



## **Methodology for NMRC Research Board Reviews of Mentoring Resources**

- 1) All resources nominated for review through the NMRC website (as well as those identified by members of the NMRC team, OJJDP staff, and other sources) are catalogued on an Excel tracking sheet.
- 2) Each resource nominated or otherwise identified is assessed by the Research Board Chair or a post-doctoral research associate working under the Chair's supervision as to whether or not it is appropriate for review based on whether:
  - a. the materials involved constitutes a "resource" as defined for the NMRC ("A material, or set of materials, used to support the implementation of a mentoring program practice with well-defined intended users and recipients as well as clearly documented steps and guidelines for implementation.") and
  - b. the resource is intended for use in a mentoring program that would fall under the scope of the NMRC ("A ...program...that is intended to promote positive youth outcomes, which include prevention of or reduction in victimization, delinquent behavior and/or juvenile justice system involvement, via fostering of mentoring activity or relationships between young persons (i.e., mentees) and older or otherwise more experienced persons (i.e., mentors) who are acting in a nonprofessional helping capacity."

For resources deemed not eligible for review, the nominator is notified with a brief explanation.

- 3) For each review-eligible resource, a determination is then made by the Research Board Chair as to whether it is appropriate for Tier 1 or Tier 2 review. Tier 1 review is intended for resources that have been evaluated in at least one study (or other similarly detailed report) with a pre-post design in relation to one or more outcomes that pertains to mentoring program effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, or safety (DuBois, 2007).
- 4) Resources determined to be suitable for each tier of review at any given point in time are prioritized, separately, for review as detailed later in this document.
- 5) Within resources designated for each tier of review, those designated "high priority" are reviewed first, followed by those designated as "medium priority" and "low priority",

respectively. Within each priority category, resources are reviewed in order of date of nomination or identification. If more than one resource is nominated or identified on the same date, order of review is determined randomly. At any time, MENTOR or OJJDP can request that a resource be reviewed ahead of others either within the same category or in higher categories of priority. Such resources are identified as having received this special consideration on the NMRC website.

- 6) The Research Board Chair oversees and referees the review process for all resources, except where he or she has a conflict of interest, in which case another member of the Research Board serves in this role. Conflicts of interest for both the Research Board Chair and reviewers are determined using the same process and form as is used for review of mentoring and other programs for CrimeSolutions.gov.
- 7) Prior to initiating each Tier 1 review, a literature search is conducted to identify possible additional eligible evaluations of the resource.
- 8) Each resource (whether receiving Tier 1 or Tier 2 review) is reviewed independently by two members of the Research Board or by one member of the Research Board and a NMRC post-doctoral research associate. In special cases, where additional expertise is deemed necessary, the Research Board Chair may arrange for review by one or more additional researchers who are not members of the Research Board.

Prior to conducting Tier 1 or Tier 2 reviews of resources, members of the Research Board are trained in the protocols for each type of review. The steps involved in the training are as follows:

- a. Initial telephone conference call in which Research Board Chair reviews the scoring protocols for each type of resource and the application of these protocols to one or more previously reviewed resources of each type.
- b. Training participants complete a homework assignment in which they complete a Tier 1 review for one resource and Tier 2 reviews for two resources.
- c. A second telephone conference call to review scoring of the “homework” resources. Prior to the call, but after submitting their own scoring, each participant receives the scoring protocol/decisions of the Research Board Chair for reference as well as, for the Tier 1-reviewed resource, a summary index of agreement with the Chair’s scoring (see below).
- d. At the discretion of the Research Board Chair, additional training and practice may be required for participants before they are approved to review a given type of resource. To inform these judgments for Tier 1 reviews of resources, intraclass correlations (ICCs) are computed between each participant’s ratings of the resource assigned as homework

and those of the Research Board Chair, using the same computational approach as is used for CrimeSolutions.gov program reviewer certification.

- 9) Tier 1 reviews of resources are conducted utilizing the approved scoring instrument (currently under development), with resulting classifications of the evidence base for each resource that parallel those used for practices and programs (i.e., Effective, Promising, No Effects, or Insufficient Evidence). Only those Resources receiving Effective or Promising classifications are profiled on the NMRC website (see below), with single or multiple study designations for each as in CrimeSolutions. Resources receiving an Insufficient Evidence or No Effects classification instead then receive Tier 2 review and, if approved through that mechanism, are included on the NMRC website with the appropriate designation.
- 10) Tier 2 resources are reviewed using a structured form, which is included later in this document. The summative rating of appropriateness for inclusion on the NMRC website is made in reference to the following single criterion: *Is there inconsistency between the resource and relevant research that is likely to be both a) consequential (i.e., use of the resource may bear negatively on a program's effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability/growth, or safety) and b) not offset by likely benefits in other areas (e.g., benefits for effectiveness in context of some reductions in efficiency)?* The inconsistency must be such that it is judged likely to be consequential. Illustratively, if there are minor inaccuracies or omissions in how research is summarized for the intended users or recipients of a resource, this would not rise to the level of being consequential. On the other hand, if relevant research is mischaracterized or incompletely considered in ways that suggest a reasonable chance for users or recipients of the resource to be influenced by or apply it in ways that are counterproductive or harmful, this would be considered consequential. An absence of references in the resource to supporting research is not itself a consequential concern. However, in all instances, the reviewer should attend to any consequential inconsistencies between the resource and existing research, whether referenced in the resource or not. Only those resources for which such inconsistent research evidence is determined not to exist are included on the NMRC website. If a reviewer determines that inconsistent research evidence *does* exist, a brief explanation must be provided with supporting reference(s) to the pertinent research.
- 11) Dispute Resolution: For resources receiving Tier 1 review, in the event of disagreement between reviewers in either the classification of the evidence base for the resource (or any individual study contributing to this classification), the Research Board Chair (or designated substitute in cases where the Chair has a conflict of interest) addresses the dispute and documents the outcome in the same manner as is used for dispute resolution for CrimeSolutions.gov. A similar process is followed for Tier 2 reviews when reviewers disagree in their determination of whether the acceptance criterion described above is met for a resource.
- 12) For each resource receiving Tier 1 review and classified as Effective or Promising, a profile of the resource is prepared by an NMRC post-doctoral research associate under the supervision of the

Research Board Chair. A draft of the profile is sent to the nominator as a courtesy, with the opportunity to provide feedback on any inaccuracies, etc. within one week's time. The profile is then be submitted to MENTOR and posted to the NMRC website.

- 13) For each resource that "passes" Tier 2 review (i.e., lack of research inconsistent with the resource), a profile is posted on the NMRC website using the same template as that used for resources receiving Tier 1 review, with notations where appropriate that the resource has not yet been evaluated. Staff of MENTOR prepare these profiles; after review and approval by the Research Board Chair, the profile is posted on the NMRC website.
- 14) If a resource does not pass Tier 2 review (i.e., available research is found to be consequentially inconsistent with the resource), the nominator is notified with a brief explanation. The nominator also is informed that the resource may be revised to address the identified concern(s) and resubmitted for review at any time. For resources that received Tier 1 review, but did not receive an Effective or Promising classification, the nominator is similarly provided with a brief explanation and an invitation to re-submit the resource at a later date should new research findings become available that affects its classification.
- 15) The outcome for any resource that is reviewed can be appealed. The process used for appeals follows that which is in place for CrimeSolutions.gov ([http://www.crimesolutions.gov/about\\_evidencerating.aspx](http://www.crimesolutions.gov/about_evidencerating.aspx)), with the Appeals Board consisting of 3 members of the NMRC Research Board.

***Reviewer Form for Tier 2 Resource Reviews for National Mentoring Resource Center***

**DISCLOSURE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

It is our common goal that all resources reviewed for NMRC receive objective and unbiased evaluation. However, some potential conflicts of interest can arise that could impede you from evaluating objectively the resource that you have been asked to review. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

You, your spouse, child or other family member or business partner is listed as a staff member, consultant, or advisor on the resource.

You have, or have had a close personal or familial relationship with the author(s)/staff on the resource. (Please note that we keep the identity of the reviewers confidential from MENTOR staff and from NMRC Research Board (RB) members other than those who also are involved in reviewing the resource. If a MENTOR staff or a NMRC RB member is closely associated with the development of the resource, it does not present a conflict of interest for reviewing the resource unless you have a close professional or personal relationship with them).

You have or within the past year have had a financial or close professional relationship with the source/publisher of the resource.

Please indicate whether you have a potential conflict that could impede you from objectively evaluating the resource that you have been asked to review:

I do not have a potential conflict.

I do have a potential conflict.

Please understand that indicating a potential conflict does not automatically preclude your participation as a reviewer. However, if you have indicated a potential conflict, you must immediately alert the NMRC and obtain clearance from them before beginning a review of the resource. If you have not indicated a potential conflict, please proceed with your review of the resource.

Reviewer:

Date of Review:

Name of Resource:

General Instructions: Please complete this form in conjunction with your review of the above referenced resource. Please note that, except where indicated, written notes or comments are not required. Any comments that are provided should be kept as brief as possible (e.g., 1-2 sentences). Please strive for feedback to be constructive in both tone and substance. As appropriate, please identify specific ways in which the resource could be improved as well as its valuable features or potential useful applications.

Part I: Please indicate your level of concern (if any) that use of the resource could detract from each of the indicated dimensions of program quality and operations. If you assess the resource as having a notable strength in a particular area (i.e., likely to be of benefit to that dimension of program quality or operations), please indicate this as well.

**Effectiveness (i.e., a program's capacity to establish/sustain high quality mentoring relationships and/or enhances positive youth outcomes)**

not applicable    strength    no concern    minor concern    significant concern

Notes:

**Safety (i.e., a program's ability to ensure that no youth are inadvertently harmed, either directly or indirectly, as a result of program participation– that is, have negative or less favorable outcomes than they would in the absence of direct or indirect exposure to the program)**

not applicable    strength    no concern    minor concern    significant concern

Notes:

**Efficiency (i.e., a program's ability to operate cost-effectively – that is, serve as many youth as feasible within the current resource constraints of the program)**

not applicable    strength    no concern    minor concern    significant concern

Notes:

**Sustainability/Growth (i.e., a program's ability to continue to operate over an extended period of time and/or serve increasing numbers of youth over time due to enhanced organizational capacity)**

not applicable    strength    no concern    minor concern    significant concern

Notes:

## Part II: Summative Rating and Feedback

*Is there inconsistency between the resource and relevant research that is likely to be both a) consequential (i.e., use of the resource may bear negatively on a program's effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability/growth, or safety) and b) not offset by likely benefits in other areas (e.g., benefits for effectiveness in context of some reductions in efficiency)?<sup>1</sup>*

No \_\_\_\_\_

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, please briefly explain the reason(s) for your assessment and include one or more supporting references to original reports of empirical research that support this assessment.

Please cite supporting references here:

Please use the space below to provide any additional comments or suggestions. Please note that these may be shared with the nominator and/or developers of the resource.

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<sup>1</sup> With regard to the first criterion, if there are minor inaccuracies or omissions in how research is summarized for the intended users or recipients of a resource, this would not rise to the level of being a consequential concern. On the other hand, if relevant research is mischaracterized or incompletely considered in ways that suggest a reasonable chance for users or recipients of the resource to be influenced by or apply the resource in ways that are counterproductive or harmful, this would be considered consequential. An absence of references in the resource to supporting research is not itself a consequential concern. However, in all instances, the reviewer should attend to any consequential inconsistencies between the resource and existing research, whether referenced in the resource or not.

With regard to the second criterion, as one possible scenario consider a new resource for screening mentors. This resource might be judged likely to have some degree of negative implications for program efficiency if, for example, it will add a substantial additional amount of staff time to the processes required for screening each prospective mentor (based on research indicating that screening processes and staff time are often substantial components of the cost structure of mentoring programs). However, it might also be anticipated that the same resource would have positive implications for effectiveness (based on research suggesting that the types of mentors screened-in with the resource tend to be more effective in promoting positive outcomes for their mentees) and these are substantial enough to more than compensate for any reductions in program efficiency.

Clearly, the preceding types of determinations will require exercise of professional judgment, all of which should ultimately be anchored in consideration of available research evidence.

Criteria for Prioritizing Tier 1 and Tier 2 Resources for Review (Criteria Used for Tier 1 Only are italicized)

- How many of the areas (up to 4 maximum) identified as priorities in the most recent needs assessment conducted by MENTOR is the resource aligned with (currently these are: Closure; Matching; Monitoring and Support; Cultural Perspectives in Program Design and Delivery; and Serving Special Youth Populations, in particular, youth in foster care, youth with mental health concerns, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, or youth with military families)?
- Does the resource support the implementation of a practice that has been reviewed for the NMRC and found to be Promising or Effective?
- Is the resource available at no cost?
- *Is the resource known to have been evaluated using a randomized control or quasi-experimental design with a relatively large sample of youth (i.e., 100 or more)?*
- Has the effectiveness of the resource been evaluated in programs that fall within the scope of CrimeSolutions.gov? (Tier 1) *or* Does the intended scope of use of the resource include programs that would fall within the scope of CrimeSolutions.gov? (Tier 2) [i.e., Aim to prevent or reduce crime, delinquency, or related problem behaviors (such as aggression, gang involvement, or school attachment); Aim to prevent, intervene, or respond to victimization; Aim to improve justice systems or processes; and/or Target an offender population or an at-risk population (that is, individuals who have the potential to become involved in the justice system)]
- *Is the effectiveness of the resource known to have been evaluated across different types or categories of program participants, program settings/structures, and/or outcomes?*
- Is there an evaluation of the resource that has been published within the past 5 years? (Tier 1) *or* Has the resource been developed within the past 5 years? (Tier 2)
- Has the resource been evaluated in the U.S. context? (Tier 1) *or* Has the resource been developed in the U.S. context? (Tier 2)
- Is the resource known to have been developed and/or evaluated with support of OJJDP funding?

Total Possible Scores: 12 for Tier 1 and 10 for Tier 2

High Priority: 9 and higher for Tier 1; 7 and higher for Tier 2

Medium Priority: 6-8 for Tier 1; 4-6 for Tier 2

Low Priority: Less than 6 for Tier 1; Less than then 4 for Tier 2