



MARYLAND
MENTOR

**UPHOLDING
THE COVENANT:**
STATE OF MENTORING
IN MARYLAND
2018

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

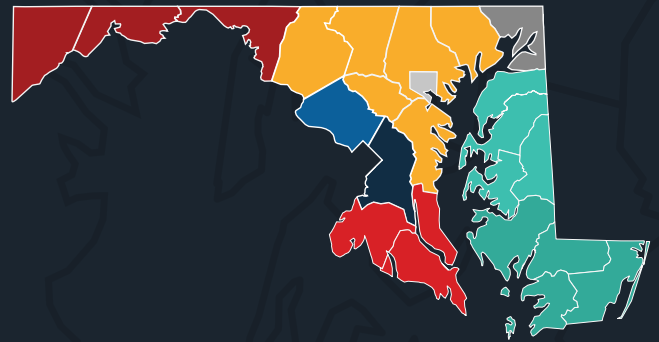
Mentoring programs exist, largely, to facilitate connections between mentors and young people who might otherwise not know where to find support or guidance through life transitions. This facilitation makes their existence vital. Between April and July of 2018, Maryland MENTOR hosted a total of 15 town hall meetings with mentoring providers throughout the state to learn more about their assets and challenges, the youth who they serve, and the types of support that could help strengthen programs. Fourteen town halls took place in-person, and one took place virtually. Each session lasted for between ninety minutes and two hours. A town hall meeting was hosted in each of the following regions or counties of Maryland, with a total of over 200 attendees:

- Baltimore City (3 town halls)
- Central Maryland, including Anne Arundel and Howard Counties (1 town hall)
- Lower Eastern Shore, including Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties (1 town hall)
- Montgomery County (2 town halls)
- Northern Maryland, including Baltimore, Harford, Carroll, and Cecil Counties (1 town hall)
- Prince George's County (3 town halls)
- Southern Maryland, including Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties (1 town hall)
- Upper Eastern Shore, including Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Talbot Counties (1 town hall)
- Western Maryland, including Garrett, Allegheny, and Washington counties (1 town hall)

Across counties, mentoring providers described the populations they serve and highlighted several assets and challenges associated with running programs throughout the state of Maryland. Programs served a range of racial and ethnic and gender groups, with a focus often on black youth of all genders. Few programs tended to have a specific gender, racial or ethnic focus. Considering age groups being served, there appears to be a variety of programs primarily available for middle and high school-aged youth between the ages of 12 and 17. Though, there are some areas of the state that had a tendency to serve younger youth, like the Lower and Upper Eastern Shores, and some with a tendency to serve older youth, like Montgomery County.

Providers' saw their surrounding communities as significant assets to programs. Residents of communities, local schools, and other public spaces, such as libraries and recreation centers often provided programs with financial and in-kind resources or, for schools, positive working relationships. When providers discussed challenges, there was a strong focus on human and financial resources. Programs have limited staff sizes, struggled with recruiting, training, and retaining mentors, and saw a need for greater financial support.

Based on findings from the 15 town hall meetings, the following recommendations were formulated. They are intended to provide stakeholders with ideas on how to support mentoring programs across Maryland in ways that providers see as essential for their work and for providing quality mentoring to youth.



RECOMMENDATION FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

1. Be a mentor. Your professional and personal life experiences could help to enrich the life a young person and help you to provide them with insight and support during important life transitions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MARYLAND MENTOR

2. Develop a resource guide for mentoring programs and organizations that includes mental health and other services throughout Maryland's counties so that mentoring programs can easily refer youth and/or their families to local services when issues of trauma or other personal challenges emerge. Facilitate a monthly community of practice for

mentors and individuals who operate mentoring programs. Mentors could meet one month by phone or webinar to discuss their experiences with mentees and the programs, share insight on ways to engage youth, and inform one another about local activities or upcoming events that mentors could attend with mentees. On alternating months, program operators could join a call or webinar to discuss implementation and design challenges, highlight successes they have had with engaging mentors, youth, and/or their families; and share resources that could be helpful to the community of practitioners.

3. Develop a staged training approach that offers a series of sessions that are targeted toward programs that are new or developing and a series of sessions targeted toward programs that are mature. Topics may be of interest for both newer and more mature programs but might be primarily provided to one or the other.

Given that many of the programs seem to be fairly nascent, trainings that help them to build out infrastructure may be most beneficial. Topics may include gaining nonprofit or other organizational legal status, developing a strong mission, building out staff, financial management, and collecting program data. These newer programs may also be interested in learning about fundraising and grant-writing as well as strategies for recruiting mentors. Since they are in the planning or upstart phase, this would also be an ideal time to help providers consider ways to engage youth and their families in program design, as members of a youth/family advisory council or by providing feedback on the types of supports that the local community believes mentoring could bring. Some of the training content could be informed by lessons from other organizations who already apply a youth-centered approach to their work.

More mature programs may benefit from trainings that are focused on helping them to scale existing efforts and have long-term sustainability. Potential topics for this group of providers include mentor retention, ways to expand programs' reach to engage younger and/or older youth and transgender and/or gender non-conforming youth. For programs that have an age-specific or gender-specific focus, they may want to consider ways that more youth within those groups could be reached, including new partnerships that could be formed to deepen programs' connections to specific populations.

4. Develop curriculum for mentor training to include content on how mentors can best engage youth in the mentor-mentee relationship and on preparing them to engage with mentees' families in a way that is appropriate, given the relationship, and beneficial to youth's mentoring experiences. Training could also include skills for communicating with youth and suggested meaningful activities or experiences that mentors and mentees can explore together.

RECOMMENDATION FOR PUBLIC & PRIVATE FUNDERS

5. Engage in a local or regional mentoring funder collaborative. This group could be a combination of national funders that support local programming; those focused on specific cities or regions in Maryland, such as community foundations; and funders from public agencies. Potential areas of support could include building out staffing sizes, training for program staff on issues described in recommendation number three, and providing general operating support so that programs can, for example, pay for resources like transportation, support the costs of meeting space, and provide incentives to mentors to help address mentor retention.
6. Recommend or refer past, current and potential mentoring grantees who may be suitable candidates for funding from your organization to Maryland MENTOR for no cost technical assistance and/or training for mentors and staff members.
7. Work with Maryland MENTOR to identify mentoring programs throughout the state who could benefit from additional support and clarify the types of support that could be needed (e.g., general operating support for staff salaries, capacity building for mentor recruitment and training). Maryland MENTOR could help to expand funder networks by brokering relationships between funders and mentoring providers.
8. Encourage employees, including state and local government employees, to mentor regularly with community-based organizations. Incentivize mentoring by providing employees with paid time-off to volunteer with a local community-based organization as a mentor.

RECOMMENDATION FOR MENTORING PROGRAMS & ORGANIZATIONS

1. Engage with Maryland MENTOR for no cost technical assistance, training and resources that could help to strengthen your program and build out your network.
2. Subscribe to the Maryland MENTOR newsletter to stay abreast of offerings, such as webinars, that could help you connect with other programs and organizations and share knowledge and resources to identify areas for collaboration and support of one another, i.e. fundraising, mentor recruitment, field trips, and other topics.
3. Become a Maryland MENTOR Quality Program Partner and commit to continuously improving your program offerings. Young people will benefit from your high-quality programs.

RECOMMENDATION FOR EDUCATION SYSTEMS

4. As a frequently mentioned partner to mentoring program throughout the state, schools could help Maryland MENTOR to better understand and support school-based mentoring programs. Local school systems could work with Maryland MENTOR to conduct a system wide inventory of all current school-based mentoring programming and its operations and identify opportunities for existing school-based programs to be strengthened and/or expanded within one school or across multiple schools.

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY

5. Work with Maryland MENTOR to engage your staffs in ongoing and long-term volunteer opportunities via mentoring programs and organizations. Partner with community-based mentoring programs to recruit youth for paid internship opportunities, and, as part of the internship, encourage company staff to serve as mentors to interns. This could support opportunities for youth to obtain permanent employment in the future and learn more about the range of possible career opportunities.

Maryland MENTOR endeavored to better understand the current state of mentoring practice in Maryland by conducting 15 town hall meetings with nearly 200 providers, totaling roughly 30 hours of discussion time. This report is Maryland MENTOR's effort to reflect back to you, the mentoring community and its supporters, what the organization heard. It is clear that many programs across Maryland are working diligently to create lasting connections that contribute to the overall wellbeing and success of youth and are often doing so with limited resources. In future efforts, mentoring programs and Maryland MENTOR would benefit from understanding youth's perspectives of mentoring and their experiences with programs. This could help shape programmatic offerings as well as the types of support that stak



MARYLAND
MENTOR

STAY CONNECTED!

@MarylandMENTOR
#MentorIRL

Maryland MENTOR

1500 Union Ave.
Suite 2300
Baltimore, MD 21211

marylandmentor.net
410.374.7692

REPORT PREPARED BY

EQUIVOLVE
CONSULTING

Equivolve is a consulting firm that is dedicated to achieving social equity. We believe that for organizations to be most effective, equity needs to be central to and reflected in each facet of their work. We support organizations to do this through data collection and analysis, cross-sector partnership development, project design and management, strategy consulting and much more.