

Introduction

Research indicates that “mentoring programs can be effective tools for enhancing the positive development of youth.”¹ It is important, however, to note that youth mentoring programs vary greatly in terms of program structure, program type, target population, and primary goals. Despite the promise of mentoring, additional research is needed to learn about the “nature and influence of mentor relationships”² across the variety of youth mentorship programs and to determine key factors that may contribute to positive youth outcomes.

Liberty Mutual, in collaboration with the Mass Mentoring Partnership, hired the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (*hereafter referred to as the Institute*) to conduct a study of Massachusetts-based youth mentoring programs. Research findings will assist Liberty Mutual and Mass Mentoring Partnership in expanding both the capacity and quality of youth mentorship programs.

The first report, *Characteristics of Youth Mentoring Programs in Massachusetts*, was released in October 2004 and provided information on the characteristics of youth mentoring programs throughout the state of Massachusetts.³ The second phase of this research (*report to be released December 2005*) will examine the diverse characteristics of youth mentoring programs and document those program characteristics that contribute to achieving successful outcomes for youth participants. Staff at each of the youth mentoring programs were asked to administer surveys to both their mentees and their mentors in order to learn about the background of participants as well as impacts of program participation. The research will provide information about the ways in which youth benefit from different types of mentoring programs. It is our hope that this research will assist in expanding the capacity and funding for mentoring programs across the state.

In order to encourage youth mentoring programs to participate in the survey administration phase, Institute staff offered to provide program results back to each of the individual youth mentoring programs. This report provides program-specific findings about the impacts of the Big Sister Association, Life Choices program. This report is being provided solely to Life Choices staff. Decisions to share or disseminate this report are left solely to the Life Choices program.

The report is organized into the following sections:

- **Methodology** – Provides a narrative description of the report, including a description of the development of the questionnaires, target populations, survey distribution, response rates and analyses of the survey.
- **Youth Survey Results** – Describes the youth involved and the self-reported impacts of participation the in the Life Choices program.
- **Mentor Survey Results** – Describes the adults involved and the self-reported impacts of participation the in the Life Choices program. In addition, this section provides mentors’ feedback on program impacts on their mentees.

¹ Jekielak, S.M. et al. February 2002. “Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development” Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

² Rhodes, J. E. et al. April 2002. “Youth Mentoring in Perspective: Introduction to the Special Issue”. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol 30, No 2.

³ To view the full report, go to <http://www.mentoring.org/mass/>.

