

Mentoring Research Program

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Abstract

The aim of this evidence-based research is to support Youth Rezolutions Mentoring program that will contribute towards decreasing the risk of homelessness among young people 16-25 years in Western Sydney LGA's of Blacktown, The Hills, Cumberland, and Parramatta through the delivery of an evidence based mentoring program.

Mentoring programs delivered by Kickstart and Women's Justice Network (WJN) have drawn upon theories of person-centered, goal-oriented, strengths based, feminist, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that have had positive outcome in areas of wellbeing and connection to community for those providing mentorship. The evidence collected from mentoring programs in NSW highlighted that young people who have participated in mentoring have increased sense of independence with living skills, feel connected to community, and have increased wellbeing. Mentors within these programs are skilled in areas of living skills development, theories of behaviour change, person centered and strengths-based practice.

KEYWORDS:

Mentoring, person-centered, strengths-based, independence, living skills.

There are numerous pieces of evidence that suggest the significance of mentoring in helping young individuals build independence or productive life skills. A core study that assessed mentoring competency in six key areas in development is a major work conducted by Fleming et al. (2013) and Pfund et al. (2013). According to Pfund et al. (2013), qualitative results suggest that a significant improvement in the capacity of independence among mentees were found subsequent to embedded mentorship. Furthermore, mentor-mentee interaction that resemble collaborative learning led to acquisition and improvement of better thinking skills and receptive values in life (Fleming et al., 2013). With proper motivation, mentorship can build youth's confidence by stimulating creativity and navigating with them the path towards individuality. Through an evidence-based approach to mentorship, mentor-mentee relationship can ensure that the constant evolution of needs is adaptive to stage-appropriate independence among mentees (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019). Experienced mentors can share knowledge and aid in skills development so that mentees are able to cope and handle challenges.

Since development is attained through collaborative learning, theories such as the strengths-based approach are pivotal in building young people's independence. Strengths-based theory can be described as focusing away from deficits and deeply recognising the multiple contexts which influence lives, particularly of the "resilience, potentials, strengths, interests, abilities, knowledge, and capacities of individuals" (Harberlin, 2019). The strength-based approach is person-centered and goal-oriented which paves way for young individuals to realise that there is more to be attained and a better state to become. The person-centred approach increases positive self-concept, educational attainment, decrease drug and alcohol use and decrease use of violence (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005). Additionally, it is interdisciplinary, holistic and acknowledges the subjectivity of a community. This is central to youth's building of relationship with their community and realising that development is related to various facets of well-being.

Meanwhile, utilising Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Feminist theory is also crucial in mentoring. The hierarchy of needs as a guide to mentoring ensures that assistance is employed through level-by-level. Meeting each level of need, physically, cognitively and emotionally, is essential in building youth as individuals and as member of a community. Comparably, the feminist theory aims to reduce isolation, build connections, and help navigate complex and often patriarchal professional settings (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2016). Feminist mentoring addresses domestic violence, issues of families and children, women's health, poverty, and culturally diverse approaches to practice focusing on realities that disproportionately affect women (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2016). Feminist theory has shown to support men through the study of masculinity, challenging the portrait of men and exploring the power hierarchies among men (Dowd, 2008). Doing so is an educational opportunity to create conversation around the stereotypes that come with identifying as a man (Brown et al, 2019). The Women's Justice Network (WJN) mentoring program aligns well with feminist theory. With focus on positive self-identity, empowerment, opportunities, self-determinations, and equality that enables woman and young girls to live the life they deserve and supports women and girls vulnerable to positively contribute to the community (WJN, 2022). The WJN Mentoring Program date the has had a 93% success rate of any women who has engaged in the program for 1 year or more has not re-offended or returned to prison (WJN, 2022).

Kickstart mentoring program for young people reflects a person-centred, non-judgemental management approach. StreetWork mentors work closely with young people to develop a plan that reflects their needs and aspirations (StreetWork, 2022). The goal-based plan helps young people to make better life choices

and steer them away from destructive influences and behaviours (StreetWork, 2022). Streetwork's 2019 Social Impact report measured KickStart Mentoring program which reflects a strength-based, goal orientated approach across a range of different wellness, resilience and life skills capabilities (StreetWork, 2019). KickStart Mentoring program observed a positive shift over the period young people spent engaged with the mentoring program. the biggest areas of impact included 42% increase in housing skills (secure stable accommodation), 43% increase in employment skills (apply and secure employment), 45% increase in daily life skills (manage household responsibilities) and 35% increase in personal development (setting goals) (StreetWork, 2019). School partners have reported that 94% of student involved within raise mentorship have improved wellbeing and 94% said mentoring encourage student engagement (StreetWork, 2022). The evaluation report shows significant improvement in, coping strategies, communication skills, confidence, identifying and achieving goals, help seeking behaviour, finishing Year 12, finding employment and hope for the future (StreetWork, 2022).

Development of independence or life skills can contribute to reducing one's risk of homelessness through various factors related to learning and understanding oneself and society. It is through interaction, constant activity, and exposure to diverse facets of life that individuals learn. In this process of learning, a person is gradually attaining knowledge significant in making their selves better. Such improvement in the individuals is a percent decrease in the risk to homelessness because the persons are slowly gearing up themselves with enough confidence and capability to stand for themselves and provide for themselves. In relation to mentoring, as a person is guided by an experienced teacher, knowledge and values are instilled in a person that allows such individual the capacity. Such capacity enables independence, the acquisition of necessary skills to survive, which in turn, diminishes the probability of homelessness. As creativity and individuality is acquired, not only is independence achieved but homelessness is also avoided because there is learning to overcome struggles that might lead to such crisis

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