

ISSUE BRIEF:

National Service and Mentoring



*The Corporation for National and Community Service historically has placed the highest priority on assisting children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances, including connecting youth with caring adult mentors. Research has confirmed that mentoring successfully reduces the incidence of delinquency and substance use and that it promotes positive outcomes such as improved self-esteem, academic achievement, social skills, and career development. National service participants serve directly as mentors and also help build the capacity of mentoring organizations through volunteer recruitment and other means. In FY 2005, the Corporation devoted more than \$250 million to support about 400,000 children and youth, including 16,000 children of prisoners, through mentoring, tutoring, and related services. Mentoring activities are provided by the Corporation's Foster Grandparent Program, RSVP, AmeriCorps*State and National, and AmeriCorps*VISTA.*



STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2010

In February 2006, the Corporation for National and Community Service chose "Ensuring a Brighter Future for All of America's Youth" as one of four "strategic focus areas" in a new five-year strategic plan. Among the national targets is to help close the "mentoring gap" by leading the effort to provide mentoring services to 3 million additional youth from disadvantaged circumstances by 2010, including 200,000 children of prisoners. Within Corporation programs, the goal is to provide mentoring and other support services to 100,000 children of prisoners and to engage more than 2.2 million children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in national service.



FEDERAL MENTORING COUNCIL

To ensure the effective and efficient coordination of the investment of federal resources in mentoring activities and to recommend policies consistent with that approach, the Corporation has formed a new Federal Mentoring Council, comprising representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice,

and Labor, among others. The Corporation has also formed a National Mentoring Working Group for experts in the mentoring field to share information, concerns, ideas, and best practices.

FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) provides volunteer mentoring and other support services to children and youth with exceptional needs in schools, hospitals, drug treatment centers, correctional institutions, and child care centers nationwide. Volunteers age 60 and older mentor children, teach parenting skills to young mothers, and care for premature infants and children with disabilities. Foster Grandparents often work one-on-one with children, maintaining an intensive relationship with them for a year or longer. In fiscal 2005, FGP provided mentoring and other support services to 263,000 children with exceptional needs, including children displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Also in 2005, an independent survey conducted by Westat found that the consistency and quality of FGP relationships had a significant effect on the children being served, including

(Continued)

by increasing their self-esteem and academic performance and by reducing risky behaviors such as drug use, gang participation, and truancy.

AMERICORPS★VISTA

For more than 40 years the VISTA program has focused on providing opportunities for children and their families to gain skills, habits, and behaviors needed to rise out of poverty. In fiscal year 2005, more than 1,650 AmeriCorps*VISTA members served in projects focused on children and youth, such as youth leadership development, mentoring (including providing support to over 6,000 children of prisoners), youth literacy, services for homeless students, and children's health. Rather than provide direct service, VISTA members focus their efforts on building the capacity of mentoring and youth organizations to increase the number of people they serve by recruiting community volunteers, devising business plans, setting up administrative operations, bringing in donations of goods and services, and raising funds. In collaboration with USA Freedom Corps, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Labor, the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, state service commissions, and faith-based and other community organizations, AmeriCorps*VISTA and other Corporation programs in fiscal year 2005 began an effort to recruit 10,000 new volunteers to engage in mentoring and re-entry activities, as well as to build volunteer capacity for ex-offender, re-entry and mentoring initiatives across the nation.

RSVP

Among their various volunteer responsibilities, participants in the RSVP program for those aged 55 and older serve as mentors for disadvantaged youth. In fiscal year 2005, RSVP volunteers provided some 66,000 children with mentoring and other services, including nearly 2,900 children of prisoners—an increase of 56 percent over 2004, reflecting RSVP's commitment to increase its service to children of prisoners by more than 20 percent per year.

AMERICORPS★STATE AND NATIONAL

In FY 2005, more than 40,000 children and youth were provided with mentoring and other services through the AmeriCorps*State and National program.

LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA

In fiscal year 2005, the Learn and Serve America program engaged almost 500,000 "at-risk" children in service-learning programs, which introduced them to community service activities. Service-learning has been shown to increase civic and academic skills, and to establish the lifelong habit of good citizenship.

MENTORING RESEARCH

The Corporation recently released a new report, titled *Volunteers Mentoring Youth: Implications for Closing the Mentoring Gap*, which analyzes the 2005 Volunteer Supplement to the Current Population Survey to develop a greater understanding of the characteristics that distinguish volunteers who mentor from those who do not. (The 2005 Volunteer Supplement was the first time the U.S. Census asked respondents whether one of their volunteer activities was mentoring youth.) Information and policy suggestions gleaned from the report, which can be found at www.nationalservice.gov, are expected to help mentoring programs better identify and recruit individuals as mentors and thereby help to reduce the "mentoring gap."

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through the Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs. Together with the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation is working to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America. For more information, go to www.nationalservice.gov

May 2006