

Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC

Ensuring a Positive Future:

Mentoring and the Reduction of Risky Behavior Among NYC Youth



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of New York City**

THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES®

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Philliber Research Associates conducted a research study focused on the impact of mentoring on children and young people.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City commissioned this study to further document the positive impact that our programs make on a child, which is central to our mission. Data collected from youth at the time they enrolled in BBBS of NYC Community-Based Mentoring Program and again an average of 15-18 months later, as well as a comparison group of non-participant youth surveyed at the same time.

Founded in 1987, Philliber Research Associates is an independent research and evaluation firm that specializes in outcome-based evaluation and program planning services, and has evaluated hundreds of programs across the United States and abroad. As the founder and senior partner of Philliber Research Associates, Dr. William Philliber provided Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City with more than forty years of experience in program design, development, and evaluation.

We are extremely delighted at the findings, which strongly support what we have believed for over a century – **that mentoring has the power to change lives.**

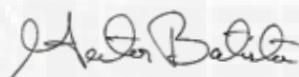
We are so pleased to share with you the following highlights of this study:

- While risky behaviors tend to increase as children transition through pre-adolescence and adolescence, youth in our mentoring program, including those in middle and high school grades, were stable.
- The impact was apparent after just six months of being matched with a mentor.
- Mentoring was an effective tool for both boys and girls.

It is clear that the consistent support and guidance of a mentor empowers youth to make better choices, engage in less risky behavior, and ultimately, position themselves to build a more successful future than they initially had and a more successful future than their non-mentored peers.

The following are the detailed results of this study.

Sincerely,



Hector Batista
Chief Executive Officer

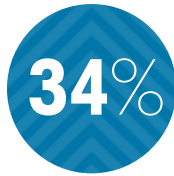
BACKGROUND

Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City (BBBS of NYC) provides evidenced-based, impactful mentoring relationships, case management, and educational support to at-risk youth ages 7-18 (up to 21 for teen mothers and youth in foster care). Annually, we serve over 4,000 youth with one-to-one mentors (Bigs) and one-day programs. Nearly all of our youth are raised in low-income, single-parent homes.

Demographically, our youth are:



African-American



Latino/a



Asian



Multiracial

In 2012, under the leadership of the board of trustees and Executive Director Hector Batista, a strategic planning committee was formed of staff and trustees. The FY12-17 Strategic Plan that was developed emphasizes our commitment to the following: impact, community partnerships, donor network, framework/infrastructure, and governance. Moreover, to refine our focus we revised our vision and mission statements:

- **Our vision is that all children achieve success in life.**
- **Our mission is to provide children facing adversity in New York City with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one mentoring relationships with adults that change their lives for the better, forever. We partner with families, volunteers, organizations and the community to inspire positive change in all.**

During the strategic planning process we determined that stronger impact is vital for the organization. In addition to qualitative measures of impact, which we document through case notes and success stories, we wanted to conduct a research study to evaluate our community-based mentoring programs. Our goal was to come close to replicating the rigor of the gold standard for research on mentoring's impact, which is the landmark study conducted by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) in 1994-95. That study examined the Big Brothers Big Sisters model nationwide, and found that, compared with a control group, mentored youth were significantly impacted. Mentored youth were 46% less likely to initiate drug use and 27% less likely to initiate alcohol use, compared to control group participants. The mentored youth also earned higher grades, skipped fewer classes, and felt more competent about doing their schoolwork.

To reinforce those results, nearly two decades after the P/PV study, we embarked on a scientific research study of our youth, with a control group by Philliber Research Associates (PRA). To ensure the study would effectively address and assess our work to achieve our mission and vision, an internal interdepartmental research committee was formed to work with PRA and collaborate on implementing a new evaluation protocol. This recent study found that for mentored youth, risky behaviors stabilized in six months, risk-taking in most areas declined after one year in our mentoring program, while in the control group risk-taking increased in most of the areas. This is important for our work, as well as for the organizations and communities that are interested in mentoring as a means of helping youth stay safe and healthy, achieve academic success, and mature into responsible adults.

RESEARCH STUDY OVERVIEW

Evaluating, documenting, and raising awareness of positive impact are all critical parts of providing services to at-risk populations. Mentoring that adheres to our one-to-one model has been demonstrated by scientific research studies to be an evidence-based method to improve youth's behavior, academic performance, self-confidence, and relationships with family and peers. It is also a proven model for preventing delinquency, teen pregnancy, truancy, and violence. Research and evaluation from the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) have found that our one-to-one mentoring model is proven to decrease harmful behavior among youth and increase positive, pro-social behavior and attitudes. The Center for Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado identified BBBS mentoring as the second of eleven "Blueprint" model intervention programs effective for reducing adolescent violent crime, aggression, delinquency and substance abuse, out of a study of 900 programs.

As youth age, especially those considered 'at-risk,' they often engage in more risky behavior as part of their journey from childhood to adulthood. We want to minimize those behaviors as they can cause issues (substance abuse; teen pregnancy; arrest), and they can also lead to future problems (addiction, lack of education, lost career opportunities). Thus, researchers consider a program to have a positive impact among youth if not only decreased risky behavior is found, but also if a stabilizing effect is found—that is, some youth in some areas may not reduce their risky behavior, but at least they have not increased the level of harmful behavior that 'naturally' occurs among most youth.

This research study conducted by Philliber Research Associates for Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City (BBBS of NYC) demonstrates that among our youth the evidence is strong that providing at-risk children and teens with adult volunteer mentors will have a significant impact on their attitudes and behaviors. Our study showed that despite the changes in society or the evolving needs of young people, our mentoring programs continue to serve as a meaningful intervention for both boys and girls. Our mentees, after a year in our program, engage in dramatically fewer risky behaviors than their peers, with a significant impact made in middle and high school youth. In fact, in grades seven through twelve, among youth not in our programs, there were substantial increases in risk factors (29% in grades seven through nine and 42% in grades ten through twelve), but not among participants in our mentoring programs.

STUDY DESIGN AND YOUTH SAMPLED

Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City began a two-year study to document the impact that mentoring has on young people. Data was collected from enrolled children and young people, who were matched with mentors. In addition, a cohort of young people who are not served by Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City agreed to participate as part of a comparison group. The non-participants were students who attended the South Bronx Academy for Applied Media which is a middle school in the Bronx and New Heights Academy which is a high school located in Washington Heights. Both schools are composed of predominantly low-income students receiving free or reduced lunch. The schools were chosen because the students are similar to the young people BBBS of NYC serves.

(continued.)

Over the course of the study, 202 youth in the BBBS of NYC one-to-one community-based mentoring programs enrolled in the study, representing approximately one-third of those beginning our programs. These youth were surveyed at intake, and, after being matched with an adult volunteer mentor, they were surveyed six-nine months later (early impact), and then again at 15-18 months (long-term impact). Both participants and non-participants were asked questions about their adjustment to school and family, their risk-taking behaviors, self-confidence, and demographic characteristics

Surveys document at-risk behavior and circumstances among mentored youth in eight areas:

- Family: e.g., youth argues with family most of the time; no adult in home employed.
- School adjustment: e.g., youth does not like school, skipped school, does not plan to attend college.
- School grades: i.e., youth's most recent grades in math, English, science, and social studies.
- Exposure to violence: e.g., in the past three months the youth hit someone, or was in a physical fight.
- Substance abuse: e.g., in the past three months the youth drank alcohol, or smoked marijuana.
- Bullying: i.e. in past three month the youth was a victim or perpetrator of bullying.
- Sexual activity: e.g., in the past three months youth had sexual intercourse or got someone pregnant.
- Self-confidence: e.g., youth is afraid to try new things, does not stand up for him/herself.

Baseline surveys were collected from youth at the time they were first assigned mentors between 2011-2012. On average, these youth engaged in a moderate-high number of risky behaviors, which research indicates is expected from a group of youth who are mostly from low-income, single-parent families and representative of the population we serve. Almost all reported at least one risk factor while over half were at-risk in at least five areas. Youth were most at risk because of family issues, school issues, and violence issues. These youth were similar to the youth in the control group, 180 youth who also had a range of risk factors, again within the expected range for youth in mainly low-income, single-parent households.

Over the course of 15-18 months, youth who were assigned a mentor as part of our one-to-one community-based programs followed our mentoring model, which included the following:

- They met twice a month with their mentor for 6-10 hours per month of enrichment, educational, sports, and/or cultural activities out in the community with the mentor—approximately 100 contact hours per year with the mentor.
- Our staff conducted monthly check-ins, case management and supervision of all parties in the relationship, including parents/caregivers.
- The structure was flexible, framed by frequent contact, goal-setting, and focus on personal achievement and developing pro-social attitudes.

On the following pages we discuss the major findings of the long-term impact surveys. Of the initial youth surveyed, approximately half responded to the long-term impact study, and their baseline risk factors at intake mirrored the risk-factors of those who did not respond to the follow-up. It is also important to note that the size of the sample at final follow-up is sufficient to provide a meaningful analysis of the impact of mentoring.

MAJOR FINDINGS

It is typical for risk behaviors to increase as adolescents age, as it is a time of experimentation and individual growth. However, the results of this study indicate that BBBS of NYC participants demonstrate patterns of stability as opposed to the increase in risk behaviors that was manifested among non-participants—risk factors were stable or were reduced among mentored youth and increased among non-participants in nearly every category. Between the time of baseline and follow-up, at 15-18 months, there were increases in the percentage of non-participants reporting family issues, school issues, poor grades, substance abuse issues, bullying issues, violence issues, and sexual activity issues. This suggests that, without the support of BBBS of NYC, risky behaviors among young people are more likely to increase.

The overall positive impact on youth, after one year in the program, was strong. Risk-taking declined among program participants in five of the eight issue areas examined. In particular, we were pleased to see that violence issues (e.g., hit someone, physical fight) and school issues (e.g., skipping school) declined significantly. The other three areas of risk remained stable, meaning they did not increase, which reflects a positive result, as noted above. Meanwhile, the prevalence of risk among those youth not in our program increased, with a higher percentage of non-participants reporting issues in every category at follow-up. There were significant increases in the percentages reporting bullying, sexual activity, and substance abuse. Details include:



Overall, the difference between the two groups was clear: at 15-18 months, risk-taking was **59% higher** among non-participants than among participants.



Risk-taking **decreased 21%** among our mentored youth, while increasing 13% among non-participants.



Among girls, our program participants showed clear improvements, engaging in **fewer risky behaviors**, while risk-taking substantially increased among non-participating girls.

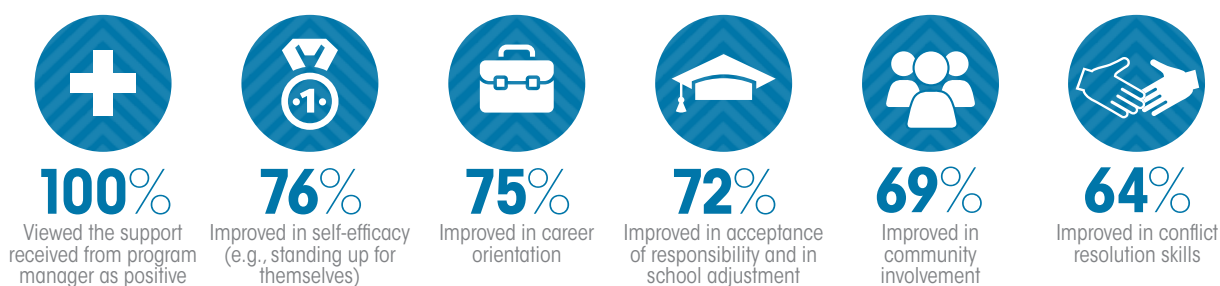


Among boys, our program participants generally **improved or stayed stable**, while non-participating boys generally increased risk-taking in most categories. Substance abuse issues were the most differentiated: the risk decreased by half among mentored youth, while it doubled among non-participants. Non-participating boys also increased significantly in their exposure to risks related to sexual activity and bullying.

Of all of the risk factors included in our study, sexual activity was the most prevalent among non-participants, showing the greatest increase at follow-up. This area remained stable for mentored youth, while increasing for non-participants. This suggests that BBBS of NYC is a critical intervention for avoiding or reducing teen pregnancy and the associated negative effects of early sexual activity, including emotional stress and health risks.

Parents and mentors were also surveyed about their youth, to triangulate the information on our youth's experiences with us. Their surveys were different, but still attempted to address the question of whether our mentoring programming positively impacts our youth. We are pleased to report that the surveys from mentors and parents supported the results we obtained from our youth surveys:

The 298 mentors surveyed, indicated that:



For the 105 parents surveyed:



Final Thoughts

While youth in our programs were similar to non-participants at the time they enrolled in BBBS of NYC's mentoring programs, their paths took different directions. Risky behavior increased for non-participants, while it decreased or stabilized for those in our programs. A significant finding is that the prevalence of sexual activity and drug use increased significantly among those youth not participating in our programs, but not among our program youth. This reassures us for our program youth, but it also reflects the reality that many at-risk youth will naturally gravitate to riskier behavior as they mature. However, a positive intervention can disrupt the process. Mentoring is well-suited to curbing those specific high-risk behaviors, as mentoring is relatively low-cost compared to the societal long-term costs of, for example, juvenile incarceration, or teen parenthood.

Now that the research study has concluded, we plan to use the survey tool we created to evaluate our community-based mentoring program annually. The results will serve as a management tool to monitor our programs. We also plan to offer our survey tool to organizations that have mentoring programs through our Center for Training and Professional Development where we offer technical assistance to community-based organizations so they can enhance or further develop their mentoring programs.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The participant and non-participant groups were similar with respect to gender (47% of the participants and 43% of the non-participants were boys) and about half of both groups lived in single parent households. However, participants were less likely to be Hispanic (31% compared to 75%) and more likely to be younger (a third of the participating youth but none of the comparisons were enrolled in elementary school).

The 97 participants who were surveyed at follow-up were similar in age to the 105 who were only surveyed at enrollment. However, those who failed to complete a follow-up survey were more likely to be girls (35% compared to 47%), African-American (53% compared to 39%), and live in single parent households (62% compared to 50%). Both groups reported a similar number of risk factors (3.1 compared to 2.8).

RISK FACTORS

At the time baseline and follow-up data were collected, the youth were asked whether, in the past three months, they had engaged in any of thirty-six different risk behaviors. These behaviors were grouped into eight different domains.¹



¹The domains and their associated behaviors were:

Family Issues

- Single parent household
- No adult in household employed
- Parent in jail or prison
- Cannot talk to adult in household
- Does not get along with family

School Issues

- Does not like school
- Does not do homework
- Parents called because something wrong
- Suspended from school
- Damaged school property
- Does not plan to graduate
- Does not plan to go to college
- Skipped school

Bullying Issues

- Been bullied
- Bullied someone else

Substance Abuse Issues

- Drank alcohol
- Smoked cigarettes
- Smoked marijuana
- Used other drugs

Poor Grades

- Grade equivalent to D or F in:
 - Math
 - Language Arts
 - Science
 - Social Studies

Sexual Activity

- Had sexual intercourse
- Had sex without a condom
- Pregnant or got someone pregnant

Self-Confidence Issues

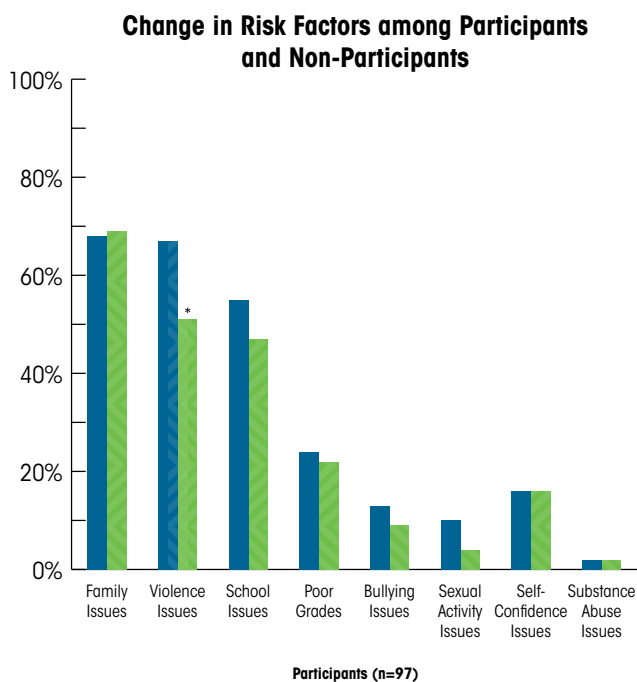
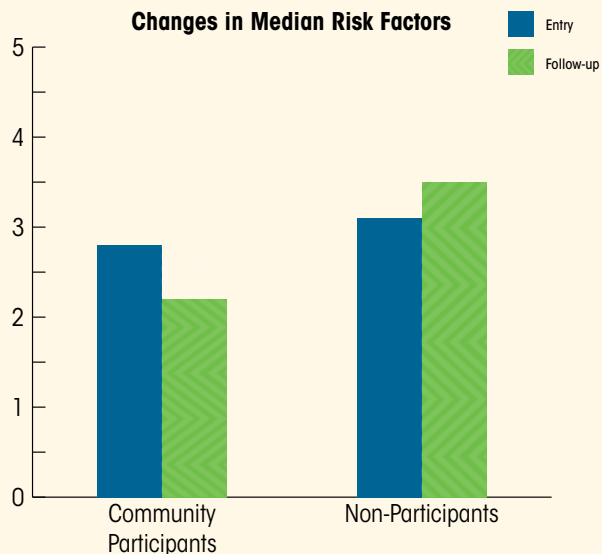
- Does not stand up for self
- Does not like to go to places or meet people
- Afraid to try new things
- Does not do better than others
- Does not make friends easily

Violence Issues

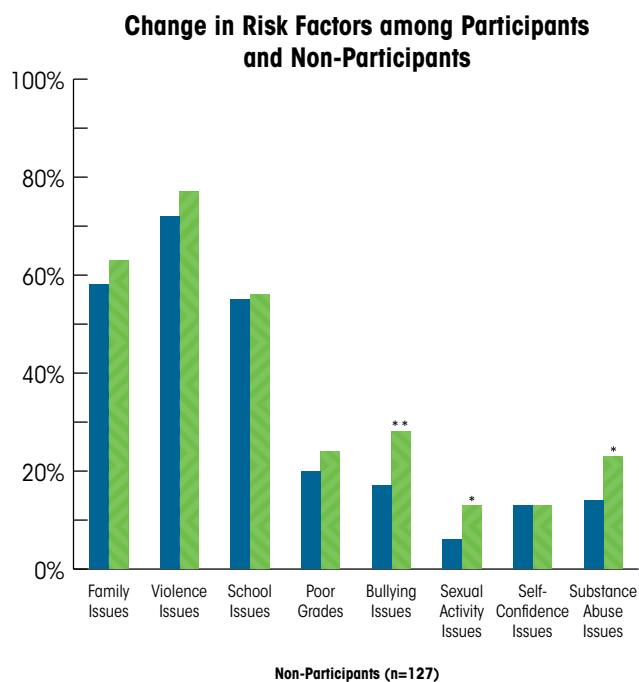
- Does not talk to solve problems
- Becomes angry
- Hit someone in anger
- In a physical fight
- Carried a weapon

At the time community participants enrolled in BBBS of NYC, their risk factors were similar to those who were non-participants. Participants reported a median of 2.8 risk factors while non-participants reported 3.1. However, risk factors declined among participants while increasing among non-participants such that at follow-up risk factors among non-participants were 59% higher than among participants.

Comparing changes in risk factors among community participants and non-participants by domain reveals a very different change in behavior between the two groups. The percentage of participants reporting violence issues and school issues significantly declined.



* Difference is statistically significant at <.05



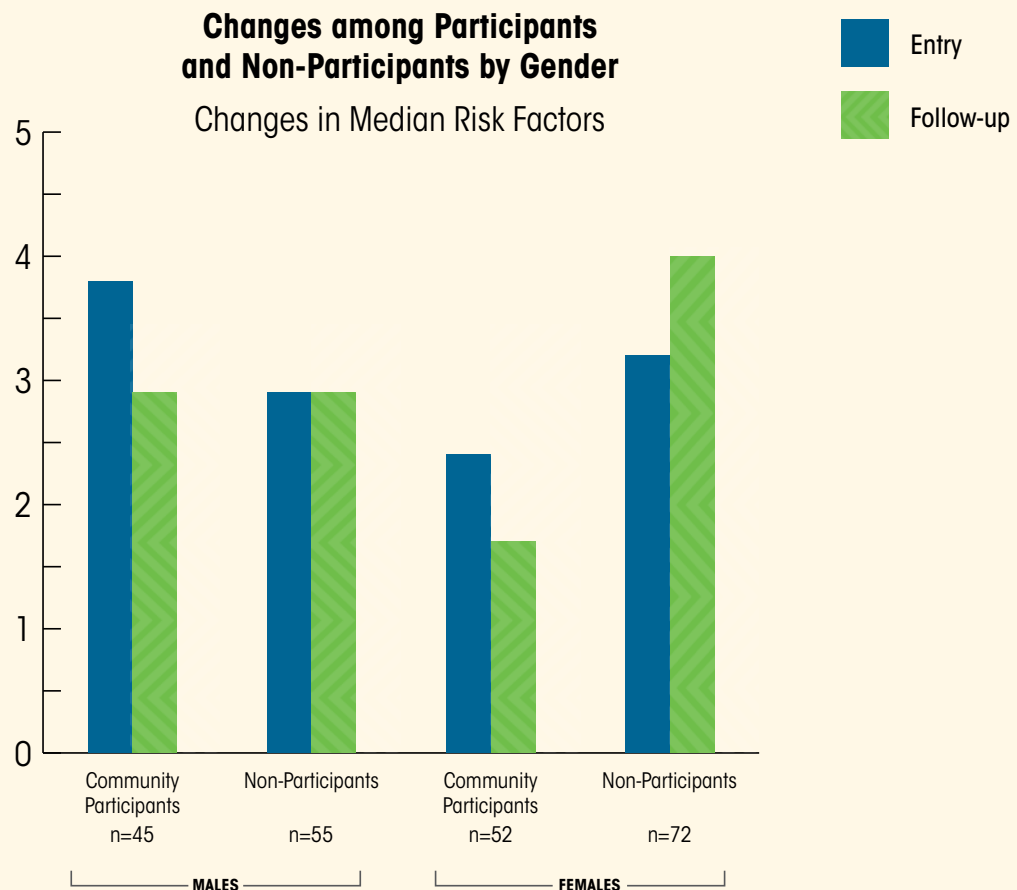
* Difference is statistically significant at <.05, ** <.01

Declines were also found in three of the other domains: poor grades, bullying, and sexual activity. The other three domains remained unchanged. A higher percentage of non-participants, by comparison, reported issues on every domain at follow-up. There were significant increases in the percentages reporting bullying, sexual activity, and substance abuse.

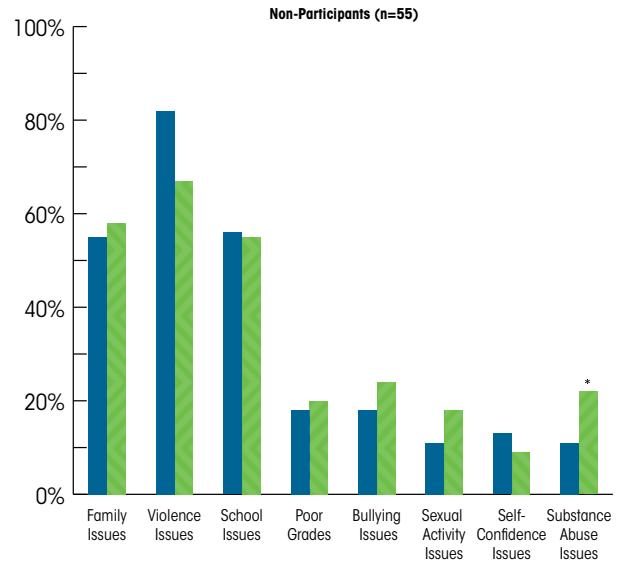
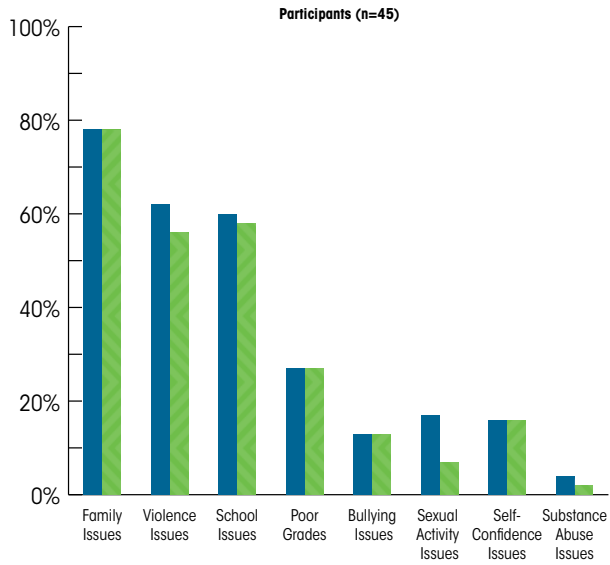
Among participants, the median number of risk factors decreased among both boys and girls. Non-participants showed increases among girls, while boys remained steady with a median of 2.9. Among boys, participants started out their baseline with greater risk, seeing a decrease over time.

Among males, participants remained stable in the domains of family issues, school issues, bullying, self-confidence, and substance abuse. They demonstrated declines in violence issues and risky sexual behavior. At the same time, the male non-participants increased their risky behavior in the domains of family issues, bullying, sexual activity and substance abuse. They only improved in the areas of violence and self-confidence.

Female participants demonstrated improvements in violence, school, and bullying issues while remaining stable in other domains. Non-participants reported greater risk taking in every domain assessed.

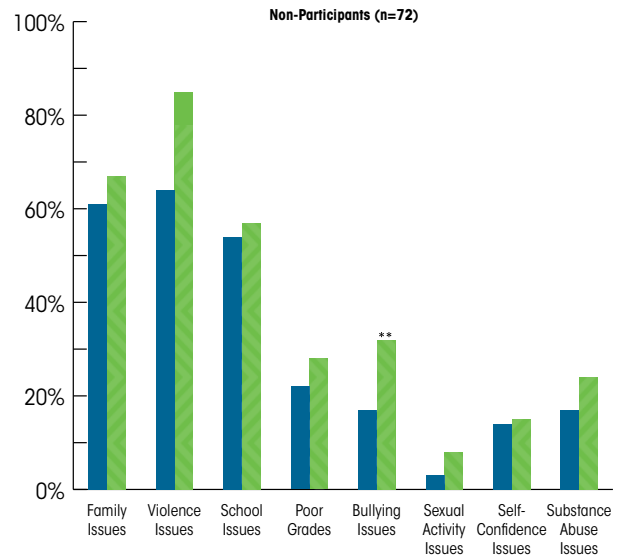
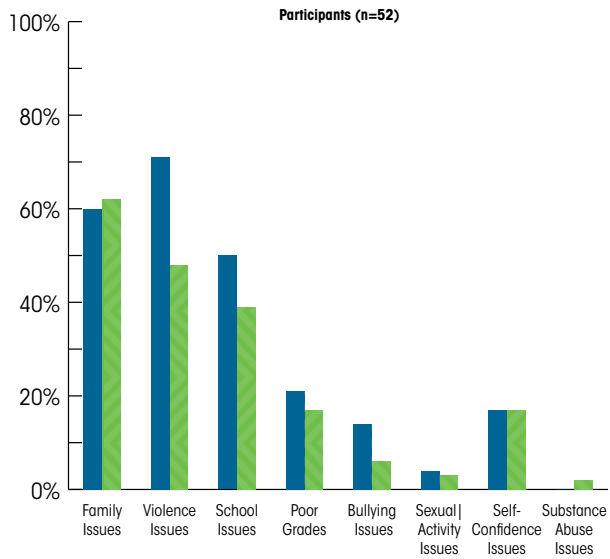


..... MALES



* Difference is statistically significant at <.05

..... FEMALES



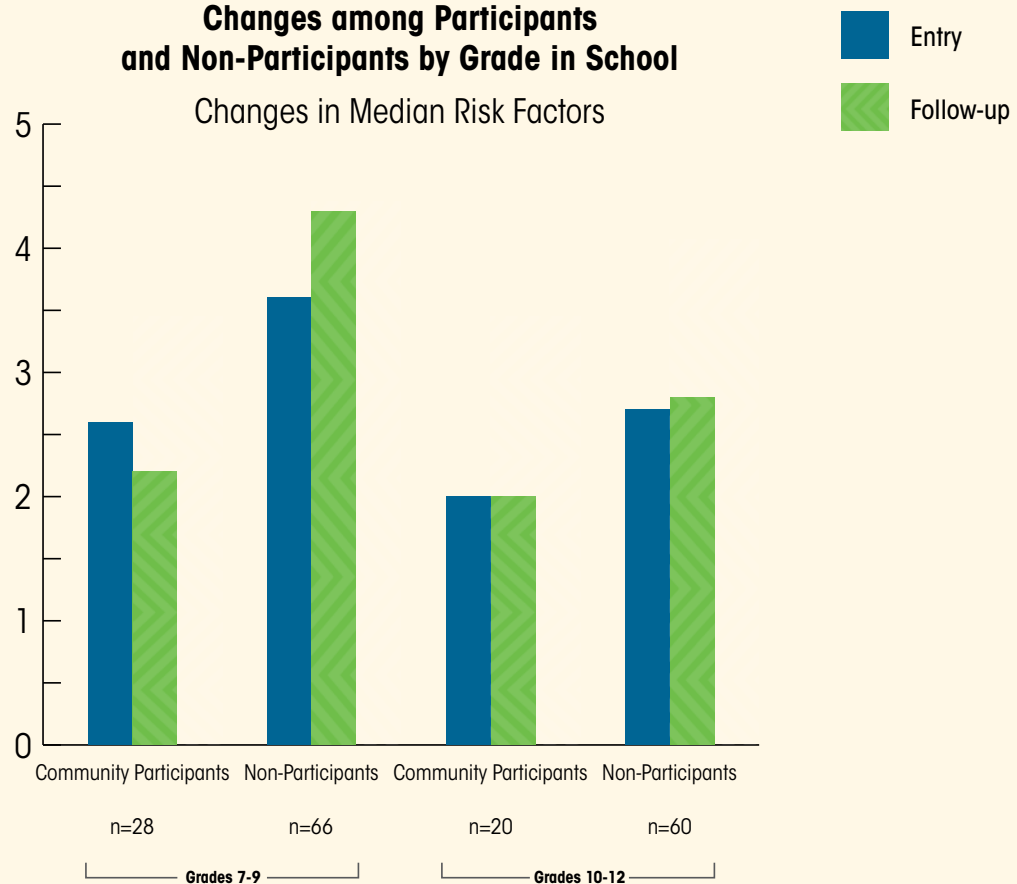
** Difference is statistically significant at <.01

Participants in grades seven through nine showed reduced risk taking in the domains of violence, school, bullying, and sexual activity while non-participants reported greater risk-taking in every domain with the exception of self-confidence.

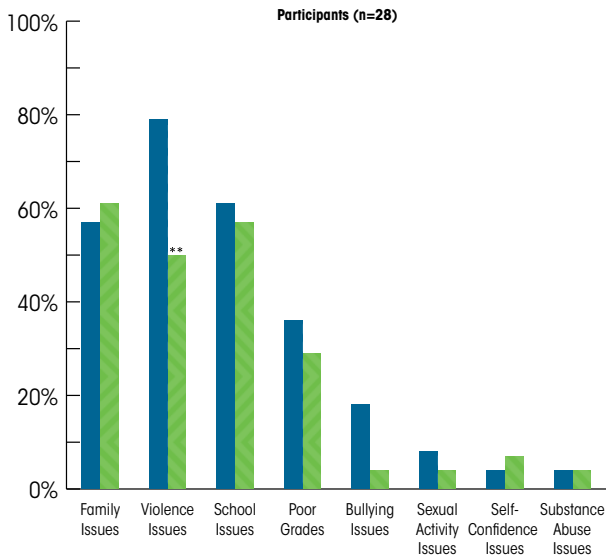
Participants in grades ten through twelve reduced risk related to family, school, sex, and substance abuse. Self-confidence was the only domain in which their risk increased. Non-participants, on the other hand, increased their risk on six of the eight domains while only improving in school related issues.

Changes among Participants and Non-Participants by Grade in School

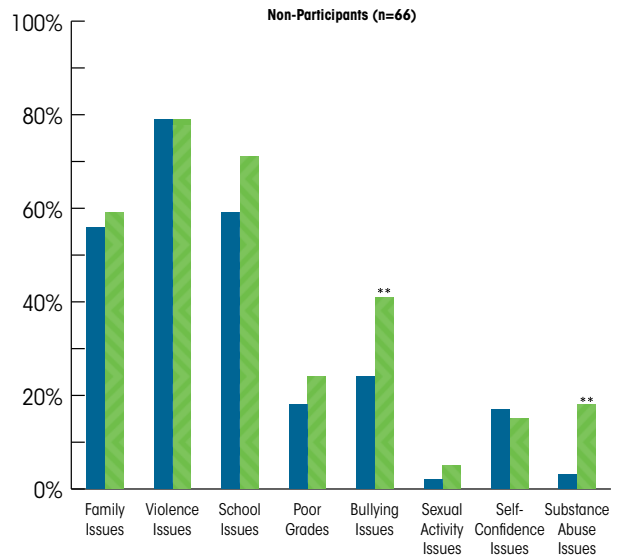
Changes in Median Risk Factors



..... 7-9

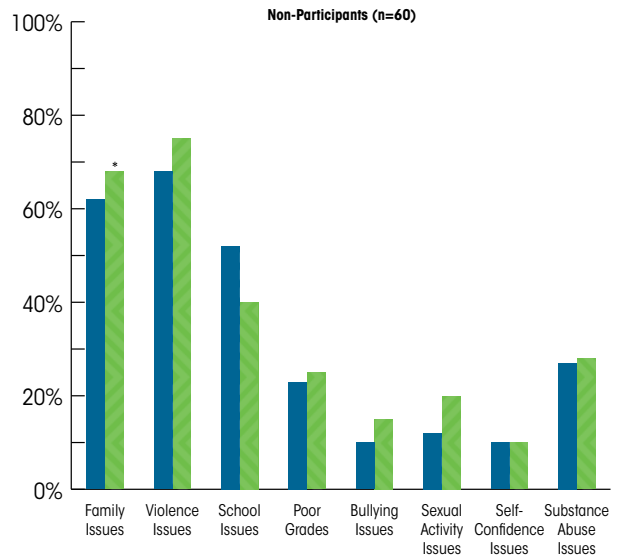
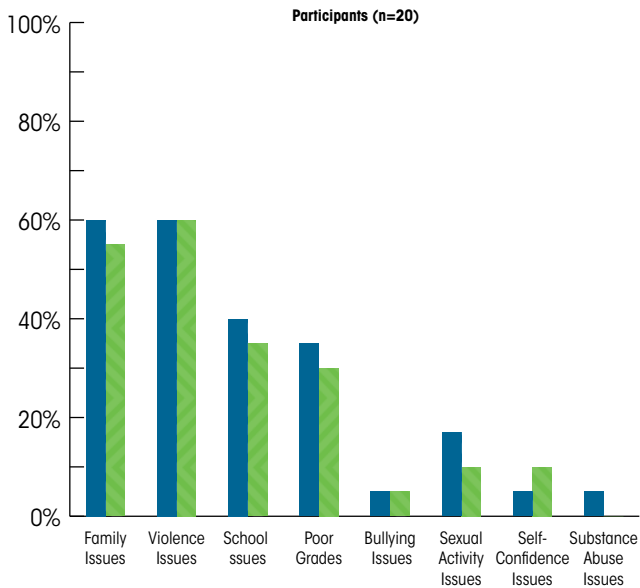


** Difference is statistically significant at <.01



** Difference is statistically significant at <.01

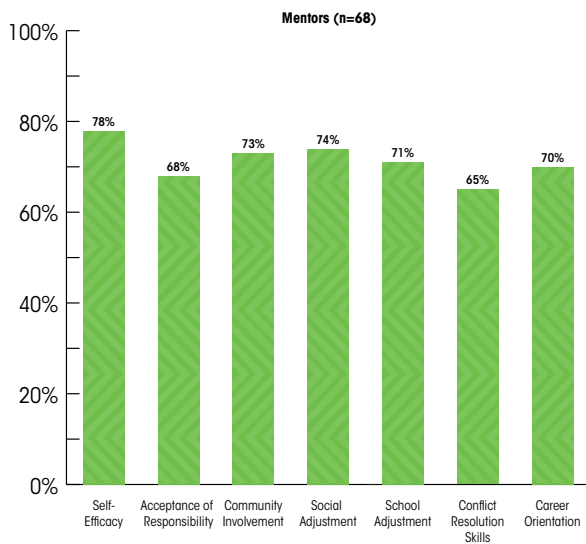
..... 10-12



* Difference is statistically significant at <.05

Mentors' evaluation of youth

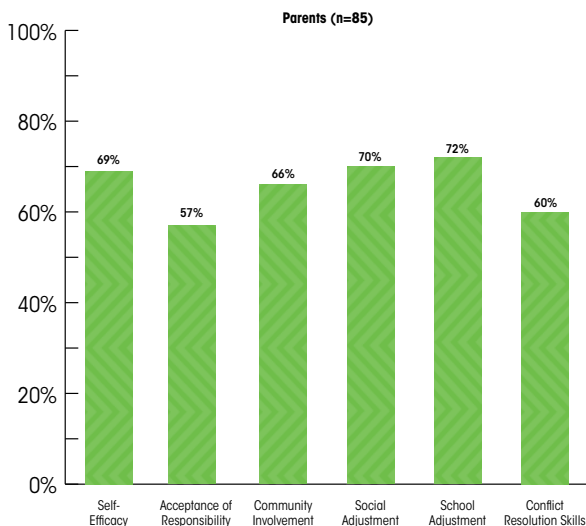
Mentors for 68 community-based mentoring youth who completed follow-up surveys also completed surveys about their mentees at approximately the same time the participants were surveyed. They were asked whether their mentees exhibited twenty-eight different behaviors more of the time, less of the time, or the same amount of time as they had when the match began. The behaviors were grouped into seven domains and scales formed for each domain. Each scale varies from 0 to 100% with a higher number being more positive. The higher the percentage, the more behaviors are perceived as demonstrating positive gains and the fewer behaviors are perceived as demonstrating negative losses.



On every dimension the mentors felt the youth they served had made progress since the time they began working together. The greatest progress was in self-efficacy while the least was in conflict resolution skills. On average, the participating youth received a score of 71%.

Parents' evaluation of youth

Parents of 85 community-based mentoring youth completed follow-up surveys about their children at approximately the same time the participants were surveyed. They were asked whether their children exhibited twenty-eight different behaviors more of the time, less of the time, or the same amount of time as they had before enrolling in BBBS of NYC. The behaviors were grouped into six domains and scales formed for each domain. Each scale varies from 0 to 100% with a higher number being more positive. The higher the percentage, the more behaviors are perceived as demonstrating positive gains and the fewer behaviors are perceived as demonstrating negative losses.



The parents saw improvement in their children on every dimension. The greatest improvement occurred in social adjustment and school adjustment while the least improvement was in acceptance of responsibility. The average youth received a score of 66% from their parents.

²The domains and their associated behaviors that were evaluated by mentors and parents include:

Self-efficacy

Happy
Feels good about self
Likes to try new things
Feels someone cares about them
Stands up for self

School Adjustment

Works hard to do well in school
Likes school
Likes learning new things
Wants to stay home from school when well

Acceptance of Responsibility

Follows directions
Listens to what others say
Behaves
Accepts consequences of behavior
Tells truth
Completes things started

Conflict Resolution Skills

Solves problems by talking
Willing to meet others half way
Disagrees with others without anger

Community Involvement

Looks for ways to help people
Likes to meet new people

Career Orientation

Demonstrates Leadership
Wants a career
Knows more about workplace
Has a career path

Social Adjustment

Gets along with friends
Makes friends easily
Listens to others
Respectful to others

CONCLUSIONS

Baseline surveys collected from 202 youth at the time they were first assigned mentors demonstrated the typical young person participating in the community-based mentoring programs of Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City engaged in a moderate number of risky behaviors. Almost all (98%) reported at least one risk factor while over half (52%) were at risk on at least five factors. Youth were most at risk because of family issues, school issues, and violence issues.

Youth who were assigned a mentor as part of the community-based mentoring programs of BBBS of NYC met twice a month with their mentor in the community.

Follow-up surveys were completed by 97 of the original youth participating in community-based mentoring programs and 127 of the original comparison group. These surveys were completed an average of 15-18 months after the baseline surveys were collected.

While participants were similar to non-participants at the time they enrolled in BBBS of NYC, their paths took different directions. Risk-taking increased 13% among the youth who were not mentored from a median of 3.1 to a median of 3.5. At the same time, risk-taking decreased 21% among participating youth from a median of 2.8 to a median of 2.2. Risk-taking was 59% higher among non-participants than among participants when they were surveyed an average of 15-18 months after enrolling in BBBS of NYC.

Risk-taking declined among participants in five of the eight domains; violence issues and school issues declined significantly. The other three domains remained unchanged. By contrast, a higher percentage of non-participants reported issues on every domain at follow-up. There were significant increases in the percentages reporting bullying, sexual activity, and substance abuse.

Risk-taking decreased among both boys and girls in community-based mentoring programs and among students in middle school.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City

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We have a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency.

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