

3

Teen Court/Youth Court Programs and Mentoring Memorandum of Understanding

Researching the
Referral Stage of
Youth Mentoring
in Six Juvenile
Justice Settings

Written by:
Scott Bernard Peterson

3

Overview

What is a Memorandum of Understanding?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is often explained as a document used to describe a common understanding of a working relationship between two (2) or more parties/entities. It is not as binding as a contract, but it outlines a commitment to work together collaboratively toward the same purpose or goal(s) and objective(s) and, related to the use of shared work, services and/or resources. A good MOU can foster effective communication between/among partners, increase access to a wide range of resources, strengthen existing and new partnerships and provide a framework for addressing issues of mutual concern.

Why is a Memorandum of Understanding Important?

MOUs build collaborative relationships: The process of negotiating a MOU between a mentoring program and a Juvenile Justice partner can help build a more collaborative working relationship, provide more empathy and a deeper understanding of partner issues, and result in more refined solutions to problems.

MOUs Identify the Structure for the Partnership

The MOU provides a structure for a working relationship and clarifies what each of the partners will do to further the collaboration. The MOU identifies the specific resources that will support the partnership and defines how each will be used. In addition, language clarifying the type of staff, scope of work, job descriptions, and provided services help to formalize the partnership. Most importantly, the MOU defines the specific

commitments between partners to meet mutually agreed upon goals.

Teen Court/Youth Court Program Description

These are Juvenile Justice diversion programs in which juveniles are sentenced by their peers for minor crimes, offenses and/or violations. These juvenile diversion programs are administered on a local level by law enforcement agencies, probation departments, delinquency courts, schools and local nonprofit organizations. These programs offer communities an opportunity to provide immediate consequences for primarily first-time juvenile offenders, and they also offer important civic, service and volunteer opportunities for volunteer youth who serve as judges, defenders, prosecutors, clerks and jurors.

Mentoring Program Description

Mentoring involves a non-parental adult who plays an important role in promoting healthy development for youth. There are many mentoring models and even more programmatic differences within the different mentoring models. The goal of mentoring programs is to provide youth with positive adult contact and, thereby, reduce risk factors (e.g., early antisocial behavior, alienation, lack of commitment to school) by enhancing protective factors (e.g., healthy beliefs, opportunities for involvement, and social and material reinforcement for appropriate behavior). Mentors provide youth with personal connectedness, supervision and guidance, skills training, career or cultural enrichment opportunities, a knowledge of spirituality and values and, perhaps most importantly, goals and hope for the future.

Tips and Strategies for Writing MOUs

Tip 1

Identify all individuals/entities that will be involved in the MOU agreement and hold a meeting to identify the shared functions, services and/or resources that will support the collaboration. Discuss a plan as to how the parties/entities can and may operate together to deliver services and/or share resources.

Tip 2

Write out the primary purpose or main goal(s)/objective(s) of the agreement and determine what specific outcomes are expected. The purpose statement can include an identification of the parties involved, as well as the terms and conditions of the agreement. Depending on the style and complexity of the agreement, some documents begin with an opening statement or preamble that introduces the names of the parties/entities that are involved in the agreement.

Tip 3

Determine a timeline as to when the partnership and agreement will begin and when it will end. Be specific regarding the dates and any other terms determined to be of importance.

Sample timeline statement: This agreement will be active from September 1, 2011, to August 31, 2012. It can be amended by mutual agreement at any time during the year. In the event that either party wants to be released from this agreement, 90 days written notice to the other party would be required.

Tip 4

Write down and determine which organization will be responsible for what pieces of work, services and/or resources.

Sample partnership responsibility statement: Each party hereby agrees to the following administrative responsibilities.

- A. Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program will (list agreements).
- B. Mentoring program will (list agreements).
- C. Teen Court/Youth Court and mentoring program will (list agreements).

Tip 5

Draft the MOU based on the decisions that were made during the meeting, then let all parties review, sign, date and authorize the document.

MOU Policy and Programmatic Discussion Points

- Discuss how Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs are operated by a wide range of agencies and organizations to include public and private entities and how this relates to referrals of these youth to mentoring programs.
- Discuss geographic and demographic considerations when making and accepting referrals of Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program involved youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss the allowable ages of Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion involved youth who are eligible for referrals of mentoring services.
- Discuss the characteristics and challenges typically associated with youth who are involved with the Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program.
- Discuss the differences and/or similarities between the most common Juvenile Justice settings to include: Dependency Court, Delinquency Court, Teen Court/Youth Court diversion program, Juvenile Probation, Juvenile Correctional Facility and Juvenile Detention Facility.
- Discuss the specific individuals who have authority to make referrals of Teen/Youth Court Diversion Program involved youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss the high-risk youth referral sources of origin for Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs within the context of statutes, laws and/or other programmatic and policy implications when referring youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss referrals of youth from Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs who are re-arrested for a subsequent juvenile crime, offense and/or violation after the referral has been made and before the formal mentoring match has taken place.
- Discuss referrals of youth from Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs within the context of “formal attestations” and/or “informal arrests” and implications on making referrals of such youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss having an agreed upon, formal written referral policy which takes into consideration a wide range of factors to be discussed and agreed upon between a Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program and mentoring program.
- Discuss creating a visual referral flowchart for the Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program and mentoring program, including a wide range of steps from making the referral to match termination, among other actions as related to mentoring Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs involved youth.
- Discuss how referrals of youth from Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Programs can include youth who are juvenile offenders and/or youth volunteers who are former offenders within the context of making referrals of these youth for mentoring services.
- Discuss referrals within the context of voluntary referrals and/or involuntary referrals of Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program involved youth for mentoring services.
- Discuss your individualized considerations and requirements for mentoring programs to consider when Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program youth are referred for mentoring services and for Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program to consider when making referrals to a mentoring program.
- Discuss all local mentoring programs within the context of various mentoring models and services which may and/or may not be appropriate for Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program involved youth of varying ages.

MOU Policy and Programmatic Discussion Points

Continued

- Discuss any statutory and/or legal considerations to consider when Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program youth are referred for mentoring services.
- Discuss how youth with Dependency Court, Delinquency Court and Teen Court/Youth Diversion Program involvement will be handled when making referrals of these high-risk youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss how to handle match termination and emergency issues for Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program involved youth engaged in a current mentoring match.
- Discuss the Teen Court/Youth Court Diversion Program Profile and PowerPoint Presentation listed below under Training and Technical Assistance Resources, in addition to other helpful resources provided below.

Training and Technical Assistance Resources

Teen/Youth Courts and Mentoring Programs

OJJDP Research Report on Referring High Risk Youth for Mentoring Services – Full Report

OJJDP Research Report on Referring High Risk Youth for Mentoring Services – Executive Summary

Juvenile Justice Journal on Referring High Risk Youth for Mentoring Services – Special Edition

Memorandums of Understanding
Six Resource Guides for Developing MOUs
for Juvenile Justice and Mentoring Services

PowerPoint Presentations for
Six Juvenile Justice Settings and Mentoring

Six Technical Assistance Profiles:
Examining the Referral Stage for Mentoring High-Risk Youth

MENTOR's *Elements of Effective Practice For Mentoring™, Third Edition*

MENTOR's *Elements of Effective Practice For Mentoring™ Toolkit – Juvenile Justice Section*

MENTOR's *Elements of Effective Practice For Mentoring™, Third Edition, Checklist for Mentoring Programs*

For free, downloadable versions of these resources, visit:

MENTOR at http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/Researching_the_Referral_Stage/;

Global Youth Justice at <http://www.globalyouthjustice.org/Mentoring.html>; and

National Partnership for Juvenile Services at <http://www.npjs.org/highriskyouth.php>

Websites of Interest

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Mentoring Resources
<http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/mentoring.html>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Model Program Guide/Mentoring
<http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/progTypesMentoring.aspx>

Global Youth Justice Website – Mentoring High Risk Youth Resources
<http://www.globalyouthjustice.org/Mentoring.html>

National Partnership for Juvenile Services – Mentoring High Risk Youth Resources
<http://www.npjs.org/>

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
<http://www.mentoring.org/>

This project was supported by Grant #2010-JU-FX-0118 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.



PROJECT PARTNERS

