



Good afternoon, I'm Chad Butt, executive director of MENTOR Vermont.

I believe that potential is equally distributed, but opportunity is not.

I invite you to think of a mentor that you have had in your life and the impact they have had on you. What mentors have helped you get to where you are today?

When young people have mentors in their lives, they have someone to turn to for support, and they feel like they matter.

As we see all too often in our communities across the state, young people don't feel connected and supported by their community. In the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, only 54% of middle and high school students in VT expressed that they feel like they matter to their community. Yet, 96% of youth mentees report "My mentor makes me feel like I matter."

Supportive mentoring relationships are imperative to fostering youth mental health and healthy youth development. For a relatively small investment we can help equalize the opportunity for access to a caring adult and a supportive relationship that can last a lifetime.

Yet 1 in 3 young people in VT will grow up without someone to turn to for support beyond their immediate family.

Without someone to turn to for guidance, without someone to share their passions and dreams with, without someone to explore their interests with.

When young people have a supportive mentor in their life, they are more engaged in their school & community.

Youth in VT need support, and the impact of mentoring has been made clear through research and evidence-based practices.

We are requesting the State increase its investment in youth mentoring in FY 26 from \$650,000 to \$1,300,000 to help ensure more young people in Vermont have access to a caring consistent mentor and have the supportive relationships they need to thrive.

Funding at this level will enable MENTOR Vermont to provide mentoring agencies across the state with much needed funding to increase staff time to better meet the needs of their communities and for MENTOR Vermont to support the establishment of mentoring programs in underserved areas of the state.

Mentoring is a cost-effective prevention tool that has lasting impacts on the youth, mentors, and the greater community. An increased yearly investment from the State is greatly needed to ensure our young people are growing up with the supportive mentoring relationships they need.

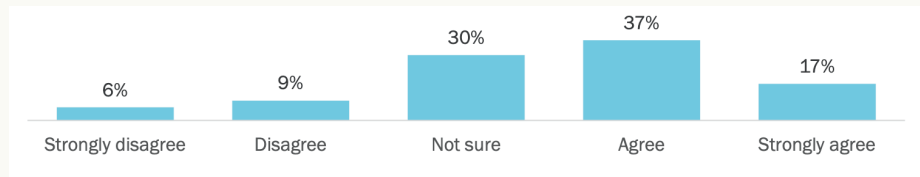
## The state of youth mental health in Vermont



**Recent headlines report Vermont youth’s mental health has not recovered from the impacts of the COVID pandemic.**

Vermont’s 2023 Youth Behavioral Risk Survey released in November 2024 shows that just over half (54%) of high school and middle school students feel like they matter to their community. 3 in 10 (30%) high school students are not sure if they matter and 15% do not feel like they matter to their community.

### Vermont high-schoolers that believe they matter:



### Youth in mentoring programs funded by MENTOR VT express:

**96%**  
of mentees said that “My mentor makes me feel like I matter.”

**92%**  
of mentees said that “Having a mentor has made a positive difference in my life.”

**97%**  
of mentors said that “I would recommend being a mentor to a friend.”

## Every Vermont youth deserves access to a mentor they can trust.

Having a caring mentor in their life can help a young person gain confidence, develop new skills, and feel more connected to their school and community. Mentors can also encourage their mentees to engage in their schoolwork and think critically about what they want to do after high school. Go to [mentorvt.org](http://mentorvt.org) to learn more.



# MENTORING IN VERMONT



*Lincoln & Kathy*



*Gracie & Maribeth*



Youth mentoring agencies supported by MENTOR Vermont



Youth served in 2023-24 grant year



Mentor matches funded by MENTOR Vermont, include 202 peer-based and 1,323 youth-adult



New mentor matches made



Match retention rate during 2023-2024 grant year

**Sustainability is key.** The mentoring field continues to foster new matches as we work to recover from the persisting impacts of the pandemic.

The statewide match retention rate during the **2023-2024** grant year for funded agencies was **89%**, with a total of **654** new mentor matches made. MENTOR Vermont recognizes that mentoring programs thrive best when they have a distinct region —be it a town, school district, or county—and dedicated staff who are embedded in the community.

**MENTOR Vermont's vision is to close the mentoring gap and drive equity through quality mentoring relationships so every young person in Vermont has the supportive mentoring relationships they need to grow and thrive.**

## Impact from Increase in MENTOR Vermont's FY24 State Grant

In **2023**, the Legislature increased MENTOR Vermont's State Grant for the first time since **2007**. **17 of 20** grantees received an increase in funding.

**As a direct result of the funding increase, these organizations were able to:**

- **10 agencies:** Increase number of paid hours of existing staff
- **5 agencies:** Hire additional staff (or move existing staff within the organization to support mentoring)
- **6 agencies:** Increase employee pay
- **1 agency:** Increase employee benefits
- **7 agencies:** Spend less time fundraising and more time running the mentoring program(s) (recruiting, training, matching, supporting matches, etc.)
- **5 agencies:** Expand the program's geographic service area
- **3 agencies:** Offer new program models (i.e. peer-based)

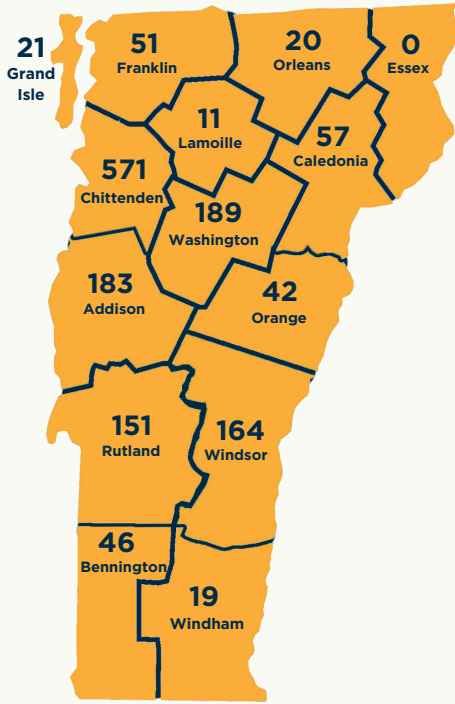


## Now, more than ever, we need support for evidence-based mentoring programs that encourage resilient youth and communities across Vermont.

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.

Prior to the COVID pandemic there were 2,000 mentor-mentee matches across the State. In 2024, MENTOR Vermont provided \$623,200 in grants to 20 mentoring agencies, whose overall combined budgets were just under \$3 million for 1,525 matches. Outside of Chittenden County, the lack of sustainable mentoring programs and waitlists for mentors is ongoing.

Just to get back to the pre-pandemic level, or 2019 numbers, we need to create 475 more matches, which will cost us, in Vermont, roughly \$4 million.



### Current Matches Funded by MENTOR Vermont

Essex County, Lamoille County, Orleans County, and Windham County currently lack a strong mentoring presence.

Date	Matches	Total Cost	State Funding
2024	1,525	\$3,000,000	\$650,000
FY26 Request	2,000	\$4,000,000	\$1,300,000

### Snapshot from a Mentor-Mentee Match:

**Mentee:** "Alice and I share a bond that extends beyond the mentoring program itself. Through my involvement with the mentoring program 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