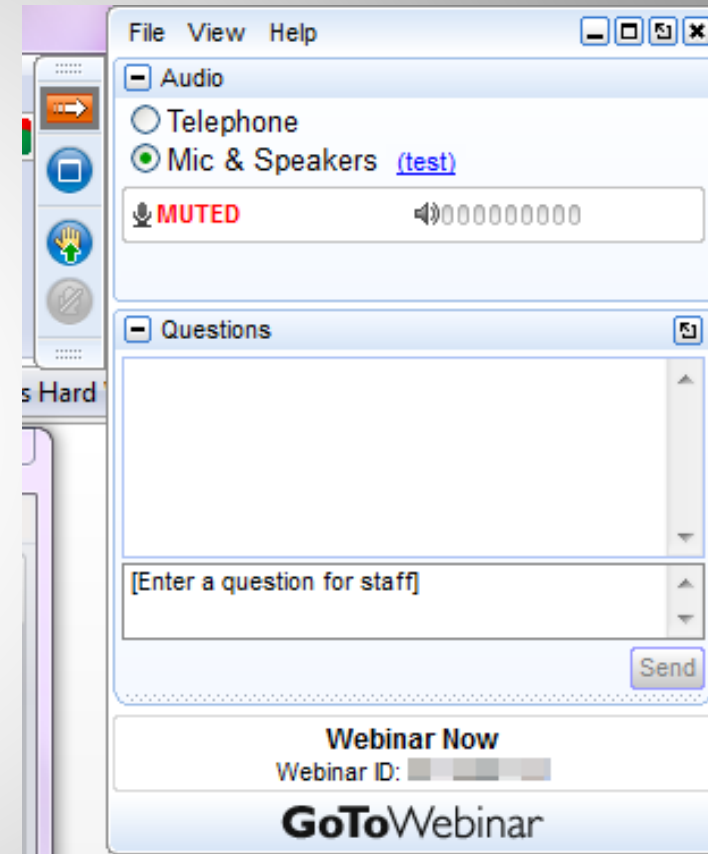
# Monitoring and Support

- **FHF mentors receive the following training each week:**
  - 1 hour of individual supervision
  - 1 hour of group supervision
  - 1.5 hours of seminar
  - .5 hours of curriculum training with group leader
  - Supervisors are on call 24/7
- **Seminar topics include:**
  - Developmental Tasks of Preadolescence
  - Impact of Maltreatment on Development, Attachment and Relationships
  - Suicide Assessment/Self-Harming Behaviors
  - Principles of Behavior Change
  - Understanding the Court Process for Dependency and Neglect Cases
  - Family Violence
  - Advocating and Navigating within the Educational System
  - A Day in the Life of a Caseworker
  - Sexual Development and Sexual Behaviors
  - Understanding the Disease of Addiction
  - Ending the Mentoring Relationships
- **Case Conferences twice a year**



# Q&A

Type your questions in the question box:



# Additional Resources



## National Mentoring Resource Center

Check out the [OJJDP National Mentoring Resource Center](#) for no-cost evidence-based mentoring resources

## Mentoring Connector

Recruit mentors by submitting your program to the Mentoring Connector <https://connect.mentoring.org/admin>

# Remember...

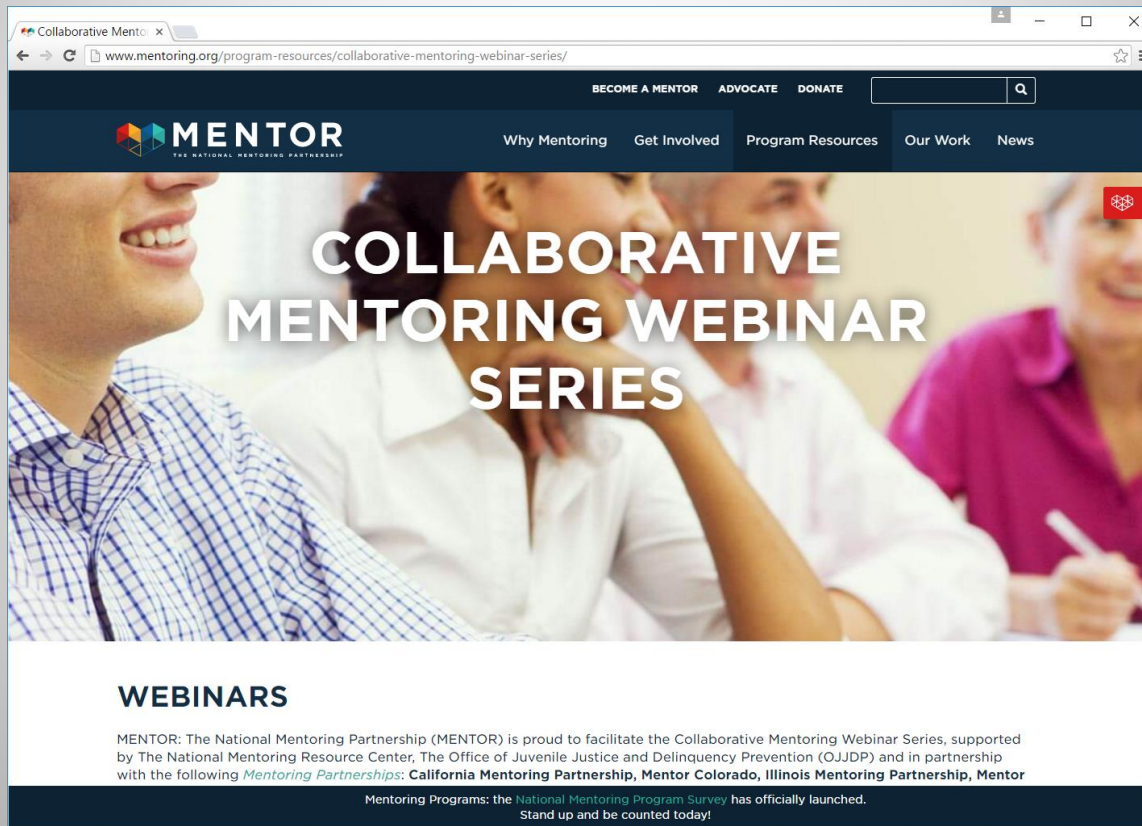
## After the webinar:

- Please help us out by answering survey questions at the end of the webinar.
- Everyone will get an email with information on how to download the slides, recording, and resources on the CMWS webpage on the MENTOR website:

[http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_resources/training\\_opportunities/collaborative\\_mentoring\\_webinar\\_series/](http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/training_opportunities/collaborative_mentoring_webinar_series/)

# Stay Connected

- Email us at [collaborativewebinarseries@mentoring.org](mailto:collaborativewebinarseries@mentoring.org)
- Tweet with hashtag #MentoringWebinar
- Visit our webpage on the MENTOR website for past and upcoming webinars:



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the MENTOR website. The URL in the address bar is [www.mentoring.org/program-resources/collaborative-mentoring-webinar-series/](http://www.mentoring.org/program-resources/collaborative-mentoring-webinar-series/). The page features a dark blue header with the MENTOR logo and navigation links: "BECOME A MENTOR", "ADVOCATE", "DONATE", "Why Mentoring", "Get Involved", "Program Resources", "Our Work", and "News". The main content area has a large image of four people smiling and talking, with the text "COLLABORATIVE MENTORING WEBINAR SERIES" overlaid in white. Below the image, the word "WEBINARS" is written in bold. The text below reads: "MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) is proud to facilitate the Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series, supported by The National Mentoring Resource Center, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and in partnership with the following *Mentoring Partnerships*: California Mentoring Partnership, Mentor Colorado, Illinois Mentoring Partnership, Mentor Mentoring Programs: the National Mentoring Program Survey has officially launched. Stand up and be counted today!"

# Join Us Next Month!



Fostering Youth Purpose  
January 18, 2018  
1 - 2:15 pm Eastern



Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series