



Mentoring is a preventive tool with proven mental health benefits. Youth with mentors are more likely to attend school, participate in sports and community activities, and are less likely to use harmful substances or to make suicide plans.



Mentoring is Prevention

A Trusted Adult is a key protective factor for Youth & Adolescent Health.

Every Vermont youth deserves access to an adult they can trust. Despite critical youth mental health needs, and the proven social and emotional benefits of mentoring, State investment in mentoring has not increased since 2007, it decreased in 2011, and has been level-funded for the last 11 years at an abysmal rate. Currently, post-pandemic mentor-mentee matches are down by 35% and waitlists exist across Vermont. I am here today to ask you to invest in mentoring to help meet the needs of Vermont youth.



During the COVID pandemic, many young people experienced social disconnection, higher levels of stress and trauma and increased substance use. **Mentoring relationships provide children and adolescents individualized, one-on-one attention and support, and are proven tools in substance use prevention, violence prevention and suicide prevention.** These connections are a critical tool to help ensure young Vermonters have the supportive relationships they need to prosper and grow.



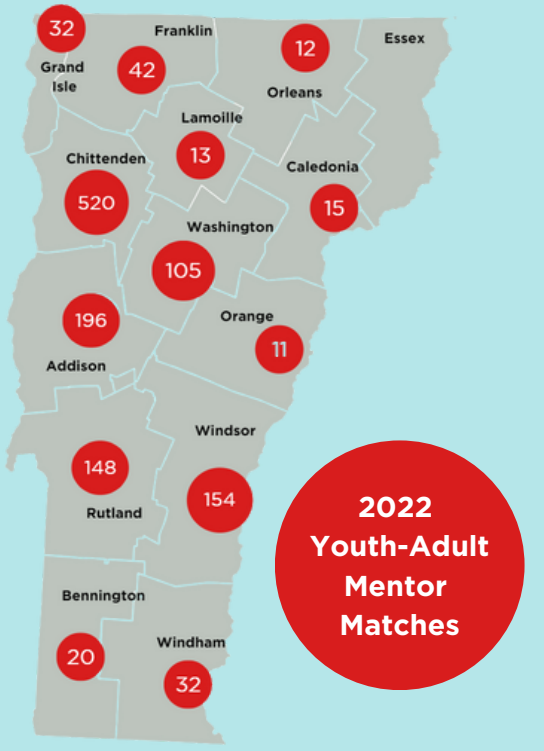
Mentoring helps youth, benefits the community members who volunteer as mentors, and offers an impactful balm for the increasing disconnection we all feel. We know that youth who feel like they matter to their community thrive and that this is one of the strongest protective factors for young Vermonters. Mentees continually report that their mentor helped them feel like they matter.

Mentee: "Alice and I share a bond that extends beyond the mentoring program itself. Through my involvement with Crossroads and my connection to Alice, I have increased self-confidence, self-awareness, leadership skills, communication abilities, and have extended my personal network." - Assia

Mentor: "Our relationship has had a significant impact on me for several reasons; first, it's been a way for Assia and me both to develop a sense of community. Our families have become friends, and we've been part of each other's significant life events. Assia's resilience, enthusiasm, and drive to make the world a better place in her community and globally is inspiring." - Alice

- 91%** OF YOUTH MENTEE SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID, "MY MENTOR MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I MATTER."
- 89%** OF YOUTH MENTEE SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID, "HAVING A MENTOR HAS MADE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE."
- 1 in 3** YOUNG PEOPLE WILL GROW UP WITHOUT A MENTOR.

Youth Needs Across Vermont



Prior to the COVID pandemic there were 2,000 mentor-mentee matches across the entire State. In 2022, MENTOR Vermont provided \$306,000 in grants to 22 mentoring agencies, whose overall combined budgets were \$3 million, for 1,300 matches. MENTOR Vermont took the \$170,000 from the State, matched it with its own fundraising, and was able to provide 10% of the money needed to get 1,300 matches.

Just to get back to the pre-pandemic level, or 2019 numbers, we need to create 700 more matches. The national average yearly cost of a mentor-mentee match is around \$2,000 - in Vermont it is slightly higher at closer to \$2,450 per match. To get back to pre-COVID levels, or 2019 numbers, it will cost us, in Vermont, roughly \$4.9 million.

Date	Matches	Total Cost	State Funding
2022	1300	\$3,000,000	\$170,000
FY24 Request	2000	\$4,900,000	\$1,500,000

Our original request to the House was an increase of \$1.5 million, with the support of the House Human Services, House Education and Appropriations Committee we were able to get a \$480,000 increase in our DCF Family Services Division grant in the House version of the FY24 Budget, bringing the MENTOR Vermont grant total to \$650,000. We are so appreciative, but this represents 13% of the funding needed.

We are here today because we have heard the Senate Appropriations Committee discuss whether mentoring and other proven prevention programs should be funded through these types of grants, or if we should be funded through the Prevention funds from the 30% excise tax on cannabis. We know that mentoring is prevention and would just urge the Senate to find a sustainable way to increase funding to support evidence-based mentoring programs that encourage resilient youth and communities. Thank you!

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