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Initiating and Sustaining a Mentoring Program for Child Welfare Staff

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As public child welfare agencies stabilize their workforce, they will need to address the challenges posed by a workforce that needs ongoing opportunities for revitalization, professional development, and recommitment to the agency mission. This article describes a two-year evaluation of a formal mentoring program in a state public child welfare agency targeting supervisors and seasoned workers. It was evaluated using both process and outcome methodologies. Findings reveal that mentees have more confidence, their network has grown, and their investment in their job and the agency has increased; mentors identify increased personal satisfaction and a renewed sense of purpose in their role as a positive outcome of participating.

KEYWORDS *child welfare, evaluation, mentee, mentoring*

INTRODUCTION

In the struggle to address challenges faced by public child welfare agencies in the retention of competent and committed staff equipped to deliver quality services to children and their families, practitioners, child welfare leaders, social work educators, and researchers are innovating and assessing a range of retention strategies. The development of mentoring programs for child welfare staff increasingly is being recognized as a promising retention strategy. Children's Rights and the National Center for Youth Law interviewed 74 stakeholders from 12 jurisdictions where child welfare class action lawsuits were pending (Children's Rights, 2007). They were asked about workforce

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retention strategies. One recommended that agencies develop “comprehensive mentoring programs for supervisors” (p. 13). Other stakeholders suggested that mentors be used to help train and educate new workers. The U.S. General Accounting Office also has recommended that child welfare agencies use formal mentoring programs as a recruitment and retention strategy (U.S. GAO, 2003).

This article describes a two-year evaluation of a formal mentoring program in a state public child welfare agency. The program targeted supervisors and outstanding workers and was designed to provide opportunities for career and professional development. It was evaluated using both process and outcome methodologies.

McCauley (2005) writes, “A mentoring relationship is an intense, committed relationship in which a senior person (the mentor) stimulates and supports the personal and professional development of a junior person (the protégé)” (p. 143). Moberg and Velasquez (2004) suggest that “[i]deally mentors are tutors who impart wisdom to their protégés, are partial to them, and offer them caring support” (p. 98). Mentors lead, advise, and coach; however, they are not simply career coaches just as protégés are not simply apprentices. In addition to career mentoring, mentors also provide psychosocial support. The formal mentoring program described in this article was designed to provide career and psychosocial mentoring. Like other formal mentoring programs, it was administered by the organization and guided by a set of requirements and expectations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Selecting supervisors as a major target population for mentees was a purposeful choice. Increasingly, research has documented that contributors to effective child welfare practice include strong supervisory support (Landsman, 2001; Smith, Russell, & Giddings, 2007) and competent supervision (Smith, 2005). Supervisors play a critical role in strengthening organizational culture (Ellett, Collins, & Ellett, 2006; Zlotnik, DePanfilis, Daining, & McDermott Lane, 2005) and are critical to retaining frontline workers (Jacquet, Clark, Morazes, & Wither, 2007). Supportive supervision is among the organizational factors identified as contributing to employee retention (Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook, & Dews, 2006).

Mentoring in the corporate world and the informal mentoring relationship are most frequently studied (Day & Allen, 2004; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Eddy, Tannenbaum, Lorenzet, & Smith-Jentsch, 2005; Gibson, 2005; Hezlett & Gibson, 2005; Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Mathews, 2006; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). However, in recent years, formal mentoring is receiving more attention. Thus far, the evidence supports the theory that formal mentoring can be

just as effective as informal mentoring (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005; Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Findings are varied but suggest that there is no difference in interpersonal comfort between formal and informal pairs (Allen et al., 2004; Allen et al., 2005; Allen & Eby, 2004; Eby & Allen, 2002; McDonald & Hite, 2005).

A review of the literature in peer-reviewed academic journals found few articles on formal mentoring programs for human services staff in the U.S. This is consistent with Kelly's (2001) review of the literature several years ago. The scarcity of literature on career mentoring in child welfare may be attributed to the lack of formal programs. Informal mentoring in the human services and child welfare may be more common.

Despite the scarcity of literature, several mentoring programs for child welfare workers and supervisors in U.S. agencies have been studied. As early as 1994, Collins found that child welfare staff with MSWs who were mentored, or served as mentors, had higher satisfaction and career success than those who did not. Several agencies have incorporated mentoring into their pre-service training for new workers (Caplan & Curry, 2001; Kanak, Maciolek, & O'Brien, 2005; Lindsey & Quaqish, 2007; Reynolds, 2001). Several California counties mentor their supervisors around worker training, how to coach and increase transfer of learning for new workers, and the importance of their role. Preliminary findings of a mentoring program for child welfare supervisors in the state of Arkansas support the need for process and outcome evaluations (Murphy & Goodson, 2007).

Several mentoring programs for managers also have been studied. Some California county agencies mentor managers to support mentoring capacity of supervisors (Saldivar, 2002). Collins-Camargo and Kelly (2006) found that almost all of their sample of 36 public child welfare managers had had at least one mentor during their professional careers, and three-quarters described themselves as having served as an informal mentor for others in the organization.

Several interesting studies of mentoring programs for child welfare staff have come out of the U.K., Canada, and Australia. In the U.K., mentors traditionally have been used to supervise social workers pursuing post-graduate professional certifications. Bourn and Bootle (2005) evaluated a long-distance learning program that utilized mentoring. Students reported that their mentors, more than colleagues, line managers, fellow students, or staff development officers, contributed to changes in their practice during the course.

Recruitment and retention of child welfare staff has been an ongoing challenge in Canada as well. Burnside and Bond (2002) evaluated a mentoring program at a child welfare agency and found that the most satisfying aspect of the mentoring relationship for most mentees was the psychosocial support they received. These results suggest that mentoring can impact both professional and career advancement as well as contribute to psychosocial development.

One qualitative study explored the impact of a formal mentoring program in Australia in which researchers served as mentors to the child welfare managers who were participants in the study. Technically, the “formal” mentors were not employed by the organization, but working in a contractual arrangement as part of the research study. Nonetheless, they found the managers increased their insight and knowledge about their management role (Wilson & Tilse, 2006).

MENTORING PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A number of agency factors contributed to the initiation of the mentoring program described in this article. First, the agency is somewhat unusual for a public child welfare agency in that the workforce is stable, with turnover at 8 percent or less for the last four years. Pay is also among the highest in the nation for child welfare staff, and caseloads are capped to ensure manageable caseloads. In addition, support for the agency to focus on retention was made possible by a five-year Children’s Bureau grant received by the first author, the focus of which was on building management capacity.

Funding support from the grant allowed the agency to undertake an agency-wide survey of job satisfaction in 2004. The results of that survey suggested that while this is an agency where staff tend to stay, the longer one stays at the agency the less satisfied one becomes with one’s job, and those with MSW degrees are significantly more likely to express intent to leave than those with a BAs. Staff members that have been at the agency the longest tend to be managers and supervisors, and some important dynamics regarding the supervisor-manager relationship emerged. For example, supervisors of caseworkers expressed the most dissatisfaction with their jobs and were more dissatisfied with their own supervision than caseworkers.

In addition, findings suggested a need for improvement in organizational culture. The areas of contingent rewards (feeling appreciated, rewarded for one’s work) and operating conditions (availability of concrete resources, amount of paperwork) received the lowest ratings across the agency, and supervisors consistently felt less satisfied than managers in these areas. These findings set the stage for a mentoring program focused on supporting supervisors, building morale, and increasing organizational commitment.

Program Purpose

The job satisfaction survey findings provided a rationale for a mentoring program that addressed the particular needs of supervisors and experienced workers, rather than new workers. The specific goals of the program are to: 1) increase organizational commitment; 2) build leadership capacity; 3) increase

retention; 4) enhance ability to navigate and negotiate within the agency and the community; and 5) increase opportunities for career and personal development.

Program Participants

Staff members were eligible to be *mentors* if they were mid-level managers or above, were in good standing in the organization, and had the approval of their immediate supervisor. Staff at the supervisory level, minorities, and men, were given priority in the selection process for *mentees* in the cohorts evaluated for this study. Potential candidates also needed to have at least two years in their job, be in good standing with the agency, and have the approval of their immediate supervisor. The majority of mentors were mid and upper management staff, and the majority of mentees were supervisors. The 2006 cohort consisted of 36 pairs and the 2007 of 34 pairs, for a total of 140 participants over the two years.

The program has been successful in encouraging men to be mentors (36% in 2006 and 50% in 2007), an important dynamic in an agency that is approximately 75% female and seeks to increase workforce attachment among men. Also, in an agency in which approximately 40% of the staff is people of color, 47% of the mentors in 2006 and 45% of the mentors in 2007 were people of color, and the majority of the mentees (56%) were people of color in both years. The program was successful in obtaining upper-level managers as mentors, and while only half of the mentees were supervisors, all mentees had been with the agency an average of 10.5 years.

Program Administration

The agency's training division coordinates the mentoring program. A mentoring committee comprised of Training Academy staff, field office staff, and outside consultants meet monthly to assist with ongoing administration and evaluation of the program. The human resources department of the agency reviewed all program applications, and a selection committee, a sub-committee of the mentoring committee, selected and matched mentees and mentors. To apply, each mentee completed an application, submitted a letter of support from his/her supervisor, and wrote a brief statement of interest in the program. Matching of mentor and mentees was made based on the mentor not being in the mentee's chain of command, on the goals and interests of the mentees, on the strength of the mentor, and on geographical proximity. To the extent possible, racial and gender preferences were honored.

Mentees were notified prior to the formal announcement of the pair to avoid conflicts of interest between the mentee and mentor that the selection committee may not have known about. If a conflict existed, the mentee was

paired with a different mentor. The mentors were informed of their match at the orientation meeting. Team leaders were responsible for ongoing mediation and support of the mentee/mentor pairs.

The grant supported consultants who provided some of the training at the program meetings, team leaders, and refreshments. It also funded the evaluation activities. In-kind contribution of agency staff time increased over the years and the agency will pick up costs previously covered by the grant.

Program Format

The mentoring program was ongoing and ran for a calendar year. All pairs participated in an all-day orientation meeting at the beginning of the program. At this meeting, the groups of mentors and mentees received separate training on their roles, expectations, and structure of the program, and different learning styles. Department training staff and outside consultants conducted the training. The pairs were expected to have a face-to-face meeting within the first month of the relationship and monthly contact the rest of the year. In addition, both mentors and mentees were encouraged to participate in quarterly program meetings. At these meetings, they had an opportunity to meet in groups, receive additional training, and relate to project staff.

During the program year, mentees follow a development plan established collaboratively with their mentors. Mentees can choose from a variety of activities to further the two program goals they have chosen to focus on. These activities included but were not limited to: shadowing executive leadership for a day; participating in mock interviews; attending meetings with their mentor; working as a member of a task force focused on a project of interest; meeting with a legislative liaison; attending a community meeting; working on a committee or group to develop policies for the agency; attending internal trainings; developing training and presentation skills; and pursuing opportunities for professional development outside the agency (conferences, seminars). At the end of the year, a formal program was held in which a “mentor of the year” award was presented and both mentors and mentees had opportunities to give formal and informal testimonials.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to answer two questions:

1. How well is the program being implemented?
2. How well are the program goals being met?

The process evaluation assessed how effectively the program components were being implemented. For example, was the orientation program

successful?; were the pairs meeting regularly?; were mentees engaged in the anticipated activities?; were the quarterly meetings well attended and well received?; and were the team leaders effective in monitoring progress and mediating difficulties? To answer the first question, feedback was sought from participants four times during the year; development plans were collected and reviewed; and monthly contact between mentors and mentees was monitored by team leaders. In addition, research staff team members participated in monthly meetings of the mentoring committee, which was responsible for coordinating and monitoring the program.

The purpose of the outcome, or impact, evaluation was to establish the program's success in meeting the program objectives. To answer this second question, feedback was sought at the end of the year, a month after the program ended, and for the 2006 cohort, 6 and 12 months after the program ended.

Measures

For the process phase of the evaluation, the following instruments were used.

A reactions questionnaire. This instrument solicited information from the mentors and mentees about the orientation program meeting and was scored using a five-point Likert scale, with response choices ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Respondents were asked to rate the facilitator's presentation, the clarity and format of the day's program, how satisfied they were with the content of the presentation, and their overall experience at the orientation meeting.

A development plan form was distributed to each mentoring pair at the orientation meeting. In consultation with mentors, mentees were asked to select at least two of the five program objectives and outline activities they hoped to participate in that would help them reach their goals.

A quarterly evaluation was administered by the research team at the conclusion of each of the three quarterly meetings, held at the agency in April, June, and September. The 2006 form was revised for 2007; it is the latter on which we report. Mentees were asked to describe specific activities they participated in, benefits they experienced, and challenges they confronted. Mentors were asked to report on activities, benefits, and challenges for their mentee.

Perceptions of the benefits of being a mentor. This scale was adapted from Ragins and Scandura's Expected Costs and Benefits to Being a Mentor instrument (1999) and changed to capture *perceptions* rather than expectations. The survey listed 16 benefits, 8 costs, perceived program effectiveness, and perceived managerial support for mentoring and asked the respondent to choose a response from a five-point Likert scale (1—strongly disagree to 5—strongly agree). The final questions asked respondents if they intend to

mentor in the future and whether they continued to have a relationship with their mentees.

Psychosocial and career mentoring. Two subscales from Noe's mentoring functions scale (1988) were used in the evaluation, "psychosocial" and "career" mentoring. Internal reliability of the psychosocial subscale was .92 and the career development subscale was .89 (Noe, 1988). Noe's mentoring functions scale has been used widely by public and private organizations seeking to learn more about the type of mentoring their formal mentors are providing and how mentoring functions provided affect a relationship's success.

For the outcome phase of the evaluation, four additional instruments were used:

An end-of-the-year program questionnaire was administered to attendees at the year-end meeting in December for both cohorts. This questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale with answer choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Mentors and mentees received slightly different evaluation forms in that mentees were asked to rate their own experience while mentors were asked to rate the experience of their mentee.

A one-month follow-up program activity feedback form was distributed to all mentees from both the 2006 and 2007 cohorts. Mentees were asked to identify one activity they participated in during the mentoring program that was particularly rewarding. The research team followed up with each respondent by telephone to gather more details about the rewarding activity.

A six-month follow-up survey was e-mailed to all 2006 and 2007 program participants six months after the completion of the program in June 2007. The survey measure for the mentors asked for perceived benefits and costs of participation, the program's effectiveness, management support for the program, their intentions to mentor in the future, and their ongoing relationship with their mentees. The mentee survey paralleled the goals of the program and sought to gain feedback from the mentees to help understand how the program affected their leadership skills, ability to navigate and negotiate the agency, professional development, and commitment. It also elicited information about their ongoing relationship with their mentor.

FINDINGS

Process Evaluation

Seventy pairs (140 staff) participated in the program during the two years of the evaluation; however, the number of respondents who completed the evaluation instruments at the various collection times was often less than the number of participants. We discuss first the feedback from the 2006 cohort and identify the suggested revisions that were incorporated into the 2007 program and assessed.

Feedback on the orientation program at the beginning of the year was very positive, with 2006 respondents rating the program as a whole 4.2 on a scale of 1-5. All development plans were completed by the end of the first three months. Activities that stood out as being particularly meaningful over the year were participation in mock interviews (a tool to prepare mentees for potential, future interviews for different positions than they currently hold) and shadowing executive management (the commissioner, member of her staff and bureau chiefs, for example). We did not systematically collect information about the number of activities mentees were engaged in as opposed to those planned.

Based on the process evaluation in 2006, many program components were continued in 2007 and several were revised. The orientation program format was continued in 2007 since it had been successful in 2006. A number of program changes were implemented for 2007. All mentees were involved in the shadowing and mock interview process, since these activities had been so successful the previous year. Closer monitoring of pairs by team leaders was initiated for the 2007 cohort by hiring outside consultants as team leaders. Previously, senior management staff (not mentors) had filled this role but time constraints impacted their ability to consistently contact the pairs. The 2007 team leaders established monthly contact with each pair and filed quarterly reports with the director of the mentoring program. This allowed for consistent oversight of each pair and provided helpful information about the pairs' progress, as well as highlighted problems when they arose. This change, combined with more detailed quarterly feedback using a revised format, allowed the evaluation team to track implementation of the program more closely.

As Table 1 illustrates, by midyear the mentees were involved in an average of 2.7 activities (out of 6 listed), which helped increase their commitment to the organization. Some of the activities mentees participated in included meeting with office directors, attending area directors meetings, behavioral health program directors meetings, child fatality review board meetings, conferences on permanency, coaching for a college interview, juvenile justice conference meetings, meetings on program monitoring, resource management meetings, staff meetings with mentors, and tours of facilities.

Also by midyear, mentees took part in an average of 2.5 activities (out of 9 listed), which helped them build leadership capacity. The most common activity mentees participated in that impacted their job satisfaction was attending a conference. Mentees participated in an average of less than one (out of six listed) activity that helped them navigate and negotiate within the agency and the larger community. Mentees participated in an average of 2.1 (out of six) activities that increased their career and personal development.

At the time of the third quarterly evaluation, the program appeared to be going well. Mentees seldom faced challenges such as difficulty advocating

TABLE 1 Quarterly Evaluation—Mentee Activities

Program Goal	April N=28	June N=28	Sept N=25
Increased organizational commitment (six activities listed)	2.2	2.7	2.7
Build leadership capacity (nine activities listed)	1.6	2.5	2.2
Impact job satisfaction (three activities listed)	.8	.9	1.1
Enhance ability to navigate and negotiate (six activities listed)	.5	.9	1.3
Help increase opportunities for career and personal development (six activities listed)	1.7	2.1	2.8
Thinking back to the goals my mentor and I agreed on ... I am on target for achieving my personal and professional growth, over the last 3 months*	4.1	3.9	4.0
Program Process	Yes	Yes	Yes
I met with my mentor at least monthly over the last 3 months	27	27	19
I was in contact with my team leader monthly over the last three months	24	26	24
My team leader was helpful/supportive in strengthening my relationship with my mentor.	16	19	15
I was able to resolved the challenges I faced	13	17	19
I confronted the following challenges or issues over the last 3 months (5 challenges listed)*	1.5	1.7	2.0

* Response scale: 1 - never 2 - seldom 3- sometimes 4- frequently 5-very frequently.

for themselves or getting supervisory approval for time spent in the program during the third quarter. The most frequent challenge reported was busy schedule. Mentees said challenges were most often overcome by speaking to their mentor. Only one respondent said he/she was not able to resolve challenges faced.

Standardized instruments to assess perceived impact of the program for mentees on career mentoring and on psychosocial development were introduced at the June 2007 quarterly meeting and repeated in September 2007. As can be seen from Table 2, psychosocial mentoring, which involved coaching, acceptance, and confirmation, role modeling, and counseling, was perceived as having a somewhat greater impact than career mentoring, which involved protection, exposure, visibility, sponsorship, and challenging assignments.

These findings have to be interpreted with caution, however, because in the two areas of career development that corresponded most closely to

TABLE 2 Mean Scores for Mentee Standardized Quarterly Perceived Psychosocial and Career Mentoring

Psychosocial Mentoring	June, 2007 (N=27)	Sept., 2007 (N=25)
Coaching	4.4	4.6
Acceptance and Confirmation	4.3	4.6
Role Modeling	4.3	4.2
Counseling	4.1	4.5
Total Psychosocial	4.3	4.5
Career Mentoring	June (N =27)	September (N=25)
Protection	3.4	3.9 (low reliability)
Exposure and Visibility	4.2	4.4
Sponsorship	3.8	3.9
Challenging Assignments	4.0	4.3
Total Career	4.0	4.1

Response Scale: 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree NA. Not Applicable
Cronbach's alpha > .95 for psychosocial mentoring and > .88 for Career mentoring at both times.

the goals of this particular agency program—exposure and visibility, and challenging assignments—the impact was rated quite high (4.4 and 4.3, respectively). The two areas rated lower (protection and sponsorship) did not correspond to goals or procedures established in this mentoring program.

A standardized assessment tool for the perceived costs and benefits of being a mentor was also introduced in June 2007 and repeated in September 2007. Results indicated that for mentors, the benefits clearly outweighed the costs, and they perceived managerial support for the program as very high. See Table 3 for more detail.

In general, the program implementation proceeded smoothly. The orientation program at the beginning of the program appeared to be very effective in orienting participants to their roles and the program expectations. Attendance at the quarterly meetings was higher for mentees than

TABLE 3 Mean Scores for Mentor Standardized Quarterly Perceived Costs and Benefits of Mentoring

Category	June, 2007 N = 14	Sept., 2007 N = 11
Perceived Benefits of Being a Mentor	3.9	3.8
Perceived Costs of Being a Mentor	1.3	1.5
Perceived Program Effectiveness	4.6	4.6
Perceived Managerial Support for Mentoring	4.1	4.4

Response scale: 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree
Cronbach's alpha = .84 for Perceived Costs, = .95 for Perceived Benefits, = >.91 for Perceived Managerial Support.

TABLE 4 End of Year Feedback and Review

Item	2006		2007	
	Mentor Score (n = 23)	Mentee Score (n = 26)	Mentor Score (n = 16)	Mentee Score (n = 24)
Total Organizational Commitment	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3
Increase mentee's understanding of mission and values	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3
Expose mentee to policies and procedures	4.4	4.3	4.5	4.3
Expose mentee to programs	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.4
Provided opportunities to demonstrate best practice	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.2
Facilitated projects to increase professional development	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.4
Total Build Leadership Skills	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1
Mentee observed management styles	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.5
Participated in program/policy development	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.8
Created opportunities to expand network	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.3
Created opportunities for specialized training	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.7
Total Desire to Stay	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.3
Create internal supports	4.2	4.2	4	4.2
Build work skills	4.3	4.3	4.1	4.2
Develop career and life planning opportunities	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.2
Total Navigating and Negotiating	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.1
Exposed to shadowing	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.3
Help collaborate, train with multicultural affairs, AA and HR	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.9
Help contribute to cultural collaborations	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.8
Help advocate for self and clients	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.2
Help manage change in depth	3.9	3.9	3.7	4.2
The MP helped me feel appreciated.	4.6	4.3	4.8	4.3
The MP influenced my professional/career goals.	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5
The MP influenced my own personal development.	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.3
For the next 5-10 years, I plan to work at DCF.	3.8	4.4	3.8	4.4

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree.

mentors. This was due both to the time demands for managers coupled with the fact that by 2007, two-thirds of the mentors had been mentors previously. Feedback to the mentoring committee suggested mentors felt they already had benefited from trainings at the quarterly meetings. All who attended, rated the training or program provided at the meetings very

highly. The development plan was helpful in organizing planned activities for each of the mentees, and the program-wide activities of shadowing senior administrators and participating in mock interviews were well received. On-going issues that need to be addressed include how to increase the pool of mentors and increase their attendance at quarterly meetings.

Outcome Evaluation

A description of the atmosphere at the end-of the year meeting is worth mentioning. It is difficult to capture in writing how moving the ceremony is for participants—the air of enthusiasm, excitement, and energy was evident to the research staff at ceremonies for both the 2006 and 2007 cohorts. The end-of the year evaluation questionnaire (reliability averaged .91 for mentors and .97 for mentees) probed for reactions to each of the major goals of the program, using specific behavioral anchors, as well as asked respondents to summarize their experiences in three areas: feeling appreciated, helping achieve personal goals, and helping achieve professional goals.

A combined total of 39 mentors and 50 mentees completed the end of the year questionnaires. For both the mentors and mentees, the mean overall total score was 4.2 out of a possible 5.0. For the *mentors*, the strongest response was to the question regarding whether the program helped them feel the work they do is appreciated (mean = 4.6 for 2006 and 4.8 for 2007). The finding is particularly important as contingent rewards emerged as an area of concern on the job satisfaction survey. The scores on this item were high for the mentees as well (4.32 and 4.25), suggesting that the program heightened feelings of positive recognition for one's work. For the *mentees*, the most positive aspect of the program appeared to be the activities they undertook to help them achieve the professional goals they had identified at the beginning of the program.

The program goal that both mentees and mentors rated as having the least impact was *enhancing ability to navigate and negotiate within the agency*. This also is a significant finding as it relates to the job satisfaction survey, which identified difficulty with “operating conditions”

Mentees and mentors largely were in agreement about where the mentees were active and where the program had the greatest impacts. This suggests mentors were actively engaged in the program and were aware of which activities their mentees participated in. Overall, the mentees found the mentoring program worthwhile and rewarding. They enjoyed spending time with their mentors. Several noted that the match between themselves and their mentors was quite successful. Mentees also enjoyed meeting other program participants and other agency employees. One mentee wrote, “This is not the end of my mentorship but the beginning of my life at [the agency]!”

The program appeared to increase some of the participants' appreciation for their chosen field and the agency as well. Not surprisingly, the mentees were more affirmative than the mentors about staying with the agency for the next five to ten years, which is understandable given that the mentors already have a longer tenure with the agency (16.5 as compared with 10.5 years).

Eleven mentees from the 2006 cohort and 18 from the 2007 cohort provided feedback one month after the end of the program. Projects and activities the mentee/mentor teams participated in and found especially beneficial were generally unique to that pair's interests and work responsibilities. There were several activities that more than one pair participated in and which cut across programmatic area. Several mentees attended meetings they may not have had the opportunity to participate in previously. Several mentees also attended conferences and trainings and participated in career development activities such as networking events, shadowing, and licensure preparation.

In general, participants reported the mentoring program had a positive impact. Both mentors and mentees valued the relationship and the mentees, in particular, found many of the activities they engaged in helpful to their current job and personal goals. They appeared to value the formal aspect of the program that brought participants together and provided the structure for formal activities like shadowing, participating in management and team meetings, and exposure to systems outside of the child welfare arm of the agency. Areas for suggested improvement included better attention to matches that may not be fully functional, and exploration of additional opportunities and activities that will help mentees better negotiate and navigate the agency system.

Six-Month Follow-Up Study

The six-month follow-up survey was administered to the 2006 and 2007 cohorts six months after their involvement in the program ended. Twelve mentees from the 2006 cohort (33%) and 18 mentees from the 2007 cohort (50%) returned the evaluation. Both sets of mentee respondents felt positive about the program six months after their participation ended. Both cohorts felt that the program had increased their leadership capacity, commitment to the agency, and opportunities for professional development. A majority of the respondents said they intended to stay at DCF over the next five to ten years. In addition, a majority of both sets of mentee respondents reported that their relationships with their former mentors have continued. All of the 2006 mentee respondents said they recommended the program to a colleague, as did most of the 2007 mentee respondents.

Nine mentors from the 2006 cohort (25%) and 18 mentors from the 2007 cohort (50%) returned the survey. Both groups of mentors also continued

to feel positively about the program six-months after the program ended. Both groups of mentors reported the benefits of participating in the program outweighed the drawbacks. The 2007 mentor respondents were more positive about the administration of the program compared to the 2006 mentor respondents. The 2007 respondents had a mean score of 4.5 for the question, “this program is effective,” compared to the 2006 respondents’ score of 4.0. The 2007 respondents also agreed more strongly that mentors are held accountable for their treatment of mentees and the appropriate steps are taken to remedy a mentee’s dissatisfaction. This suggests that the revisions made to the program in 2007 were effective.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Limitations of the study included the lower-than-desired response rate on many of the instruments, particularly at the quarterly meetings. Generally, two-thirds of the mentees completed the questionnaires but only about one-third of the mentors did so. This was due to lower attendance at the quarterly meetings by the mentors. Since we did not ask for demographic information other than at the beginning of the year, we are unable to analyze the data by staff characteristics, and it may be that mentees who are supervisors, for example, perceived the program differently than those who were workers. This is an important variable to capture in future evaluations. A strategy also should be developed for obtaining a fuller response rate. Another limitation was the lack of a comparison or control group. Adding this to the design would considerably strengthen the outcome evaluation.

While the evaluation focused on staff members who were mentees, the impact on mentors who represent senior management staff in the agency cannot be ignored. Our data suggests the program had a beneficial impact on mentors as well. Benefits of being a mentor outweighed the costs, and scores were higher for mentors than mentees on questions at the end of the program that asked if the Mentoring Program helped them feel appreciated. The program also appears to have influenced professional/career goals and personal development for the mentors. On both the standardized measures and in response to open-ended questions, mentors identify increased personal satisfaction and a renewed sense of purpose in their role as a positive outcome of participating. Focusing on benefits for the mentors, as well as for the mentees, is an area that warrants further exploration, especially in view of the potential for burnout the longer one stays at the agency.

Mentees generally felt that as a result of the program, they have more confidence, their network has grown, and their investment in their job and the agency has increased. As a strategy designed to 1) improve organizational commitment, 2) increase leadership capacity, 3) increase retention, 4) increase capacity to navigate the system, and 5) improve personal and

TABLE 5 Mean Score Per Category on Perceived Costs and Benefits of Being A Mentor 6-Month Follow-Up for Mentors

Category	2006 N=14	2007 N= 18
Perceived Benefits of Being a Mentor	3.8	3.7
Perceived Costs of Being a Mentor	1.3	1.7
Perceived Program Effectiveness	4.0	4.5
Perceived Managerial Support for Mentoring	3.8	3.8

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree.

professional development, the mentoring program appears to have been successful in meeting goals one, three and five, with mixed results on the second and fourth goal. Noteworthy, too, is the capacity of the program to attract staff of color and men as both mentors and mentees, an overarching goal of the program in regard to all program objectives. The strength of the program in meeting the need to develop committed individuals who feel the agency can offer professional development opportunities and the chance for personal growth is striking.

This program combined supervisors and workers. It may be that establishing a program that serves long-term workers, as well as supervisors, is ideal. As Westbrook, Ellis and Ellett (2006) point out, there are professionally committed child welfare staff members that may prefer a career in direct practice rather than moving into administration. A mentoring program such as this one that offers opportunities to learn new skills, renews commitment to the public agency mission, and offers support for personal development may be one way to counter dissatisfaction and promote the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

As public child welfare agencies become successful in stabilizing their workforce, they will need to address challenges posed by a workforce that needs ongoing opportunities for revitalization, professional development, and recommitment to the agency mission. A formal mentoring program, such as the one described above, appears to hold much promise for staff who participate as mentees and potentially for those who participate as mentors as well.

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