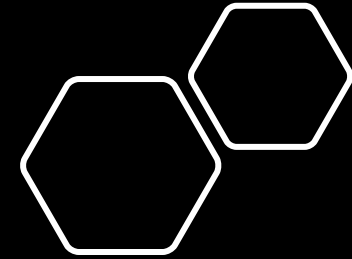




# January: Mentoring Month



## Mentoring for Enhancing Career Interests and Exploration

A National Mentoring Resource Center Research Review

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This review examines research on the role of mentoring on career interest and exploration for adolescents under 18 years of age. Four questions:

- What are the effects of mentoring on **career interests and exploration (CIE)** among youth?
- What factors condition or shape the effects of mentoring on CIE?
- What intervening processes are most important for linking mentoring to beneficial effects on CIE?
- To what extent have efforts to provide mentoring to youth with CIE as a priority outcome reached and engaged the intended youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by host organizations and settings?

# Some Key Findings



While a broad range of mentoring programs target CIE outcomes, few programs have been rigorously evaluated for their effects on these outcomes and even less evidence is available concerning whether relatively immediate benefits carry over into later stages of development (career interests at the stage of entering higher education or the workforce).



Mentoring helps middle-schoolers build skills and gain knowledge needed for positive CIE outcomes related to social-emotional, academic, and cognitive skills, and overcoming barriers) whereas older youth, who are closer to entering the job market, benefit more from mentor support around career decision-making.



Self-efficacy and perception of “future-self” appear to be important to the processes by which mentoring improves youth career aspirations. However, reducing social barriers and strengthening social connections are just as important.





**All mentoring programs—  
whether career-oriented or not—  
should be aligned with both the  
developmental and career stages  
of the mentees they serve.**



## Progression of age-related developmental changes that influence children's career development

- Younger participants: CIE programs should focus primarily on exposing them to different careers and piquing their interest
- Middle youth: CIE programs should focus on solidifying career interests (narrow focus), building career-relevant skills needed for positive outcomes (social-emotional, academic, and cognitive skills), and supporting youth in overcoming barriers in pursuit of their desired career
- Mentoring programs for older youth are more likely to target students with pre-existing interests, with the goal of maintaining that interest and engagement over time



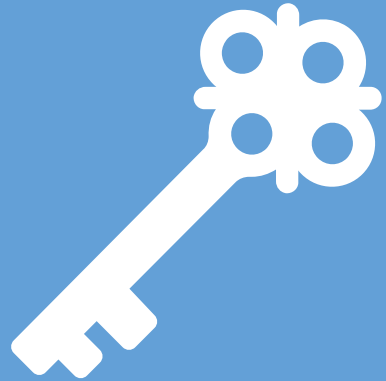
# Developmental Progression Among Young Persons

Initial identification of possible careers or industries of interest

Gather more information and narrow fields of interest

Engage in more hands-on learning and skill-building in a focused career path or ladder





Matching on career or personal interests is just as important or more important than matching on other background characteristics. For example, if a mentee is looking to develop a specific skill, or is seeking exposure to a specific career, finding a mentor based on race or gender may be of lower importance than finding a mentor with the appropriate occupational background.

Utilizing same-sex mentors, specifically for female youth with an interest in traditionally male-dominated fields, may be critical in maintaining female engagement in those fields.

Quality mentor training and continued program support may be an effective means through which mentoring leads to both high quality mentoring relationships and improved CIE outcomes.







- Don't assume that young people of a certain group need or want to go into particular fields. This review mentions an example from a study where youth of color were strongly encouraged to participate in a STEM mentoring program — unfortunately many of them didn't care much for STEM subjects and were not interested in those careers from the outset.
- While one could argue that finding out a career in a field is not right for you is a good outcome, it's also possible that programs can wind up pushing youth into careers where they may be underrepresented (hoping to address those diversity gaps) rather than letting the young person genuinely explore and find careers that fit their values, interests, and talents.
- A program making assumptions about careers youth “should” consider from an adult or industry perspective may miss the mark of a broader exploration experience that some young people may benefit from. There is a tension practitioners should consider between wanting to help youth explore careers they may never have considered but also trying to avoid pushing youth toward careers that genuinely aren't a good fit for them.





# Sample of National Mentoring Resource Center's career exploration mentoring program resources:

- **College and Career Success Mentoring [Toolkit](#)** - provides guidance on the development of mentoring programs that promote college and career success or youth. It reviews key elements of program design, recruiting and supporting mentors and mentees, and provides examples of relevant programming and data tools.
- **Discovering the Possibilities: [“C”ing Your Future](#)** – a 12-module curriculum and activity guide is designed to assist mentors in working with middle school youth to explore postsecondary education and possible careers.
- **[STEM Mentoring Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#)** - This resource outlines recommendations and research-informed practices for STEM mentoring programs.
- **[Workplace Mentoring Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#)** - This resource outlines recommendations and research-informed practices for workplace mentoring programs.



# Evidence Reviews

<https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/research-tools/evidence-reviews/>

The NMRC Research Board conducts reviews at three levels of interest to mentoring practitioners and policymakers:

1. Reviewing the research evidence related to specific program models, populations of youth, or categories of outcomes. These reviews offer a nice summary of what is known on a broad topic in the mentoring field and are an excellent starting point for deeper learning.
2. Reviews of specific programs for effectiveness: Using the Crime Solutions protocol, the NMRC reviews the effectiveness of over 50 specific programs that have undergone rigorous evaluation. These reviews highlight which programs have produced good results and offer additional tips based on those findings.
3. Practice reviews: These summarize the research on specific aspects of running a mentoring program, such as training volunteers or offering match support.



## Model/Population Reviews

Examining the full body of rigorous evidence as it pertains to either mentoring for a specific population of youth (e.g., youth with disabilities, immigrant youth) or a specific model of mentoring (e.g., group mentoring, e-mentoring).

[View Model/Population Reviews](#)



## Program Reviews

Reviews of research about rigorously evaluated mentoring programs to rate their currently demonstrated level of effectiveness.

[View Program Reviews](#)



## Practice Reviews

For different mentoring practices (i.e., specific sets of tasks or strategies for implementing some component of a mentoring program)

[View Practice Reviews](#)





## Mentoring Program Reviews

One of the main activities of the [National Mentoring Resource Center Research Board](#) is to review the research about rigorously evaluated mentoring programs to rate their currently demonstrated level of effectiveness.

Program reviews are conducted using the standards and protocols of [CrimeSolutions.gov](#)<sup>12</sup>, a resource developed by the Office of Justice Programs.

Following a [systematic review](#) of all available research, each program is given an evidence rating using the following key:



### Effective

Program has strong evidence that it achieves justice-related goals when implemented with fidelity.



### Promising

Program has some evidence that it achieves justice-related goals when implemented with fidelity.



### No Effects

Program has strong evidence that it did not achieve justice-related goals (or had harmful effects).



### Insufficient Research

Some relevant research may be available but is inconclusive. More research is needed to determine effectiveness.

Name	Rating	Desc
<a href="#">A Stop Smoking in Schools Trial (ASSIST) Program</a> <sup>12</sup>		This in-school smoking prevention program was designed to spread and sustain norms of non-smoking behavior among 12–13 year olds, using influential peer opinion leaders. The program is rated No Effects. Youths who received the intervention did not differ statistically significantly from youths who did not receive the intervention in their odds of smoking in the last week, at 2 years post-intervention.
<a href="#">Academic Mentoring Program for Educational Development (AMPED)</a> <sup>12</sup>		This is a school-based, mentoring program designed to improve academic performance and life satisfaction and reduce absences and behavioral infractions. The program is rated Promising. Participants had a statistically significant decrease in unexcused absences and higher math and English grades, compared with the control group. However, there were no effects on school-reported behavioral infractions, science or history grades, positive affect, negative affect, coping, or overall mental health.  <a href="#">Read the Program Insights</a>
<a href="#">Achievement Mentoring Program (AMP)</a> <sup>12</sup>		This is an intervention for urban minority freshmen at risk of dropping out of high school. The goal was to enhance school-related cognitions and behaviors. The program is rated Promising. The program did not statistically significantly impact students' absences, grade point averages, or decision-making efficacy, but had statistically significant effects on discipline referrals, negative school behavior, performance in mathematics and language arts, and other self-reported outcomes.  <a href="#">Read the Program Insights</a>
<a href="#">Across Ages</a> <sup>12</sup>		This is an intergenerational mentoring initiative designed to delay or reduce substance use by increasing the resiliency and protective factors of at-risk middle school youth. The program is rated Promising. The treatment group showed statistically significant improvements in school attendance; reactions to situations involving drug use; and attitudes toward school, the future, and elders, compared with the control group; however, there were no effects on overall well-being or substance use.
<a href="#">Adolescent Diversion Project (Michigan State University)</a> <sup>12</sup>		This is a strengths-based, university-led program that diverts arrested youth from formal processing in the juvenile justice system and provides them with community-based services. The program is rated Effective. Participants in the program had statistically significant lower rates of official delinquency, compared with control group youth. However, there was no statistically significant difference between groups in self-reported delinquency.





How can insights from research in other disciplines support mentoring youth in cybersecurity career programs?

