

## Adverse Childhood Experiences in Minnesota: Caring Adults

Caring relationships are critical to supporting positive youth development and for ensuring the success of youth programs and interventions (Li & Julian, 2012; Pekel et al., 2018; Search Institute, n.d.). Positive relationships between youth and adults can help youth identify and work toward their goals, promote identity development, increase self-efficacy and empowerment, develop leadership skills, reduce risky behaviors and substance use, improve academic outcomes and academic engagement, increase work readiness, and help youth access resources and opportunities they may benefit from (Anderson & Sandmann, 2009; Boat et al., 2021; Pekel, 2019; Search Institute, 2022; Search Institute, n.d.-a; Sethi & Scales, 2020). For the most current local data on the percentage of students reporting they have at least one adult they can talk to and that they feel adults in the community care about them, please visit MDH's interactive [Adverse Childhood Experiences Data \(www.web.health.state.mn.us/communities/ace/data/index.html\)](http://www.web.health.state.mn.us/communities/ace/data/index.html).

There are several ways communities can help promote positive relationships between adults and the youth in their lives.

### Effective strategies

There are many types of programs that encourage the development of positive relationships between youth and adults, including:

- **Mentoring initiatives** that typically involve youth meeting one-on-one with an adult on an ongoing basis, and the adult serves as a role model and provides support to the youth (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Raposa et al., 2019). Mentor meetings may also involve trying new activities, practicing skills, working on schoolwork, promoting healthy development, and providing new opportunities for the youth, while the adult provides emotional support and a safe environment. Mentoring initiatives can take place in a wide range of settings, including schools, community centers, and community-based organizations.
- **Community-based programming and activities** for youth varies widely regarding the specific topics and activities youth may engage in, but programming typically involves adult supervision; these adults are often well suited to providing caring, trusting relationships (Arnold, 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Li & Winters, 2022; Syvertsen et al., 2023). These may include coaches, teachers, school staff, and community volunteers. Programming also allows youth to learn new skills and explore their interests in a safe environment. Some programs may also involve a stronger focus on intergenerational

#### Relevant indicator(s):

- Youth feel adults in their community care for them
- Youth have adults to talk to about their problems

Strategies for promoting positive parenting practices, relationships with teachers and other school staff, and community connections can also promote caring relationships between adults and youth.

relationships, focused on engaging in art, music, educational, cultural and other types of activities (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2021).

- **Trainings, guidance, and policies that encourage the development of strong adult-youth relationships.** This may include providing guidance and/or training professionals who serve or interact with youth to raise awareness of the importance of relationships with caring adults, understand their current communication and relationship styles, and learn best practices for connecting with youth and ensuring they feel safe and understood (Anderson & Sandmann, 2009; Search Institute, n.d.-b; Search Institute, n.d.-c). It may also include prioritizing relationships over other program requirements that reduce professionals' capacity to focus on building strong relationships with youth they work with, such as focusing too much on curriculum content or meeting external accountability requirements from funders (Pekel, 2019; Anderson & Sandmann, 2009).

## Examples of Minnesota initiatives

### CornerStone Community and Youth Center

CornerStone is a community and youth center based in Frazee, Minnesota. CornerStone offers a variety of programs and supports for youth, including open drop-in hours, arts activities, games, book clubs, presentations and classes on a wide range of topics, a food pantry, and spaces for crafting and hobbies. CornerStone relies on community volunteers.

Watch a video highlighting the [CornerStone Youth and Community Center ACE Case Study \(youtu.be/54VGRckpsCk\)](https://youtu.be/54VGRckpsCk)

More information about [CornerStone \(www.cornerstonefrazee.org/\)](http://www.cornerstonefrazee.org/)

### Search Institute's developmental relationships trainings

The Search Institute offers a variety of trainings and workshops for professionals working in schools, youth programs, mentoring programs, juvenile justice organizations, and community organizations. Several options specifically focus on the research-based developmental relationships framework, which outlines elements and actions that are critical for developing caring relationships with youth.

More information about [The Developmental Relationships Framework \(www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/developmental-relationships-framework/\)](http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/developmental-relationships-framework/)

More information about [Upcoming Search Institute Workshops \(www.search-institute.org/professional-development/register-for-upcoming-workshops/\)](http://www.search-institute.org/professional-development/register-for-upcoming-workshops/)

### Youthprise's Opportunity Reboot

Opportunity Reboot is an evidence-based program that provides education, career, and basic needs supports to youth, with a focus on mentoring and ensuring youth develop positive relationships with mentors. Opportunity Reboot partners with the Search Institute to evaluate the program's impact.

More information about [Opportunity Reboot \(youthprise.org/opportunity-reboot/\)](https://youthprise.org/opportunity-reboot/)

## Examples of national initiatives

### Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is a one-on-one mentoring program available across the country that pairs a youth mentee with an adult mentor, providing an opportunity for youth to develop a relationship with a caring adult outside of their home and school. BBBS offers specific programs for youth with an incarcerated caregiver and youth of military families.

More information about [Big Brothers Big Sisters Programs \(www.bbbs.org/programs/\)](https://www.bbbs.org/programs/)

### After School Matters

The After School Matters program provides free after-school and summer programming to youth in Chicago. The program involves engaging community partners and professionals to provide opportunities in a wide range of topics, including the arts, communications, sports, science, technology, engineering, and math. To support youth engagement and reduce barriers to participation, After School Matters provides a stipend to youth who meet program requirements.

More information [About After School Matters \(afterschoolmatters.org/about-us/\)](https://afterschoolmatters.org/about-us/)

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Minnesota Department of Health  
Injury and Violence Prevention Section  
PO Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164  
651-201-4035  
MDH\_HPCD\_5.6-IVPS-Economics\_Evaluation\_Unit@state.mn.us  
www.health.state.mn.us

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