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Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Wendy McClanahan, and I am Vice President for Research at Public/Private Ventures, a national nonprofit organization headquartered in Philadelphia. Our mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults. We do this by identifying or developing promising approaches to critical social problems, by rigorously evaluating these approaches and, when suitable, by replicating them in new communities.

Like other stakeholders, P/PV is deeply concerned about violent crime, which is on the rise in many of our nation's cities. Homicides in urban areas have increased by 5.7% in a single year. In Philadelphia, homicide was up by 15% in 2005 (the greatest number of homicides in eight years) and, unfortunately, this increase looks like it might be the start of a trend.
Many have expressed hope that mentoring can play a role in reducing violent crime. For more than 15 years, P/PV has been investigating the value of mentoring as a strategy to improve the lives of young people. In our pivotal report on the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, titled Making a Difference, we presented evidence--persuasive evidence, derived from a rigorous random assignment study--that well-designed mentoring programs could measurably decrease negative behaviors and increase positive behaviors among young people.

In a series of projects over the past decade, P/PV has extended its research into mentoring programs in a variety of service environments, including its impact on crime and violence, and has added to the findings about mentoring's potential. For today's panel, I would characterize the findings from this work as follows: Mentoring offers real promise in reducing violence among children, youth and young adults. But there are important qualifications that are essential to understanding both the value, and the limitations, of mentoring.

Some of the positive findings from P/PV's work are indeed heartening. We saw:

? A reduction in homicides in districts using a comprehensive program for violence-prone youngsters--Philadelphia's Youth Violence Reduction Partnership;
? Decreased recidivism rates in an employment-oriented program for adult ex-prisoners--a federally sponsored initiative called Ready4Work;

? Lower incidence of depression among youth in a program for justice-system-involved juveniles--the National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth, also federally supported;
? Less violent behavior and substance use (and more positive school outcomes and relationships) among youngsters mentored in the nationally recognized Big Brothers Big Sisters Program; and
? A significant reduction in child abuse and neglect and in subsequent criminal behavior of both mothers and their children, among participants in the Nurse-Family Partnership, a home-visiting program for first-time, low-income mothers.

Findings such as these should rightfully inform decisions about national and local intervention policies, and the role of mentoring in particular. That is all to the good. However, the qualifications--significant ones--all too often are overlooked or minimized. The result may be that there is too much "mentoring" of a kind and quality that in the end is unlikely to help young people, and too much inflated rhetoric about mentoring that may hinder the design of effective policies.

I want to emphasize three qualifications in particular that we need to keep in mind, based on P/PV's research.
First, mentoring is not a cure-all social intervention or a magic bullet. Particularly for very high-risk populations--for the criminally involved adolescents and young adults we are concerned with today--P/PV's research suggests that mentoring alone isn't an answer.
These young people bring rough histories, little trust and numerous challenges to the table. Multiple supports and services, in well-crafted program settings, are essential to alter, even slightly, the trajectories of their lives. In the Ready4Work program, for instance, mentoring did appear to contribute to improved outcomes. But there also was intensive case management, wraparound services and job placement assistance--a dense web of support that gave mentoring relationships the opportunity to take root.
Similarly, the mentoring that took place in the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership was accompanied by regular supervision from parole or probation officers. The mentors in the program were full-time employees--paid street workers--who could meet regularly and at all hours with participants. It was the intensity of the overall service package, P/PV believes, that helped reduce the incidence of violent behaviors.

Second, just as there aren't free lunches, mentoring is not the cost-free social program it often is made out to be. The experience of Big Brothers Big Sisters makes it clear that the costs of good screening, training and ongoing professional support are far from negligible. In programs that use paid street workers or paid counselors, the costs are even higher.

But the need for strong supports is paramount. P/PV's work suggests that a solid support apparatus is crucial for mentors of high-risk adolescents and young adults. These costs are likely far lower than the costs of long-term incarceration. But they're still a real expense--one that is too often downplayed in discussions of mentoring.
Third, mentoring isn't easy, either as a programmatic task or a personal commitment. For programs, there is the continuing challenge of finding enough individuals prepared to dedicate the time and energy to building a relationship, and matching them with the right mentee. When that "mentee" is a high-risk youth or a young adult returning from incarceration, finding suitable and willing volunteers--and keeping them--is a serious challenge.

The Ready4Work program, despite strenuous and sustained efforts by its staff, was able to match mentors to only about half of the participants. That's understandable: people are often hesitant when they're asked to build and sustain a relationship with a young ex-prisoner.
And there are other challenges. The ex-offender himself--or herself--may have no interest in having a mentor. Family and work pressures for both mentor and mentee can subvert the delicate process of personal contact and trust-building. Or the mentor, once he or she has gone some distance into the relationship, may feel overmatched, inadequate or overwhelmed, and withdraw.

We also need to be mindful of the larger reality: with these high-risk populations, even our most striking statistical successes are modest. Recidivism rates may be reduced, but remain too high; homicides and violent behavior are lessened, but by too little. Despite these caveats, our successes are real and substantial. P/PV's work to date has established that mentoring can contribute to measurable benefits in a variety of settings, including programs for high-risk youth, violence-prone youth and ex-prisoners--perhaps the most difficult and challenging populations in the human service field.

The deep and manifold challenges these young people present mean that mentoring alone will not suffice. We need rich interventions that address multiple challenges with multiple supports and services of uniformly high quality. In programmatic settings such as these, the potential of mentoring--and other sustained, authentic and supportive relationships--will be most fully realized.

Youth Violence Reduction Partnership

The Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP) aims to reduce youth homicide in Philadelphia's most violent neighborhoods. It specifically targets those deemed by initiative partners as "most likely to kill or be killed" in five of the deadliest Philadelphia police districts, including the 22nd, 24th, and 25th districts in North Philadelphia, the 12th district in southwest Philadelphia, and the 19th district in West Philadelphia. Targeted youth are between the ages of 14 to 24 years, and most have been convicted or adjudicated on a violent or drug-related charge at least once.

YVRP is a collaborative effort that involves law enforcement, city agencies and nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the partners in this multi-agency effort include the District Attorney's Office, the Department of Juvenile Probation, the Department of Adult Probation, the Police Department, the Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network (PAAN), Philadelphia Safe and Sound, The School District of Philadelphia, and Public/Private Ventures (P/PV). Through its partnering agencies, YVRP takes a two-pronged approach, providing both increased supervision and increased support to its participants, known as "youth partners" (YP's):

1. Supervision: YP's are assigned to probation officers who are themselves specifically assigned to YVRP. This special group of probation officers is given significantly lighter caseloads (often half the size of those for typical probation officers) in exchange for the opportunity to spend time outside of the office meeting with their probationers, usually at their homes, school or work. In addition, the program also promotes heightened scrutiny by law enforcement agencies and intensive supervision by both police and probation officers, including joint police-probation

patrols, zero tolerance for drug use and gun possession, and an expedited judicial process for those youth who violate the terms of their probation.

2. Support: Prior research has indicated that increased supervision is inadequate in making permanent changes to youth's criminal behavior. As such, YP's are also given increased positive supports through the role of paraprofessionals known as "streetworkers." Streetworkers fill many roles including mentor, counselor and friend. They also provide both tangible (e.g., rides to job interviews, assistance in purchasing attire for job interviews, information regarding community resources and programs offering developmental opportunities like GED programs) and intangible support (e.g., guidance and advice).

YVRP line staff (which sum to a staff of more than 50 police officers, probation officers and streetworkers) aim to meet with participants and their families more than 25 times per month. Several levels of partnership supervision exist in order to ensure that coordination and accountability remain constant over time. A steering committee, which consists of senior-level executives from each agency, meets quarterly to review strategy, develop funding and intercede with organizations outside the partnership. In addition, a mid-level management team meets monthly to deal with inter-agency issues and to review performance data and adherence to benchmarks (i.e., minimum standards) within the partnership, using monitoring data collected on a monthly basis. Finally, an Operations Committee of about 20 first-level supervisors from the partnering agencies meets weekly to select candidates for intervention and to review recent shootings and arrests of youth ages 14-24 in all YVRP districts. At each meeting, a streetworker-probation officer team presents an overview and update about their caseloads, which enables supervisors to monitor individual youth partner cases.

The program has been operational since 1999, beginning in the 24th and 25th police districts. Results from a preliminary evaluation conducted by P/PV in these two police districts, for which an adequate amount of time had passed to judge trends in district- and city-level homicides over time, suggest that it may be effective in preventing youth homicides (see Alive at 25, McClanahan, 2004, available for free download at www.ppv.org). Analyses examining ten years of homicide data collected from the Philadelphia Police revealed that homicides in the 24th and 25th districts were significantly lower following the inception of YVRP.

Specifically, the average number of quarterly youth homicides declined 50 percent from two youth homicides per quarter to just one youth homicide in the 24th district. The 25th district experienced a similar decline of 59 percent, falling to 3.4 youth homicides per quarter from 5.8. In addition to homicides among youth, the 25th district also saw a significant decline in homicides overall, across all ages. Further, the overall rate of homicide reduction was greater in both YVRP districts than in the city as a whole. Although these positive changes in homicides cannot be conclusively attributed to YVRP, these findings lend preliminary support for the effectiveness of the partnership. A quasi-experimental comparison group study is currently being conducted by P/PV to better assess YVRP's effectiveness as a youth violence prevention strategy.

Ready4Work

In 2003, P/PV and the US Department of Labor (DOL) developed Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoner, Community and Faith Initiative (see Just Out, Jucovy, 2006, and Ready4Work In Brief, Farley and Hackman, 2006, available for free download at www.ppv.org). Ready4Work was designed to address the needs of the growing ex-prisoner population and to test the capacity of community- and faith-based organizations to meet those needs. The Ready4Work initiative aimed to strengthen the social networks and supports of participants, increase employment opportunities and/or improve educational outcomes, provide a range of wraparound direct and referral services, and reduce recidivism.

Ready4Work programs provided three core sets of services: employment-related services (e.g., employment-readiness training and job placement); mentoring (group or one-on-one mentoring); and intensive case management, including referrals for housing, health care, drug treatment and other programs. Juvenile Ready4Work focused on providing case management, mentoring, education and employment services to juvenile returnees. Over a period of three years, 11 adult sites (East Harlem, NY; Philadelphia; Washington, DC; Chicago; Detroit; Milwaukee; Houston; Jacksonville; Memphis; Los Angeles; and Oakland) and 7 juvenile sites (Brooklyn, NY; Camden, NJ; Boston; Los Angeles; Houston; New York City; and Seattle) operated Ready4Work programs and built partnerships among local faith, justice, business and social service organizations. Lead agencies included faith-based organizations, secular nonprofits, a mayor's office and a for-profit entity.

Ready4Work targeted 18- to 34-year-old, nonviolent, non-sexual-felony offenders--individuals with the highest risk of recidivism--and enrolled them within 90 days of their release from prison. All participants enrolled voluntarily and could receive services for up to one year. Ready4Work served a predominantly black male population. With an average age of 26, the initiative's participants were younger and more heavily minority than the overall population of ex-prisoners. Half of all participants had been arrested five or more times. A majority had spent more than two years in prison, and almost 25 percent had spent five or more years behind bars. Despite these extensive criminal histories, Ready4Work participants had some advantages when compared with the larger ex-prisoner population: They had slightly higher education rates, and more than half held a full-time job for a year or longer before entering prison. At the same time, more than 50 percent of the participants reported earning half or more of their income from crime the year before they became incarcerated. Across all adult sites, Ready4Work served 4,500 formerly incarcerated individuals.

Outcomes

Program Retention

Participants in Ready4Work remained engaged in the program for a significant period of time: a median of eight months. Only a small proportion left the program during the first few months, while just under 30 percent took advantage of the full 12 months of services.

Employment

Almost 60 percent of all participants held a job for at least one month while they remained in the program. More than 40 percent--and more than 60 percent of enrollees who ever found a job--

remained employed for at least three consecutive months during the program. And almost a third of all participants managed to remain employed for six consecutive months. These accomplishments are impressive given the many barriers these ex-prisoners face.

Recidivism

According to incarceration records available for 8 of the 11 Ready4Work sites, recidivism rates among participants were considerably lower than those reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) for a nationally representative population of ex-prisoners. Just 1.9 percent of Ready4Work participants returned to state prison with a new offense within six months of their release (compared with 5 percent nationally), and only 5 percent did so within one year (compared with 10.4 percent nationally).

P/PV was also able to obtain BJS data on a group of ex-prisoners more similar to Ready4Work participants--18- to 34-year-old, African American, nonviolent felons--which provides a more relevant comparison point. Just 2.4 percent of African American felons participating in Ready4Work returned to state prison with a new offense within six months, and 6.3 percent did so within one year. These rates are 52 to 62 percent lower than those for the subsample of ex-prisoners provided by BJS.

Mentoring and R4W

Ready4Work's most innovative aspect may be its mentoring component: Few social programs have attempted to provide adults--much less ex-offenders--with mentors. P/PV set out to examine how mentoring was related to other in-program outcomes, using four sources of information collected throughout the three years of the initiative: site-reported data on program participants; a questionnaire completed by participants; interviews with program staff, participants and mentors; and public incarceration records.

Findings

Participants who met with a mentor at least once remained in the program longer (10.2 months compared to others who left after an average of 7.2 months). Furthermore, participants who received mentoring of any kind in a given month were 70 percent less likely to leave the program during the following month than participants who were not mentored. Because mentoring is voluntary, some of this observed link may reflect participants' motivation. That is, participants who are more motivated may be both more likely to be involved in mentoring and more likely to remain in the program. Nevertheless, the results are encouraging, because the longer participants remain engaged in a program, the more likely they are to benefit.

Participants who received mentoring were also twice as likely to obtain a job than those who did not take advantage of mentoring. Meeting with a mentor increased a participant's odds of getting a job the next month by 73 percent over ex-offenders not taking advantage of the program. Participants who met with a mentor were 56 percent more likely to remain employed for three months than those who did not.

P/PV's Evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters' Youth Mentoring Program

In its landmark study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters' (BBBS) community-based mentoring program, Public/Private Ventures answered the question, "can mentoring by a caring adult make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth ages 10 to 16?" The results were positive; the study showed that mentoring benefited youth in several areas, including reductions in drug and alcohol use, reduced violent behavior, increases in school attendance and performance, more positive attitudes towards schoolwork, and higher quality peer and family relationships. Mentors met with their youth almost weekly for a year; the mentor functioned as a friend, not a teacher or a preacher; and the mentors were carefully screened, trained and supervised. (See Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters, Tierney and Grossman, 1995, available for free download at www.ppv.org.).

The BBBS Youth Mentoring Program

BBBS' community-based mentoring program aims to provide children (aged 5 to16) from poor single parent homes with long-term, regular contact with a caring adult. Mentors commit to meeting with their child for a minimum of 12 months. The mentors meet approximately once a week for several hours. BBBS is a well-established, high-quality program with more than 500 affiliates across every state, each of which must meet national program standards for level of recruitment, volunteer screening, mentor matching, and continuous supervision and support of matched pairs.

P/PV's Evaluation Methodology

P/PV used the most rigorous of evaluation designs (random assignment) to ensure its findings were defensible. Approximately 1,000 children from eight geographically diverse locations were enrolled in the study. Half of them were assigned, through a lottery, to a group that was matched with a mentor, while the other half of the children joined the wait list for 18 months.

Nearly two-thirds of the study participants were boys, and over half were from a minority group, with 70 percent of that number being African American. Sixty-nine percent of the children were between the ages of 11 and 13 at the start of the program. Fifty-five percent of parents earned a high school equivalency or less. Ninety percent of youth lived with only one parent and many lived in poor households--over 40 percent were receiving either food stamps and/or cash public assistance.

Study participants completed baseline surveys, which gathered basic demographic information as well as the baseline measures for outcome variables in six areas: antisocial activities; academic performance, attitudes and behaviors; relationships with family; relationships with friends; self-concept; and social and cultural enrichment. All study children also filled out follow-up surveys 18 months later. Of the 487 youth assigned to the mentored group, 378 were matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister and met for an average of almost 12 months, meeting about three times per month for about four hours each time.

P/PV's Findings

P/PV found positive impacts of mentoring in all six areas investigated, except social and cultural enrichment. Especially notable impacts within each area include:

Academic:
? Mentored youth skipped 52 percent fewer days of school and 37 percent fewer classes than the unmentored comparison youth.
? Female mentored youth, particularly minority females, felt more competent in school.

Family:
? Mentored youth reported better relationships with parents than comparison group youth, due primarily to higher levels of trust in the parent.

Prevention:
? Mentored youth were 46 percent less likely than nonmentored youth to initiate drug use during the study period. The results were even stronger for minority youth--they were 70 percent less likely to start using drugs.

? Mentored youth were almost one third less likely to report hitting someone in the past 12 months.

Youth Development:
? Mentored youth, particularly minority boys, reported improvements in their relationships with their peers and feeling more emotionally supported by their peers.

The National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth
Building on previous research on mentoring, which provided evidence that mentoring can prevent the initiation of delinquent behaviors (Tierney and Grossman 1995), Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) hypothesized that mentoring high-risk young people might help reduce such behaviors among those already engaged in them. In 1997 P/PV launched the National Faith-Based Initiative; a 12-site demonstration testing the effectiveness of collaborations by local faith-based institutions with juvenile justice and law enforcement organizations. These collaborations sought to provide communities' most vulnerable youth with productive alternatives to crime and violence.

At the time that the National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth (NFBI) began in 1998, little evidence existed about the effectiveness of mentoring programs for high-risk young people. Two out of three significant studies evaluating the effect of mentoring on recidivism found mixed results, while a third found mentoring to be harmful (McCord 1992; O'Donnell et al. 1979; Davidson et al. 1987). None of these studies, however, included mentoring programs operated by faith-based organizations.

A recent review that assesses evaluations completed since the NFBI began comes to the same conclusion: some programs have achieved modest positive results while others appear to have some harmful effects (Blechman and Bopp 2005). Therefore, the question remains: can mentoring deter high-risk youth from risky behaviors?

Three elements formed the core of the NFBI program:

1. A focus on high-risk youth: P/PV required sites to target youth already involved in delinquent activities, or considered by community members to be headed for trouble.

2. Partnerships: With the successful community and justice partnerships of the Boston Ten Point Coalition in mind, P/PV required sites to collaborate with other faith-based organizations, juvenile justice agencies and social service providers.
3. Key services: In addition to whatever services the sites offered when they entered the demonstration, P/PV required them to develop new services to meet the young people's needs around skill development (education and employment related) and positive adult relationships (mentoring) if they did not already have such services.
The demonstration concluded in late 2004, having served 1,786 youth. We found that the sites generally succeeded in recruiting high-risk youth. They also leveraged their credibility as community leaders to establish partnerships with an array of juvenile justice agencies, social service providers and other faith-based organizations. However, many sites encountered serious challenges in implementing key services. Inexperience in offering structured programming, inadequate staff resources and competing demands on those resources were the primary reasons for the inconsistent and often weak implementation. Because of this, we did not recommend to funders and policymakers that they should move forward with a more rigorous random assignment evaluation. We concluded that future work with small to medium-sized faith-based organizations should be guided not simply by broad principles but rather by concrete implementation requirements buttressed with substantial training and technical assistance.

We continued, however, to look at the NFBI's mentoring component. Our third report on the initiative focused on mentoring programs (Bauldry and Hartmann 2004). In that report we documented the creative ways in which the NFBI sites adapted the best practices from community-based mentoring programs to address the unique challenges of working with high-risk youth and faith-based mentors. We found that the sites struggled with mentor recruitment and estimated that they managed to recruit only a third of the volunteers needed to provide a mentor for each young person in their programs at the time. These faith-based mentors tended to be well-educated and resided outside the local community, offering their mentees links to opportunities that may have been unavailable within their own neighborhoods.

We also felt it would be valuable to document participating youth's outcomes in order to determine the more or less successful components of the NFBI, and provide information to the field that might help funders and program operators make better choices about what and how to implement. There are two limitations of the study design to keep in mind when assessing our findings. First, since we did not conduct a random assignment or comparison group study, we cannot attribute the changes the youth experienced to their participation in the programs. Second, due to the timing of the demonstration and the enrollment processes at the sites, we had an average of about six months between baseline and follow-up.
We found no differences in outcomes when we looked at education and employment services. However, our analysis of the youth matched with mentors for at least six months produced interesting results. Mentoring among the NFBI youth acted as a barrier against depression, which in turn had an effect on how the youth handled social conflicts, substance use and recidivism.

1 While Ready4Work's outcomes are very positive when compared with the BJS data, there are limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from such comparisons. The question of participants' motivation is certainly germane to any discussion of recidivism. Furthermore, our study was not

designed to determine if Ready4Work was the cause of any positive participant outcome. More research, such as a random-assignment evaluation, would be needed to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention.

2 Site-reported data included basic information on each participant, a monthly record of all the services they received through the site and a monthly record of their employment status. A questionnaire participants filled out when they joined the program provided detailed information on their education and work history, criminal background, religious beliefs and practices and family support.

3 As previously mentioned, these findings must be interpreted cautiously since mentoring and employment are both related to motivation and possibly other factors as well. The design of the study limited our ability to draw solid cause-and-effect conclusions about mentoring and other program components. Because the Ready4Work model was so new, we oriented our research toward implementation issues. There was no follow-up survey to allow us to explore the precise relationship between mentoring and a wider range of outcomes.

4 From Bauldry, Sean 2006. Positive Support: Mentoring and Depression Among High-Risk Youth. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Available for free download at www.ppv.org.