



Youth Mentoring: An Overview of Programs and Initiatives in Ottawa

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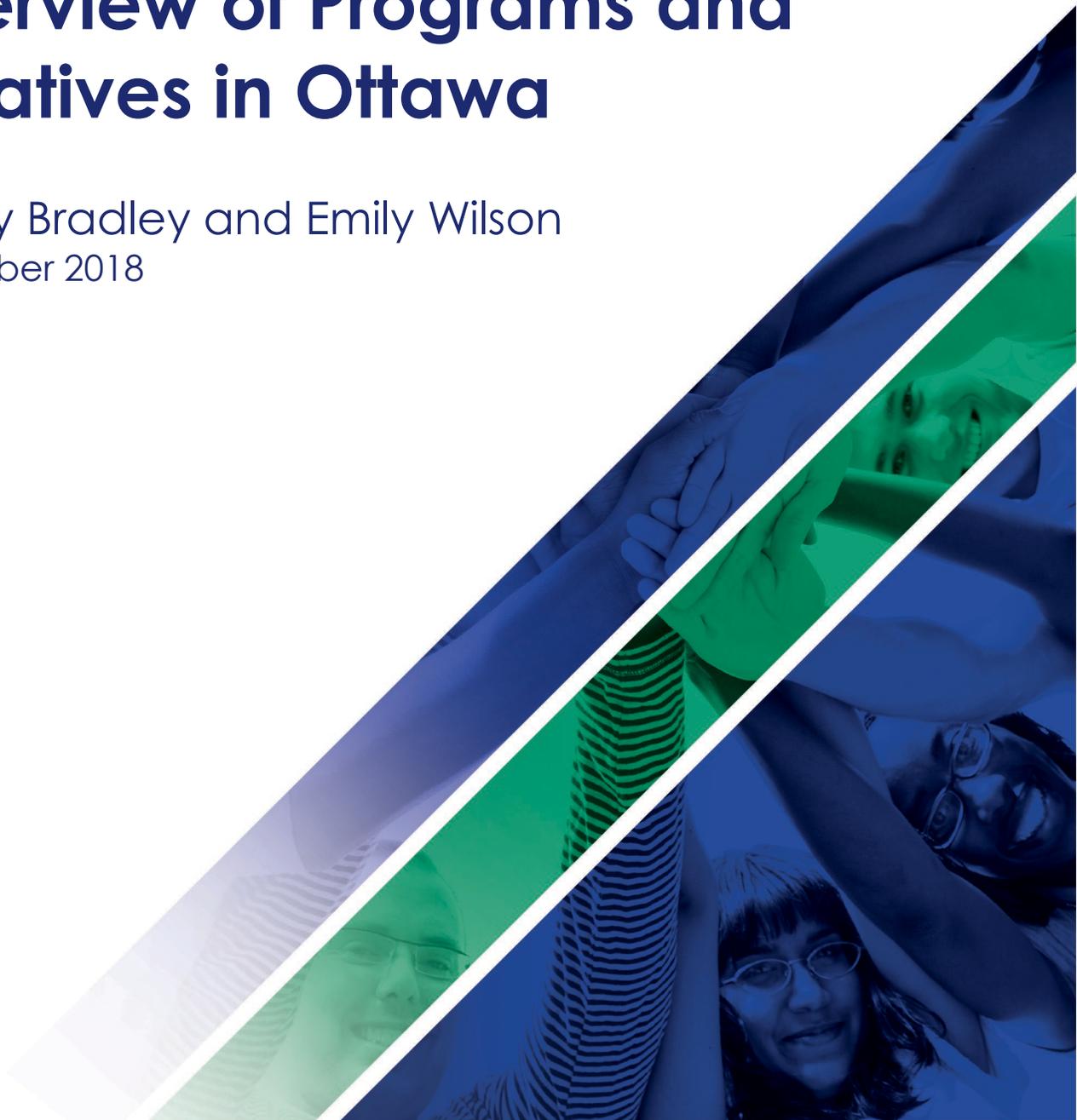


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Executive Summary

Youth mentoring is an important strategy that can help reduce street-level violence and gang activity. One of the recommendations of the Ottawa Street Violence and Gang Strategy (OSVGS) is that we increase access to mentors who youth can identify with and who are culturally and racially diverse. Many community organizations and service providers in Ottawa offer some sort of mentoring to youth. This paper explains the different types of mentoring, provides an overview of the different organizations that offer mentorship in Ottawa, and offers recommendations for supporting youth mentoring programming in Ottawa.

Types of mentoring programs in Ottawa

Traditionally, mentoring has been framed as one-to-one, youth-adult relationships; however, in practice, there are many other forms. Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, and often target specific groups of youth. The different types of mentoring are group, team, peer or cross-age, E-mentoring, site-based, and mixed mentoring. Group mentoring is one adult to a small number of youth while team mentoring is several adults to a small number of youth. Peer or cross-age mentoring is when youth of similar age mentor other youth. E-mentoring is mentoring over the internet via e-mail or online messaging. Site-based mentoring is when the youth and mentor meet in a specific place like school or work. Lastly, mixed mentoring happens when there is a transition between group mentoring and one-to one mentoring. A common factor between all types of youth mentoring is that it involves a caring individual who provides consistent companionship, support, and guidance aimed at developing the competence, character and confidence of youth.

Recommendations

These recommendations outline how to build on and improve existing youth mentoring programs and services in four broad areas: networking opportunities, funding, partnerships, and research and evaluations support. Creating a network would help organizations share what is working and what is not working based on their own experiences. More funds would support the ongoing processes of mentorship like recruiting additional mentors and facilitating training. Partnering with other organizations that run mentoring programs would allow for pooling of financial and human resources to recruit, screen, and train mentors collectively. Lastly, researching the life path of individuals over time would better demonstrate how mentoring prevents crime and provides better outcomes for youth.

Introduction

Youth mentoring is a key **prevention** strategy that can help address a growing concern about street-level violence and gang activity in Ottawa. It can positively engage young people in their schools and communities before they become involved in gang-related activities and violence. Youth mentoring is also viewed as an important **intervention** strategy to support young people who are beginning to get involved in street-level violence and gang activity and the criminal justice system.

The 2017-2020 [Ottawa Street Violence and Gang Strategy \(OSVGS\)](#)¹ identifies the need for youth mentoring in *Recommendation 3.2*:

*Increase access to mentors and positive role models for youth living in neighbourhoods affected by violence. Ensure mentors are those that youth can relate to, including male mentors and mentors who are culturally and racially diverse with varying lived experiences.*²

This, along with all of the recommendations in the document, is based on broad community consultations that were conducted in mid-2017.

In mid-2018, [Crime Prevention Ottawa \(CPO\)](#) decided to follow up on *Recommendation 3.2* by investing in research to identify and document the different youth mentoring initiatives that are currently being offered by community-based organizations and service providers across the city, to provide an overview and to celebrate the diverse approaches to mentoring that are underway.

This report provides a brief note on the methodology used to gather and analyze information from ten community-based organizations in Ottawa; a short explanation of different approaches to youth mentoring; a summary of the research findings and a description of the work that each of the organizations is currently undertaking; and a set of recommendations for how to build on and improve existing youth mentoring programs and services moving forward.

¹ The [Ottawa Street Violence and Gang Strategy \(OSVGS\)](#) is based on a holistic approach, which takes into consideration different factors that contribute to gang involvement and street-level violence at the individual, family, peer, school, neighbourhood, and social levels. This holistic approach is based on four pillars: Neighbourhood Cohesion; Prevention; Intervention; Enforcement & Suppression. The recommendations in the OSVGS are framed around these four pillars.

² See the 2017-2020 [Ottawa Street Violence and Gang Strategy \(OSVGS\)](#), page 9.

Methodology

To carry out this research, CPO engaged an external researcher. The first step was to consult the CPO mentoring working group and identify youth mentoring programming in Ottawa by doing a web-based review.³ Based on this review, a list of organizations that offer some type of youth mentoring or role modelling program or initiative was drafted, and each one was contacted by CPO to see if they were interested in participating in a short interview with the researcher. Out of an initial list of 22 organizations, 11 responded to say that they were interested, and the others either did not respond or indicated that they did not have any mentoring initiatives currently underway. Most interviews were then carried out between May and June 2018 either by phone or email; a few interviews were done in September and early October. The notes from the interviews, as well information provided on organizational websites, were used to write the case studies in this report. The recommendations are based directly on the interviews.

Youth Mentoring: A Diversity of Approaches

Defining youth mentoring and what it entails is complicated, because there are so many ways that it is done, and so many factors that play into how mentor-mentee relationships are established and developed. Traditionally, mentoring has been framed as one-to-one, youth-adult relationships; however, in practice, there are many other forms.

Some of the alternative approaches to mentoring are outlined in a [literature review](#) of best practices for youth mentoring published by [Crime Prevention Ottawa \(CPO\)](#) in 2014. These include:

- **Group mentoring** (ex. one adult to a small number of youth);
- **Team mentoring** (ex. several adults to a small number of youth);
- **Peer or cross-age mentoring** (ex. youth of a similar age mentoring other youth);
- **E-mentoring** (ex. mentoring over the internet via e-mail and online messaging);
- **Site-based mentoring** (ex. youth and mentor interactions are limited to a particular setting, such as school, workplace, community setting, etc.);
- **Mixed mentoring** (ex. mentoring that transitions from a group to one-to-one mentoring).⁴

³ For the purposes of this review, youth are defined as young people up to the age of 29. While the age for service cut-off is usually 18, studies and practice show that young people are transitioning into adulthood much later and many community programs are thus extending the age range for their services to 29.

⁴ Butera, Johny-Angel. July 2014. [Effective Youth Mentoring: Best Practices](#). Ottawa, Canada: Crime Prevention Ottawa, pp. 6-7.

In addition, mentoring relationships can be **formal** (ex. mentor and youth are matched by a third party) or **informal** (ex. mentor/youth relationship evolves on its own without outside intervention) and often **target specific groups of youth** (ex. youth in foster care, academically at risk students, youth involved in the criminal justice system, youth who have learning disabilities, etc.)⁵ Also, mentoring can be a by-product or secondary outcome of programs or services that are not specifically focused on mentorship.

Despite these variables, what seems to be a common factor is that youth mentoring involves a caring individual who provides consistent companionship, support, and guidance aimed at developing the competence, character and confidence of a young person (or group of young people).⁶

An Overview of Youth Mentoring Programs and Initiatives in Ottawa

The research carried out for this study involved speaking with ten community-based organizations in Ottawa that offer some form of youth mentoring. These initiatives reflect much of the diversity outlined in the previous section: some focus on providing one-to-one support, while others offer group mentoring; some are based on the adult-youth model, and others use more of a peer support approach; some are offered in community spaces, whereas many are offered in schools. A few of these initiatives have been offered for some time, while others received funding in the spring of 2018 through Ontario's *Black Youth Action Plan*, now known as *Services for Black Children, Youth and Families*.⁷ What is common to all the initiatives is that they are youth-led, in that their programming or services are flexible enough to accommodate the specific needs and interests of the young people they target, to maximize the potential growth and development of mentees.

A summary of ten youth mentoring initiatives that are currently underway in Ottawa is provided in the table below, which is loosely organized by the most common distinctive elements amongst the various mentoring programs and services (ex. one-to-one/group and community-based/school-based). This is followed by a more detailed description of each of the mentoring initiatives (in alphabetical order).

⁵ Ibid, page 3.

⁶ Adapted from the definition of youth mentoring included in the 2014 literature review that is cited above (see page 3), based on the interviews carried out with ten Ottawa-based community organizations and service providers who offer some form of youth mentoring.

⁷ The *Black Youth Action Plan* was announced in February 2017 and is in alignment with Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan which is focused on eliminating systemic, race-based disparities for Black children and youth. It was renamed the *Services for Black Children, Youth and Families* in mid-2018.

A Summary of Youth Mentoring Programs and Initiatives in Ottawa

| | One-to-One in Community | One-to-One in Schools | Group in Community | Group in Schools | Mentoring as a By-Product | Other Distinctive Aspects |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ottawa (BBBSO) | x | x | | x | | <p>Mostly one-to-one mentoring to support vulnerable and marginalized young people from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Big Brothers; Big Sisters; MPower)</p> <p>Some peer (Meet you in School; Conversation Clubs) and group (Game On!; Go Girls!) mentoring initiatives in priority schools across Ottawa, mostly in the Central and Southern parts of the city</p> |
| Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGCO) | | x | | x | | <p>One-to-one mentoring for at-risk youth in grades 8-12 (Raising the Grade)</p> <p>Group mentoring as part of a Leadership program for grades 9-12 (Leaders4Life)</p> <p>Offered in select schools in Ottawa's high-risk, low-income and vulnerable neighbourhoods</p> |
| John Howard Society of Ottawa (JHSO) | x | | x | | | <p>One-to-one and group mentoring; part of employment programs for youth who are justice involved and/or with mental health and addictions</p> <p>One-to-one mentoring for youth and adults involved in street-level violence associated with guns, gangs and drugs (Time4Change, in partnership with Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO))</p> |
| Jaku Konbit | x | | x | | | <p>One-to-one and group mentoring as part of youth outreach in the Afro-Caribbean community</p> <p>New mentoring program launched in mid-2018 (Together We Can)</p> |
| Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) | x | | x | x | | <p>Group Mentoring in schools and in the YOCISO Newcomer Youth Centre of immigrant and refugee youth through employment and orientation workshops, leadership sessions, homework club and tutoring, health and fitness programs, civic engagement programs, recreational and sports programs, and drama and dance.</p> |

Continued on next page

| | One-to-One in Community | One-to-One in Schools | Group in Community | Group in Schools | Mentoring as a By-Product | Other Distinctive Aspects |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) (continued) | x | | x | x | | One-to-one mentoring for youth and adults involved in street-level violence associated with guns, gangs and drugs (Time4Change, in partnership with John Howard Society of Ottawa (JHSO)) |
| Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) | | | x | x | | Group mentoring for young people in grades 9-12 living in low-income communities in Ottawa's West end (Pathways) Group mentoring as part of a new program targeting black youth aged 12-18 living in low-income or social housing in West-end Ottawa (Together We Can) |
| Regroupement Ethnoculturel des Parents Francophones de l'Ontario (REPFO) | | x | x | x | | Mentoring of Francophone immigrants One-to-one mentoring in schools with at-risk youth in grades 9-12 (Quantum) Group mentoring in the community and in schools (Together we Succeed / Ensemble pour la Réussite in partnership with Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) and the South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC) ; Homework Club) |
| Somali Centre for Family Services (SCFS) | | | | x | x | Mentoring as part of broader recreational and educational programs targeting Somali and immigrant children and youth living in Ottawa Group mentoring for immigrant youth enrolled in post-secondary institutions; focus on employment (Networking for Youth (N4Y), in partnership with Jewish Family Services Ottawa (JFSO)) |
| South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC) | | | | | x | Informal mentoring as part of child and youth services offered to lower income, marginalized neighbourhoods in South-East Ottawa; older youth act as role models for younger kids (Youth Zone; Girls on the Move; Homework Club; Youth Drop-In; Youth Futures) |

| | One-to-One in Community | One-to-One in Schools | Group in Community | Group in Schools | Mentoring as a By-Product | Other Distinctive Aspects |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Youturn | | | | | x | Role modelling and mentoring offered to high-risk youth as part of one-to-one counselling services. |
| Youth Ottawa | | x | | x | | Mentoring as one aspect of programs offered in schools across the city; youth supported by adult mentors and facilitators (DILA; YAM; OYEC; Cuts for Kids) |

1. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ottawa (BBBSO)

[Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ottawa \(BBBSO\)](#) offers a variety of [mentoring programs](#) to children and youth, which is the core of their work. Their model is mostly focused on one-to-one mentoring and is offered both in the community and in schools. BBBSO aims to ensure that every child that needs a mentor has one. They work with vulnerable and marginalized young people from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

BBBSO defines mentoring as a relationship between two people that is consistent and prosocial. They offer young people an adult or peer role model to help them build confidence and self-esteem, and to support them to develop positive relationships and make decisions that are good for their well-being.

BBBSO serves between 850 and 1200 youth in the Ottawa area; the number varies based on the availability of mentors in any given year. They currently have in the range of 300-400 mentors. Through their programs, BBBSO engages a diversity of youth, who mostly come from single parent homes, foster care, newcomer families, refugee families, and/or are members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

The foundation of BBBSO's community-based programming is the [Big Brothers](#) (Men-to-Boy) and [Big Sisters](#) (Women-to-Girl) mentoring model, which involves regularly scheduled outings once a week for 2 to 4 hours, with a minimum one year commitment from mentors. In this evidence-based model, parents and/or guardians are also involved in the mentor-mentee relationship. BBBSO matches up children and youth with an adult mentor and there is open communication and regular check-ins between all parties. Professional case workers also provide oversight of the mentoring relationships, to ensure that mentors, mentees and their families receive adequate support and resources, based on best practices.

BBBSO is also implementing a new community-based initiative called the [MPower](#) program, which targets 15-24 year olds who are high risk (ex. foster kids, or those coming out of foster care). The program is youth-led in that youth get to choose their mentor, either by identifying someone who is already in their life (ex. a teacher, an older friend, etc.) or by being given a few options by BBBSO, and then choosing the person they want to have as their mentor. The youth meet with their mentor for a minimum of 10 hours per month over a 1-2-year period; this can be through email, phone calls or meeting up face-to-face. There is a lot of flexibility in the program, so that youth can build a relationship with their mentor in a way that works best for them.

Another new community-based mentoring program underway in Ottawa involves linking up 16-24-year-old Inuit youth with Inuit mentors. BBBSO has also launched a recent pilot program to offer mentoring services to autistic youth.

BBBSO's [school-based](#) mentoring programs are offered to children and youth in priority schools across Ottawa, mostly in the Central and Southern parts of the city. The relationship is between the mentor and the mentee; family members are not involved. This allows BBBSO to access young people who are at higher risk and/or whose parents are not able to participate. Youth spend about an hour with their mentor each week throughout the school year; the mentor can be an adult or a peer.

For example, the [Meet you in School](#) mentoring program links up senior high school and college students with elementary school children between the ages of 7 and 11.

BBBSO also organizes [Conversation Clubs](#) in some schools, targeting newcomers between the ages of 12 to 18, who meet up with their mentors – volunteers aged 16 to 24 – on a weekly basis. This allows the youth to make friends, build connections, and practice their language skills. The program is informal and promotes cross-cultural understanding and respect.

While the BBBSO mentoring programs are mostly built around the one-to-one model, they do offer some group mentoring initiatives in schools. For instance, the [Game On!](#) program targets adolescent boys and is focused on healthy lifestyles; and the [Go Girls!](#) program targets girls between the ages of 12 and 14, and aims to support them in developing self-esteem and a positive self-image. These programs run in 7-week cycles.

2. Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGCO)

The [Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa \(BGCO\)](#) mission is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationship and develop confidence and skills for life. The BGCO has two formal mentoring programs, both of which are offered in schools across Ottawa. Through these programs, they reach approximately 70 young people per year; mostly marginalized youth living in Ottawa's high-risk, low-income and vulnerable neighbourhoods.

For the BGCO, mentoring is a form of direct support to youth, to help them to develop more fully as people and to achieve their life goals. Many of the youth targeted through their programs come from newcomer and/or single parent families, and parents often do not have the time to invest in providing active mentoring to their children. That is why having mentors is so important in terms of helping young people to acquire social skills and to achieve their educational goals.

[Raise the Grade](#) is a national Boys and Girls Club of Canada program that was developed based on extensive research, and is being implemented for at-risk youth from a select group of Boys and Girls Clubs across the country. It is a one-to-one mentoring program where the youth and their mentor meet weekly for at least an hour after school. The focus is on activities such as career planning, preparation for post-secondary education, resume writing, and practicing interview skills. Youth who are involved in the BGCO program are typically in grades 8 to 12.

[Leaders 4 Life](#) is a four-year program for youth in grades 9 to 12 where the youth meet once a week from October to May. The focus is on developing leadership skills in a group and one-to-one setting. This program has developed organically based on the needs expressed by the youth themselves. Leadership trainings from different sources have been adapted and best practices have been adopted and integrated into the program design.

The BGCO also convenes a Leadership Round Table, which brings together non-profit organizations that run leadership programs from across Ottawa to share best practices.

3. John Howard Society of Ottawa (JHSO)

The [John Howard Society of Ottawa \(JHSO\)](#) offers both one-to-one and group mentoring to youth (up to the age of 29) and adults as an integral part of their [Pre-Employment and Training Program](#) and their [Employment Services](#). These programs aim to support people who are justice involved, and/or those with mental health and addictions, to access initial or better employment. Mentoring is also a key component of their [Time For Change \(T4C\)](#) program, which is dedicated to youth, adults and their families who are impacted by street-level violence associated with guns, gangs and drugs, and is being implemented in partnership with the [Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization \(OCISO\)](#).

The JHSO had funding in 2016-2017 to run a specific **employment-focused mentoring initiative** for youth, although during implementation it was extended to serve adults as well. Through this initiative, they had about 40 mentees and 20-25 mentors. The mentees would come and go (ex. some would stay engaged for a few weeks or a few months and others for the full year); and some mentors worked with 2-3 different clients at a time. Although the funding for this mentoring program ended in December 2017, the JHSO has continued to offer mentoring support to clients through their ongoing employment programs. The mentors who offer employment support are identified through the professional networks of the JHSO and to date there has been no shortage of interest.

Mentors are viewed as a “cheering squad” for their clients, and support clients to build their confidence and skills, and to develop their peer relationships and networks. The JHSO uses a creative way to pair up mentors and mentees: they organize a ‘speed mentoring’ event once a year and invite all their mentors and mentees (including potential mentees). The event is organized so that the mentees have a chance to chat to each of the mentors, who offer basic employment tips and briefly explain what they do and who they are. At the end of the night, mentees decide which mentors they are interested in working with. There is pizza, door prizes, and other things to make the event fun and enjoyable.

While most of the employment-focused mentoring is offered as a one-to-one service, the JHSO also organizes some group mentoring opportunities. For example, there is a knitting group made up of 3-4 mentees who meet regularly with a mentor to knit and chat about employment issues.

The [Time For Change \(T4C\)](#) initiative also has a mentoring component to it: the Community Connections program uses both community-based and faith-based approaches and it engages a variety of mentors, including spiritual mentors, education mentors, employment mentors, recreation mentors, settlement and integration mentors, lived-experience mentors and general mentors. The facilitation of the community-based portion aims to support individuals to reintegrate into society through the development of prosocial behaviours. The faith-based portion offers individuals an opportunity to explore various avenues with support of a spiritual mentor, if it is of interest. The Community Connections program uses a one-to-one and in-person mentoring format, which allows the mentees to obtain the level of support they require regardless of which area they are interested in. Each mentor-mentee relationship is different in nature based on the specific goals and expectations that each mentee and mentor develop together at the outset.

The mentors involved in this initiative tend to be people who are past participants in the program (ex. people who have been gang-involved). This is because the JHSO has found that it is easier to engage people in the program if the mentors themselves have a personal understanding and experience of the events and factors that bring individuals into gangs, and that keep them involved in a gang-related lifestyle.

4. Jaku Konbit

Jaku Konbit aims to support and improve the lives of disadvantaged individuals and families of African and Caribbean descent. They achieve this by partnering with all communities and offering programming that results in everyone's successful economic and civic participation in Canadian society. With the slogan, 'Building Our Community Together,' Jaku Konbit believes that even the slightest positive influence has the potential to change a child's life.

Since it was established in 2000, Jaku Konbit has facilitated **mentoring** and role modelling relationships between members of the Afro-Caribbean community. Throughout any given year, their mentoring initiatives engage between 100 to 120 youth between the ages of 15 to 25. These initiatives range from bringing in special guest speakers and presenters to **day camps** and Kwanzaa Celebrations; to offering tutoring services through their **Black Star Tutoring** program; to linking up seniors and summer campers through their **community garden**. They also organize leadership and employment trainings and organize cultural events.

Jaku Konbit's mentoring programs aim to foster trusting relationships between community leaders and professionals who look like and can serve as role models for youth and young adults from Ottawa's Black community. They have about 50 mentors involved in their programs throughout the year. These mentors are professionals and tradespeople, as well as university and college students. Some are one-to-one mentors and some are group mentors; and some volunteer from as little as a few hours in the summer, whereas others commit to volunteering weekly throughout the year or on multiple occasions.

With group mentoring, young people are organized into three different program streams, each with its own specific objectives:

1. Business Basics/Organize a Job Fair;
2. Entrepreneurs at Heart/Organize an African market; and,
3. Event Planning/African History incorporated into the Kwanzaa cultural event.

One-to-one mentoring includes tutoring, which offers a portable/mobile service, and peer-to-peer engagement where pre-planned activities occur.

With support from the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, specifically the *Black Youth Action Plan* (now known as *Services for Black Children, Youth and Families*), Jaku Konbit recently launched a youth mentoring program called *Together We Can* with the slogan "The Power to Shape Identity", which provides classes, activities and dialogues between mentors and mentees within the community.

5. Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)

[OCISO's](#) mission and core values are to support immigrants and refugees through their journey of making Canada home by providing creative and responsive programs that are culturally and linguistically appropriate; by building community through mutual respect and partnerships; and by fostering healthy and inclusive spaces for open dialogue and healing. OCISO envisions Ottawa as an inclusive city in which all immigrants contribute their gifts, skills, values and culture, strengthening and transforming our community life.

Through a youth-led approach, [YOCISO](#) creates safer spaces for newcomer immigrant and refugee youth to amplify their voices, lived experiences, and capabilities. YOCISO provides in-school programming to immigrant and refugee youth ages 13-24 to assist in their transition and settlement to Canada. This is facilitated through employment and orientation workshops, weekly group leadership development sessions, academic support (homework club and tutoring), after school recreational and sports programs (drop-in basketball), and opportunities for art expression through drama and dance to 1,740 newcomer youths in the Ottawa school system.

In addition, YOCISO also provides support at the afterschool Newcomer Youth Centre in which newcomer youth can access daily programming, drop-in mental health services and academic supports in an inclusive and safe environment. Youth participate in life skills workshops, creative expression, arts and music education, health and fitness workshops, social and civic engagement activities and English language support. In 2017-2018, 3,678 newcomer youth participated in-group and individual services at the Newcomer Youth Centre.

OCISO also runs the [Time For Change \(T4C\)](#) initiative with the [John Howard Society of Ottawa \(JHSO\)](#) (see #3 above).

6. Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC)

The [Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre \(PQCHC\)](#) has been serving about 400 youth in Ottawa each year since 2007 through their [Pathways to Education](#) program, which specifically targets young people from low-income communities in Ottawa's West end. The program aims to support youth to stay in school and to graduate from high school. It is open to any youth enrolled in grades 9-12; ideally, initial enrolment begins in grade 9 and students remain in the program until the end of grade 12, but students can also join during a later grade. Group mentoring is one component of the Pathways model and program and includes bringing in adult role models to cover a variety of topics with the youth.

The PQCHC mentoring model is based on the [Developmental Relationship Framework](#), which was created by the US-based [Search Institute](#). This Framework is founded on the belief that young people are more likely to succeed if they experience developmental

relationships⁸ with important people in their lives (ex. mentors, role models). The Framework outlines five key elements that make for powerful relationships for young people:

- Expressing Care;
- Challenging Growth;
- Providing Support;
- Sharing Power;
- Expanding Possibilities.

This Framework encapsulates PQCHC's approach; they have been using it over the past year to train volunteers and to reflect on and evaluate their work.

PQCHC has also recently launched a new community-based mentoring program as part of Ontario's *Black Youth Action Plan* (now known as *Services for Black Children, Youth and Families*), called the [Together We Can \(TWC\) Youth Mentoring](#) Program, which will target black youth aged 12 to 18 who are living in low-income or social housing in West-end Ottawa. The program builds on a pilot initiative that was run over a year and that linked up black male youth with black adult role models. The TWC Program will be youth-led and will focus on cultural identity and civic engagement; participants will engage in group conversations, facilitated by a mentor, about the issues black youth face in Canadian society and the stigma and discrimination they face coming from low income neighbourhoods. The youth will meet with their mentor once a week throughout the school year and during this time, will develop a project that aims to address some form of systemic discrimination by engaging with the broader community and decision-makers.

7. Regroupement Ethnoculturel des Parents Francophones de L'Ontario (REPFO)

[Regroupement Ethnoculturel des Parents Francophones de L'Ontario \(REPFO\)](#) aims to provide parents from Black and ethno cultural francophone communities with tools to promote the academic performance, cultural pride and good health of their children. They currently focus on three main activities:

- Parent's participation in schools;
- Prevention of school drop-out; and,
- Education of parents about school policies, particularly in relation to getting involved with school councils and the school board.

⁸ Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them (from: https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Developmental-Relationships-Framework_English.pdf).

REPFO is currently running a mentoring program called [Quantum](#) at four schools in Ottawa (Charlotte Lemieux, Gabrielle Roy, Marie Curie, and Trillium). It targets at-risk youth and is based on an evidence-based model of providing ongoing support to each student in the program from grade 9 through to grade 12 when they graduate. They reach approximately 60 students a month through this initiative.

REPFO views mentoring as an adult supporting a young person to help them grow via homework help, recreational activities, and health promotion.

In September 2018, REPFO also started two new mentoring programs with support from the *Black Youth Action Plan* (now known as *Services for Black Children, Youth and Families*). One program is called *Together We Can* (In French: **Ensemble Pour La Réussite**) and is being implemented in partnership with [Ottawa Community Housing \(OCH\)](#) and the [South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre \(SEOCHC\)](#). They aim to have 18 employees, who will mostly be supporting mentoring initiatives at 10 sites across the city. This initiative will have high school students mentoring elementary students from immigrant families. The other program is **a homework club**, which will offer 20 spots at various schools across the city; the aim is to help students whose parents do not speak French. Both programs are based on group mentoring model, with a 1:10 ratio of mentor to youth.

8. Somali Centre for Family Services (SCFS)

The [Somali Centre for Family Services \(SCFS\)](#) works to assist refugees and immigrants in need – particularly Somali families and individuals living in Ottawa – through partnerships, services, and programs that are timely, culturally appropriate, and that directly address their concerns.

The SCFS provides mentoring services, which are part of larger [recreational and educational programs](#) that target children and youth from as young as 5 years old. They view mentoring as a way to provide positive role modelling for young people, and as a form of crime prevention. The SCFS have a holistic, 'triangular' approach that aims to bring community members, schools and parents together to support young people in developing positive relationships and to make healthy choices. They work in partnership with local Universities, School Boards, Employment Centres, the Youth Services Bureau, the City of Ottawa and others to provide training and employment opportunities for Somali and immigrant youth.

The SCFS also has a specific mentoring program in partnership with [Jewish Family Services of Ottawa \(JFSO\)](#) called [Networking for Youth \(N4Y\)](#) that was started in 2010 and targets immigrant youth to provide them with information, direction, and support in relation to the job market and finding meaningful employment. Each year approximately 30 young people who are enrolled in post-secondary institutions are involved in the program, supported by 20 mentors. The program uses a group mentoring model, but SCFS is also developing a one-to-one mentoring program that is set to begin in September 2018 as part of Ontario's *Black Youth Action Plan* (now known as *Services for Black Children, Youth and Families*).

9. South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC)

The [South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre \(SEOCHC\)](#) runs a variety of programs for children and youth. They do not have any formal mentoring initiatives, but their child and youth services are designed in a way that older youth act as role models for younger kids, and thus provide a type of informal mentoring. Their intention is to expose youth to a variety of role models from different walks of life and their staff is mostly made up of recent graduates from the community. Older kids or youth workers refer young people to other services and supports as needed.

The programs offered by the SEOCHC target lower income, marginalized neighbourhoods that have a high percentage of visible minorities and newcomer families, many of whom live in community housing in South-East Ottawa. There are multiple languages, cultures, and backgrounds in the community and the SEOCHC attempts to reflect this diversity through their staff, so that role modelling is more effective. In this sense, they want youth to see themselves in the staff that serve them. A lot of the staff are not necessarily youth workers by trade.

The [Youth Zone](#) program is a weekly sport and recreation program offered in the early evening every Friday, which promotes an active lifestyle and also provides an entry point to engage with youth and direct them to different types of supports. It targets youth aged 8-13 years old, and is hosted by older kids who are aged 18 and up. There are typically 80-100 youth who participate in the Youth Zone on a weekly basis. The kids come to play basketball or soccer, and the program then integrates sessions focused on employment or other areas based on the needs expressed by the youth. This same type of program is also offered specifically to girls through the [Girls on the Move](#) initiative.

The SEOCHC also runs a [Homework Club](#) for children aged 6-12 years old; and a [Youth Drop-In](#) program two nights a week for youth between the ages of 13 and 18. The Drop-In program is focused on recreation, leadership, life-skills, field trips and civic engagement; and also offers specific workshops about employment, including resume writing and interview skills. Staff work with the youth to develop programming and plan field trips based on their needs and interests.

In the summer, the SEOCHC runs a 2-week long leadership and training program for youth as part of the [Youth Futures](#) initiative, which targets vulnerable young people. The activities range from field trips to local museums, to sessions on conflict resolution, team building and communications. The initiative is youth-driven in that participants can feed their ideas into the program.

10. Youturn

[Youturn](#) provides services to about 220 youth in Ottawa each year. They have a counselling program for high-risk youth in which young people receive one-to-one support to reduce their risk of getting involved in illegal activities or to reoffend. Counsellors act as role models and de facto mentors for the youth that they support; in this way mentoring is a secondary outcome that may be achieved through the counselling services that are offered.

The type of relationship that counsellors develop with their clients (youth) is quite informal. The supports provided are developed from a series of assessments completed at the beginning of service. Supports can range from helping youth develop improved emotional regulation skills, to managing and coping with anxiety and stress, to making sure that youth show up for court or their meetings with their probation officer; helping them prepare and getting them to job interviews on time; and going to their school if they get into trouble and have to meet with the principal. Youth lead the relationship, in that conversations happen on 'their turf' and they have a voice in determining the type of support they need and want.

Youturn counsellors also involve and meet with siblings and parents, as well as grandparents, teachers, probation officers and any other people who interact regularly with their client, to talk about what needs to be done. Everyone has the chance to discuss the situation, including the young person who is receiving counselling. In this sense, Youturn's approach is about doing *with* kids, not doing *for* kids.

11. Youth Ottawa

[Youth Ottawa](#) is a not-for-profit charity that envisions an Ottawa where youth drive positive change. They support youth by encouraging them to seize opportunities, harness their ideas and spark change. Youth Ottawa offers a variety of programs in schools across the city, of which mentoring is one aspect.

Youth Ottawa currently offers four key programs in schools across Ottawa, in which youth are supported by adult mentors and facilitators:

1. **[A Day of Information for a Lifetime of Action \(DILA\)](#)**: facilitators (mentors) support high school civics teachers and students to be engaged citizens by organizing and participating in community initiatives. The premise is simple: let youth do *something* about *something* for their community.
2. **[Youth Active Media \(YAM\)](#)**: is a videography initiative for youth that targets priority neighbourhoods across Ottawa. Youth work with a filmmaker to produce short videos about community issues that matter to them. This program is run as a social enterprise and hires youth who have already participated in the program to mentor younger participants.
3. **[Ottawa Youth Engagement Committee \(OYEC\)](#)**: this program encourages youth engagement in municipal decisions and actions, and aims to amplify youth voices at the City of Ottawa. The program is open to youth between the ages of 15-25 who make a one-year commitment to do their part in making Ottawa a better, safer, more equal place for all youth.
4. **[Cuts for Kids](#)**: is a charity that works in partnership with Youth Ottawa to provide haircuts, free of charge, for children of low-income families in Ottawa. The aim is to increase self-esteem and improving overall well-being of young, disadvantaged people.

Youth Ottawa reaches approximately 8000-9000 youth through their programs each year.

Recommendations

During the interviews, respondents came up with a number of recommendations for how to build on and improve existing youth mentoring programs and services moving forward. These recommendations can be categorized into four broad areas:

1. **Networking Opportunities:** more than half of the respondents talked about the need for more networking opportunities amongst community-based organizations offering youth mentoring programs and services in Ottawa. Although ideas were expressed in a variety of ways, there is clearly a lot of interest amongst the organizations interviewed to come together and learn from one another. The common thread was the suggestion that **some kind of space be facilitated for organizations to share what is working and what is not working based on their own experiences**. For example, one person talked about the idea of having a 'meet and greet' to bring together coordinators from the various mentoring programs to connect and share experiences. Another mentioned the idea of setting up an Ottawa mentoring coalition similar to coalitions in other major Canadian cities.
2. **Funding:** half of the respondents indicated this as priority, albeit from different angles. For example, because each mentor-mentee relationship involves building trust and an emotional bond, it is not possible for one person to mentor dozens of clients. In this regard, **financial resources are needed to bring on board additional mentors** to grow existing initiatives. Once mentors have been screened and recruited – and this is true even for programs that engage volunteer mentors – they need to receive **training** and **ongoing support** – which requires **staff time** that needs to be paid for. As one explained, the most costly component of mentoring is not necessarily the mentoring itself, but it is the ongoing support to ensure that the relationship is healthy and developing.
3. **Partnerships:** following on from the previous recommendation, a few respondents talked about the idea of working in partnership with other organizations that run mentoring programs to **pool financial and human resources to recruit, screen and train mentors collectively**. One even talked about the possibility of sharing mentors between organizations/programs. Coming from a different angle, and linked to the first recommendation, one respondent suggested that **CPO could bring organizations together to form partnerships and write joint proposals** to access funding for their individual mentoring programs (or to develop a collective program).

4. **Research and Evaluation Support:** some respondents talked about the need for further research into how mentoring prevents crime and provides better outcomes for youth by tracking the life path of individuals over time. As part of this, former mentees could give feedback about how the mentoring they received earlier in their lives impacted their life choices (or not) and how youth mentoring programming could be improved. One person talked more generally about the need for assistance in designing and carrying out evaluations of their organization's youth mentoring programs.

Conclusion

It is clear from the impressive work of the ten organizations profiled in this report that there are many important, innovative and diverse youth mentoring and role modelling initiatives underway across the City of Ottawa. There is a lot of good work happening, and with some additional support, the results and impact of this work can be further expanded. The recommendations provide a starting point for the types of support that could be most useful to the organizations in Ottawa that are currently offering youth mentoring services, and CPO is committed to following them up.

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