A mentor training module designed to build resiliency for homeless emerging adults

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A mentor training module designed to build resiliency for homeless emerging adults

Abstract
Homelessness in emerging adulthood is a problem that potentially creates a lifetime of extreme poverty and limits the ability to thrive in adulthood. The literature demonstrates a need for programs specific to the homeless emerging adult population. A mentoring program is beneficial because the relationship between the mentor and mentee can offset developmental and psychosocial shortfalls that impede the individual’s transition to adulthood. The homeless emerging adult needs a sense of belonging and positive role models. The theories of Maslow and Bandura therefore become the foundation of the mentoring training manual. The Walk with Me mentoring program manual and training program has been developed to guide the mentor and mentee as they develop a caring and supportive relationship.

Keywords
Psychology, Counseling, Developmental, Sociology, Public and Social Welfare

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A MENTOR TRAINING MODULE DESIGNED TO BUILD RESILIENCY FOR
HOMELESS EMERGING ADULTS

BY

COURTNEY J. EDWARDS
Bachelors of Arts, Union Institute and University, 2007

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
in
Counseling

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This thesis has been examined and approved.

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\[\text{May 2, 2011}\]
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DEDICATION

Thank you to my husband Jeffrey and three sons, Tyler, Lucas and Jeremy who have been supportive and forgiving throughout my educational process. I would not have and could not have done it without you! Boys, I have done it all to be the best person I can be – for you! Thanks to my circle of friends who have been incredible sounding boards, editors, friends and cheerleaders. I love you all and would not be the person I am today without each and every one of you and the gifts you bring to my life.
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Homelessness in emerging adulthood is a problem that potentially creates a lifetime of extreme poverty and limits the ability to thrive in adulthood. The literature demonstrates a need for programs specific to the homeless emerging adult population. A mentoring program is beneficial because the relationship between the mentor and mentee can offset developmental and psychosocial shortfalls that impede the individual’s transition to adulthood. The homeless emerging adult needs a sense of belonging and positive role models. The theories of Maslow and Bandura therefore become the foundation of the mentoring training manual. The *Walk with Me* mentoring program manual and training program has been developed to guide the mentor and mentee as they develop a caring and supportive relationship.
INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to propose a mentoring program and mentor training manual specifically designed to model positive behaviors and provide support for homeless emerging adults. It is the assertion of this thesis that through creating and administering a mentoring program between homeless emerging adults and caring, stable community members that the homeless emerging adult, over time, will feel assured safety in the relationship which will promote resiliency and personal growth for the emerging adult.

The effects of homelessness on the emerging adult can create a lifetime of homelessness and a cycle of extreme poverty that he or she struggles to break. Living without stable housing threatens personal safety, long term physical and mental well-being and the ability to have and maintain healthy personal relationships. Additionally, education and employment opportunities are greatly limited for the emerging adult because he or she lacks a permanent home address. The policies and programs designed to help homeless individuals most often help specific populations like families with children, veterans, elderly adults and the mentally ill. The homeless emerging adult falls into a service gap; often overlooked or lost in the system. These particular adults have needs specific to their age and experience which require learning personal, vocational and interpersonal skills necessary to function effectively as an independent adult. Further, the social influences on the homeless emerging adult are often limited and encourage unhealthy behaviors or life choices. The combination of external influences, personal
relationships and inner dialogue or process all contribute to ineffective patterns of behavior which will become cyclical without intervention strategies that will help to address root causes.
CHAPTER I  

RATIONALE AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS  

**Background and Rationale**  

Emerging adulthood is a complicated time of transition for individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. The transition to adulthood involves a diverse spectrum of experiences including the discovery of vocational interests, attempts at personal independence and testing and learning in romantic relationships. Ideally, the emerging adult experiences this stage of development with support and mentorship from supportive and caring adults who encourage personal potential and growth (Whitbeck, 2009). 

Emerging adulthood for a homeless person, however, is often a time filled with frustration and stress as he or she has limited support to help make this transition to adulthood effectively. 

According to the National HealthCare for the Homeless Council [NHCHC] lack of social support and social capital in the community signifies a “gaping hole in the safety net” for the homeless emerging adult (NHCHC, 2004, p. 31). The research suggests that every year in the United States “approximately 750,000 to 2 million” emerging adults experience at least one episode of homelessness (NHCHC, 2004, p. v.). An episode of homelessness could mean sleeping on a couch, sleeping in a car, pitching a tent in a local park or staying in a shelter. Why would someone without a job or financial means to live independently trade the stability of his or her home for the insecurity of homelessness? Often, it is to leave some type of abusive situation. According to the
National Coalition for the Homeless [NCH] “many homeless youth leave home after years of physical and sexual abuse, strained relationships, addiction of a family member, and parental neglect” (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008, p. 1). The years of childhood maltreatment take a toll on the adolescent or emerging adult and he or she often leaves or simply fades from family life without anyone in his or her family seeming to notice or care. The adolescent or emerging adult who chooses to leave his or her home is commonly referred to as a runaway. The adolescent or emerging adult who is kicked out, locked out or neglected to the point of leaving home unnoticed is called a throwaway. Homelessness is a choice many emerging adults make because living away from their primary home allows them to have or perceive some level of control over their lives. NCH states that “disruptive family conditions are the principal reason that young people leave home” (NCH, June 2008, p.1).

Dysfunctional family patterns that include making poor choices and/or exhibiting negative behaviors are factors contributing to homelessness for emerging adults. The unhealthy patterns observed in the family setting add to the lack of psychosocial ability of adolescents and emerging adults as they attempt to transition into adulthood. Ineffective behaviors will continue to disrupt the life of a homeless emerging adult until he or she learns the skills necessary to move beyond these negative patterns. According to Bandura’s social learning/cognitive theory, children learn what is modeled for them. Often the negative behaviors are observed or perceived by the child as normal and subsequently repeated incorrectly as a social norm. Adolescents or emerging adults who have life experiences involving patterns of maltreatment, homelessness or poverty have a unique perception of the way the world works. This social maladaptive understanding
becomes a challenge for the homeless emerging adult. New social expectations that arise in adulthood require the individual to learn new skills. The NHCHC asserts that:

For young people who have not adapted to the structure of school or an organized family life, the most fundamental skills – showing up at work, doing what one is told and staying at work for the duration of responsibility – must be learned (2004, p. 28).

Understanding the need to be responsible is difficult for the individual when the support system or behavior model is his or her homeless peers who usually have similar skewed perceptions and disregard for social conventions. It is important to understand that for many in the homeless emerging adult population instability has been one of the only constants in his or her life. Without creating stability the homeless emerging adult will struggle to grow and thrive as an adult because he or she will be consistently focused on meeting his or her basic needs. The impact on society and future generations is undeniable. Homelessness and poverty are hard cycles to break and the loss of human potential due to poverty is significant. Millions of people live on the “razor’s edge” because they are unable to fully support themselves and as a result are never able to achieve their highest potential or contribution to society.

Maslow, in his book *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1980), discusses the importance of meeting the basic needs of children and individuals as they grow and mature. Maslow uses the example of a toddler entering a room full of people. First, the child takes a few steps then hurries back to his mother’s leg for assurance. Soon, however, the child will again take those steps, but instead of running back to his mother will simply look back to reassure his safety and comfort. Maslow states that “assured safety permits higher needs and impulses to emerge and to grow toward mastery. To endanger safety means regression backward to the more basic foundation” (1980, p.49).
Assured safety and support is what the homeless emerging adult lacks. The homeless emerging adult will spend his or her time and energy trying to figure out how to get basic and safety needs met such as where to sleep, where to get one’s next meal, etc. Until the emerging adult can meet his or her basic physiological and biological needs, adequate progress toward higher goals will be virtually impossible.

The loss of contact with supportive family members and other natural mentors or supportive individuals can also delay the emerging adult’s personal development. A mentor in the role of a caring, non-parental adult is able to address this challenge for a variety of reasons. First, many homeless emerging adults do not have family to depend on for emotional or social support and their peer groups often model negative behaviors and choices. This challenge can be addressed by establishing a relationship with an older, stable person in the community who can provide guidance, support and generally serve as a model for positive behaviors and choices (i.e., mentor). Second, the homeless emerging adult may have several professionals working to provide them with services, but at the end of the day, professional boundaries limit the interaction. It is hard to imagine how it must feel only to receive support from people who are paid to be involved in one’s life. The *Walk with Me* mentoring program proposed in this thesis has been designed to build a bridge where one appears absent: encouraging the establishment of relationships with caring, stable adults that remain constant even when services fluctuate or stop.

The art of mentoring is the ability to meet the mentee where he or she is and to be fully present and authentic as the relationship grows. This authentic sense of belonging for the mentee is the primary task for the mentor. The feeling of belonging, as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs suggests, allows the emerging adult a sense of stability in the
relationship. As the relationship grows, a mentor can help his or her mentee through new experiences by guiding them and modeling healthy behavior as Bandura suggests in his social cognitive/learning theory. A mentor can support a mentee by sharing life stories, validating the mentee’s experiences and by being a sounding board for the mentee to practice the skills he or she is developing in therapy or vocational education. Health care, especially mental health care, is a luxury for many homeless emerging adults and while mentoring is not a substitute for or a form of professional counseling, it provides a supportive person in the life of a homeless person that could make a significant difference.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Homeless Youth or Emerging Adult** – An individual 18 years or older who cannot return home, may have opted not to return home, or who has no permanent residence (Whitbeck, 2009).

**Runaway** – A child who leaves home without permission and stays away overnight (Whitbeck, 2009)

**Throwaway** – A child who is asked or told to leave home without any form of alternate care arranged or a child who is prevented from returning home by an adult in the household and the child is out of the house overnight (Whitbeck, 2009).

**Emerging Adulthood** - A new developmental stage between adolescence and adulthood with distinct developmental characteristics. It is a time when the individual seeks to find and follow personal interests, especially in love and vocation (Arnett, 2004).
Early Independence – By running away or being a throwaway the adolescent or emerging adult attends to his or her own needs and is generally forced to be independent because of conflict in relationships in the home (Whitbeck, 2009).

Safety – A place of comfort or a feeling of safe harbor which allows individuals to expand their personal boundaries and try new things without concern of harmful consequences due to lack of success (Maslow, 1980)

Conventional Behaviors – Behaviors and/or expectations that society or the community considers usual or customary.

Corrective Emotional Experience – A process which creates a feeling of interpersonal safety for an individual so that he/she will intentionally break dysfunctional behavior patterns (Teyber, 2006).

Mentoring – A structured and trusting relationship that brings people in need of support together with caring individuals who are willing to offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee (Rhodes, 2002).

Natural Mentor – A non-parent or non-peer individual who has a supportive relationship with a younger person because of his/her natural involvement with the young person (e.g., grandparent, coach, neighbor) (Rhodes, 2002).

Developmental Assets – A strength-based developmental approach which focuses on creating resiliency in youth through assets in community, school, family and policy (Benson, 2006).

Physiological Needs – Basic biological needs such as food, air, water, clothing and shelter (Malsow, 1980).
Safety Needs – Needs that are secondary to physiological needs and when not met can lead to issues of insecurity (Maslow, 1980).

Resiliency – The ability to overcome negative or stressful circumstances (Arnett, 2004).

Childhood Maltreatment – Includes neglect, emotional abuse and physical forms of abuse (Thomas & Hall, 2008).

Modeling – A therapeutic method in which one or more people demonstrate desirable behaviors. It is also the same as Observation Learning (Ewen, 2003).

Thriving [in adulthood] – Occurs when one has psychological maturity, has compassion and empathy for others, has healthy values and priorities, recognizes the value of and appreciates life, and has new strengths (Thomas & Hall, 2008).

Summary

The loss of human potential caused by homelessness in general should not be acceptable in a society such as ours which has it within its power to create the necessary change. Homelessness during emerging adulthood in particular is a problem that must be addressed because too often it creates a lifetime of extreme poverty and lack of contribution to society. The NHCHC says that emerging adulthood:

Is a window of opportunity during which youth can, with support, live to their potential and grow into a healthy responsibly functioning adult contributing to society, or left to their own devices face a future of dependency, marginalization and potential long-term homelessness (2004, p. 4).

Mentors can help homeless emerging adults by expanding the social circle they see on a regular basis and through being a consistent source of support. Many young people have never been part of or witnessed a working household that pays bills, works regular jobs or
demonstrate a healthy relationship among adults. Unfortunately, our society places the same legal and fiscal responsibility on the homeless emerging adult regardless of their ability to understand the consequences.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The goal of this chapter is to provide pertinent information about mentoring and its potential use with homeless emerging adults. Additionally, the new developmental stage of emerging adulthood will be clarified as well as the impact of homelessness during this time of transition and growth. Finally, with the theories of Maslow and Bandura, the ways a mentor can help establish a greater sense of resiliency for a homeless emerging adult mentee will be discussed.

Mentoring

Mentoring is generally defined as a structured and trusting relationship that brings people in need of support together with caring individuals who are willing to offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee (Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring, if done well, can make a difference in the life of the mentee and usually the mentor too. Leading researcher Jean Rhodes conveys in her book *Stand by Me* that: “Compared with their less successful peers resilient youth sought support more often from nonparent adults. In fact, without exception, all children who thrived had at least one nonparent adult who provided consistent emotional support” (Rhodes, 2002, p. 29).

Natural mentors can come into the lives of young people through family relationships, school, sports, community and work places. The natural mentoring relationship occurs when the individual is able to “recruit” his or her own mentor. Some
adolescents and emerging adults are skilled at attracting their own mentors and maintaining healthy authentic relationships without guidance, support or a formal program. However, it is not possible for some individuals to do this because of a lack of supportive people in the family or extended community. Opportunities to form natural mentoring relationships within the extended family are also now limited because of the need for families to relocate to find work or affordable housing. Further, the burden placed on parents to work long hours to provide for their families limits their collective availability to the community as a whole. This is different from in the past when children were often looked after by neighbors in a shared sense of responsibility. The emerging adult with limited family or community connections would benefit from a formal program to find a mentor in his or her life.

Mentoring happens in a variety of ways and in a number of settings in the community. Formal youth mentoring programs are often based in schools or in community organizations like Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Volunteers for school mentoring programs usually commit to spending an hour a week with the student for the duration of the school year. Community based mentoring programs often have more flexible one-on-one time as well as group activities with other mentors and mentees. Both mentoring and resiliency research agree that without fail an individual who has at least one non-parent adult in his or her life will be more resilient. According to Scales and Leffert (1999) mentoring can provide “for a range of developmental benefits, including higher self-esteem, greater engagement and performance in school, reduced delinquency and substance abuse and better mental health” (as cited in Rhodes, 2002, p. 10). They also
suggest that these developmental benefits could also apply to the homeless emerging adult.

A common theme in any mentoring relationship is the sharing of wisdom and extending support among individuals. The existing support system around homeless emerging adults are frequently paid professionals. Case managers, social workers, health professionals or other support workers have the best of intentions but the work is dependent on professionals. However, a mentor is someone who is choosing to be there for the homeless emerging adult and as simple as that may seem, it matters when there is no one else. A connection with a mentor can often be the first mutual relationship with a mature adult for the emerging adult. If the relationship is successful it could open him or her to greater possibilities and perhaps even a lifetime of social and personal growth. Rhodes explains that: “...through consistently warm and accepting interaction with their mentors, protégés [mentees] can begin to recognize the enormous potential that exists in close relationships and to open themselves up more to the people around them” (2002b, p. 38).

It is important to understand that the mentoring relationship does not take the place of professional therapy. Though the process in the mentoring relationship is not intentionally therapeutic, the results of the experience may prove to be so. The social support and modeling of positive behaviors can compliment a wide variety of treatment plans and therapists should be made aware of their client’s participation in the program. A mentor is to serve as the mentee’s trusted friend and advisor. The first goal of any mentoring relationship is to establish a sense of belonging with the mentee. As with any
relationship, the mentoring pair could make an authentic connection instantly or it could take time and perseverance on behalf of the mentor to gain the mentee’s trust.

In his book *Interpersonal Process in Therapy*, Teyber (2006) describes a therapeutic process which is called a “corrective emotional experience.” The process as illustrated by Teyber is similar to the process called “corrective learning experience” as suggested by Bandura (1977, as cited by Ewen, 2003, p. 513). Teyber and Bandura both describe the corrective experiences as opportunities for personal growth through the mentee attempting an activity which causes some anxiety or [perceived] fear. The activity that causes fear or anxiety could be something as simple as shaking hands but without prior knowledge that simple greeting can be intimidating. When the mentee prevails over his or her [irrational] fear a greater sense of self-efficacy is established (Ewen, 2003, p. 513). Progression can be accomplished by the mentor showing up consistently and modeling healthy ways of interacting. Additionally, the skilled and well-trained mentor would need to demonstrate the “interpersonal flexibility to combine firm limits with compassion” (Teyber, 2006, p. 206). When a mentor is able to maintain firm limits with compassion the emerging adult experiences change. Often change and growth will stem from the emerging adult learning to trust the mentor and the relationship. Trust is built as the mentor provides secure and caring personal boundaries and follows through with his or her commitments. The mentee can learn social skills by participating in a healthy mentoring relationship and by observing his or her mentor interacting with others. Teyber suggests that in a safe and stable relationship the “safety allows these clients [emerging adults] to stop testing and manipulating others and acting out in self destructive ways” (Teyber, 2006, p. 206). Ideally, as the relationship grows, the mentor can use the
mentee’s attempts at manipulation as teachable moments. Mentors must understand the mentee’s nonproductive relationship and behavioral patterns to overcome possible testing behaviors as they work to establish a connection.

**Mentoring as it Applies to Homelessness**

Homeless emerging adults often lack positive role models that can help them learn the skills required to escape homelessness. Wauchope, in a study published by the Carsey Institute and the New Hampshire Children’s Alliance, sums up the unique challenges facing homeless emerging adults in New Hampshire by stating that “adult shelters are not developmentally appropriate for young adults” (2010, p. 5). The problem, as Wauchope states, is that:

Difficulties often arise when mixing them [emerging adults] with older adults who have long histories of addictions, mental illness, abuse, crime, and other problems and who model survival strategies learned from years of living on the street to the younger residents (2010, p. 5).

Likewise, involvement in street culture can create a sense of belonging that will keep the individual on the streets. Whitbeck describes social networks as an important consideration for the homeless adolescent or emerging adult. He argues that “for runaways, ties to stable caring adults are tenuous, and maintaining and establishing such network members may be very important” (2009, p. 201). The longer an emerging adult stays on the street, the more they become invested in the street culture and the more difficult it becomes to “reestablish conventional ties to education, family, and employment” (Whitbeck, 2009, p. 201).

Despite the potential that mentoring has to model positive behaviors and life skills for the homeless emerging adult, the literature did not describe any current or past programs designed to work with homeless emerging adults.
However, several articles referenced the lack of social supports as a barrier for most homeless emerging adults (Ammerman, et. al, 2004; Foster & Gifford, 2008; Settersten, 2008; Settersten & Ray, 2010).

**The Emerging Adult**

Jeffrey Arnett is one of the leading researchers on a new stage of development called emerging adulthood. In his book *Emerging Adulthood* (2004), Arnett says that emerging adulthood is a developmental stage that is a time for the young adult to find his or her way in the adult world. It is a time for the individual to “try on” different occupations, relationships and to discover and test personal beliefs. Arnett’s work defines this developmental stage as possessing five main features:

1. It is the age of *identity exploration*, of trying out various possibilities, especially in love and work.
2. It is the age of *instability*.
3. It is the most *self-focused* stage of life.
4. It is the age of *feeling in-between*, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult.
5. It is the age of *possibilities*, when hopes flourish, when people have unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives.

(Arnett, 2004, p. 8).

Historically, the benchmarks for becoming an adult have customarily been young people moving from their parents’ home, finding stable careers, finishing their education, getting married and having children. A variety of societal shifts and changing expectations of young adults (ages 18-25) have occurred over the past 50 years. The
changes have not been observed solely in the United States, but globally as well. In their paper *What's going on with young people today?*, Settersten Jr. and Ray (2010) explain “social timetables that were widely observed in that era no longer seem relevant, and young people are taking longer to achieve economic and psychological autonomy than their counterparts did” (Settersten & Ray, 2010, p. 20). In *An Invitation to the Lifespan*, research states that these changes have been observed in countries such as China, Brazil, East Asia, South Africa as well as North America and Europe (Berger, 2010). These changes include, but are not limited to, higher college attendance, social acceptance of cohabitation, the development and common use of birth control (which has also set back the timetable when younger adults have children) and for more women entering the workforce before having children. Independently these factors can be considered positive changes, but they have also contributed to extending the age and process for transitioning to adulthood. The transition into adulthood has shifted in the past four decades; therefore, it is important that society understand the implications of this change. Adulthood no longer begins the day an individual turns 18 or when they graduate high school or even if they become parents. As a result, the transition timeline that society and parents have for the emerging adult is not always a realistic expectation in the world today.

The first milestone, living independently of parents, has been considered an important step toward adulthood in the United States. The challenge is that most emerging adults cannot afford to live independently immediately after high school and often not after completing college. Low wages and overall earning potential is the primary reason emerging adults require additional family financial support. Some individuals achieve a first step toward independent living by going to college and living
in dorms or apartments near the college. This is not always the case and currently, more emerging adults live at home with parents than in their parents’ generation. According to Settersten and Ray (2010) this is merely a pendulum swing back toward a norm. The authors believe that the post World War II economy allowed emerging adults to leave home and start families as very young adults and that this was an anomaly that quickly became considered a cultural norm and an expectation. The authors explain: “At the turn of both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, greater proportions of young people stayed home longer than those who came of age at mid-century because they faced distinctive social and economic conditions of their own” (Settersten & Ray, 2010, p. 24).

Additionally, the current housing and rental market is not a friendly environment for the emerging adult. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) explains that the most frequently used reasons by landlords to deny rental applications include the following: poor or no rental history, poor credit score, low incomes and poor employment records (NAEH, 2010, p. 6). The landlord’s criteria would create a challenge for most emerging adults attempting to enter the rental market without family support. Most emerging adults have not had time to have a well-established job or to create positive credit and rental reports for themselves. As our economy and housing market struggle, the emerging adult will have a hard time finding solid footing in the rental/housing market.

In society today, many emerging adults require additional financial support that has put “pressure on families to house adult children” according to Settersten and Ray (2010, p. 25). The emerging adult living with his or her parents is often perceived negatively for not being able to live independently. Realistically, it is simply not feasible
in today’s economy for many emerging adults to live independently. The ability to live independently is happening later in life for today’s emerging adults than in previous generations. Settersten and Ray cite that the time of independence between adolescence and full adulthood [prior to marriage, family or career establishment] “is one of the most profound changes in the experience of young adults in the past several decades” (2010, p. 26). Essentially, independent living has never been so personally important to the success of the emerging adult, but at the same time is taking longer to accomplish in today’s world.

The second milestone, finding a career, holds more personal meaning to emerging adults than it did half a century ago. The priority in the 1950s would simply have been to find a job that would enable the individual to support a young family, Though commonplace for the 1950s, in today’s job market it would be rare for an emerging adult to find one job and stay with it through retirement. Arnett’s research shows that “the average American holds seven to eight different jobs between the ages of 18 and 30…” (2004, p. 146). Settersten and Ray concur with Arnett in the conclusion that jobs in the emerging adult years are more flexible than just a few decades ago. The authors also agree that for the most part these are jobs they are doing while waiting for something better to come along. Arnett explains the emerging adult’s perspective on careers in this way: “Emerging adults want more out of work than a decent wage and a steady paycheck. They want work to be an expression of themselves, to fit well with their interests and abilities, to be something they find satisfying and enjoyable” (Arnett, 2004, p. 162). The emerging adult’s desire to have a career that matters and the ever-changing job market have contributed to the shifting vocational expectation as well as taking longer to
settle into a career that is best for them. Basically, the emerging adults of today are willing to explore many different kinds of jobs and get more education until they feel the work they are doing is right for them.

The next area which has traditionally been considered a milestone toward adulthood is the completion of education, defined as graduation from high school or college. Many students who would not have traditionally gone to college out of high school are now going to college. The recent improvements to the community college system and a wide variety of career based certificate programs have made formal education beyond high school readily available to students. The US higher education system, according to Arnett, is “open and extensive” and unlike any other in the world (2004, p. 120). He explains the opportunity for education in the following way: “In this way American society supports an extended emerging adulthood, in which people have abundant opportunities to obtain higher education which will allow them to explore a wide range of possible occupational futures” (2004, p. 120).

Arnett suggests that the expanded reach of college attainment in our society has contributed greatly to the creation of the emerging adulthood stage of development. With more people going to college the standard adult milestones are simply taking longer to accomplish for a greater number of emerging adults. Settersten and Ray also point out “...that only 40 percent of those who enter four-year institutions earn degrees within six years” (2010, p. 27). Jeffrey Arnett provides another possible explanation for the extended time that some emerging adults take to earn a college degree: “The influences that lead emerging adults to take a long time to finish their degrees are the same ones that
lead many of them to drop out – uncertainty over what to study, too much ‘beer and circus’, financial struggles” (Arnett, 2004, p. 131).

Now more than ever college is possible for a greater number of students who graduate high school. According to Settersten and Ray “today’s young adults are better educated than any previous generation in the nation’s history” (2010, p. 26). While clearly a good thing, it is essential that society understand the impact this has on the emerging adult developmental process. With more emerging adults than ever before extending their education after high school, the average time it takes to find personal independence is extended.

The final two milestones are marriage and starting families which are also happening later, if at all. The attainment of these milestones is closely tied together in most of the research. Settersten and Ray explain that emerging adults are delaying marriage and having a family. They suggest that “… [whereas] once couples came together to build a life together, today couples build their own lives separately and then marry” (Settersten & Ray, 2010, p. 30). The median ages for couples who choose to get married in the first decade of the twenty-first century are over age 27 for men and 26 for women and this is close to a five-year difference from marriage trends just 40 years ago. The growing acceptance of same-sex relationships, cohabitation before or instead of marriage, single parenthood, delaying having children and other diverse life choices have also contributed to the rise in the median age.

Arnett contends that emerging adults in the 1950s were anxious to “settle down” and have a family whereas the young heterosexual couples today seek to avoid unplanned pregnancies. Many in the emerging adult stage avoid “being tied down” until they are
ready to engage in a committed relationship. Arnett also says a good percentage of this change can be contributed to the changing social status of women in American society. Arnett points out that an unmarried 26 year old in the 1950s would have had an unfavorable social status. A woman's role at the time was “defined” by what her husband did for work. He also contends that women often attended college with “the purpose of finding a husband” (Arnett, 2004, p.6). In higher education today more women are graduating than men. According to the research, at age 26 the young woman in society today is looking to define her career and may be married but it is no longer a societal expectation (Arnett, 2004).

Certainly, the transition to adulthood still has many of the same milestones and obstacles and adulthood will eventually be achieved regardless of the journey. The challenge is that the gap between adolescence and adulthood is more expansive than it was. Many find emerging adulthood a time of endless possibilities and excitement, while others experience limitation and frustration. Emerging adulthood has created space for individuals to “try on” different versions of themselves, to discover who they are meant to be, and to define what kind of person they want to be in adulthood. With supportive environments individuals can gradually transition into adulthood as they learn the skills to fully function as an adult.

**Homelessness in Emerging Adulthood**

According to NAEH, the reasons most people become homeless are “poverty; a financial setback or household dispute; or release from an institution with no resources to re-integrate” (NAEH, 2010, p. 1). NAEH disputes the stereotypical image of the “average” homeless person as mentally ill or chemically dependent. The current statistics
show this stereotype is an exception to the rule at this time. NAEH research shows that “about one-third of the people who become homeless in a year are parents and children” (NAEH, 2010, p. 1). It is important to note that these data represent only those who report themselves as homeless to public agencies. Many individuals and families are homeless by definition though they would not consider themselves to be homeless. They are the people living on couches and depending on the kindness of friends and family. They are the youth and adults living in tent cities in the woods. NCH cite the Stewart B. McKinney Act passed by The United States Congress in 1994 which defines a homeless person as an individual who:

...lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence; and... has primary night time residency that is: (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations... (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (NCH, 2009, p. 1).

The NHC asserts that there is a problem with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness because it leaves out individuals who may be couch surfing, living with family, living in cars or living in substandard conditions for housing. The research from HUD interprets the McKinney–Vento Act only to include: “...those persons who are on the streets or in shelters and persons who face imminent eviction (within a week) from a private dwelling or institution and who have no subsequent residence or resources to obtain housing” (NCH, 2009, p. 1). This definition works in urban areas where there are more shelters and other resources for homeless individuals and families. In rural areas people are “less likely to live on the street or in a
shelter, and more likely living with relatives in overcrowded substandard housing” (NCH, 2009, p. 1).

The emerging adulthood stage in general terms is one where the individual is able to focus on his or her future and experiment with potential versions of themselves. The individual is able to explore all the possibilities he or she has before them and consider the kind of life they want. The textbooks, studies, books and reports all indicate that the average emerging adult is in a stage full of possibilities and opportunities. This is not the case for the homeless emerging adult. Most homeless emerging adults focus on how to meet his or her basic physiological and safety needs—Where will I sleep tonight? What is the weather going to be? When will I eat next? Am I safe?

Physiological and safety needs are the two foundational pieces of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (see Appendix) and are things most of us take for granted in our daily lives. However, for the homeless emerging adult’s basic needs constantly weigh on their psychological energy. When the individual comes from a home where there is dysfunction, neglect or abuse, there may be anxiety because there has not been consistent safety. The homeless emerging adult who experiences continued neglect of safety needs may experience inner conflict about getting his or her needs met. The National Center for Family Homelessness (NCFH) reports that “the absence of a predictable and supportive parent is a threat to a child’s emotional and physical well being and may impact all aspects of a child’s functioning, beginning at the most fundamental, neurobiological level” (NCFH, 2009, p. 25).

The problems facing most homeless emerging adults is more than just not having a place to live. Getting the emerging adult off the street is important but without the skills
to understand the adult world and heal past traumas the cycles will continue. Much of the research focuses on the development of children but for those emerging adults who have not had stability, their personal growth is potentially stunted as well. Maslow states that “in the choice between giving up safety or giving up growth, safety will ordinarily win out” (Maslow, 1968, p.49). When an adolescent or emerging adult finds him/herself living on the streets there is generally a regression toward basic survival which directs all of his/her energy and focus on attending to the physiological needs of the here and now.

Another consideration is Albert Bandura’s social learning/cognitive theory which suggests that “socially acceptable behavior is learned by watching conformist models get along well with others” (Ewen, 2003, p. 511). A homeless emerging adult taking part in a mentoring meeting where he or she sees a handful of adults interacting well will be able to learn, not only about his or her mentor but how to interact in a social setting through observation.

Whitbeck provides a comprehensive view of homelessness in emerging adulthood in his book Mental Health and Emerging Adulthood among Homeless Young People (2009). His study took place over three years and has 13 “waves” of data collection with the young people who agreed to be part of the study. He says of the participants in his study that “housing is not the simple answer to all that ails them” (2009, p. 248). Generally, emerging adults who are homeless have had conflict-filled relationships with older adults in their lives that cause them to distrust adults, even those trying to help them. The early patterns established by the family of origin or too much time surviving on the streets can make a
homeless young person very hard to reach without proper support systems in place.

Caring for homeless emerging adults presents a unique challenge for service providers. Legally they are adults, but frequently lack the skills, understanding and desire to act like an adult or assume adult responsibilities. Homeless emerging adults who have connected with resources to get help probably have a handful of paid people from various state and local agencies. Each paid professional represents an agency that has a specific mission or function in helping the emerging adult. This usually includes the application and administration of public assistance, transitional housing and any other services that may be needed in the emerging adult's life. This focus on the delivery of a specific service leaves little time for process or conversation. The agency professional will usually help in whatever way he or she can but is often limited by available resources, policy or caseload. Even a case manager who helps coordinate multiple services is limited in the quality and duration of the interaction he/she is able to provide the homeless emerging adult. If the emerging adult is lucky enough to “qualify” for mental health services the wait time for most community mental health centers is more than a month and often only for those with a significant mental health diagnosis. A mentor can provide a variety of support that counselors, case managers and other professionals may not be able to. The mentor can encourage the homeless emerging adult to consider his or her future beyond housing and immediate needs while also supporting the work of professionals. For example, the social worker may set the individual up with a job interview but the mentor could be the one to coach him/her through the social expectations of the interview process. The workers and mentors in the life of a homeless young person very hard to reach without proper support systems in place.
emerging adult should all be on the same page. Most importantly, as in adolescence, the homeless 18 to 24 year old needs a trusted advisor and friend who is there because he or she chooses to be.

The emerging adults who are most at risk are individuals who have aged out of the foster care system. The lucky ones have been placed in a stable family environment, while many others get passed from family to family. According to Bandura, the risk facing the individual is that he or she could learn to make decisions “solely by external rewards and punishments...constantly shifting in different directions to conform to the momentary influences impinging upon them” (Ewen, 2003, p. 508). The emerging adult leaving foster care subsequently struggles to create behavioral standards or expectations for themselves. Furthermore, the individual lacks a social support system to guide and advise them when they need assistance. When a homeless adolescent or a youth in foster care legally becomes an adult at age 18, he or she is suddenly burdened with the same responsibilities and expectations as other adults. The life skills and social expectations required to navigate independent life can be challenging. Many homeless emerging adults already in the system or living on the streets have not learned or observed the skills necessary to find and keep stable housing, a job or make use of conventional systems and opportunities.

**Building Resiliency in Homeless Emerging Adults through Mentoring**

The concept of resiliency is loosely defined as an individual’s ability to overcome challenges and adapt in positive ways. Resiliency is more than just the ability to face challenges and survive; it is the ability to thrive in spite of life’s adversities. According to leading mentoring researcher Jean Rhodes, the majority of the research on mentoring has
been “driven by the concept of resiliency” (2002, p. 27). Her research suggests that when faced with challenges the most common traits that cultivate resiliency in individuals are:

1. **Characteristics of the individual**, such as intelligence and an appealing disposition.

2. **Characteristics of the family**, such as consistent close relationships and socioeconomic advantages, and

3. **Characteristics of the community**, such as bonds to nonrelated adults who are positive role models, connections with community organizations, good schools (Rhodes, 2002b, Pp. 27-28).

The characteristics listed above are often missing for individuals who come from dysfunctional families or live on the streets. Emerging adults lacking resiliency often struggle with day-to-day hardship because they do not have the ability to overcome the challenges. According to the NAEH the specific vulnerabilities facing the homeless emerging adult are extreme poverty, a history of trauma or loss, disability or a “small or poorly functioning support network, especially with high levels of conflict” (2009, p. 7). They suggest that the protective factors are support networks, a resilient personality and good people skills. Building resiliency for the homeless emerging adult requires individuals, organizations and communities to do their best to ensure a high number of protective factors are in place for everyone. The Search Institute is an organization that has devised a survey that attempts to measure positive developmental asset attainment through a combination of surveys administered in schools and communities all across the country. Search calls the factors the 40 Developmental Assets and others simply say
positive or developmental asset approach. No matter the name they all measure and assess the same needs. The primary survey, The Developmental Assets Profile, has been utilized for years and is a comprehensive measure of a youth’s perspective on his or her community. The survey results provide an asset profile for the individual. The data from each individual survey is compiled by Search in order to discover asset trends within communities, states and the nation as well as a host of smaller subsets. Search Institute’s research indicates the involvement of one non-parent adult in the life of a child or adolescent as a mentor can change the trajectory of that child in ways beyond measure. The reason for matching a homeless emerging adult with a caring, stable adult is that it correlates with social learning/cognitive theory that suggests that the emerging adult will eventually develop resiliency or the belief that “they can master a situation and bring desired outcomes through their own efforts” (Ewen, 2003, 513).

Gaps in the Homeless Emerging Adult Literature

There is limited research regarding homelessness in emerging adulthood. The book by Whitbeck and the report by Wauchope was the only research specifically focused on homeless emerging adults. The bulk of the information was on homeless families, children who are born into homelessness or adults with mental health or substance abuse issues who have been in the system for years. Caton et al. identified that most of the research on homelessness address specific “subgroups of the population, such as those who are severely mentally ill” (2005, p. 1753). Although mental illness is a big and undeniable factor in homelessness across all ages, it is not the focal point of this thesis.
Many of the research pieces utilized in this thesis discuss the need for further research on the ways to specifically assist emerging adults. In addition to the lack of current research on the topic of homelessness during emerging adulthood is the challenge of actually accounting for the numbers. According to a recent report from the Carsey Institute (2010), the number of homeless adolescents and emerging adults in New Hampshire is over 1,000 but they contend that the number is considerably higher. The challenge is many emerging adults are technically homeless but don’t consider themselves to be homeless. They are couch hopping, living under the radar, living with a variety of family members or live totally off the “grid.” Nationally it is estimated that emerging adults take up 12% of the total homeless population (Wauchope, 2010).

The greatest gap in the pertinent literature has been in the area of mentoring and the emerging adult. There is an extensive array of information on both topics individually but there was no research specific to mentoring and homeless emerging adults. The research showed an ample variety of information for mentoring in the work world and the effectiveness of mentoring in the area of professional growth in adults starting new careers. A number of the journal articles and books referred to mentoring as a potential solution for emerging adults. Additionally, when looking for a connection in the literature between Bandura’s social learning theory and mentoring, there were no direct connections found.

**Summary**

Change for a homeless emerging adult will stem from the quality and dependability of the relationship with a mentor. The initial goal is for the mentor to establish a sense of belonging with the mentee which can take various amounts of time to
create. Emerging adults who have been in foster care, on the streets or in a dysfunctional household may not have learned all they needed to succeed in the adult world. Without a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, coach, mentor, teacher or other caring adult to teach them, some adult lessons are missed. Wauchope explains that “young adults are expected to handle homelessness as if they are adults but often lack the experience or capacity to do so without more support” (Wauchope, 2010, p. 9). Homeless emerging adults need mentors to model and teach conventional behaviors as they learn and take on adult roles and responsibilities.
CHAPTER III

PROGRAM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter the structure of a mentoring program will be described as an effective intervention to support homeless emerging adults with personal growth and development through providing psychosocial support and stability. This chapter will first present the rationale for mentoring as an intervention, the program target population, the method for screening mentors, mentor training, methods of matching mentor with a mentee, methods of evaluation and the supervision of the program.

Homeless emerging adults participating in what this writer is calling the Walk with Me pilot program will experience personal growth as they participate in a healthy relationship with well-trained adult mentors. As the relationship evolves the resiliency and sense of belonging of the homeless emerging adult is expected to increase. Increased resiliency will help the homeless emerging adult to begin to look at future aspirations, feel confident about learning new skills and potentially thrive in adulthood.

Creating a Mentoring Program

Creating a mentoring program requires an organization willing to designate employee hours for program administration, volunteer mentor recruitment, outreach efforts to find homeless emerging adults willing to participate as mentees and mentor-mentee relationship support during the program. An effective mentoring program is one that is well organized, draws on best practices, and is relatively easy to implement. This author hopes that as a result of this thesis, agencies caring for the homeless emerging
adult population will see the value in adopting mentoring programs as an effective tool in case management strategy.

**Program Target Population**

The target population for mentees in the *Walk with Me* mentoring program is homeless emerging adults ages 18 to 25. Without additional adaptation, the program will not accept individuals with violent histories or who are actively abusing drugs or alcohol. Individuals willing to be mentored must understand and commit to the participation requirements. If the program is based at a community-based organization, participation could be open to referrals from community mental health organizations, shelters, and homeless outreach workers within a specific geographic region. If the program is based in a shelter, it may be beneficial to limit participation to current residents and perhaps past residents up to six months. Initially, the goal would be to identify five to seven homeless emerging adults willing to meet with a mentor weekly for a six-month period.

The target population for mentors for the *Walk with Me* Mentoring Program is adults in the community who are stable, well-balanced and have a strong desire to help. Mentors must be able to spend at least six hours a month with their mentees which includes the required mentor meetings and meal time. Additionally, the mentor needs to be an individual who has a positive and realistic sense of self. The ideal mentor is described by Brown as someone who: “...inspires their clients [mentees] through word and deed. They accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. Each mentor contributes to the end product in his or her own way and amount” (Brown, 2004, p. 78). Brown contends that mentoring builds resiliency because the mentor constantly helps the mentee re-frame challenges and negative experiences toward a more constructive,
optimistic perspective. Volunteer recruitment will be done through outreach campaigns targeting community, business and faith sectors. The initial pilot program will create a cohort that will establish the program after the first six-month review mentors will be screened and placed as they apply.

Screening Mentors for Participation

A challenge for any mentoring program is finding enough volunteers to serve all the individuals who would like to have a mentor. Reaching out to the community to find volunteers willing to work with homeless emerging adults will take time. The screening process for the Walk with Me Program is intended to be rigorous in an attempt to prevent further damage to the emerging homeless adult from a poor match or otherwise dysfunctional mentor-mentee relationship. Volunteers will attend an information session with the mentoring coordinator who will provide the prospective mentor with relevant information that reviews a profile of the typical homeless emerging adult, barriers s/he must face, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, and the policies and procedures for the Walk with Me program. If the volunteer remains interested after the information session, an application is completed that includes a criminal background check and review of professional and personal references. The mentor coordinator will process the application, validate employment and/or education histories and contact references. Individuals, who have active addiction issues, have recently entered [addiction] recovery, have a history of violent behavior or sexual misconduct will not be considered for the program. Individuals who have experienced episodes of homelessness and the related challenges can be a great support and offer tremendous insight to the mentee. It is anticipated that these individuals may have histories involving episodes of substance
abuse, mental health issues and legal trouble that should not necessarily exclude them from participation in the program as a mentor. The coordinator will have to take special care when evaluating such an individual to insure that she or he has made enough progress in his/her own life to be an effective model for the mentee and does not present a concern for the safety and well-being of the mentee.

Once the mentoring coordinator checks references, the mentor will be ready for the next step in the process. The potential mentor will be invited to meet with the mentor coordinator for an interview. The interview will allow the coordinator an opportunity to remind the mentor of the guidelines and challenges that may occur while working with the mentee. According to Spencer in her article *Understanding the Mentoring Process Between Adolescents and Adults* (2006), “the key elements of successful mentoring pairs include authenticity, empathy, collaboration and companionship” (p. 296). The interview will be designed to help the coordinator assess the mentor’s experience in relationships within these four key elements. Potential mentors who have already exhibited these skills and qualities are prime candidates for the *Walk with Me* mentoring program.

During the interview the mentor coordinator will also stress the importance of consistency, patience and commitment. According to Rhodes’ research, it is important that the mentor be willing to stick with the mentee for the minimum six month period (2002). It is not uncommon for homeless emerging adult mentees to interpret termination, even when well planned, as another person leaving them. Rhodes contends that

...because it is impossible for program staff to predetermine the course of relationships, sensitivity to the potential vulnerabilities of adolescents [or emerging adults] to loss must be incorporated into the training of volunteers and the ongoing support that program staff offer in managing and eventually terminating relationships” (2002b, p. 71).
A mentor will be asked to consider his or her role in termination before being introduced to his or her mentee. Screening mentors is an important step and one that should not be rushed. The four step screening process (information session, application, background check and interview) should eliminate any individuals who lack commitment to the program.

The research on mentoring indicates that the key to successful mentoring depends on the quality of the relationship, which starts with the match. Once the mentor has passed the screening process, the coordinator will begin the process of matching him or her with a mentee. This could take time as the match should be based on similar and/or complementary interests and personalities. The coordinator will keep the new mentor informed of progress and potential matches.

**Training of Mentors**

To ensure that mentors understand the specific challenges and needs of this population, training is a critical component of an effective mentoring program. As stated in previous chapters, homeless emerging adults are often homeless as a result of childhood maltreatment or dysfunction in their biological home, aging out of the foster care system or the inability of the family to provide housing or financial support to an emerging adult. When an emerging adult attempts to make the transition to adulthood with no (perceived) role models or means of adult support, they are often lost and overwhelmed by the expectations of the adult world. Research suggests homelessness in adolescence limits the individual’s understanding of conventional behaviors and adult expectations. Encouraging the mentor to meet the emerging adult where he or she is in his/her personal growth is a critical understanding. The relationship with a mentor can
encourage personal growth and development over time but patience and persistence will be important. Mentors need to establish some healthy boundaries that are firm and supportive. It must be clear to the mentor and mentee that it is not the job of the mentor to solve the financial, housing, personal or social problems for the mentee. In fact, many homeless emerging adults have an abundance of professionals in their lives to help address those needs. The goal for the mentor is to focus more on the social and developmental needs that help build resiliency.

**Methods of Evaluation**

Programs or intervention strategies that have a level of effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes incorporate some type of evaluation. Often this includes a set of questions focused on the mechanics of the program: Is the time and location convenient; was the meeting room or food acceptable; did attendance remain consistent throughout the program sessions, etc. While this type of evaluation is important it does not necessarily demonstrate that participants benefited in a meaningful way by participating in the program/treatment. Therefore, a second type of evaluation is needed which seeks to understand how the participant benefitted. More specifically, this second type of evaluation measures to what degree the participant made progress toward participant outcomes (treatment goals) that were identified by the program/treatment.

Evaluation of the *Walk with Me* Mentoring Program will incorporate two methods of evaluation in order to increase the effectiveness of the program as an intervention strategy for homeless emerging adults and ensure that program mechanics are not a barrier to achieving participant outcomes. Process evaluation will measure the program structure and operation. This will answer questions such as: Has the program been
implemented as intended? Do changes need to be made to align the program with its outcomes more effectively? Has attendance been consistent? Does the schedule work for all participants?, etc. The Outcome evaluation will measure the impact the program has on participants. Mentoring program outcome evaluation can be challenging, as most often the data is collected by observation and self-reporting at specific points in time; usually at the beginning and end of a program. This presents a challenge because an evaluation of the short-term impact the program had on the mentees may not accurately reflect the expected shifts that will manifest over the long term. An effective metaphor for understanding this is found in the piloting of a large ocean liner which, through the smallest of course corrections, can find itself thousands of miles from its original destination. Mentoring is like this; the smallest corrective experience leads to a new and positive trajectory in the mentee’s life. This is similar to the impact a teacher can have on a student; although in the present there is little or no indication of such impact. For the purpose of this pilot program, a short-term evaluation is proposed, but with the caveat that optimal growth will occur in the long term. Implementation of a permanent mentoring program provides an opportunity to better measure long-term growth and therefore is recommended to inform future development of the program.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluation of the Walk with Me mentoring program will measure progress toward the following three objectives:
1. Mentors and mentees will consistently attend monthly meetings. This objective can be measured by utilizing the sign in sheet at all the meetings.

2. Mentors and mentees will meet for a total of at least six hours per month. The program will establish a monthly activities report that will include dates, times and activities.

3. The mentoring coordinator will provide adequate support and training for the mentors to do their job effectively and with confidence. This will be measured on the monthly report completed by the mentors.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation measures the effectiveness of the program to bring about desired changes in the mentee. Effective evaluation of a permanent *Walk with Me* mentoring program should measure short- and long-term outcomes; however, the six-month pilot program will only allow enough time to measure short-term progress. It is recommended that the permanent program conduct evaluations at least annually for each mentoring pair. The following objectives will be measured for the pilot program:

1. The mentee will establish an authentic connection with the mentor. This will be measured by mentees completing the *Gauging the Effectiveness of Youth Mentoring Questionnaire* developed by Jean Rhodes (see Appendix). The questionnaire will help to illustrate the experience the mentee had while participating in the program. Mentees will also be asked to participate in a short one-on-one interview with the program coordinator. This will provide direct feedback regarding the mentee’s experience with the mentor and the program in
general. This questionnaire and interview are suggested and supported by the National Mentoring Partnership as an effective evaluation tool.

2. Mentees will increase the total number of developmental assets he or she has. This will be measured through the use of Search Institute’s Developmental Asset Profile (see Appendix). The Profile is a self-reporting measurement tool that will be completed by the mentee. The survey will be administered at the beginning and again at the end of the pilot program in order to determine if an increase in the total number of assets occurred while the participant was in the program. It should be noted that the profile will not be used as a measure for scientific study and research, but as a tool to understand the specific needs and progress of the individual.

Program Development and Coordination

A mentoring program that supports homeless emerging adults can be established in a variety of settings including community mental health centers, community agencies, and through government agencies that administer homeless services. The initial pilot program should be limited to five to seven mentoring pairs to allow for effective program management, evaluation and improvement. The time and location of the monthly trainings/meetings should take into consideration participant schedules and geographic location to avoid placing unnecessary burden on the potential volunteer mentors. It is strongly recommended that a meal be provided to encourage attendance and foster the connection between coordinator and other potential mentors.

The program coordinator should either already have some past experience with effective mentoring programs or attend trainings before starting the mentoring program.
The ideal candidate would have an education and background in psychology, counseling, social work or education. Ideally, the person would have an understanding of vulnerable populations and experience facilitating groups, especially with diverse populations. It is critically important that the mentoring coordinator be able to handle sensitive topics including sexuality, multicultural differences, etc., in a manner that allows mentors and mentees to feel safe and supported.
CHAPTER IV

THE PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS EMERGING ADULTS

The mentoring program that is being proposed by this thesis will utilize the human development models outlined by Bandura’s social learning/cognitive theory and build on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. The model would be used to promote resiliency, personal growth and healthy behaviors in the homeless emerging adult. Resiliency will allow the homeless emerging adult to face challenges and move toward a greater sense of self and potentially future self-actualization. Self-actualization is essentially when an individual is living up to his/her fullest potential and the highest level of development according to Maslow.

Mentoring Program Design

The *Walk with Me* mentoring program will begin by trying to create a sense of belonging for both the mentors and mentees who are part of program. Support for mentors and mentees in the program includes ongoing support and availability to respond to questions, concerns or problems. Prior to the first monthly *Walk with Me* meeting, the mentoring coordinator will have done his or her due diligence to effectively create the mentoring pairs through the procedures described in Chapter III. The pairs will meet for the first time at the first of six meetings, which will be explained in detail in this chapter. The meetings will last two and a half hours. The first hour involves training and support time for the mentors. During this time the mentor will have the opportunity to update mentoring peers on progress made, request support and/or offer suggestions. The
coordinator will facilitate the conversation and utilize the time to cover monthly themes with the mentors. The monthly themes will include: getting to know you, belonging, unconditional positive regard and role models, valuing successes and challenges, accomplishment and affirming the relationship, and transitions. The themes will be communicated to the mentees through activities and discussions. The mentees are scheduled to arrive an hour after the mentors. The mentees and mentors will be together during the middle half hour of each session for group activities that will be based on the month’s theme. The group will then share a meal together after which mentor and mentee can stay with the larger group or meet separately.

Mentor Training Monthly Meeting Guide

Meeting 1 - Introductions

Theme: Getting to know you

Meeting Goals:

1. Introduce mentors and mentees and establish the road map for the first and future sessions.

2. Create an understanding for the need for belonging and establish the understanding that the larger group is a support system for each other but each pair will be very different.

Meeting Process

The Program Coordinator will describe the process for the first session and establish the road map so the participants know what to expect and can ask questions. The coordinator will introduce himself/herself to the group, explain his or her role to the group and share someone that has been a mentor in his or her life. The leader will then
ask each mentor to introduce himself/herself and share a little something about a person who has been a mentor in his or her life.

After the introductions, the coordinator will remind the mentors of the importance of boundaries and not sharing information about other mentors and mentees in the community. The coordinator will reiterate to the mentor that there is no right or perfect way to be a mentor but that the guidelines will help them set the foundation for a healthy relationship. The coordinator will also address the difficulties and challenges that may occur at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. If a mentor is having a hard time establishing a relationship with his/her mentee, the hope is for the mentor to discuss this in the group rather than give up.

**Activity 1**

Mentors will be asked to find a quiet space to fill out a worksheet entitled “Ten things I want you to know about me.” The mentors will work silently on their list and share only what they are comfortable sharing with the larger group and his or her mentee. While sharing ten things is the goal, it is not necessary at this point. They are to turn the paper over in front of them when they are done.

Once the last person has turned over his or her sheet, the coordinator will give about thirty seconds for any last minute additions. Upon completion by all the mentors, the coordinator will instruct the group to hold their list in front of them, facing out so others can read them and circulate amongst the group. Mentors are to move about in silence, only communicating through facial expressions and body language. Individuals should return to their seats once everyone’s lists have been read.
Mentors will be asked what the exercise was like to not be able to use his or her voice for communication. Each mentor will be given the opportunity to share and the group will be allowed a few minutes of verbal processing with each other. The coordinator will also ask about body language and remind the mentors of the importance of nonverbal communication. The coordinator will slowly move the conversation to the point that homeless emerging adults need role models and a sense of belonging in a world where their voices are often not heard.

**Transition**

The mentor coordinator will keep a tight watch on the time and explain about 55 minutes into the session that it is time for a break and that the mentees will be arriving soon. They will be given five minutes to take a break.

**Introductions**

The mentees will be introduced to his or her mentors as they arrive. The goal would be 100% participation for the first session but any mentor whose mentee does not show up will be asked to observe the group. The coordinator will then give them a road map of the sessions and how the schedule works. At this point the mentees will only be introduced to the mentors with whom they will specifically be working. The reason for this is to not overwhelm the mentee with introductions and new people at one time.

**Activity 2**

The coordinator will explain to the group the exercise the mentors just did and as the mentees to complete the worksheet also. The mentees will be asked to find a quiet corner to fill the sheet out but they can talk to the mentor about the ten things they are comfortable sharing at this point. For the mentors and the mentees, this is a “getting to
know you” kind of exercise. The items on each sheet are places from which the pair can build conversations.

Wrap Up

The whole group will be brought together briefly with about five minutes remaining. The coordinator will explain that it is important to have those sheets and that they can be left with the mentor to put in his or her binder if the mentee wanted. The pairs would be given a reminder to exchange contact information to arrange their meet-ups over the next few weeks.

Meal Time

The coordinator will then explain that the meal time has been designated for an hour but beyond eating, it is up to them what they do with that time. For the coordinator, this is a time of observing and helping to find common ground if there appears to be any pairs struggling exceptionally hard to find it.

Monthly Meeting 2

Theme: Belonging

Meeting Goals:

1. Provide a more in-depth understanding of belonging for the mentors.

2. Make wider group introductions to establish a sense of belonging with the mentees and the larger group.

Check In

The coordinator will facilitate a brief check-in with the mentors regarding the past few weeks of meeting with his or her mentees. The questions to the mentors include:

How is building the relationship going? Is there anything you need from the group in
terms of support? The coordinator will take notes, keep the group to the schedule and offer solutions only as necessary to encourage some group cohesiveness with the mentors. It is important that the mentors share a community of trust to encourage a willingness to communicate openly with each other during training sessions.

**Activity**

The activity for the month will be to explore the work sheet from the last meeting to gain some understanding based on the ten things they learned about their mentees and what they have learned over the month. Each pair will have had different experiences and each sheet will have a variety of answers. The coordinator will lead the conversation with broad questions such as:

- Where have you found common ground?
- What were your first impressions of your mentee’s ten things?
- Was it helpful in creating conversations?
- Did you find another way to find common ground?

The coordinator will use talking points from the mentors to elucidate the importance of feeling a sense of belonging for the mentees. The hope would be that each mentor will have experienced three meet-ups with his or her mentee and that the pair has the beginnings of a relationship started. This activity will be allotted most of the session ending with a chance for mentors to ask questions if they have any. Once again the mentors will be offered a short break to return for shared time with their mentees.

**Activity Introduction**

The activity the group will be participating in today will be an active introduction. The coordinator will explain that there was simply not enough time during the last
meeting but that it is important to know the names of the people in the group. The coordinator will ask the group to stand in a circle and the coordinator will have a handful of tennis balls. The directions are – step one: toss the tennis ball to anyone in the group and when you throw it say your name but you can only throw it to someone who has yet to receive it. This will take observing skills on the part of the group to ensure everyone has his/her chance. This could take a couple tries to get everyone to remember to throw it and say his or her name. The second part is a “challenge” for the group. They have to create a pattern in which the ball is thrown in the same order each time. If the group appears to be getting overly frustrated the coordinator can ask, “Have you figured out the trick yet?” and if someone has he/she can answer. The answer is: each person has to pay attention to the person from whom he/she received the ball and be attentive to the person to whom they are throwing the ball. Once they have it down, slowly more balls are thrown into the mix. Questions to ask the group while they have multiple balls in the air are: Do you know who is throwing to you? Do you know who you threw to? What is his or her name?

Meal Time

The coordinator reminds the group that one hour has been allotted for the meal, but they are welcome to use the time however they want after the meal. The coordinator can intervene and support the pairs who have struggled to connect.
Monthly Meeting 3

Theme: Unconditional positive regard and role models

Meeting Goals:

1. Create an understanding for what the word “unconditional” means in the lives or his or her mentees.

2. Inform the mentors of the importance of role models and the importance of unconditional acceptance of the mentee in the mentoring relationship.

Check In

The coordinator will start with a road map for the meeting and all of the components to the topic of the session. The coordinator will facilitate a brief check in with the mentors regarding the past few weeks of meetings with his or her mentees, asking the following questions: How is it going at this point? Is there anything you need from the group in terms of support? The coordinator will take notes, keep the group to the schedule and offer solutions only as necessary.

Conversation

The subjects covered by the coordinator are unconditional love and the importance of role models in the lives of all of us. The coordinator will lead the discussion about role models beginning with who the role models are and have been in the lives of the mentors. The discussion will also address the fact that the family members and extended family members in the lives of the emerging adult may not have been people the mentee looked up to. The coordinator can address with mentors any concerns they have about approaching the subject with his or her mentee. The challenge for the mentors will be keeping the acceptance to unconditional and supporting the role model
that the mentee chooses, regardless of how the mentor feels. The coordinator will also address the potential for one of the mentees to test the unconditional support of the mentor choosing a role model who is conventionally known as not admirable. An example of this would be an emerging adult who said his or her hero is Hitler. Chances are the individual is looking to test the relationship and the mentor needs to be aware of such a potential.

**Mentor Wrap up and Break**

As the end of the hour approaches, the coordinator will ask if the mentors have any questions or concerns about the next step or the conversation with the mentees. The coordinator will field the questions and concerns and then have a break.

**Mentors and Mentees Discussion**

The coordinator will explain that this month’s meeting is going to be more conversational than the previous meetings. Depending on how the program has progressed, the coordinator may want to establish that it has been three months and that she or he has been hearing some great feedback on the activities with mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentee will be asked to find a private/quiet space where they can talk and not be distracted by the other and still be able to see and hear the coordinator. The following directions will be explained to mentors and mentees: First, the coordinator will provide a topic or ask a question and each will take a turn talking uninterrupted for a minute about what is said. The mentees will get to talk first and the mentors will have to listen. In between questions the mentoring pairs will be asked if anyone wants to share what was said between them. The key is the mentor or mentee can only share what they heard not what they, themselves, said. The coordinator will start with a list of questions
appropriate for the topic and gather a sense of the comfort level in the room before moving forward. The questions and comments would start in the following manner:

- I think a hero is...
- One person who I admire is... and this is why...
- I admire people who....
- I feel good when I accomplish....

The coordinator will lead this group activity for 15-20 minutes and end with a positive wrap-up of the activity

**Wrap up and Meal Time**

The coordinator will conclude the meeting by summarizing the theme of the training with the experiences of the mentor and mentee time together. The meal will follow immediately and the coordinator will check in with all the pairs about the training and if they had any questions.

**Monthly Meeting 4**

**Theme:** Valuing Successes and Challenges

**Meeting Goals:**

1. Demonstrate to mentees the value of challenges and how to help them focus on their goal

**Check In and Road Map**

The mentoring coordinator will lead a brief check in with the mentors about the month, communication with mentees and if meet-ups are happening as planned. Any challenges will be addressed or handled by the coordinator in a timely manner. The
 coordinator will give a road map for the meeting and explain how the activity ties into the work with the mentees.

**Conversation and Activity with Mentors**

The mentoring coordinator will lead a discussion about successes and challenges he or she has had in their lives. The mentors will be asked to complete a sheet listing a personal success and the lessons learned from it and another sheet with a failure or challenge they had to overcome and the lessons learned from it. The mentors will share these experiences briefly and save the sheets for later with the mentees. The mentors are instructed to help the mentees reframe their failures or challenges to see where the lessons were and where he or she was resilient. Modeling healthy ways of dealing with success and challenges will help the mentee relate to others in a more positive way.

**Mentor Wrap up and Break**

The coordinator will remind the mentors of the theme for the training and provide and last minute suggestions for supporting his or her mentee in the exercise.

**Check in and Activity with Mentees**

The mentor coordinator will ask each of the mentees to give any updates they would like to give before moving forward with the meeting. The hope is the conversation can lead right into the topic of success and challenges in one way or another. The mentor coordinator will ask the mentees to create the same success and challenge/failure sheets with his or her mentor. Mentees will be given a few minutes to complete this and then be asked to share with the larger group. The time will only allow for a couple to fully share his or her successes and failures. The coordinator will survey the group to see if anyone is visibly disappointed and allow “just one more.”
Wrap up and Meal Time

The group will be invited to continue the conversation into meal time if they would like. The group will be encouraged to exchange sheets between mentors and mentees for a “top secret” activity with the mentoring coordinator to be used in next month’s activity.

Monthly Meeting 5

Theme: – Accomplishment/ Affirming the Relationship

Meeting Goals:

1. Have the mentoring pairs demonstrate knowledge of each other in a fun way.
2. Prepare mentors and mentees for final full meeting in month 6.

Check In

The coordinator leads a check in with the mentors to see how the relationships are growing and if anyone has any challenges to report or needs advice.

Conversation

The coordinator will lead the conversation regarding potential pulling away and resistance as the sixth month approaches. Additionally, the coordinator will supply the road map for the meeting time with the mentees. The mentors will need to “play along” with a game show type activity.

Wrap up and Break

The coordinator will remind the mentors of the theme for the training and provide and last minute suggestions for supporting his or her mentee in the exercise.
Activity with mentees

Over the month the coordinator will ask each participant to fill out a brief questionnaire that will ask them to answer questions about his or her mentor or mentee. Each will be given a card with the answers they gave and the mentor or mentee will try to guess what the other said, Newlywed Game style.

Wrap up and Meal

The coordinator will remind the group that the next session will be the last meeting and that the mentees need to arrive a half-hour early.

Monthly Meeting 6

Theme: – Transitions

Meeting Goals:

1. Celebrate the mentors and mentees commitment to the program and each other.

2. Support mentors and mentees in the transition.

Check In and Road Map

The coordinator will lead a round table check in with the mentors to briefly address any issues relevant to the evening’s activities. The coordinator will supply the mentors with a suggested road map and open up the discussion for any concerns or questions.

Activity

Mentoring coordinator leads a celebration of the mentors and mentees by asking each to share the best thing that he or she has experienced with his or her mentor. Participants will be given token gifts of appreciation and the coordinator will take photos of the pairs to go into a card to be given out later in the evening.
Wrap up and Meal

The mentor coordinator will ask each participant to fill out the survey and mail upon completion, but the preference would be to complete the survey. Mentees will have a wrap up appointment scheduled with the mentor coordinator for the administration of the post-developmental asset survey.

The goal would be not to be ending the mentoring relationship at the end of six months but merely to assess the effectiveness of the two and a half hour per month trainings/meetings.
CONCLUSION

Mentoring is an intervention that can address the internal challenges that exist for homeless emerging adults by modeling and supporting appropriate behaviors as they learn the life skills necessary to move forward in life. Current economic realities make independence as a young adult particularly difficult and even more so for the homeless individual. The path for the homeless emerging adult is complicated by the lack of a permanent home address, extreme poverty and a lack of positive social supports. Well-trained mentors can make a difference in the lives of homeless emerging adults by providing a sense of safety and security through being a positive social support. It is important for the mentor to understand the developmental needs and the barriers that his or her mentee must overcome. The training manual and program design will assist with creating an understanding and opening a line of dialogue with the goal of helping the emerging adult find his or her way in the world. A mentor allows the homeless emerging adult a new perspective on the world that he or she may never have known without this relationship in place.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Source: Retrieved 5/8/2010,
http://www.edpsychinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html
APPENDIX 2

*Walk with Me*
*Mentee Interview Form*

What did you like most about the mentoring program?
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

What did you like least about the mentoring program?
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Is there anything you would like to see done differently?
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Do you have any additional ideas or comments about the mentoring program, mentoring coordinator or your mentor you would like to share?
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Thank you!
Monthly Process Considerations for Mentors

Things to Consider for the First Month

– Notes to the mentor

The sense of belonging takes time to establish. Be consistent with your mentee even if they are not responding to you. Use the items on the list to build conversations even if it is only through e-mail work to establish the connection. The program’s goal is to have a meet-up with your mentee once a week for at least an hour. Model patience and avoid communicating any frustration. Please let the coordinator know at the next Walk with Me meeting if the relationship is not reciprocal.

Things to Consider for the Second Month

– Notes to the mentor

Are you feeling a connection with your mentee? Are you feeling a positive level of reciprocation? Some ideas for connecting are: send a text just to say hi or that you enjoyed spending time with them, ask them how they would like to be introduced if and when you see people you know and vice versa or establish some ground rules for your time together. Talk about and model healthy boundaries. Work to create an understanding about setting boundaries.
Appendix 3 (continued)

Things to Consider for the Third Month

– Notes to the mentor

The topic of heroes can be a tough topic with the way celebrities are portrayed in the media. Talking about the differences between celebrity and hero and someone worthy of being admired is a great conversation. If you feel the conversation is going well with your mentee over the month bring up the concept of values, integrity or character. Your mentee may have some strong opinions about the kind of person they would like to be.

Things to Consider for the Fourth Month

– Notes for Mentors

Keeping it fun is sometimes the better tact to take in mentoring. The homeless emerging adult has challenges that can often seem insurmountable. Keep the focus on what your mentee is doing well and honor the baby steps as big victories, because for him or her it is. Modeling or sharing ways you have and have not handled challenges and successes well will allow the mentee room to learn from their past ways of relating to others and valuing themselves. Your mentees will be charged with the task of keeping a fun surprise secret about the next meeting.

Things to Consider for the Fifth Month

– Notes to the Mentor

The fifth month could be challenging because the end to the formal meetings will be in sight for all participants. Avoid focusing on the end of the meetings and make the most of the monthly sessions. The pilot part of the program has two months left but
mentees may perceive the ending as closer. Maintain course continue to model positive behaviors and attitudes. Celebrate any positive changes you have observed and

Things to Consider for the Sixth Month

– Notes to the Mentor

In this the last month of the pilot program your mentee may demonstrate resistance, anger, withdrawing or he or she may have no difference in his or her behavior. The key is to be ready for anything and be consistent and model transitions in healthy ways. Certainly, discuss the transition as necessary but try to avoid dwelling and repeating negative patterns.
APPENDIX 5

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS PROFILE

Emerging Adult - age 18 - 25

NAME / ID ____________________________ TODAY'S DATE: Mo _____ Day _____ Yr _____
SEX: □ Male □ Female AGE: ________ BIRTH DATE: Mo _____ Day _____ Yr _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of positive things that you might have in yourself, your family, friends, neighborhood, school, and community. For each item that describes you now or within the past 3 months, check if the item is true.

Not At All or Rarely Somewhat or Sometimes Very or Often Extremely or Almost Always

If you do not want to answer an item, leave it blank. But please try to answer all items as best you can.

I . . .

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 1. Stand up for what I believe in.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 2. Feel in control of my life and future
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 3. Feel good about myself
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 4. Avoid things that are dangerous or unhealthy.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 5. Enjoy reading.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 6. Build friendships with other people.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 7. Care about school/work.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 8. Do my homework/housework.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 9. Stay away from tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 11. Express my feelings in proper ways
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 12. Feel good about my future
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 13. Seek advice from my parents
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 14. Deal with frustration in positive ways.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 15. Overcome challenges in positive ways.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 16. Think it is important to help other people.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 17. Feel safe and secure at home.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 18. Plan ahead and make good choices.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 20. Resolve conflicts without anyone getting hurt
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 21. Feel valued and appreciated by others.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 22. Take responsibility for what I do.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 23. Tell the truth even when it is not easy.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 24. Accept people who are different from me.
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 25. Feel safe at school.

PLEASE TURN OVER AND COMPLETE THE BACK.

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Appendix 5 (continued)

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**Note:** The term Parent(s) means 1 or more adults who are responsible for raising you.

I AM.

- 26 Actively engaged in learning new things
- 27 Developing a sense of purpose in my life
- 28 Encouraged to try things that might be good for me
- 29 Included in family tasks and decisions
- 30 Helping to make my community a better place
- 31 Involved in a religious group or activity
- 32 Developing good health habits
- 33 Encouraged to help others
- 34 Involved in a sport club or other group
- 35 Trying to help solve social problems
- 36 Given useful roles and responsibilities
- 37 Developing respect for other people
- 38 Eager to do well in school and other activities
- 39 Sensitive to the needs and feelings of others
- 40 Involved in creative things such as music, theater, or art
- 41 Serving others in my community
- 42 Spending quality time at home with my parent(s)

I HAVE.

- 43 Friends who set good examples for me
- 44 A school/employer that gives young adults clear rules
- 45 Adults who are good role models for me
- 46 A safe neighborhood
- 47 Parent(s) who try to help me succeed
- 48 Good neighbors who care about me
- 49 A school/employer that cares and encourages young adults
- 50 Teachers/managers who urge me to develop and achieve
- 51 Support from adults other than my parents
- 52 A family that provides me with clear rules
- 53 Parent(s) who urge me to do well in school
- 54 A family that gives me love and support
- 55 Neighbors who help watch out for me
- 56 Parent(s) who are good at talking with me about things
- 57 A school/employer that enforces rules fairly
- 58 A family that knows who I am and what I am doing

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM**

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