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## Dependency Court and Mentoring Memorandum of Understanding

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

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# 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. The document is not as binding as a contract, but it outlines a commitment between the parties/entities 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 existing 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.

## Dependency Court Description

Dependency Courts involve a juvenile (child/youth), typically in cases of abuse, neglect and mistreatment. Judges determine if allegations of abuse or neglect are sustained by the evidence and, if so, are legally sufficient to support state intervention on behalf of the child. Some youth who appear in the Delinquency Court also appear in the Dependency Court for dual adjudicatory issues. The Dependency Court is most commonly associated with foster care, abuse and neglect issues involving youth younger than 18.

## 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 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. Dependency Court will (list agreements).
- B. Mentoring program will (list agreements).
- C. Dependency 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 geographic and demographic considerations when making and accepting referrals of Dependency Court involved youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss the allowable ages of Dependency Court involved youth who are eligible for referrals of mentoring services.
- Discuss the characteristics and challenges typically associated with youth who are involved with the Dependency Court.
- 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 Dependency Court involved youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss the numerous Dependency Court hearings within the context of which one(s) are appropriate to making well informed decisions to refer 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 the Dependency Court and mentoring program.
- Discuss creating a visual referral flowchart for the Dependency Court and mentoring program, including a wide range of steps from making the referral to match termination, among other actions as related to mentoring Dependency Court involved youth.
- Discuss referrals within the context of voluntary referrals and/or involuntary referrals of Dependency Court involved youth for mentoring services.
- Discuss your individualized considerations and requirements for mentoring programs to consider when Dependency Court youth are referred for mentoring services and for Dependency Court 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 Dependency Court involved youth of varying ages.
- Discuss any statutory and/or legal considerations to consider when Dependency Court youth are referred for mentoring services.
- Discuss how youth with both Dependency Court and Delinquency Court involvement will be handled when making referrals of these high-risk youth for the delivery of mentoring services.
- Discuss match termination and emergency issues within the context of how it will be handled for Dependency Court involved youth engaged in a current mentoring match.
- Discuss the Dependency Court Profile and Dependency Court PowerPoint Presentation listed below under Training and Technical Assistance Resources, in addition to other helpful resources provided on the next page.

## Training and Technical Assistance Resources

### Dependency 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/](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/>



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