



Mentoring Supports Youth's Mental Health and Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on many young people's mental health: 70% of 6- to 18-year-olds and 60% of 18 to 24 years-old report a decline in their mental health since the start of the pandemic.¹

Research shows that mentoring relationships — including naturally occurring mentoring relationships young people develop with adults in their environment or formal relationships established through mentoring programs — can have positive effects on youth mental health. According to our study, *Mapping the Mentoring Gap*, almost a quarter of adolescents who took the initiative to find a mentor did so because they were struggling with their mental health.

Too many young people face barriers accessing mentoring opportunities: roughly 38% of young adults in Canada reported facing barriers accessing mentors during their teen years.

Mentoring contributes to youth well-being

Mentors influence several areas that contribute to young people's mental health:

73% of young adults who were mentored during their adolescence reported that their most meaningful mentor had a significant influence on their confidence in their abilities.

70% reported that their mentor influenced their optimism for the future.

67% reported that their mentor influenced their self-esteem.

Mentored youth report better mental health and belonging

Young adults who had a mentor growing up were 53% more likely to report positive mental health compared to those who did not have access to mentoring.

79% of youth who had a **formal** mentor through a program reported good or excellent mental health compared to 62% of youth who did not have access to any mentor, formal or informal.

Mentored youth were twice as likely to report feeling that they belonged to their community than non-mentored youth.

68% of youth who had a **formal** mentor reported a strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging compared to 37% of youth who did not have any mentor.

68% of Indigenous youth who had a mentor felt that they belonged compared to 46% of those who did not have access to mentoring.

Mentoring should be integrated into the continuum of mental health care

Although mentoring relationships cannot replace professional care for youth with mental health challenges, they can be integrated along the continuum of care as one tool to promote mental well-being. Mentors help young people develop the social-emotional skills they need to manage their emotions and relationships and, ultimately, build resiliency. For youth who need more support, mentors can create connections with appropriate services and remove some barriers to access. Mentors can help youth receiving clinical care reinforce the skills acquired and encourage their continued engagement with mental health professionals. Schools and mental health service providers should consider how informal mentoring relationships and targeted mentoring programs can support their efforts to promote youth's well-being.

Contact Stacey Dakin at stacey.dakin@mentoringcanada.ca to learn more about how you and your organization can help close the mentoring gap to support youth mental health.

1 Sick Kids. (2021). New research reveals impact of COVID-19 pandemic on child and youth mental health. <https://www.sickkids.ca/en/news/archive/2021/impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-child-youth-mental-health/>. Canadian Mental Health Association. (2021). Summary of Findings. Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19: Wave 2. <https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CMHA-UBC-wave-2-Summary-of-Findings-FINAL-EN.pdf>

About MENTOR Canada

MENTOR Canada is a coalition of organizations that provide youth mentoring. We are working together to build sector capacity and expand access to mentoring to empower every young person to reach their potential. *Mapping the Mentoring Gap* is one of three studies conducted by MENTOR Canada as part of the State of Mentoring Research Initiative. Between January and March 2020, we surveyed 2,838 young adults aged 18-30 about their mentoring experiences growing up and their current lives.

Learn more about MENTOR Canada and our research at [MentoringCanada.ca](https://mentoringcanada.ca).