

Native American Mentoring Initiative: Mentoring Children with Incarcerated Parents

Welcome to the Mentoring Children of Prisoner's Voucher Demonstration Program

"Caregiver's Choice." Established in 2007, the Voucher Demonstration Program is designed to increase access to mentoring services nationwide and provide caregivers and parents the choice to select a mentoring program that meets high quality standards. The Family and Youth Services Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded a grant to the National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) to coordinate the distribution of the vouchers. The goal is to serve children who reside in areas not served by a Mentoring Children of Prisoner's basic grant, Native American children and children residing in rural areas. In addition, MENTOR provides ongoing training and technical assistance to all community based Caregiver's Choice Mentoring Providers and their Affiliates.

We are pleased to announce a tribal partnership opportunity within the *Mentoring Children of Prisoner's: Caregiver's Choice* initiative (*Caregiver's Choice*). This exciting new partnership will provide additional financial support for mentoring programs providing services for Native American youth with incarcerated parents.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

In all cultures, the presence of a caring adult is integral to a child's success in life and their ability to develop a healthy positive outlook. The Native American Mentoring Initiative recognizes the existence of natural mentors throughout native cultural history and as an integral part of the daily lives of Native American people – especially traditions passed to younger generations from the elders. Children with incarcerated parents are vulnerable to stigma and low self esteem. Mentoring helps unlock their potential through a positive trusting relationship with a helpful adult. Children who are mentored are less likely to participate in risky behaviors, have fewer contacts with law enforcement and perform better in school.

Mentors are not meant to be replacement parents, but they often help the caregiver strengthen their parenting skills and understand the needs of their child. Adults enter into mentoring relationships with the thought of helping a child in need, but often report that they gain far more than they feel they give.

HOW DOES THE PARTNERSHIP WORK?

Tribal, Alaskan Villages and Pacific Islanders are eligible to participate in the Native American Mentoring Initiative. In addition, urban Native American youth programs, including Boys and Girls Clubs and Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations, are eligible to participate.

Caregiver's Choice is a federal demonstration project that provides financial support to qualified programs providing mentoring services to youth with parents in jail. Thanks to this partnership, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters and other tribal-based National Organizations with the capacity to screen, train and support mentor matches may receive a stipend to offset some of their costs. For each mentored young person who has an incarcerated parent, programs can

receive up to \$1,000. The funding is disbursed in three payments linked to meeting the following match criteria milestones:

Milestone 1- Mentor is screened, trained, and matched with the child. Both the child and mentor have completed a short pre-survey. Mentor and mentee have first face to face meeting. **\$600**

Milestone 2- Mentor and child have been matched for three months. Focus is on the frequency and duration of match meetings and regular case management by the mentoring program. **\$200**

Milestone 3 - Mentor and child have been matched for six months. While there is no payment at this milestone, all of the criteria must be met to be eligible for the payment at Milestone 4. These criteria focus on those mentioned in the previous milestone.

Milestone 4- Mentor and child have been matched for twelve months and have completed a survey. Mentoring relationships that reach twelve months often continue. **\$200**

Milestones are tracked using MentorPRO Basic, the free on-line data tracking system provided to all approved *Caregiver's Choice* programs.

Program providers may receive youth referrals directly through the child's caregiver/guardian. They may also receive referrals inviting them to reach out to an identified family in order to enroll the child.

HOW CAN A NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPATE IN CAREGIVER'S CHOICE?

STEP 1: Contact *Caregiver's Choice*

Programs can call Caregivers Choice directly at 703-224-2210 or apply online at www.mentoring.org/caregiverschoice

STEP 2: Participate in Virtual Trainings

All programs will take two required trainings as part of the *Caregiver's Choice* application process. These free trainings include learning the MentorPRO Basic online data tracking system and the specialized, interactive Mentoring Children of Prisoners session. Program directors, case managers, and other staff members are encouraged to register. Only one staff member per program must attend. Trainings are held regularly. To obtain a schedule of upcoming trainings, call 703-224-2210, email caregiverschoice@mentoring.org or check the Caregiver's Choice website at www.mentoring.org/caregiverschoice.

STEP 3: Families Sign Up

In the case of current mentoring programs, during intake interview staff members may ask family members if there is a parent currently in jail. Parents can enroll their child by calling the toll free number 877-333-CHOICE (2464).

STEP 4: Screen Your Mentors

The Federal legislation authorizing *Caregiver's Choice* requires participating organizations to conduct a fingerprint background check on all mentors. Native Jurisdictions may have their own requirements for background checks. *Caregivers Choice* is making a rigorous background check available at very little cost. SafetyNET conducts background checks in an agreement with the FBI and costs only \$18 per check with the results returned to a program in 3-5 business days. For more information, visit <http://mentoring.org/safetynet/>.

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