

The Need for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities:

Youth with physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities represent special populations at risk for juvenile delinquency, victimization, educational failure, and poor employment outcomes. They often have multiple, overlapping risk factors. Such youth benefit from mentoring relationships.

The Need for Inclusive Mentoring Programs:

Youth with disabilities typically receive mentoring, if at all, within disability-specific programs rather than in inclusive, community-based programs. Community-based programs include participants with diverse characteristics, offer comprehensive resources, and promote education, job readiness, development of employment skills, and/or training in and exposure to entrepreneurial activities.

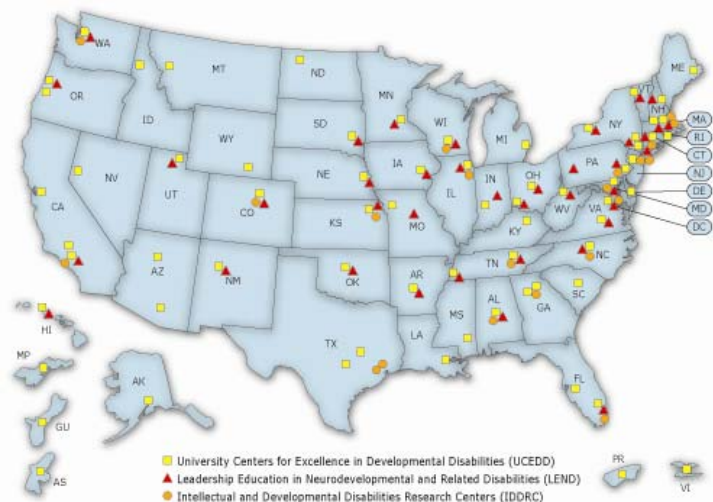
The Benefits:

- There is value in youth with disabilities engaging with peers who do not have disabilities or have disabilities different than their own,
- The community capacity to serve people with disabilities is enhanced with training, technical assistance, and programmatic supports,
- There is a social value to providing inclusive supports and services, and
- Building the capacity of community-based mentoring programs to serve all youth well—including those with special physical or mental challenges—is more cost-effective than supporting multiple specialty services.

Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is a membership organization that supports and promotes a national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs. Network members consist of:

- 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD)
- 39 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Programs funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)
- 19 Intellectual and Developmental Disability Research Centers (IDDRC), most of which are funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Development (NICHD).



These programs are located in every U.S. state and territory and are all part of universities or medical centers. They serve as a bridge between the university and the community, bringing together the resources of both to achieve meaningful change.

AUCD Network Mentoring Youth with Disabilities Highlights:

Several AUCD network members have been in the forefront of this issue and are engaged in or have conducted successful programs concerning mentoring youth with disabilities.

Washington

The University of Washington designed the implemented the “DO-IT” (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) e-mentoring community in 1992 and is active to this day. It is an Internet-based mentoring community for college-bound teenagers with a wide range of abilities and disabilities and helps participants succeed in education, employment, and other adult-life activities. The teenagers have disabilities such as mobility impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, autism spectrum disorders, speech impairments, and health impairments. Its numerous awards include the National Information Infrastructure Award in 1996 and the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mentoring in 1997.

North Dakota

The North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University is implementing the “I Can Do It, You Can Do It” mentoring program, developed by the US Department of Health and Human Services Office on Disability, to promote good nutrition and physical activity among youth with disabilities. Mentors (who may or may not have a disability) are trained, matched with a youth with a disability (ages 12–21), and supported in an 8-week, one-to-one mentoring relationship.

Illinois

The Institute on Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois-Chicago piloted “Project Disability Bullet,” a peer-training disability and violence service model designed to reintegrate a growing population of individuals disabled as a result of violence. Culturally competent peer mentors are trained to bridge the gap between medical rehabilitation and the objectives of education, employment, independent living, self-advocacy, and physical fitness for mentees.

California

The Tarjan Center at the University of California–Los Angeles has partnered with California Volunteers, California’s State Commission on Service, to pilot a community service program for students with and without disabilities in an urban high school largely attended by youth who have been in the juvenile court system. The Center has infused disability awareness, knowledge, and skills into the mentee curriculum and provided technical assistance to the project.

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