

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

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SENATE BILL 721

Short Title: Youth Mentoring Services Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Foushee (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

May 6, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE YOUTH MENTORING GRANT PROGRAM.

Whereas, mentoring and youth services organizations have played a critical role in the social, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual development of children and teenagers in North Carolina for many years; and

Whereas, national research shows that mentoring programs are effective tools in combating substance use disorders, absence from school, criminal activity, and violence among youth; and

Whereas, based on recent national research results, youth who are matched with mentors for a minimum of one year, thus developing positive relationships, are more likely to show improvements in academic performance, social skills, and peer relations, and are more likely to continue to college or careers; and

Whereas, many small- to medium-sized mentoring agencies in North Carolina lack sufficient resources, capacity, and mentoring adults to provide the most effective and efficacious mentoring services; and

Whereas, despite the clear benefits of mentoring, the average mentoring program has 63 young people on its waitlist; and

Whereas, one in three young people in the United States currently is growing up without a mentor, constituting a "mentoring gap"; and

Whereas, mentoring services for youth in high-risk situations, through public and private entities to recruit, train, screen, and supervise mentors, would be beneficial and in the best interests of the people of North Carolina; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Youth Mentoring Services Act."

SECTION 2. Article 3 of Chapter 143B is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 5C. Youth Mentoring Grant Program.

"§ 143B-152.20. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Part:

(1) Council. – The Youth Mentoring Services Council.

(2) Department. – The Department of Health and Human Services.

(3) High-risk situation. – The term includes a situation where any of the following are present: poverty or low-wealth, residence in a substance use disorder household, family conflict, association with peers involved in criminal activity, residence in a single-parent household, exhibition of or inclination



1 toward delinquent behavior, trauma from child abuse, and trauma from
2 systemic racism.

3 (4) Mentor. – A natural person at least 18 years of age who acts in a
4 nonprofessional helping capacity to provide relationship-based support for the
5 benefit of a youth.

6 (5) Program. – The Youth Mentoring Grant Program.

7 (6) Secretary. – The Secretary of Health and Human Services.

8 (7) Youth. – A natural person at least five years of age and less than 18 years of
9 age.

10 **"§ 143B-152.21. Youth Mentoring Grant Program; Youth Mentoring Services Council.**

11 (a) There is created within the Department the Youth Mentoring Grant Program. The
12 purpose of the program is to (i) address the essential need for youth mentoring services in
13 communities that lack existing youth mentoring programs and (ii) sustain and enhance
14 established community-based youth mentoring programs, with the goal of reducing substance
15 use disorders, decreasing the incidence of delinquent and violent activity among youths, and
16 fostering positive connections for youths.

17 (b) The Youth Mentoring Services Council is established to administer the Program. The
18 Secretary shall, in the Secretary's discretion, appoint the Council members. The Council shall
19 consist of at least the following:

20 (1) One representative of the Department.

21 (2) One representative of the Department of Public Instruction.

22 (3) One representative of a local school administrative unit.

23 (4) One licensed teacher.

24 (5) One parent.

25 (6) One representative of the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice.

26 (7) One representative of a registered North Carolina nonprofit corporation that
27 trains mentoring organizations in order to expand quality mentoring
28 relationships across the State.

29 **"§ 143B-152.22. Applications for grants; eligible applicants.**

30 (a) The Council shall (i) develop an application process, guidelines consistent with this
31 Part, and a time line and (ii) disseminate an application form to be used by organizations that
32 wish to apply for a grant to provide mentoring services. To the extent funds are made available
33 for this purpose, the Council shall award grant funds to eligible applicants. After careful
34 consideration of applicants, the Council may exercise its discretion in determining the number of
35 grants to award and the amount of each grant, within available funds.

36 (b) Grants shall be awarded to nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring services to
37 youth in high-risk situations. In order to be considered eligible, an applicant must be a nonprofit
38 organization with a demonstrated ability to do all of the following:

39 (1) Actively recruit qualified and appropriate mentors willing to (i) serve as youth
40 mentors for a minimum period of one year and (ii) commit to an average of
41 two or three hours per week providing direct service to the youth they mentor.

42 (2) Effectively screen adult volunteers to serve as mentors, including, but not
43 limited to, conducting criminal background checks.

44 (3) Provide training and ongoing support to mentors to prepare them to serve the
45 individualized needs of youth in high-risk situations.

46 (4) Carefully match each mentor with youth in high-risk situations based on the
47 unique qualifications of the mentor and the specific needs of the youth.

48 (5) Closely assess the activities of the mentor and the youth to better ensure the
49 mutual benefit and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

50 (6) Make life skills workshops, recreational activities, and community service
51 opportunities available for youth in high-risk situations and their mentors.

1 (7) Practice commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion across all services and
2 among all staff members.

3 (8) Implement a method of evaluating the impacts, outcomes, and overall
4 effectiveness of the mentoring services provided.

5 (c) An applicant shall provide certification to the Council that it will match any grant
6 received under the Program on the basis of one dollar (\$1.00) in non-grant funds for every five
7 dollars (\$5.00) in grant funds received. Matching funds shall not include other State funds.

8 "**§ 143B-152.23. Program evaluation; reporting requirements.**

9 (a) When awarding a grant, the Council shall provide each mentoring organization
10 instructions for evaluation and reporting requirements. Any organization that receives a grant
11 under this Part shall report to the Council, in the manner instructed by the Council, on the use of
12 State funds.

13 (b) By October 1 annually, the Council shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight
14 Committee on Health and Human Services on at least the (i) number of grants awarded, (ii)
15 number of youth served, and (iii) outcomes of the Program. The report shall include any
16 recommended modifications to the Program to improve its effectiveness."

17 **SECTION 3.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
18 Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, the sum of one million five hundred
19 thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) in nonrecurring funds for each year of the 2021-2023 fiscal
20 biennium to be used to award grants to nonprofit organizations in accordance with this act. In
21 awarding grants, the Council shall give priority to services that are directed toward mitigating
22 the effects of and furthering the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

23 **SECTION 4.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.