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MENTOR Program Evaluation Report

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Program Evaluation

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Project Overview

With funding from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant, the MENTOR (Mentors Empowering Now to Overcome Recidivism) Program began a follow-up pilot program in late 2016. As further explained on MENTOR's website, the program is a problem-solving court in Philadelphia that "seeks to interrupt the cycle of recidivism by providing a holistic and supportive reentry experience through mentoring and case management." Judges Michael Erdos and Kai Scott coordinate the program in collaboration with a Program Director and Program Coordinator. MENTOR program participants ("mentees") who are serving county probation sentences are matched with a volunteer mentor from the community, receive case management from MENTOR staff, and attend a monthly status hearing with one of the MENTOR judges.

According to their website, MENTOR's vision is to empower justice system-involved individuals to "live successful, healthy, crime-free and high quality lives post-conviction." To evaluate the program's success in reaching that vision, Dr. Caitlin Taylor has completed a mixed-methods program evaluation, the main findings of which are detailed in the following report.

Executive Summary

The program evaluation relied on several data sources to assess program effectiveness, including surveys and focus groups with mentees, online monthly reports from mentors, internally collected program data on service referrals, interviews with stakeholders, and official records from Adult Probation and Parole Department (APPD). A summary of the findings from these data are provided in this section.

Participant Perceptions

Based on surveys and focus groups with participants, participant perceptions of the program were extremely positive. Nearly all survey respondents agreed that they like their mentors and feel comfortable talking to their mentors. Focus groups revealed that participants appreciated the emotional and instrumental support from their mentors, have some concerns about whether relationships with mentors are empowering or enabling, and valued mentors who were more relatable with similar lived experiences. Surveys also showed that nearly all respondents reported positive relationships with their MENTOR judge and provided high ratings for status hearings. Participants further elaborated in focus groups by explaining that status hearings were like a "sanctuary" from their regular chaotic lives, which represented a new criminal justice system experience for them.

Program Dosage

Several measures of program dosage revealed that participants had a high quantity and quality of contact with the program. According to the mentee surveys, the most commonly identified frequency of in-person interactions with mentors was a few times a week. Mentor monthly reports showed less frequent in-person contact with mentees, with 44 percent of mentor responses indicating only one in-person meeting per month, but with an average meeting length of 90 to 119 minutes. Both mentors and mentees also reported a high number of electronic contacts per month. As a measure of the quality of contact, the pairs regularly discussed criminogenic needs, including employment, housing, and education. Lastly, analysis of internal program data showed that MENTOR staff made an impressive 432 service referrals between April 2017 and July 2019. Of these 432 referrals, program participants made at least some contact with the service provider 65 times and completed the service 155 times. The highest number of referrals were made for legal services followed by employment-related opportunities.

Stakeholder Perceptions

Interviews with program stakeholders identified a number of program strengths, including some examples of beneficial mentoring relationships, access to services via case management, the accountability and social support provided during status

hearings, the benefits of a non-adversarial model for improving understanding among stakeholders and changing justice system actors' traditional behaviors, and a genuine focus on participants' humanity. A number of challenges were also recognized, such as the mentor-mentee matching process; mentor training; ongoing social service needs; the program's organizational structure; stakeholder disagreement about sanctions, particularly for marijuana use; and recruitment issues, including stakeholders advertising the program, the program's reputation, the transfer of one of the judges to civil court, narrow eligibility requirements, and competition with other court programs or short probation sentences under District Attorney Krasner's administration.

Effects on Recidivism and Employment

The outcome evaluation included 38 MENTOR participants and a matched comparison group of 114 individuals under the regular terms of supervision. A three-to-one matching technique was used that matched MENTOR participants to comparison group individuals on age, gender, release date, risk level, and MENTOR's offense type exclusion criteria.

Bivariate analyses revealed that while 29.8 percent of the comparison group experienced at least one new arrest during the 12-month study period, only 15.8 percent of MENTOR participants had a new arrest, which constitutes a marginally statistically significant difference. A statistically significant effect of program

participation was found for probation revocations. Only 10.5 percent of MENTOR participants had their probation supervision revoked during the 12-month study period compared to 31.6 percent of the comparison group. An impressive 63.2 percent of MENTOR participants had some form of employment at the end of the 12-month study period, compared to 52.6 percent of the comparison group. This is a substantive difference between groups, but one that did not reach statistical significance.

Multivariate analyses, which isolated the independent effects of MENTOR program participation on each outcome after controlling for other known predictors of those outcomes, failed to find significant effects of MENTOR participation on any of the three outcomes.

Data and Methods

The following section summarizes the data collection process and research methodologies used to evaluate the MENTOR program.[1]

Participant Focus Groups and Surveys

To assess participant perceptions of the program and document the frequency and quality of mentor-mentee contact, focus groups and surveys were used. Focus groups were held and surveys were administered during and after status hearings in private rooms at the courthouse, including attorney conference rooms and the grand jury room. Participants signed informed consent forms, which explained the confidential nature of the process. Participants were given $20 Target gift cards as compensation for their participation.

A total of four focus groups were conducted with 13 participants between October 2017 and March 2019. Focus groups ranged in length from 43 to 65 minutes, with a mean focus group length of 56 minutes.[2] Throughout the focus group sessions, at least one research assistant recorded detailed notes, including direct quotes

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[1] Those interested in more information about research methods are encouraged to contact Dr. Caitlin Taylor at taylorc@lasalle.edu.
[2] These focus group lengths exclude the fourth session in which only one MENTOR participant was available to participate. This session lasted 15 minutes.

whenever possble. Surveys were administered during five different status hearings to

27 interested participants between August 2017 and November 2018.

Qualitative analyses were conducted with the open-ended survey questions

and the focus group notes. An open coding strategy was employed to identify key

themes and organize concepts. For the close-ended survey questions, the Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to generate descriptive statistics.

Mentor Monthly Reports

To further assess the frequency and quality of mentor-mentee contact as well as

to identify the types of reintegration challenges discussed, mentors were asked to

submit monthly reports online via a survey program Dr. Taylor created using Qualtrics.

A total of 244 mentor reports were collected across 27 status hearings between May

2017 and June 2019. Reports were regularly downloaded from Qualtrics and merged

into a master SPSS file for analysis.

Stakeholder Interviews

Phone interviews with stakeholders were another important data collection

strategy. While not part of the original evaluation design, this strategy was

implemented in response to some challenges related to program implementation,

particularly in regards to participant recruitment. Willing respondents signed an

informed consent form, which explained their comments would not be linked to their

names or positions in the program. Interview questions prompted respondents to share

their perceptions of MENTOR's strengths and weaknesses. Interviews were conducted

with 12 different former or current stakeholders between February and May of 2019.

Interviews ranged in length from 29 to 62 minutes, with a mean interview length of 43

minutes.

Detailed notes were taken during the interviews, including direct quotes as often

as possible. For analysis, interview notes were first sorted by general topic across

respondents (such as responses related to recruitment, or status hearings, or

workgroup dynamics). Then, an open coding technique was used to further analyze

responses so that themes could be identified within and across topics.

MENTOR Internal Data Collection

To measure social service provision for MENTOR participants, Dr. Taylor assisted

MENTOR staff at the beginning of the project with developing an Excel spreadsheet for

internal data collection purposes. This spreadsheet documented 57 different types of

services provided as part of the case management component of the program and

classified each service into one of the following categories: need met at intake;

referral made, but no contact ever made with service; referral made and at least

some contact made with the service; or referral made and completed. Pivot tables in Excel were used to tally service provision within each category.

APPD Records

As the key data source for the outcome evaluation findings, Dr. Taylor worked with Philadelphia's Adult Probation and Parole Department (APPD) to secure data on MENTOR participants as well as a matched comparison group. Several rounds of data collection requests were made with APPD.

First, baseline data on the first 42 MENTOR participants was requested, including each individual's current age, race/ethnicity, gender, number of prior arrests, APPD risk score (for most recent case), probation start date, and supervision conditions. Four participants were dropped from the outcome evaluation because they were never fully accepted into the program and never matched with a mentor. The outcome evaluation is thus based on 38 MENTOR participants.

Second, to begin identifying individuals for a matched comparison group, Dr. Taylor requested from APPD eight lists of all probationers who met each of the following sets of characteristics and did not have one of MENTOR's enrollment exclusions ([1] in a specialized unit and/or [2] have a prior or current charge that is violent, VUFA, arson, or sex offense):

- Males, age 18 to 24, moderate risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Males, age 25 to 30, moderate risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Females, age 18 to 24, moderate risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Females, age 25 to 30, moderate risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Males, age 18 to 24, high risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Males, age 25 to 30, high risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Females, age 18 to 24, high risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018
- Females, age 25 to 30, high risk score, supervision start date between March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018

These lists comprised the pool of all eligible comparison group individuals.

Dr. Taylor then used the baseline data on the MENTOR participants to randomly select cases from each of the eight above categories. Comparison group individuals were thus matched to MENTOR participants on the following characteristics: gender, age, risk level, and supervision start date. A three-to-one matching design was used to maximize statistical power with a relatively small group of MENTOR participants. In other words, for each MENTOR participant in one of the above designated groups, three comparison group individuals were randomly selected. Accordingly, the outcome evaluation included 114 comparison group individuals.

For the third data request to APPD, baseline data were collected on each of the selected comparison group individuals, including race/ethnicity, number of prior arrests, supervision start date, and supervision conditions.

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The fourth APPD data request was for the following outcome data on each

MENTOR participant and comparison group individual (for a total of 152 individuals in

the outcome evaluation):

- New arrests (dates and charges) in the first 12 months following the start of supervision
- New convictions (dates and charges) in the first 12 months following the start of supervision
- Probation revocations (dates) in the first 12 months following the start of supervision
- Employment status as of 12 months following supervision start date

While the original evaluation design employed a 24 month study period, MENTOR's

participant recruitment and enrollment challenges resulted in a substantially smaller

sample size than originally planned. In order to obtain meaningful outcome

evaluation results within the JAG grant period, the evaluation plan was revised to

include a shorter study period of 12 months.

All APPD data were merged into a master SPSS file for analysis. Descriptive

statistics, chi-square tests of independence, and logistic regression were employed.

Results

Evaluation findings are detailed in the following section.

Participant Perceptions of the Program

Focus groups and surveys with MENTOR participants ("mentees") were used to assess participant perceptions of the program. Considering the literature on procedural justice,[3] positive participant views of a program should be seen as a successful aspect of criminal justice programs. This literature finds that people are more likely to follow the rules when they perceive those rules to be imposed in a fair and legitimate manner. For the purposes of this study, if participants perceive the policies and procedures of the MENTOR program to be applied in a fair and just manner, they may be more likely to follow the rules of the program, including steering clear of new criminal activity.

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[3] Tyler, T. (1990). *Why People Obey the Law*. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press.
Tyler, T.R & Huo, Y.J. (2002). *Trust in the Law: Encouraging Public Cooperation with the Police and Courts*. NY: Russell-Sage Foundation.
Bottoms, A. & Tankebee, J. (2012). Beyond procedural justice: A dialogic approach to legitimacy in criminal justice. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 102(1),* 119-170.

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Mentee Perceptions of the Mentor Relationship

Both the surveys and focus groups provide insight into mentees' perceptions of their mentors. Based on the surveys, mentee perceptions of their mentors are overwhelmingly positive. Table I. provides the percentages of the 27 survey respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with each statement.

Table I. Mentee Perceptions of the Mentor Relationship

Survey Item	% Strongly Agree or Agree
When I contact my mentor, he/she gets back to me quickly.	96%
When my mentor contacts me, I get back to him/her quickly.	91%
I feel comfortable talking about my problems with my mentor.	96%
I am honest with my mentor about what's going on in my life.	100%
I like my mentor as a person.	100%
My mentor has my best interest in mind.	96%
My mentor would never try to hurt me.	96%
I am comfortable telling my mentor things that I wouldn't tell to the Judge or to the Court.	96%
I trust that my mentor will keep my private information to themselves.	100%
My mentor wants to catch me doing something wrong.	8%
My mentor is there for me when I need them.	96%

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While the mentee surveys provided nearly universally positive views of relationships with mentors, the focus groups revealed slightly more nuance. Qualitative analysis of focus groups yielded three central themes.

The first theme is **supportive relationships**. Consistent with the survey findings, mentees generally reported that mentors offered both emotional and instrumental support. For example, one respondent summarized the emotionally supportive relationship by stating,

> *"It's professional, but at the same time it's a friendship… When you work together for a long time it's a friendship... [We work together figuring out] what we need to succeed."*

Another respondent shared the financial challenges he has sometimes endured during his time in the program and stressed how much it meant to him to have his mentor's assistance with immediate needs during those times. He explained,

> *"My mentor a cool bull [i.e., person]… My mentor come through… It be days I ain't eat in two days and he come through [with food]"*

Clearly, mentees appreciated the various forms of support their mentors provided during their participation in the program.

The second theme can be labeled **enabling versus empowering relationships**. For some mentees, there seems to be a bit of a tension or perhaps just a need for a delicate balance between a mentor relationship that is enabling or holding back mentees versus a relationship that is empowering mentees to take ownership of and

action in addressing their own needs. For example, one respondent expressed

concerns about how much mentors may do for mentees by stating,

"I think its handicapping you, I want to be independent."

Another mentee indicated that some other mentees may rely too much on their

mentors. He indicated that,

*"The mentor isn't supposed to do everything for you… People
looking for handouts."*

In contrast, other mentees emphasized the empowering nature of tough love from a

mentor. One respondent shared,

"Mine [mentor] works tough on me like a mom."

Some mentees seemed to believe that when a mentor is tough on them, that can be

empowering and motivating, but if the mentor is doing too much for the mentees, that

can be holding them back or enabling them to stay with old behaviors.

The third theme identified in the focus groups is **relatability**. Some mentees

seemed to really value that their mentors have had similar life experiences to them,

while others wished their mentors could better relate to the everyday challenges

mentees faced.

For example, the two quotations below illustrate the extent to which mentees

value mentors with similar lived experiences.

*"He helps me out a lot… He a older version of me… He just did
like 15 years… I got to respect his hand."*

"My mentor has a similar background with addiction, criminal record, and other things, so she is a credible mentor to me. It helps me open up more."

In contrast, some participants expressed concerns about the relatability of their mentors. Two mentees shared the following perspectives:

"The matching [of mentees to mentors] could be better. The only thing we have in common is that we are the same race and we from Philly. My mentor don't motivate enough"

"I would rather have someone that came from my background… we can't bust it up if you been a prissy rich white girl."

Partially to address relatability issues, some mentees have been switched to different mentors during their time in the program. The program has also engaged in some discussions about the greater involvement of people with criminal histories.

Mentee Perceptions of Judges, Staff, and Status Hearings

Mentee surveys and focus groups were also utilized to gauge mentee perceptions of the MENTOR judges, staff, and status hearings. The survey results again demonstrate extremely positive views of these aspects of the program. Table II. below details the percentages of the 27 respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with each statement. All or nearly all respondents indicated that they feel comfortable talking to the MENTOR judge and that they perceive status hearings to be helpful in several ways.

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Table II. Mentee Perceptions of Judges and Status Hearings

Survey Item	% Strongly Agree or Agree
I feel comfortable talking about my problems with the MENTOR Judge.	92%
The MENTOR Judge talks to me in a way that is easy to understand.	100%
I am honest with the MENTOR Judge about what's going on in my life.	96%
The MENTOR Judge wants to catch me doing something wrong.	8%
I learn about different social services, such as job training or education in status hearings.	100%
Activities during status hearings help me work on my personal goals.	96%
It is helpful for me to hear about other participants' lives and challenges in MENTOR status hearings.	100%
Hearing about other participants' experiences in status motivates me to work toward my own goals.	96%

Once again, the focus groups provide further insight into the mentees' perceptions of the aspects of the program outside of their relationships with their mentors. Qualitative data analysis of the focus groups uncovered two main themes.

The first theme is the extent to which mentees viewed their participation in the program as a **sanctuary** from their regular, stressful, or chaotic lives. Mentees appreciated the "good energy" from the judges and program staff. Some referred to

status hearings as a *"piece of paradise"* and *"taking a break from the world."* As

evidenced by the comments below, several mentees explained how much they

valued the friendly and supportive relationships with MENTOR staff and the judges.

> *"Just think about it like this. You don't have that person in Philadelphia that will hit you up on the random basis… She [program coordinator] just wants to make sure that we are doing something positive."*

> *"When I come down here, I'm seeing a therapist."* [in reference to speaking with the MENTOR judge during status]

> *"[A strength of the program is] the positivity we get when we come here [to status hearings at the courthouse]… The smiles and stuff."*

The second theme from the focus groups is closely connected to the perception

of the program as a sanctuary. This theme can best be labeled by MENTOR as a **new**

criminal justice system experience. Participants indicated that even though MENTOR

is a justice system program, it's not like anything else they have experienced in the

justice system previously. This is particularly true for their relationships with the judges.

As illustrated by the following comments, mentees believed they could open up to the

judges without fear of instantly being sent back to jail.

> *"Every judge I ever had sent me back to the jawn [jail / prison]. I can open up to [my MENTOR] judge."*

> *"When I first walked in her [judge's] courtroom… I tried to visualize it. When I walked in there I was trembling… I saw that she's not mean, she cares… I'm talking about I never been that comfortable."*

Another participant emphasized the symbolic importance of the physical setup in the courtroom during status hearings. This mentee shared,

> *"I think its cool because it's a cool setting. He [judge] is not on the stand and its normal seating. I don't feel like he is above me."*

Another exchange among several participants drew attention to the differences between going to the courthouse for a regular court hearing during the day compared to going to the courthouse for a MENTOR status hearing in the evening. The respondents explained,

> *"Come here in the morning and coming here at nighttime is two different things."*

> *"When you come to court [for a regular hearing during the day] its going to be something good or bad."*

> *"You either going home or not."*

> *"You not trying to speak to no DA [District Attorney] because you know they are going try to roof you [i.e., send you to jail]."*

> *"I feel comfortable because I can look at the cops [in the lobby of the courthouse] and say I'm coming back out of here."*

This conversation documents the value of MENTOR in not only changing the justice system-involved individuals' perceptions of judges, but also changing how they perceive other justice system actors, including prosecutors and police officers. Removing the imposing fear or threat of re-incarceration enables MENTOR participants to interact with justice system actors in a much more amicable manner.

Program Dosage

Mentee surveys, mentor monthly reports, as well as internally-collected records on service provision from MENTOR staff were used to assess program "dosage" or the extent to which program participants experience something different than traditional probation supervision. If evaluation results reveal differences in outcomes between MENTOR participants and a similarly situated comparison group of individuals under the regular terms of probation supervision, it is important to know what exactly the MENTOR program was doing to generate those outcomes. Measures for the quantity and quality of mentor-mentee contact as well as social service referrals from the program are used to assess program dosage.

Quantity of Mentor-Mentee Contact

Both mentee surveys as well as mentors' monthly reports were used to assess the quantity and quality of mentor-mentee contact. While the mentee perceptions of their mentors (as detailed above) can provide a piece of a contact measure, a comparison of both mentor and mentee reports can better triangulate a measurement of program dosage.

Table III. below summarizes both mentor and mentee reports on the quantity of in-person contact. Among the 25 mentee respondents who completed this item, the most common frequency of in-person contact was a few times per week followed by a few times per month. Recall that the mentor monthly reports reflect 244 mentor

responses across 27 different monthly status hearings. Mentors reported less frequent

in-person contact with mentees than mentees reported, with 44% of mentor responses

indicating only one in-person meeting per month and 28% indicating no in-person

meetings. Mentors were also asked to report the total length of time spent with

mentees in-person each month. Across all monthly reports, the most common length

of time spent together was between 90 and 119 minutes, followed by 120 minutes or

more.

Table III. Quantity of In-Person Mentor-Mentee Contact

MENTEES *How often do you usually communicate with your mentor in person?*	MENTORS *How many times have you met in-person with your mentee in the past month?*
Monthly = 12%	3 or more times = 4%
Few times per month = 32%	2 times = 24%
Once per week = 12%	1 time = 44%
Few times per week = 36%	0 times = 28%
Daily = 8%	
	Total time spent together in person in the past month
	90 to 119 minutes = 39%
	120 minutes or more = 24%

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As displayed in Table IV. below, mentors and mentees also reported the quantity of contact made by phone or internet (including social media and email). Among the 25 mentee responses, the most common frequency of electronic communication was a few times per week followed by daily contact. Mentors were asked to report the number of separate electronic conversations each month. Across the 244 mentor reports, the mean number of electronic conversations per month was 5.66 with a standard deviation of 5.60. The responses for this item ranged from zero electronic contacts (11% of all reports) to 30 contacts (0.8% of all reports) per month. Mentors were also asked to report the average length of time for electronic contacts each month. The most frequent response for this item was less than 10 minutes, followed by 10 to 29 minutes.

Table IV. Quantity of Electronic Mentor-Mentee Contact

MENTEES *How often do you usually communicate with your mentor via phone or internet?*	MENTORS *How many separate conversations have you had with your mentee over the phone or internet in the past month?*
Few times per month = 16%	Mean = 5.66
Once per week = 8%	SD = 5.60
Few times per week = 52%	**Average time per conversation**
Daily = 24%	Less than 10 minutes = 48%
	10 to 29 minutes = 34%

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These results generally indicate a fairly high level of program dosage for mentees each month. While some mentor-mentee pairs struggled to maintain regular contact, the majority of mentee and mentor reports indicate a relatively high quantity of in-person contact and electronic communication.[4]

Quality of Mentor-Mentee Contact

In addition to documenting the frequency or *quantity* of contact, some survey and monthly report items also sought to measure the *quality* of mentoring interactions. One measure for quality of contact was the types of challenges related to crime-free living that mentor-mentee pairs discussed. As displayed in Table V. below, surveys prompted mentees to indicate whether a particular challenge was ever discussed with their mentors and to offer their perceptions on how helpful it was to discuss each challenge. Mentor monthly reports simply asked mentors to report whether or not certain challenges were discussed each month.

Based on the 27 mentee surveys, it appears that when challenges were discussed with mentors, mentees found these discussions to be overwhelmingly helpful. There were only five challenges for which someone indicated that discussing that

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[4] It is important to note the possibility for bias in these findings based on who participated in the mentee surveys and who submitted mentor monthly reports. Only mentees who showed up for status hearings were able to submit surveys. Mentor submission of monthly reports declined towards the end of the study with some anecdotal evidence indicating that it was the mentors with less responsive mentees who were less likely to submit monthly reports. In other words, the mentors and mentees who would likely have lower quantity of contacts are also less likely to have provided data for the results provided.

challenge was not helpful; these challenges included legal ID, employment, mental

health, substance abuse, and knowing own strengths.

Table V. Types of Challenges Discussed

	MENTEES		MENTORS
	% never discussed	% found very or somewhat helpful (when discussed)	% responding that challenge was discussed that month
Legal identification	12%	84%	33%
Employment	4%	92%	79%
Education	17%	83%	55%
Healthcare	27%	73%	22%
Mental health	32%	64%	32%
Substance abuse	24%	72%	27%
Housing	23%	77%	57%
Family problems	12%	89%	51%
Problems with friends	31%	69%	23%
Setting goals	0%	100%	69%
Knowing own strengths	8%	88%	54%

According to mentees, the most commonly discussed challenges included

setting goals, employment, knowing your own strengths, legal identification and family

problems. Across all months of mentor reports, the most commonly discussed issues

each month included employment, setting goals, housing, education, and knowing

your own strengths.

The second strategy to assess quality of mentor-mentee contact compared

mentees' perceptions of mentors to mentors' perceptions of mentees. Table VI.

displays these comparisons. The first two columns on the left feature the mentees'

Table VI. Comparison of Mentee and Mentor Perceptions of Their Relationships

MENTEE Survey Item (n = 27)	% Strongly Agree or Agree	% Strongly Agree or Agree	MENTOR Monthly Report Item (n = 36)
When I contact my mentor, he/she gets back to me quickly.	96%	75%	When I contact my mentee, he/she gets back to me quickly.
When my mentor contacts me, I get back to him/her quickly.	91%	92%	When my mentee contacts me, I get back to him/her quickly.
I feel comfortable talking about my problems with my mentor.	96%	89%	My mentee feels comfortable talking about his/her problems with me.
I am honest with my mentor about what's going on in my life.	100%	89%	My mentee is honest with me about what's going on in his/her life.
I like my mentor as a person.	100%	97%	I like my mentee as a person.
My mentor has my best interest in mind.	96%	97%	I have my mentee's best interest in mind.
My mentor wants to catch me doing something wrong.	8%	0%	I want to catch my mentee doing something wrong.
My mentor is there for me when I need them.	96%	97%	I am there for my mentee when s/he needs me.

perceptions of mentors, as measured by the mentee surveys (also reported in Table I. above). The two columns on the right display mentors' perceptions of mentees, as measured by the mentor monthly reports.[5] The results of these comparisons generally show a great deal of agreement between mentors and mentees on the positive nature of the mentoring relationship. For example, both mentors and mentees closely agreed that mentors contact mentees quickly, that they like each other as people, that mentors have mentees' best interests in mind, and that mentors are there for mentees when needed. In contrast, mentors were less likely than mentees to believe that mentees responded to mentor contact quickly. Mentors also were more likely to express concerns about mentees' comfort level and honesty in discussing problems with mentors.

Overall, these findings indicate a high level of program dosage for mentees. Both mentors and mentees reported discussing many of the most commonly identified criminogenic needs among high-risk probationers, mentees found these to be helpful discussions, and both mentors and mentees characterized their relationships as high quality.

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[5] To minimize monthly reporting burdens on mentors, these questions on perceptions of the mentoring relationship were only included on the mentors' monthly reports approximately every 6 months, for a total of three separate times during the study period.

Social Service Referrals

As an additional measure of program dosage that provides insight into the case management aspect of the program, MENTOR staff tracked social service referrals and completion using an Excel spreadsheet created by Dr. Taylor. Across the 38 MENTOR participants tracked, analyses revealed that there were

- 212 times in which staff made a referral, but program participants never made any contact with the service identified by staff;

- 65 times staff made a referral, program participants made at least some contact with the service identified by staff, but did not complete the service; and

- 155 times staff made a referral and the program participant fully completed the service.

With an impressive total of 432 service referrals made from April 2017 to July 2019, these results indicate that MENTOR program staff were extremely active in providing participants with opportunities to access various service needs. Such a high number of referrals also suggests that the MENTOR participants came to the program with a high number of criminogenic needs requiring social service assistance.

Further analyses investigated which types of social service referrals MENTOR staff most commonly made. Table VII. below shows variation in service referral and completion across different service types.

Table VII. Service Referrals and Completions across Service Types[6]

Service Type	# Referrals with no service contact made	# Referrals with some service contact made	# Referrals with service completed
Documentation	25	7	36
Public benefits	11	8	11
Legal	9	37	70
Financial	19	0	0
Health	30	4	8
Housing	8	0	2
Employment	82	7	18
Education	20	1	5
Other	7	0	4

This table indicates that the highest number of referrals were made for legal services, with a total of 116 referrals made. Second most frequent, 107 referrals were made for employment services. Interestingly, the employment category shows the highest number of services that were not utilized by participants. For 82 of the 107

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[6] Examples of *documentation* include obtaining an email address, state ID, Social Security card, and birth certificate. *Public benefits* include obtaining insurance, TANF, SSI, and energy assistance. *Legal* includes screenings with Community Legal Services and Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, expungement, and debt services. *Financial* includes setting up a bank account and financial management resources. *Health* includes medical and dental care, cognitive behavioral therapy group, and substance use treatment. *Housing* includes Philadelphia Housing Authority reunification, shelter information, and mailbox services. *Employment* includes various job training programs, union information, and temporary employment referrals. *Education* includes GED class / exam, trade schools, college, and vocational training / certification. *Other* includes drivers' license and food assistance.

employment-related referrals, the participant never made any contact with the recommended service or program. In contrast, for legal services, which mostly included screenings with Community Legal Services and Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, only nine of the 116 referrals made were not utilized by participants.

For future program development, MENTOR stakeholders may want to further investigate the reasons why certain referrals were not sufficiently utilized by program participants. For example, do certain organizations or programs have poor reputations among returning citizens? Were some services more difficult to access due to time or transportation challenges compared to other services that may have been provided directly during case management meetings or status hearings? Did program participants not perceive the referral to meet a particularly urgent need for themselves? Was a sufficient amount of information provided by MENTOR staff making the referral and did staff follow up with the participant about the opportunity?

The service referrals analysis also showed the extent to which the program relied heavily on a handful of close partnerships with particular social service providers. In other words, there were a few providers or programs for which a disproportionate number of referrals were made. The organizations with the highest frequencies of referrals are listed below.

- Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (legal) – 38 referrals
- BenePhilly (public benefits) – 34 referrals
- Community Legal Services (legal) – 31 referrals

- The Center for Carceral Communities' cognitive behavioral therapy group (health) – 28 referrals

- CareerLink (employment) – 22 referrals

- The Guild (employment) – 18 referrals

The frequency of referrals to these particular organizations shows the extent to which MENTOR's program delivery was embedded in a wider network of social service provision within the city. The dosage of programming MENTOR provided appeared to be dependent upon the relationships they built with local social service providers.

Summarizing program dosage, the measures for the quantity and quality of mentor-mentee contact as well as social service referrals indicate that MENTOR participants experienced a high degree of interaction (or "dosage") with the program. Participants' contact with mentors was high, criminogenic needs were regularly discussed with mentors, mentor-mentee relationships were perceived to be of a high quality, and MENTOR staff provided participants with access to a range of social services.

Stakeholder Perceptions of the Program

As is common among most newly developed criminal justice programs, MENTOR experienced some challenges in program implementation. In order to improve future programming, stakeholder interviews were conducted to identify MENTOR's key

strengths and weaknesses. The following sections detail the key themes and subthemes that emerged from stakeholder interviews.

Mentor-Mentee Relationships

Most of the stakeholders agreed that there were a number of participants who deeply **benefitted from their relationships** with their mentors. Valuing the formation of long-lasting relationships, one stakeholder stated, "A few of the mentors I've heard about have made a particularly strong impact on mentees [and] maintained relationships past the program." Another respondent shared that it's been "beneficial [for mentees] to have somebody in their life." Emphasizing the emotional support aspects of the relationship, one stakeholder shared, "Some participants formed really strong bonds with their mentors, and expanding social support is important."

Others expressed **concerns about the quality** of the mentor-mentee relationships. One person stated, "I don't know how much the participants and the mentors are really bonding together." Another shared, "I don't feel like we figured that [mentoring] out entirely. It didn't work for a lot of people in the program. Not the main thing people were getting out of it." At least one stakeholder believed that the program participants were not prepared to form relationships with their mentors, given their own histories of trauma: "Participants want to have meaningful relationships, but they can't… [the program is] asking for a young person who hasn't had positive adult relationships, but asking them to build a relationship out of thin air."

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Some stakeholders attributed challenges with the mentor-mentee relationship to overly time-consuming **program requirements** on the number and length of meetings. One respondent explained,

> "It's hard to demand when someone engages with a mentor or a coach and when they don't. Like so many things in the system, it's sort of patronizing – you [the mentee] have to meet them [your mentor] so many times instead of meet them when you need to or you want to. Work that needs to be done around the requirements of the program…. just wasn't working for some of the participants in the program."

Another respondent indicated that this was particularly problematic for participants who may have been enrolled in other programs simultaneously. "It's too much when people have mentors from other programs, too."

At least two respondents noted that the program requirements made the one-on-one mentoring model unsustainable. Instead, stakeholders had "talked about transitioning to a **group mentoring** model." These respondents shared that a group mentoring model may have been more feasible considering the time commitments for mentors.

Several respondents identified the **mentor-mentee matching process** as an area for improvement. While it's inevitable that some matches may not work out, some stakeholders expressed reservations about the matching methodology used:

> "Pre-matching people, I just don't believe it… it's like E-Harmony… two people on paper just aren't the same in real life."

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"I don't believe in the mentor model… you can't just get matched up with somebody, and then that's your mentor. For adults, I don't believe in that model. I have a couple people who just luckily, their mentor was amazing… but then 40 other people who had 3 mentors and then somebody matched me with Jill from Bryn Mawr who's a lawyer… then it's just a box to be checked off" [people meet with their mentor because they have to do it to get through the program, not because it's a meaningful relationship]

"Mentoring piece of the MENTOR program is a weakness in the way it's set up mostly because it's a fake or a constructed mentoring relationship… there's a matchmaking process that people are trying to do to the best of their ability, but there's not enough volunteers to have a pool to pick from… [they pick] the best mentor from that [limited] pool for that person and people are asked to create those relationships on the go and that feels really hard for participants."

At least six respondents expressed that the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship could be improved with something resembling a "**credible messenger**" model.[7] One respondent summarized this perspective as "incorporat[ing] people with lived experience… advice coming from someone who looks like you or has been through what you've been through." One respondent shared that some mentors were law students who were not prepared for the time commitment or to address the complex needs of mentees. This respondent believed it would have been better to have "folks who had more of a deeper lifelong investment in social work or criminal

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[7] For more on the credible messenger model, see Austria, R. & Peterson, J. (2017). Credible Messenger Mentoring for Justice-Involved Youth. *The Pinkerton Papers*. Retrieved from: http://www.thepinkertonfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Pinkerton-Papers-credible-messenger-monitoring.pdf.

justice work instead of a passing interest." Similarly, another stakeholder stated that

"people came from different social positions and were still successful, but I think that

was less [common]. [It was] the rare mentor that was able to fully understand where

participants were coming from… [I] would have liked to seen people who were closest

to the problem" working as mentors. This respondent went on to explain that the

program recruited a lot of well-meaning middle class people who lived in the suburbs

or white college students as mentors, but that they often were "not the best fit" as

mentors.

Another stakeholder specified characteristics of people who may have made

better mentors:

> "Something closer to the credible messenger model [would be
> better]. They don't need to be somebody who has personal
> experience being in jail, but a long standing community
> member with family members incarcerated.   A much better
> and more understanding kind of thing. Being intentional about
> matching. Being able to pay people to do that. Juvenile lifers
> and older community members."

One respondent also noted that a credible messenger model would align with other

efforts in the City of Philadelphia: "City is trying to push for credible messenger

programs."

At least six respondents identified **mentor training** as a challenge for the

program. One respondent identified this as primarily an issue of limited resources: "It

was a missed opportunity that mentors weren't better trained. I don't think we had

the capacity to provide that, to give mentors more robust training." Another emphasized that the lack of training has put participants at risk: "We have to flush out the mentor piece. I haven't been comfortable with the lack of training they receive. That's a deficit for me… I expect them to at least know the basics. [It] bothers me that people can touch probationers without any formalized training or coaching…. Just walk into someone's life." Identifying communication between mentors and program staff or service providers as a training issue, another stakeholder said, "Sometimes the mentors don't even know what's going on and say things that are totally counteractive to what somebody's working on in treatment. Then when you're with us and [we're saying] let's do harm reduction [but mentors are telling them something else]."

In sum, while nearly all respondents identified examples of strong bonds between mentors and mentees, some respondents identified possible areas for improvement, including revising program requirements for the number and length of meetings, implementing a group mentoring model, reconsidering the matching process, employing a credible messenger model, and enhancing mentor training.

Case Management and Social Services

Most stakeholders cited access to social services as a **main advantage** of the program and emphasized that case management from the Program Coordinator became an essential piece of the program. The most commonly noted social service needs among participants included poverty, housing, employment, education, and

obtaining ID. Many stakeholders identified case management as a key aspect of

what drives recidivism reduction in the program. For example, stakeholders shared

that,

> *"Her [Program Coordinator's] case management skills were really strong and she was able to build really strong relationships with the clients in the program. That was really the bones of MENTOR. The most engagement anyone had in the program was with the case manager or the Coordinator. Without that, there wouldn't have been success for anyone in the program. Making all of the connections to services and putting out fires when they came up."*

> *"Without addressing the sort of trauma and what the participants are facing everyday… without an intentional focus on their wellbeing, they could slip back and recidivate… Very complicated and complex set of issues participants are dealing with."*

> *[What makes a difference is participants' lives is] "when you take a high-risk probationer and wrap them up with services so they won't be able to go out and recidivate… that case management piece."*

> *[Given the reality of participants'] "chaotic lives, it has to be very holistic so the case management part is really important."*

Despite general agreement that case management and access to social

services were key components of MENTOR's success, several stakeholders also offered

suggestions for how to improve this aspect of the program. At least two respondents

believed that it would be helpful to have a more formalized **relationship with outside**

organizations or non-profits. One respondent shared that "MENTOR was a middle way

to other kinds of things that I thought were more effective… because we weren't a

community-based organization and we didn't have a place for people to go… we did a lot of triage out to other places."

Several other stakeholders shared that case management can be **limited within a criminal justice program**. As further discussed in the section on the non-adversarial nature of the program, some stakeholders perceived there to be conflicts between the judges and case managers or social service providers, especially related to sensitive or confidential issues. One stakeholder explained that s/he saw it as problematic to have

> "judges being supervisors of case managers / social workers… In a number of cases, it's been pretty challenging to keep confidentiality within the program… Judges [are] not used to that… [Can be a] conflict of interest. Judges are lawyers who understand the law and not social workers – those are conflicting points of view."

Another stakeholder believed that MENTOR having a "social servicey component to it inside the system [was a] doubled edged thing [because the] case manager needs to be a social worker, who's bound by the code of confidentiality." S/he was unsure whether the judges "understand or respect" the "strict ethical guidelines" social workers follow.

At least three different stakeholders identified **role confusion between the mentors and case managers** (Program Coordinator). There was agreement that the program has become more about case management than mentoring. One person

believed that case managers' goals and the lack of mentor training were the reason

behind this shift:

> "They [mentors] leaned too much on coordinators as case managers [and some coordinators] wanted to save the world so they would help them too much… Some of that may be on us because we need to do ongoing [mentor] training so they [mentors] don't feel like they're in crisis mode any time there's a problem… [Case management should be] a combination of primary support from the mentor and secondary support from the MENTOR Coordinator."

Another stakeholder attributed this role confusion to the priorities of Program

Coordinators. S/he stated that,

> "Mentoring was more about increasing emotional intelligence and increasing your inner ability, your inner strength. Having the services was certainly important, but our original view was that the mentorship was supporting people to make the most empowering choices. But the different social workers who came in had a different idea and getting people access to services. This was maybe a mismatch… the social workers doing so much and really being involved with each individual client, it's just a totally different perspective. The coaching [for mentors] piece would have made it a little bit different than the wraparound services available for people."

Others saw the workload transfer from mentors to the Program Coordinator as a

necessary outcome given the challenges participants were facing. One stakeholder

shared that "mentors don't have the capability or the time to take on the challenges

the participants have."

At least five respondents raised concerns about **gaps or ongoing needs** in social service provision. These stakeholders identified housing, employment, and mental health treatment as the primary unmet needs. One stakeholder worried that unmet social service needs were due to "personnel issues." S/he explained that "we don't always follow through as much as we should, or be as creative as we can… At a minimum, when we say as a program we're going to do something [like get someone a particular service], we need to do it." Another stakeholder believed that these service gaps influence post-program success: "It's really, really hard because the people in the program are not getting the foundational help they need to do well after the program… a lot of them are graduating and they're still in the same precarious situation… Housing is a major one [service need]."

As the program evolves, it may be worthwhile to address case management issues related to partnerships with outside organizations, social worker confidentiality, role confusion for mentors and the Program Coordinator, and existing service needs.

Status Hearings

Respondents expressed somewhat mixed perceptions of the value of the courtroom-based status hearings with the judge. At least six different respondents identified advantages of status hearings. As evidenced by the excerpts below, several respondents noted that status hearings helped to **hold participants accountable** for their behaviors.

"[An advantage was] having the judges involved because that's the authority, that's the accountability, the consequence."

"Having to come to court once a month, having to be accountable to somebody, wanting to be able to say I'm working, going to counseling, doing the right things… they want to be able to say that."

"Overall the way that they're [status hearings] set up, it's an effective way to try to address recidivism. Allows participants to take much more responsibility."

Other stakeholders valued the **social support** provided during status hearings. One respondent shared that "the status hearings do exactly what they're supposed to do – showing support, trying to bond with individuals, bond with each other." Another respondent drew attention to the physical setup of the courtroom as something that facilitates "candid and open conversation." At the very beginning of the program, the judge was sitting on the bench, but since then, the judges sit off the bench at a table directly facing the participant's table. This has "encouraged trust and open dialogue." As explained by a different stakeholder, these open conversations give participants a "greater say in how things are working." Participants can say, "'I think this is what I need and no, that's not really working for me because…' It empowers participants to really take control over their reentry journey."

At least four respondents explained that an advantage of status hearings was giving participants a **new experience within the justice system**, particularly in terms of how they interact with the judges.

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"Another form of the mentoring is meeting with the judges one-on-one. Very impactful because it's one of the first times a participant sits in the courtroom without judgement and without something hanging over their head. [Participants] feel comfortable in that setting and I think that's somewhat empowering."

"[Participants] feel more comfortable talking to the [MENTOR] judges than they would in a normal courtroom setting."

"[An advantage is the] ability for mentees to interact with their judges in a way that really kind of humanizes and makes the interaction more interactive and personal. Allows participants to see their judge as someone more than just a person who has a lot of control over my life… someone I can be more open with… someone who isn't just there to punish me, but when I fall down, can help pick me back up and when I succeed, celebrate that with me."

These passages indicate that some stakeholders valued the opportunities created in status hearings for participants to interact with judges in a non-traditional manner.

In terms of disadvantages of status hearings, at least four respondents pointed to the **inconsistent participant attendance for the entire status hearing**. As illustrated by the following comments, stakeholders believed that status hearings would be most effective if all participants and all key stakeholders could be present for the entire session.

"What I didn't like was that because it started so late, people left so you lost the sense of community."

"I want everybody to be there at the same time… this drop in, roll in and out, doesn't work well for me. I don't want people to come in and out…. I would like it to be more structured."

"I wish that people were more punctual and that people would stay. Some of our more impactful hearings are when people are there as a group… We can't mandate anything [like being on time or staying the whole time] because we tried not to be that strict."

"[There was] trouble getting the PD [public defender] and DA [district attorney] to stay… [if they] commit to the sessions and stay, would make it stronger."

Also stressing the perceived value of everyone in attendance together for status hearings, another respondent wished that status hearings would be held "more than once a month. Even if it were twice a month, that could be a strength… If you could find the resources for people. And participants were willing to come more than once a month."

Other respondents expressed suggestions about the content or format of status hearings. One suggestion was to "get back to the component of having an **educational presentation** at the beginning of every status." In the beginning of the program, status hearings commonly started with a motivational speaker or a representative from a service provider explaining opportunities. This respondent saw value not just in the substantive information provided during these sessions, but also believed the sessions "symbolically, shows them [participants] we're there for them."

At least three of the respondents shared concerns about the types of sensitive conversations held during status hearings. As further elaborated upon below, these respondents believed that status hearings **should have been more trauma-informed and supportive** of participants.

"If those [conversations during status] could be utilized in a way that is more trauma-informed and sensitive and less restricted to legal and binding… those are an opportunity to develop the relationship in a way that's appropriate for the mentors, mentees and judges. [Should be saying to participants,] 'the reason why we're making this program is because we genuinely care about you. You have a specific set of needs and skills and wants for your future and we are genuinely here to support you.' [Make it] less formal and more showing genuine care and concern."

"It just felt like court… It was hard to build community. We did ice breakers at the start… Status hearings were this weird time in which sometimes it felt like community coming together, but it just ended up feeling like court… people trickle in and not stay the whole time. People will show up when they feel like they're gonna get something out of it."

"I don't know if participants felt comfortable speaking about their challenges, especially if those challenges were related to substance abuse or a new arrest."

At least three respondents expressed that many of the advantages or disadvantages of status hearings were related to the personalities and behaviors of the individual judges. These respondents believed there were **notable differences between the two courts**. Some respondents shared that the judges employed different strategies in terms of providing "warm" or friendly interactions with participants. One respondent shared that while one judge takes more of a "mechanical" approach in supporting participants, another judge is "more about 'how do I get to know this person so I can understand how I can help this person?'" Similarly drawing upon the unique personalities of the individual judges, another respondent indicated that each judge had different approaches for creating relationships with participants. "What

Judge [A] was creating was really unique and organic for [him/her]. This made sense

for [him/her] because of the relationships [s/he] built with defendants."

In sum, respondents identified several key strengths of status hearings, including

a mechanism for holding participants accountable, delivering social support, and

creating new justice system experiences for participants. Respondents also identified

possible limitations of status hearings that may be addressed in future program

planning, such as participant attendance for the duration of sessions, educational

presentations, and the discussion of sensitive issues during status in a trauma-informed

manner.

Sanctions and Rewards

Several interview respondents referred to the use of sanctions and rewards in

MENTOR as the "**carrot and stick**" approach. Stakeholders generally agreed that the

reduction in the length of probation sentence was the primary reward for program

participation. Some referred to the sentence reduction as "the most tangible reward"

and expressed that the "incentive was meaningful" for participants.

Stakeholders disagreed on the extent to which the program imposed **too many**

or too few sanctions. Wishing the program utilized more sanctions, one stakeholder

shared that MENTOR is "meant to be a pure carrot program... it's kind of rough

[because] you want to see some punitive stuff coming." But, this stakeholder later

acknowledged that "as long as it's going to benefit the participant, that's the end result [that matters]."

In contrast, the following excerpts show that some stakeholders were concerned that the program relied too heavily on sanctions.

> *"In a perfect world, the program would have been more focused on supporting people as they moved through the probation sentence instead of meting out punishment. And I don't know how realistic that is in a court setting… [There was a lot of emphasis on forcing people to] change through sanctions instead of truly understanding their needs and making the criminal justice system more easily navigated."*

> *"My concern is that we were setting people up to fail because of the model and the heightened surveillance… [could have been done] without the hyper constant surveillance."*

Working to reach stakeholder agreement on the appropriate use of sanctions may be an important goal for future program development.

Addressing Participant Marijuana Use

Perhaps the best example of the disagreement about the use of sanctions can be seen in how the program handled participants' marijuana use. Nearly all respondents indicated that this issue was a **source of conflict** among stakeholders. Various respondents characterized the issue as "the bane of our existence," "an obsession for some members of the steering committee," something that "prohibited relationship building," a "real tension," "annoying," and something that "didn't get resolved."

Respondents shared different views on **whether or not MENTOR should punish participants** for marijuana use. For example, several stakeholders believed treatment and open discussion about marijuana use without sanctions was the best response. One stakeholder explained that,

> "In terms of what a lot of participants are going through and dealing with, whether or not they're using marijuana is on the lower end of the top level concerns. It's more effectively addressed through treatment and through encouraging someone to seek that rather than being punitive. Being punitive doesn't make sense. Punishing them for using marijuana when there may be a lot of different reasons why someone choses to use marijuana, it's counterproductive."

Concerned about the level of racial bias involved with sanctioning for marijuana use, another stakeholder shared, "the way culturally it's viewed and the way it's utilized, so many people of color are stigmatized and stereotyped in a way that other races aren't…and I can't help but think that race is woefully underestimated."

In contrast, other respondents believed that as long as marijuana is still illegal, the program needs to respond to it as such. One stakeholder explained that the probation department's responsibility was to "follow protocol" and report marijuana use to the judge, then it is at the judge's discretion how it will be handled. Another stakeholder summarized the position of one of the MENTOR judges by stating that the judge "was saying that as long as it's on the books as illegal, [s/he] needs to rule that it's illegal."

Respondents also disagreed about the extent to which MENTOR **is lenient or strict** with handling marijuana use, relative to standard probation supervision or other judges. At least two of the stakeholders who believed that MENTOR is relatively lenient on marijuana use believed part of the reason for leniency was because the judge was more familiar with the individual probationer, including what may be going well in his or her life. One of these stakeholders explained that compared to a regular judge, the MENTOR judges are

> "more aware of what's going on in the person's life… [If someone has] more successes and marijuana is only one issue, then it weighs more heavily on the positives going on in the person's life… If he's in school, working, with children, going to therapy / CBT, made strides, the marijuana is, ya know, the percentages are going down…. MENTOR looks at that and those things are factored in at a violation hearing. [There] wind[s] up being no real punitive measures being taken because the person has so many positive things going on in their lives."

Another respondent said that the program is not too lenient because the way marijuana is handled in MENTOR is separate from how it is handled with probation or in a violation hearing. This stakeholder stated, "We're trying to strike a balance here, realizing that it's rarely punished at all in the DA's office now…. But it's still illegal."

A greater number of respondents perceived MENTOR to be stricter on marijuana than regular probation supervision. In contrast to the views expressed above on the judge being more lenient because s/he knows the participant, one stakeholder saw that as a disadvantage for participants.

"[It's a] false kind of thing that the judge is not your ally… The judge now thinks that they know you and when you come before the judge in court, the judge feels like they've helped you out in the past so they have higher expectations… Kind of treating like a parent… Judges are tougher because they feel like they've already given you the chance."

Others referred to MENTOR in the context of marijuana use as "probation on steroids" and stated that participants "don't need seven layers of supervision."

Several stakeholders shared that the program's handling of marijuana **differed between the two judges' courts**. One respondent said that sanctioning for marijuana in the program "depends on which judge you're in front of. I've had people tell me that Judge [name removed] is more strict on marijuana use." As further discussed in the Recruitment section below, several respondents worried that the different judicial styles for handling marijuana may have influenced program enrollment. One of these respondents explained that public defenders were sometimes hesitant to encourage their clients to join the program if they feared the MENTOR judge was going to be "harsh on people who test positive for marijuana and then can't get out of probation."

Further development or specification of MENTOR's marijuana policy as well as clear and direct communication about the policy to other justice system actors may be worthwhile strategies for future program growth.

Non-Adversarial Model

Some of the challenges with stakeholder agreement on sanction imposition may be related to MENTOR's non-adversarial model. In addition to the program judges and staff, the Steering Committee also includes representatives from the District Attorney's Office, the Defender Association, Adult Probation and Parole, and various community-based organizations. Despite these multiple perspectives, several respondents mentioned that stakeholders generally have the same "**common goal**" of reducing recidivism. One respondent characterized this perspective by stating, "Everyone has the same end goal… ultimate goal of reducing recidivism and providing the support to the people who need it."

However, some respondents expressed that there was disagreement on how to achieve that shared goal. One respondent summarized these disagreements:

> "Even with that one shared goal, we couldn't reach an agreement about the program intervention – what was each of our roles, what was the program? [Some stakeholders] saw an opportunity to act differently within the system. An opportunity for Probation not to act like they always do or the DA's Office to not act like they normally do. So often, the response was 'we can't [do something different], that's protocol.' That was the most infuriating thing, after we've built relationships with these people. Protocol is an out… Can't create an innovative program or something that's trying to change the system if people just fall back on protocol. And that's why I felt we weren't trying to change the system."

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Aside from these disagreements on how to reach the shared goal, at least five respondents expressed that the non-adversarial approach **improved understanding** of other stakeholders' positions. MENTOR created a space for different stakeholders to be "able to listen to each other." One respondent emphasized that the "idea of gathering people from different points of view in the same room is a really nice thing… having that many people around the table, working together" was an advantage. Another stakeholder stressed that, "Any program, any opportunity, that we have to reach across what we think about as these canyons of differences, yes there are huge gaps in our privilege and our resources, [but] just being able to reach across and make those connections [is] a great thing." Oftentimes, this level of understanding was the result of being forced to work together on MENTOR. As one stakeholder put it, MENTOR "encourages attorneys to want to work together for the good of the participants. Normally, if a PD [public defender] says the sky is blue, the DA's [District Attorney's] almost knee jerk reaction is to say it's white."

As evidenced by some of the excerpts below, several respondents also believed that this improved understanding among stakeholders may **change how justice system actors operate outside of MENTOR**.

> "That [improved understanding] has long term effects that we can't measure… how [name removed]'s policies in the probation department have changed by meeting [name removed] or me… we would have never met otherwise [if not for MENTOR]."

"Foster a greater sense of understanding that allows those stakeholders to work together in lots of different ways as well... the connections that are built allow future things to be built on."

"Everybody has an opinion... might even change the opinion of some of the stakeholders."

The improved understanding across different positions in the justice system thus appeared to transcend the boundaries of the program and potentially alter justice system actors' thoughts and behaviors outside of the program.

In addition to improving understanding, at least six respondents identified **advantages for the probationer** due to the program's non-adversarial model. Emphasizing the importance of tapping into others' knowledge, one stakeholder explained that "if you have so many people invested in a person, so many avenues can open up even wider for a person... there are services that one stakeholder may not know about, but others might." Drawing attention to the social support the non-adversarial model provided for participants, a respondent stated that, "when anybody comes to court, it's usually them against the world or them and their PD against the world. This allows everybody to be their cheerleader and they [program participants] like it." Another respondent noted that overcoming some of the traditional barriers between stakeholders has been good for participants: "There was a pretty thick wall dividing the law enforcement part of it and MENTOR, but seems to be that wall's getting thinner and thinner. Can actually see through it right now... in a way it's good because it's giving the person [participant] more opportunity."

Several respondents emphasized that the non-adversarial model increased access to justice system actors who could make decisions to benefit program participants:

> "The relationship piece in the criminal justice world in Philadelphia is the most important thing… [MENTOR means I] have relationships with people who can change things for you, move mountains when asked… I can call someone who does have the power to change stuff. Powerful relationships with people [are] the only way you get stuff done."

> "Having stakeholders in a room being able to look at someone's case closely… having the DAs and the PDs with the judges before status hearings, which often allow things that would be really complicated, to be fixed really easily. People in power can fix those quickly… Ability to have eyes on certain cases and advocate for people."

> "One of the big things I had to do, was [say to myself], 'ok I want this outcome to happen for this particular person. Who in the room do I need to have as an ally to have this happen?' [So I would] call the Director of Probation before the meeting so I could prepare the conversation or talk to someone at The Center [for Carceral Communities (non-profit partner)] so they could be on board with me before the Steering Committee. A lot of things that happen in that backroom have like huge consequences on people's lives."

In other words, the non-adversarial model gave some stakeholders the ability to more effectively advocate on behalf of program participants by engaging directly with key decision makers.

Some stakeholders also identified **disadvantages or limitations** of the program's non-adversarial model. For these respondents, the political nature of the criminal

justice system limited the effectiveness of a non-adversarial model. For example, one respondent explained that there was "not a lot of communication or good alignment amongst partners in general… I do feel like in criminal justice, there's a lot of politics and there's a lot of self-interest. Many times, the good of who you're serving is not put first or what drives policy or conversation."

In contrast, another respondent shared that some stakeholders feared that disagreements in MENTOR may put at risk positive working relationships outside of the program. "A lot of criminal justice in Philadelphia works based on relationships that have been formed for like 20 years… I heard more or less that people are just not willing to jeopardize relationships that have been developing for years…. not for a pilot program." This respondent explained that some stakeholders know that they rely on different partners in other contexts more than in MENTOR. For example, public defenders still need to keep a good relationship with the judges and with the District Attorney's Office for other clients and they were not willing to risk that relationship for this program.

In several contexts, respondents noted the effects of an administration change in the District Attorney's Office. In the middle of this evaluation, Philadelphia elected a very progressive DA, Larry Krasner. The excerpt below indicates that the functioning of the non-adversarial model improved after Krasner's election.

> "Pre-Krasner, MENTOR stakeholder meetings were insane. The DA's office wanted nothing to do with any changes. Every time we met, it was a problem of arguing back and forth.

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> Constantly tense and horrible. Then, I would have said it's basically all negative. Post-Krasner, [DA's Office stakeholder] has been largely amazing…"

Despite these limitations, the non-adversarial model was largely perceived to be a strength of the program that improved understanding among stakeholders and created tangible benefits for program participants.

Participant Recruitment

Nearly all respondents identified participant recruitment as a major challenge for the program. Stakeholders provided many different explanations for why MENTOR struggled to enroll new participants. One of the most commonly cited explanations was that **stakeholders failed to "sell" or "advertise" the program** sufficiently. At least five respondents identified this as a key recruitment issue. Some believed MENTOR staff and the judges needed to do a better job of communicating what the program offered. One respondent noted that both the Program Director and the Coordinator should be responsible for "getting the word out and sharing literature about the program." Another respondent shared that, "some of it is the fault of our staff and [judges] – not being as forceful and proactive in seeking people out." Others expressed disappointment with public defenders not helping with recruitment more vigorously:

> "It's the defenders who should have the most motivation to get people to join. Some think it's not worth the trouble to get them to join, they think it's a lot of work and time to put in, but most people who go through the program think it's well worth

the time. I wish they [defenders] would work harder because I would think they would have brought us 100 people a month… Worried that the message isn't being conveyed."

The limited recruitment from public defenders relates to another commonly cited explanation for recruitment challenges: the **program's reputation**. At least seven different respondents cited this as an issue for recruitment. Several respondents particularly noted the program's reputation among public defenders:

> "A lot of PDs [public defenders] did not want to refer their participants to the MENTOR program… rumor has it around the CJC [Criminal Justice Center – Philadelphia's courthouse] that it's because of […] being harsh on people who test positive for marijuana and then can't get out of probation."

> "I would have loved to been privy to the conversations between defendants and their public defenders… concerns about moving someone from their sentencing judge to a new judge. Some people just didn't care that much."

Other respondents noted that the reputation challenges were related to perceptions of program legitimacy. One person explained that the program "didn't have any kind of program materials that could prove this was a valid program… needs to be more validated. People need to understand that it's a real program, there's a program and staff. Needs to be more official." Someone else asserted that "MENTOR's a weird court run program… people didn't understand what the benefits were, except for the reduction in probation."

Some respondents emphasized that the program's reputation with eligible participants was problematic. As explained by one stakeholder, "people in situations

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of crisis cannot think two years ahead, but that's what the program is asking you to do. People often have really concrete needs, they need jobs, they need housing, things the program can't get them." In contrast, another stakeholder believed that the program could meet these types of needs, but eligible participants were wary of that. "High-risk probationers see it as too much services. Until they get in it, they don't realize it's how much of a help to them… but once they get in, it's good." Stakeholders did not necessarily indicate that these issues related to the program's reputation were accurate representations of the program, but nonetheless emphasized that others' perceptions of the program (accurate or not) negatively influenced recruitment.

Recruitment was also limited by **one of the MENTOR judges being moved out of criminal court to civil court** near the start of the program. As respondents explained, this meant that this judge was unable to directly recruit participants from his/her own cases. One respondent said the program suffered from this because it was his/her "experience as a really concerned judge and person" that initially drove the program. Another stakeholder declared that when the judge "got moved to another court, and he wasn't able to help with enrollment, the program wasn't really worth the juice for the squeeze."

An additional issue with recruitment that at least six respondents mentioned was the program's **eligibility requirements**. As one respondent summarized, "the program criteria for participants are pretty restrictive." Another explained that "We're taking

non-violent felony convictions, which [mostly] limited it to people selling drugs… We were very specific – we didn't want someone with serious substance abuse histories or mental illness because we weren't equipped to serve them, but that was very limiting. Also had a narrow age range."

A few respondents expressed support for considering participants with weapons offenses as eligible participants. Two respondents noted that working with the YVRP population[8] could have expanded recruitment. Most strongly, one respondent disagreed with the violent offense exclusion:

> "I'm an opponent of the screening people to make sure they aren't dangerous… It just kind of becomes corner boy court. Why would they think that someone who has back to back low level cases is going to be more successful than someone who had one gun case? What is it that you're screening out actually? Younger people with habitual drug use? I just don't get why you think MENTOR is an appropriate level of care [for someone with a drug case] compared to someone with a gun case or an aggravated assault? The violent / nonviolent binary – I hate that they adhere to that. It doesn't make a lot of sense. You think this is representative of the person, it's not."

At least four respondents cited **competition with other specialty courts, diversion programs, or the rapidly shortening sentences of regular probation supervision** under District Attorney Krasner's administration as a source of recruitment challenges. One

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[8] The Youth Violence Reduction Partnership is a Philadelphia program that targets young people at the greatest risk of killing or being killed. More information can be found here; https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/spt/Programs/126.

respondent explained that this is a "time in Philadelphia criminal justice history where there are so many programs available to people." Other respondents noted that many of the other programs may be more appealing to people because they are pre-conviction, less time-consuming in terms of meetings with mentors and status, and may terminate probation entirely upon program completion. Even for people not interested in other programs, MENTOR's offer to reduce the length of a probation sentence by half was believed to be less appealing when probation sentences are increasingly shorter across the board. "Ironically with the new DA being very progressive, and wanting to shorten jail sentences and probation – I'm not judging whether that's good or bad – but that hasn't helped with our recruitment because a lot of the sentences are now so low."

In sum, stakeholders believed that recruitment was limited by a number of different, yet often related, issues, including stakeholders' failure to sell the program, the program's reputation, one of the MENTOR judge's transfer from criminal to civil court, narrow eligibility requirements, and competition with other city programs or initiatives.

Organizational Structure and Program Administration

All stakeholders offered comments related to MENTOR's organizational structure or how staff administer the program. At least five respondents pointed to the **frequent staff turnover** in the Program Director and Coordinator positions as challenges for the program. As respondents noted, there have been three different people in each of

the Program Director and Program Coordinator roles in approximately three years.

One respondent remarked that this "inconsistency is not surprising, it's how social

services are." But considering the small size of the program, the high turnover "raises

eyebrows way more [because there should be] more of a sense of commitment and

community when it's that small." Several respondents blamed the low pay and high

stress of these positions for the high turnover. One person explained that it "has to do

probably with what coordinators and directors are required to do in order to make the

program successful. A lot is on their shoulders. It's a lot to put on their shoulders."

Some respondents maintained that the **workload** is too high for the Coordinator

and Director positions to do alone. The lack of "people power" in these roles was

believed to have negative implications for participants. As one respondent explained,

a program weakness was "not having adequate staff to make sure the guys

[participants] are getting everything they need. [Participants need] someone who is

responsive to their needs when their mentor isn't."

As summarized by one respondent, most of the stakeholders who mentioned

staff workload issues also praised the staff who have filled these positions. "MENTOR

has also been pretty lucky in regards to staff and coordinators. Like any program, the

people who are in the program and running it make the difference between success

and not really hitting the goals... People who really put their all into it."

As a separate organizational structure issue, at least six respondents discussed

leadership issues as program challenges. Several respondents placed particular

emphasis on the case management problems created by judicial involvement in

social work functions. The comments below detail these viewpoints:

"Judges are not social workers and they should stop trying to be social workers… they're making people share a lot of information that's actually not great to be shared in public… people have shared things that have put mandated reporters in the room in awkward positions and the judges may not be aware of that."

"Judges, because it's their program, they're maybe holding on to it super close… that could be a problem in terms of sustainability. Maybe need someone who's less biased, if you will, driving it… someone who represents the social service side. Look genuinely holistically at the people you're trying to reach."

"When illegal activities come up, and I know it [as a social worker or case manager], that's fine... but it scares me a lot to have people inside of that building knowing that kind of stuff… problematic no matter what. I don't think Judge [name removed] understands or respects what social workers can or can't say."

"[A disadvantage is] judges being supervisors of case managers or social workers…. In a number of cases, it's been pretty challenging to keep confidentiality within the program… judges not used to that… conflict of interest… judges are lawyers who understand the law and not social workers… those are conflicting points of views."

"Biggest challenge is that it's under the supervision of judges… the big, big problem of the program… the lack of collective decision making in the steering committee… at the end of the day, it's the judges who make the decision… creates some fake sense of collective and I don't think people who are involved in the system can also make decisions that are

trauma-informed and not the same decisions they would make regularly on the bench."

"I think the judges are great and they know and understand the law really well, but probably are less tuned in with the subtleties' with these guys reestablishing themselves with the community, finding a job, dealing with the trauma…. Staying out of prison, transferring that trauma onto others"

At least two other respondents linked staff turnover problems to conflicts with judicial leadership. These respondents indicated that program staff did not feel well supported by the judge and were discouraged from forcefully advocating for participants with other stakeholders.

For future program development, it may be valuable for program stakeholders to address staff turnover and workload challenges as well as come to an agreement on the appropriate role of judicial leadership in case management issues.

Focusing on Participants' Humanity

One of the most commonly cited strengths of the program overall was that the program **changed the lives** of participants beyond just future criminal justice system involvement. As highlighted by the selected excerpts below, at least nine different stakeholders emphasized the focus on participants' humanity as a key program advantage.

"I really believe that the most important part is seeing people involved in the criminal justice system as people… as a whole person instead of what people did or are going to do."

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"[It's] not just about committing crime, but so they feel better about their futures. At the end of the day, we all want to feel happy, and we feel that way when we feel optimistic about our futures."

"Caring, compassion… going the distance with each person… giving them plenty of opportunities to become more productive in their lives and in their family lives."

"For many people, it's the first time they've had anyone care about them."

"Some things are not quantifiable… program has made amazing relationships with people… their lives have changed and there are those success stories."

"Judges able to see participants as humans rather than cases has been a big, big positive of the program."

"[The program] sees them more than what they used to be."

These passages confirm that stakeholders strongly agree that MENTOR has been successful in changing participants' lives and changing how justice system actors relate to individuals involved in the justice system.

Program Effects on Recidivism and Employment

In addition to the process-level measures provided above, the project also included an outcome evaluation that assessed the effects of the program on three key outcomes of interest: new arrests and probation revocations during the 12-month study period as well as employment status at the end of the 12-month study period.

Prior to examining the relationship between program participation and these outcomes, it is important to confirm that the quasi-experimental design with the selection of a matched comparison group yielded an appropriate comparison group. Table VIII. compares the MENTOR group to the comparison group on key variables of interest to assess the similarity of groups. Considering that groups were matched on key variables such as age, gender, and risk level, it is no surprise that there were no statistically significant differences between groups on these variables. MENTOR had slightly more non-white participants than the comparison group, but this difference did not reach statistical significance. However, the MENTOR group had a significantly lower mean number of prior arrests than the comparison group ($t_{(150)}$=3.32, p<.05) and a significantly lower mean number of different types of supervision conditions than the comparison group ($t_{(150)}$=9.92, p<.05).

Table VIII. Assessment of Comparison Group Matching

	MENTOR	Comparison
Age [mean (SD)]	24.95 (2.97)	24.77 (3.31)
Male	89.5%	89.5%
High risk level	28.9%	28.9%
Non-white	89.5%	82.5%
# of prior arrests ** [mean (SD)]	4.45 (2.13)	7.35 (5.24)
# of supervision conditions ** [mean (SD)]	1.26 (2.98)	6.54 (2.79)

* p < .10, ** p < .05

While APPD's designated risk level is likely the best predictor of future offending risk, it is possible that differences in arrest history and supervision conditions may represent influential differences between the MENTOR and comparison groups and subsequently bias bivariate analyses. Multivariate analyses, however, which control for the number of supervision conditions, largely eliminate these concerns.

Bivariate analyses

This section includes the results of the bivariate analyses, which entail straightforward comparisons of the percentage of MENTOR participants to the percentage of comparison group individuals who experienced each of the outcomes of interest.

First examining the new arrests outcome, 15.8 percent of MENTOR participants and 29.8 percent of the comparison group experienced at least one new arrest during the 12-month study period. A chi-square test of independence indicates that this is a marginally statistically significant difference ($x^2_{(1)}$ = 2.895, p < .10). Table IX. details differences in new arrests between groups for different offense types. While the comparison group had a higher number of new violent, drug, and public order arrests, chi-square tests of independence show that none of these differences are statistically significant.

Turning to probation revocations, analyses revealed that only 10.5 percent of MENTOR participants had their probation supervision revoked during the 12-month

study period compared to 31.6 percent of the comparison group. A chi-square test of independence confirms that there is a statistically significant difference between groups on probation revocations ($x^2_{(1)}$ = 6.514, p < .05).

Table IX. New Arrests

Arrest Type	MENTOR (N = 38)	Comparison (N=114)
Violent	0.0%	0.9%
Drug	13.2%	23.7%
Property	2.6%	1.8%
Public order	0.0%	3.5%
No new arrest*	84.2%	70.2%

* p < .10, ** p < .05

Lastly, the effects of program participation on employment status at the end of the 12-month follow-up period were examined. An impressive 63.2 percent of MENTOR participants had some form of employment at the end of the 12-month study period, compared to 52.6 percent of the comparison group. Again, this is a substantive difference between groups, but a chi-square test of independence concludes that this is not a statistically significant difference ($x^2_{(1)}$ = 1.277, p > .10).

Multivariate analyses

   This section features the results of the multivariate analyses, which isolate the

independent effects of MENTOR program participation on each outcome of interest,

after controlling for other known predictors of those outcomes. Control variables

included gender (0= male, 1=female), probation-designated risk level (0=moderate,

1=high), race/ethnicity (0=non-Hispanic white, 1=non-white [Black or Hispanic/Latino]),

and the number of different types of supervision conditions to which individuals were

subjected.[9]

   First examining the multivariate logistic regression models predicting the

likelihood of new arrest, the results indicate that after controlling for the other known

predictors of new arrest, MENTOR participation was not significantly associated with

new arrests. As displayed in Table X., none of the control variables in the model

significantly predicted new arrests either.

   The regression models for probation revocations during the 12-month study

period and employment status at the end of the 12-month study period show similar

findings. MENTOR participation did not significantly predict either of these outcomes

after controlling for the other variables in the model. The only significant control

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[9] The original evaluation plan included age and prior number of arrests as additional control variables. Preliminary diagnostics indicated that both of these variables were highly correlated with one another and with the risk level variable. To avoid multicollinearity, age and prior arrests were not included in the regression analyses.

variable was gender in the model predicting employment status. This coefficient

indicates that the effect of being female was to reduce the likelihood of being

employed by 78 percent after controlling for the other variables in the model.

Table X. Multivariate Logistic Regression Results

	New Arrests Exp(B)	Probation Revocations Exp(B)	Employment Status Exp(B)
MENTOR participation (1=MENTOR)	0.60	0.37	1.78
Gender (1=female)	1.68	0.96	0.22**
Risk level (1=high risk)	0.90	1.41	0.76
Race (1=non-white)	0.69	0.65	1.16
# of supervision conditions	1.05	1.05	1.03
Model x^2	5.82	9.70*	8.98
Nagelkerke R^2	0.06	0.09	0.08

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$

In sum, the bivariate analyses confirm that MENTOR participation was

associated with a significant decline in probation revocations and a marginally

significant decline in new arrests. While the percentages for employment status

suggest that MENTOR may have positively influenced these outcomes, these effects

did not reach statistical significance with a sample of this size. Multivariate analyses

failed to detect any significant effects of MENTOR participation on the three outcomes

of interest.

Conclusion

Based on the evaluation findings, there are several reasons MENTOR should be considered a promising intervention. First, participant perceptions of the program are overwhelmingly positive. In light of the literature on procedural justice, positive perceptions of justice-system involved individuals should be viewed as a valuable program outcome. Second, several measures of program dosage indicate that participants receive a high quantity and quality of intervention from the program. Third, stakeholders identified a number of program strengths, including some examples of beneficial mentoring relationships, access to services via case management, the accountability and social support provided during status hearings, the benefits of a non-adversarial model for improving understanding among stakeholders and changing justice system actors' traditional behaviors, and a genuine focus on participants' humanity. Fourth, these beneficial results were achieved without an increase in new arrests or probation revocations. In fact, results suggest that MENTOR reduces the likelihood of new arrests. Analyses indicate that MENTOR is associated with a significant reduction in probation revocations.

As the program continues to evolve, there are several areas for improving future program implementation, as identified by stakeholders. These include the mentor matching process; mentor training; ongoing social service needs; the program's organizational structure; stakeholder disagreement about sanctions, particularly for

marijuana use; and recruitment issues, including stakeholders advertising the program, the program's reputation, the transfer of one of the judges to civil court, narrow eligibility requirements, and managing competition with other court programs or short probation sentences under the Krasner administration.

Despite these challenges, MENTOR appears to have generated a number of beneficial outcomes for their participants. Addressing the areas for improvement identified above will likely enhance their future successes.