

Miami Valley Leadership Foundation utilizes *Substance of Change* course to train mentors



“ I would encourage anyone to take the *Substance of Change: Building Assets in Mentees Affected by Substance Misuse* course. ”

Shannon Todd
Mentoring Program Director at Miami Valley Leadership Foundation

The Challenge

While the opioid crisis has affected nearly every state in the nation, the Miami Valley Leadership Foundation (MVLF) in Dayton, Ohio serves one of the hardest-hit regions. Addiction and substance abuse have had a tremendous impact on local communities, families, and children. Through the efforts of national and local resources, great strides have been made in addressing addiction in these communities. Undoubtedly, the impact will continue to be felt for years to come.

Mentees involved in the MVLF mentoring program come from diverse backgrounds and many different school districts. The focus of mentoring programs offered by MVLF also differ between the school districts they serve, as youth development professionals in the region address the needs of their specific school populations.

MVLF wanted to provide specialized training to their mentors, so their mentors could be effective, supportive, and impactful as a resource about addiction and prevention for their mentees.

The Context

MVLF is primarily a school-based program that currently works with six different school districts in the Miami Valley area, which includes the Dayton area and nearby suburbs. Currently, they have 125 school-based matches. Due to an increased need for mentors and the success of their program, there has been significant

interest from other school districts to expand the mentoring program to provide social-emotional support to as many students as possible. Mentees generally range in age from second grade through eighth grade. There are also a few high school students in the program this year as the initiative expands its reach.

MVLF is a member of the Leadership Foundations global network and is committed to harnessing the power of relationships to make real and lasting change to benefit individuals and their communities. An important part of the program is to build the capacity of volunteers based on what is happening in each community and in each school within that community.

When they join the MVLF mentoring program, mentors are required to attend a 2.5-hour in-person training workshop. Additional online training is offered to mentors throughout the year, but it is not required.

“ The more mentors that we can have participate in the course, the better the foundation they’re going to have to be able to support their young people. ”

Shannon Todd
Mentoring Program Director at Miami Valley Leadership Foundation

The Solution

As a member of the Leadership Foundations global network, MVLF was offered the opportunity to participate in a pilot program with Mentoring Central to utilize the *Substance of Change: Building Assets in Mentees Affected by Substance Misuse* course. Mentoring Central created the course to train mentors in a variety of different ways to support their mentees who are living in high-risk communities and who may have a family member or themselves be recovering from, misusing, or at-risk for misusing opioids or other drugs. The course offers research and practitioner-informed content for training mentors about opioids, the effects of opioids on the lives of mentees, and specific strategies they may use to support their mentees.



The one-time, multimedia, interactive, online training was completed by a selected group of mentors who had been matched with opioid-affected youth. The mentors had participated in the MVLF program for several years and developed strong bonds with their mentees. These mentors and their mentees together had already completed an online curriculum, that had been created by a third-party organization, to learn about opioids. However, it didn't address mentors or mentoring in relation to opioid-affected youth.

“When I was given the opportunity for our program to take part in the pilot, I was excited to do it; because Dayton specifically has been one of the cities hardest hit by the opioid crisis.”

Shannon Todd
Mentoring Program Director at Miami Valley
Leadership Foundation

The Results, ROI, and Future Plans

MVLF found the information from *Substance of Change: Building Assets in Mentees Affected by Substance Misuse* course to be valuable for all communities, including ones where addiction is prevalent. Mentors who took the course said they learned more about what addiction really is, how easy it is for a person to become addicted, and the importance of dropping their biases about addiction. After taking the course, mentors also felt more equipped to offer prevention resources to their mentees and let their mentees know there's someone they can turn to when they are feeling isolated or stressed about something in their life.

With the successful completion of the pilot program under their belts, MVLF plans to roll out the training to a larger group of mentors in the spring of 2022. MVLF has also identified schools and teachers who may be interested in the course as well.

“Although our program doesn't specifically recruit students who have been impacted by substance abuse, we know it's an issue in our community, and we feel the course shares important information our mentors can use on the prevention side.”

Shannon Todd
Mentoring Program Director at Miami Valley
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www.leadershipfoundations.org



www.mentoringcentral.net