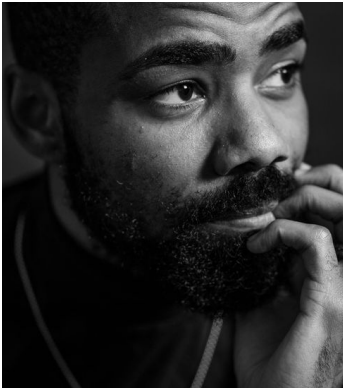


With Mentoring Central's Preparing for Mentoring Program BEST Kids achieves higher than average results for matches.



I think what's really good about the Mentoring Central training is that it provides those scenarios to helping mentors assess what they should do and moments where they're really not sure about these things. And, seeing that visually, really helps people to grasp a real concept of what mentoring looks like.

Carl C. Scott

Independent Mentoring Consultant and former Mentoring Director for the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence's Boren Mentoring Initiative.

The Challenge

Nation-wide three in every 1,000 children are in the foster care system, and 30 percent of these children are ages 1 through 5. Many of the adolescents in foster care have felt abuse, neglect, and/or suffered the strains poverty has on families. The United States has alarming statistics for the futures of the youth within the foster care system. Studies have shown about 20 percent of children in the system will experience homelessness, and only two years after the exiting foster care, 25 percent will be entangled in crime and the justice system. Moreover, approximately 50 percent graduate high school. Thus, youth in foster care constitute a traumatized, high-risk group needing substantial resources and support.

The [BEST Kids](#) mentoring program is specifically designed to serve youth who are currently in the foster care system. The program aims to give them meaningful, long-lasting mentoring relationships to build healthy and successful futures. By joining the BEST Kids mentoring program, children in the foster-care system are introduced to adults who can provide consistency, compassion, and acceptance. The intention of BEST Kids is to match youth with a positive mentor who can help them to thrive with confidence, while also addressing the systemic challenges associated with being in the foster care system.

The program has a well-defined protocol for recruiting and screening volunteers to be mentors that includes

undergoing an extensive, multi-level background check. However, the program wanted to have an equally state-of-the-art protocol for preparing volunteers to be effective mentors to youth in this vulnerable population. As Carl C. Scott, Program Manager for BEST Kids, stated BEST Kids mentors need guidance on what mentoring is and how to have a positive, supportive mentoring relationship with a youth in foster care. . Simply put, the program needed a comprehensive set of tools that were easy to administer and monitor for preparing their mentors to be committed, dependable, ethical, safe, and efficacious in their mentoring relationships. BEST Kids saw this as a critical opportunity to rigorously train their mentors before they meet their mentees.



The mentors complete the Mentoring Central training and then, they feel motivated to be able to say, 'I think I'm ready for this.'

Carl C. Scott

*Mentoring Support Specialist, and Program Manager
BEST Kids Mentoring Program*

The Context

BEST Kids is based in Washington, D.C., where there are nearly 2,500 children in the foster care system from ages 6 to 21. While they currently have about 78 matches, eight children still need a mentor.

BEST Kids was the first pilot program in D.C. providing volunteer mentors to children in the foster care system. Children are allowed to continue their mentoring until they are 21 years old and “age out” from the foster care system. In the D.C. foster system, 70 to 80 percent of children are Black or African American. This demographic group also makes up the majority of the population in the BEST Kids program. Black youth and children of color are disproportionately represented in the foster care system due to a variety of socioeconomical issues such as higher rates of poverty and lower rates of adoption. In 2020, nearly 30,000 children who were adopted nation-wide were white, while approximately 10,000 were Black or African American.

With individualized attention, long-lasting relationships, and a holistic approach, BEST Kids provides a stable environment for youth who experience constant transitions in life. BEST Kids uses a one-on-one mentoring approach to create a larger family for children and adolescents. Volunteer mentors undergo extensive background checks, complete a comprehensive training program, are consistently monitored, and are provided with ongoing support. BEST Kids is always looking for training to keep their mentors engaged, active, and knowledgeable. By providing considerable training opportunities to mentors, they establish a basis for more success in matches.

As Carl C. Scott, Program Manager for BEST Kids, states – the youth and adolescents in their program have not been afforded choices in their lives. The mentoring program allows youth to choose their mentor, giving them control, connection, and consistency.

The Results, ROI, and Future Plans

BEST Kids mentors who completed Mentoring Central’s Preparing for Mentoring Program say they feel more prepared, have more “tools in their toolbox,” and that the courses were simple to follow. By defining the responsibilities and roles of mentorship, the foundational courses allow their volunteers to create long-lasting relationships that are built upon realistic expectations, respect, and proper boundaries.

BEST Kids takes their mentoring and training seriously, and it is reflected in their evaluation data. With extensive background checks and required Mentoring Central training, their matches last longer than the average length of matches in typical

mentoring programs. On average, Mr. Scott said their matches last between 2 and 2.5 years. Their longest match in their program is nine years.

Across the U.S., close to 39% of mentoring matches end in less than a year, according to a 2017 study by Mentoring Central researchers. The U.S. Department of Education also found as many as one in five matches [end in under six months](#). In contrast, BEST Kids proudly reports that only approximately 5% of their matches end in under a year, an astonishingly low percentage. Without the sincere interest BEST Kids has in the success of their matches and the comprehensive instruction Mentoring Central provides, this achievement would probably not be possible.

Their success shows the importance of training, vetting, and supporting mentors. Despite the fact that they set a high bar for volunteers, their mentors exceed expectations due to the extensive support and training from Mentoring Central and the program staff. When mentors are supported, mentees are as well. BEST Kids has been using Mentoring Central’s Preparing for Mentoring Program since 2017 and plans to continue using it because of the amazing lasting relationships the training helps make.

Online is so tangible for everybody. They can really grasp it and really get their hands on it from wherever they are. I think doing (the mentoring training) online, especially with the times that we live in now, where people are still skeptical about being outside – everybody can access it, as long as they have a connection to the internet.

Carl C. Scott

*Mentoring Support Specialist, and Program Manager
BEST Kids Mentoring Program*

PREPARING FOR MENTORING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

THREE CORE COURSES SPAN THE LIFE OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP.



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