

Implementing, Evaluating and Sustaining a Parent Mentor Program: Lessons Learned

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MENTOR PARENT PROGRAM

Dependency Advocacy Center, Santa Clara County



East Bay Family Defenders, Alameda County





Mentor Parent / Parent Advocate

- A parent with lived experience in the child welfare system
- “Sameness of experience” allows parents to identify with other parents who have succeeded, which increases hope and facilitates engagement and coping.
- Parent mentor programs can improve engagement in the juvenile dependency court process (Summers et al., 2012)



Mentor Parent: An Inter-disciplinary Legal Team Member

- Mentor Parent employed by law office is covered under attorney – client confidential communications. (Bus. & Prof. Code Sec. 6068, CA Rule 3-100, Evid. Code 952)
- Under the ABA Model Rules of Professional Responsibility, the ABA approved Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases and state rules, attorneys have an obligation to provide competent and zealous advocacy (ABA Model Rules of Prof. Conduct, Rule 1.3, Comment 1)
- Ensure attorneys have access to work in an integrated manner with parent allies/ peer parent mentors and youth ambassadors, as needed. (Attributes of High-Quality Legal Representation for Children and Parents in Child Welfare Proceedings, Family Justice Initiative, ABA)
- CA Rule 5.3: Responsibilities Regarding Nonlawyer Assistants: the lawyer supervising the nonlawyer “shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the person’s conduct is compatible with the professional obligations of the lawyer.”





6 Mothers, 3 Fathers



Manager and Clinical Supervisor



Average caseload 20 clients



Full - time DAC employees



Funded by Santa Clara County Department of Behavioral Health, Probation, and Substance Use Treatment Services (SUTS)

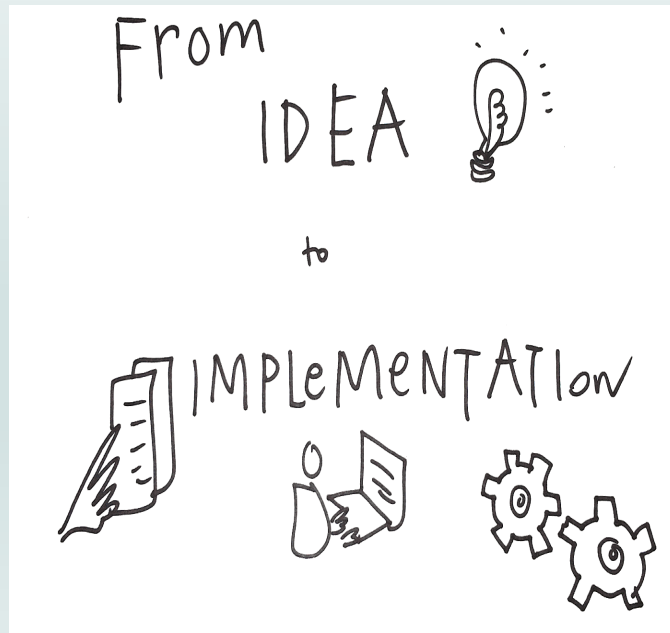
Dependency Advocacy Center's (DAC) Mentor Parent Program



Implementation Considerations

Who Gets a Mentor Parent and How?

- Target Population
- Referral Process



The Mentor Parent Role:

- Qualifications to be a Mentor Parent
- Roles and Responsibilities, including how different than Mentors within Social Services
- Caseload Numbers
- Supervision structure (clinical and administrative)



A close-up, low-angle shot of an hourglass. The top bulb is filled with a light-colored, granular substance, likely sand or sugar, which is slowly trickling through the narrow neck into the bottom bulb. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the sand and the glass. The background is dark, making the hourglass stand out.

PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Target Population: Who Can Access a Mentor Parent?

Factors to Consider:

- * Timing of case?**
- * Issue specific (ie, SUD, DV)?**
- * Breadth vs Depth**

2. Referral Process



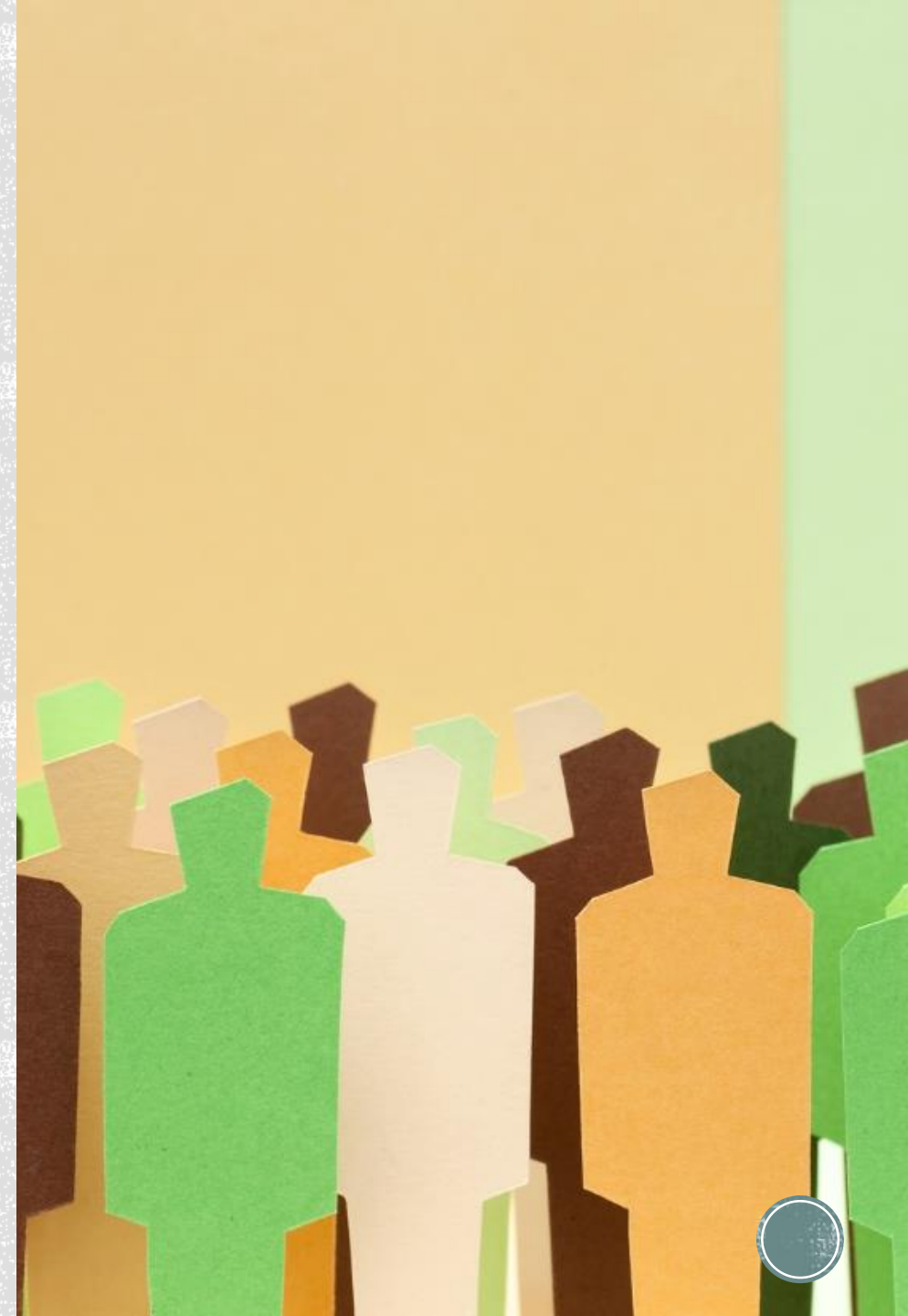
Mentor Parent Criteria

- Committed to clean and sober lifestyle, in active recovery, and raising healthy families.
- Successful graduate of dependency drug court.
- Successfully reunified with their children and had their dependency case dismissed.
- No pending criminal cases or charges.
- Willing to share their story.



Roles and Responsibilities

- Recruit eligible parents into Dependency Drug Court
- Establish professional boundaries
- Provide referrals or facilitate service delivery of court ordered programs and those directly related to recovery
- Provide support at drug court and legal hearings and throughout dependency court process
- Maintain confidential communications (protected under attorney client privilege)
- Meet parents in the community
- Upon request of parent, provide support at CFTs and other provider meetings
- Train system partners
- Different Role than Mentor Parents outside of Attorneys' office



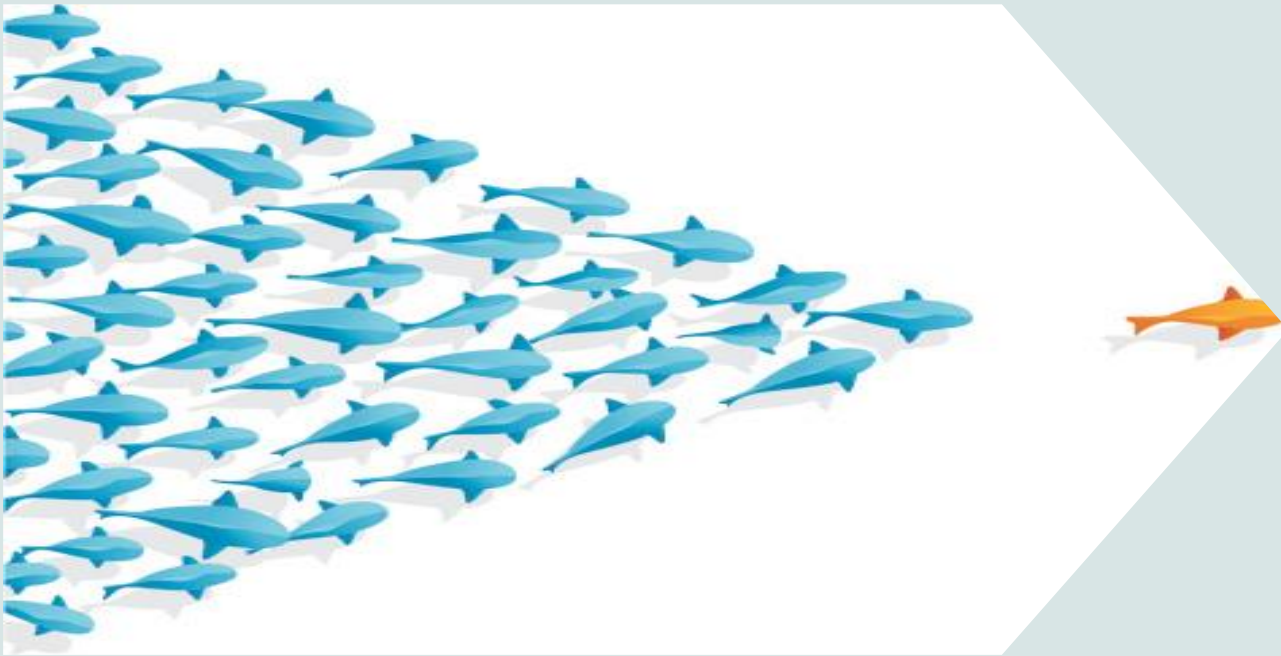


Supervision Structure

- **Mentor Parent Program Manager**
- **Meet biweekly with each mentor individually:**
 - Strategies on how to engage with / problem solve with parents
 - Data entry and collection
 - HR issues
 - Manage vacation / sick time
- **Meet monthly as a group**
 - Review program / system changes
 - Discuss common themes
- **Clinical Supervisor**
- **Meets biweekly with each mentor individually**
- **Meets weekly as a group**
- **Quarterly trainings (ie, motivational interviewing)**



ROLE THEY PLAY IN THE SYSTEM



Leading by example

- Integral part of dependency committees where policy gets decided (Dependency Drug Court, Systems meetings)
- Educate new dependency judges
- Participate in trainings for DFCS (court report writing, engaging fathers), CASA (birth parent perspective, understanding addiction), foster parent trainings



Transition to Management

- Leadership Opportunities as a Mentor Parent
 - Doing presentations to outside agencies about the Mentor Parent Program
 - Volunteered to do additional projects relevant to the Mentor Parent Program
- Training / Onboarding from Mentor Parent to Management (organizational supports):
 - Support and Encouragement
 - Training on HR issues
 - Including Manager in Management meetings
 - Attending outside trainings – specific management trainings
 - Trainings to support report writing for grant funded positions
- Managing changed relationships from colleague to Manager

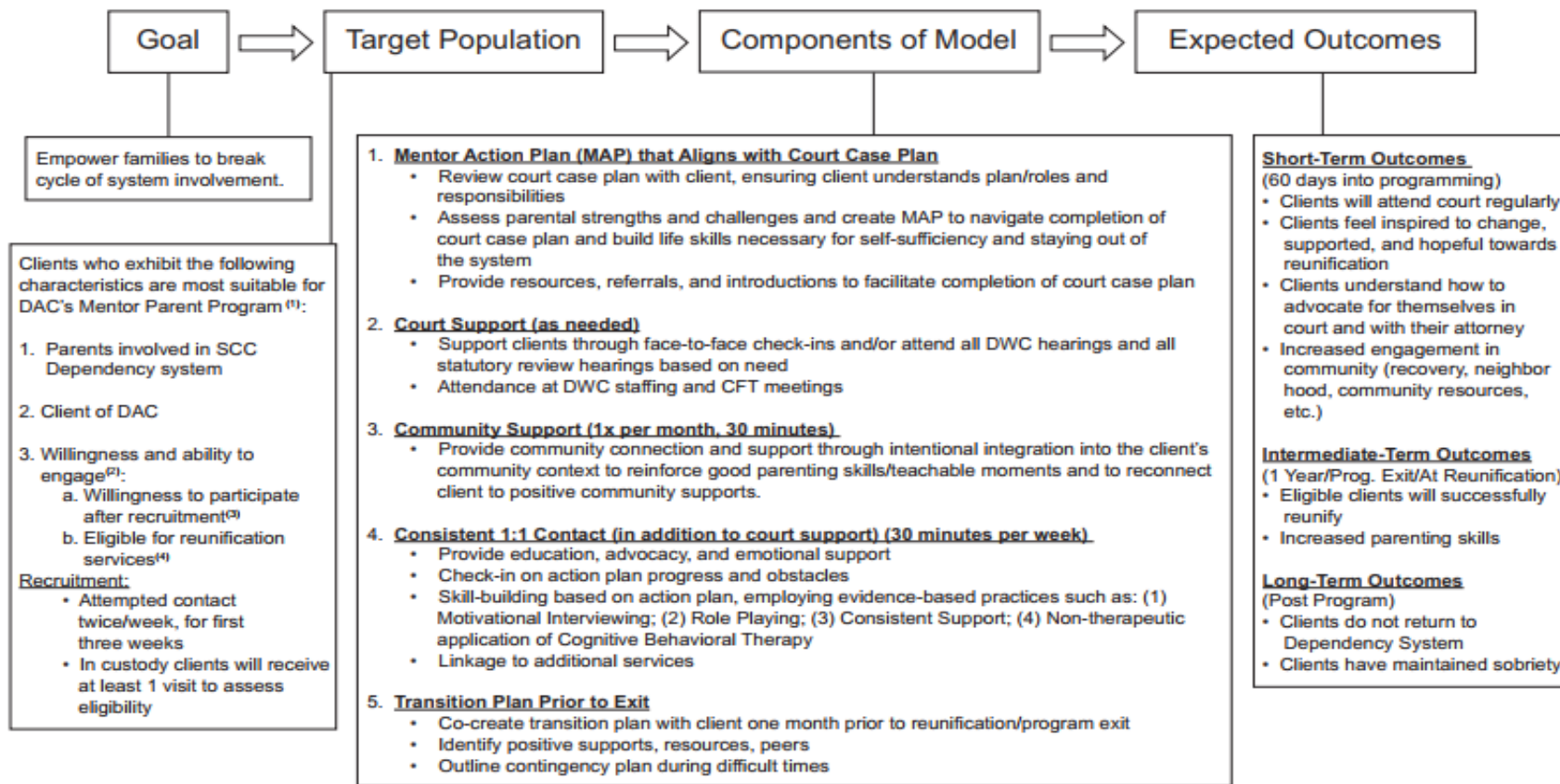


**EVALUATION –
PARTNERED
RESEARCH
WITH SAN JOSE
STATE
UNIVERSITY:
MENTOR
PARENT
PROGRAM**





Dependency Advocacy Center – Mentor Parent Program Logic Model



(1) Clients who are severely mentally ill are not best suited for DAC's programming until stabilized through medical treatment

(2) Currently measured by enrollment in DWC

(3) Recruitment period lasts 3 weeks, recruits should be contacted at least twice per week

(4) If client is in prison during recruitment, client must have exit date and be eligible for reunification services

THEORY: EXCERPTS FROM MPP LOGIC MODEL

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Engagement and retention in DWC
- Engagement in MPP support services
- Access to treatment and other services

INTERIM OUTCOMES

- Increased self-sufficiency in recovery, legal status, social support, and other life domains
- Engagement in self-help/recovery
- Abstention/ reduction in substance abuse

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Successful reunification at MPP program completion
- Reduction in recurrence of maltreatment/ reduced days in foster care
- Long-term sobriety



ILLUSTRATION: MEASURING SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECT

- Identification of domains through focus groups with Mentor Parents
- Pilot adapted version of Self-Sufficiency Matrix
- Report back and feedback on challenges, and/or discoveries in administering the Self-Sufficiency Matrix



SELF-SUFFICIENCY MATRIX FINDINGS

	Baseline Scores	Post scores (12 months)	
Self-Sufficiency Domains	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	p-value
Housing	1.55 (0.85)	3.47 (1.39)	<.001
Employment	1.09 (0.39)	2.16 (1.29)	<.001
Mobility (transportation)	1.34 (0.60)	2.69 (1.42)	<.001
Life Skills	2.39 (1.09)	4.00 (1.02)	<.001
Family/Social Relations	2.22 (1.04)	3.66 (1.07)	<.001
Community Involvement	1.87 (0.88)	3.71 (0.96)	<.001
Parenting Skills	1.93 (1.08)	3.78 (0.94)	<.001
Legal	2.84 (1.49)	3.77 (1.28)	<.004
Substance Abuse	2.38 (1.43)	4.56 (0.88)	<.001



RESEARCH/EVALUATION PROJECTS

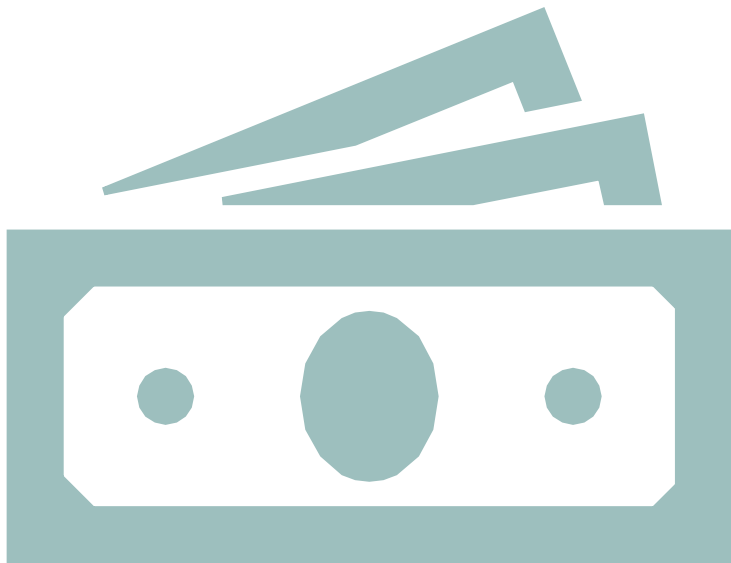
- Evaluation of unique contribution of mentor parent program
 - Qualitative interviews/surveys with stakeholders
 - Client satisfaction and client engagement surveys
 - Client focus groups
- Evaluation of outcomes
 - Re-unification and re-entry
 - Increase self-sufficiency
- **Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/sjsu.edu/cw-part/>**



HIGHLIGHTS OF PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES

- Documentation of MPP impact on DWC engagement and increased self-sufficiency
- Documentation of relationship between MPP participation/contact hours and reunification
- Evaluation findings used in report to funders
- Parallel consultation to address data collection instruments and infrastructure with DWC; influencing practice in other therapeutic courts





Funding Mentor Parents

- **Potential sources of funding for peer support models:**
 - California Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)
 - AB109 or California's Public Safety Realignment Funding
 - Federal: Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
 - Philanthropic Grants
 - Forthcoming – Title IV-E





Provides annual funding to county mental health departments



Specifically called for an increase in use of peer support models



Focus on increasing access to services to treat substance use and mental health disorders



System navigation support

California Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)





Allows non-violent, non-serious, and non-sex offenders to serve their sentence in county jails instead of state prisons



Provides sustained funding for “supervision and rehabilitative services” for adult felony offenders subject to probation and for “evidence-based rehabilitative programs” that include drug and alcohol and mental health treatment, including peer support



For parent clients navigating two justice systems simultaneously



Opportunity to partner with other community - based organizations serving the reentry population

California's Public Safety Realignment Act (AB 109)



Federal: Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- Typically funded in the context of grants to create or expand Dependency Drug Courts
- Requires collaboration of multiple partners, including governmental agencies such as a state entity (court) and/or county agency such as Department of Behavioral Health or Substance Use Treatment Services.
- Non profit (including law office representing) could join collaboration to fund peer mentor parents.
- Often 3 – 5 year grants.
- 4 DAC Mentor Parents positions funded in 2008 as part of a larger Santa Clara County Dependency Drug Court SAMHSA grant.





Health care foundations with an interest in maximizing access to needed behavioral health care services



Family wellness focused foundations with an emphasis on engaging and empowering parents to be strong advocates for their children



Social innovation grants focused on incubating new approaches to old problems

PHILANTHROPIC GRANTS



On the Horizon: Title IV-E

- Recent federal policy change: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, interprets administrative costs for foster care to include costs for children's and parents' attorneys. ([Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 8.1B, Question 30](#)).
- "Eligible expenses" programs can claim as legal representation may or may not include use of non-lawyer staff time as part of the legal representation.
- Regardless, programs can choose to invest the additional funding received from Title IV-E in high quality legal representation, including use of interdisciplinary teams as part of the legal representation model.
- Stay tuned for more guidance...



LESSONS LEARNED FOR SUSTAINING A MENTOR PARENT PROGRAM

- Create visibility with your mentors. What committees can they sit on? Who should they meet with? Where does policy get decided?
- Who can the mentors train? Social workers? Judges? Team members? Increases visibility of the program and establishes support from stakeholders.
- Evaluate your program. What do you want to measure? How will you measure it? What data do you need to collect? Who can help you obtain that data?
- Create mutually beneficial partnerships to sustain program. Which university/college/community college is near you? Is there a school of social work near you?
- Have both hard data to support your program and a mentor to publicly share their story: a winning combination for potential funders.





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