

# Caregivers with Children in Mentoring Organizations: Attitudes on Mentor Involvement in Child Mental Health and Digital Mental Health Interventions

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## Introduction

- A recent shift in the field points to mentors for bridging gaps in youth mental health care, however mentoring programs often struggle to provide evidence-based care (Rhodes, 2022)
- Digital mental health interventions (DMHIs) are a low-cost, easily accessible, and effective method for providing mental health support
- Mentors may be able to support mentee DMHI use
- However, relatively little is known about caregivers' comfort with their child receiving mental health support through a mentoring program, or the acceptability of DMHI use supported by mentors

References available upon request

## Methods

### Online Survey

**Participants:** Caregivers ( $N=4,853$ ) with at least 1 child in a mentoring program

- Mean age: **36.29** years
- **50.5%** female, 49.3% male, .2% nonbinary
- **62.8%** White, 21.1% Black/African American, 7.5% Native American, 6.2% Asian/Asian American, 3.7% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, .6% prefer not to respond, .2% other/unknown
- **65.5%** not Latino/Latinx, 27.9% Latino/Latinx, 3.6% unknown, 3.0% prefer not to respond
- **72.3%** participated in a youth mentoring program in the past themselves
- **9.4%** have used a DMHI

**Statistical analyses:** Regression analyses were conducted to examine which variables relate to attitudes towards mentor involvement in child mental health and digital mental health interventions

## Frequencies

- **47.8%** of caregivers were comfortable with their child talking to their mentor about mental health
- **46.5%** of caregivers were comfortable with their child's mentor helping their child use an online intervention for mental health

	Comfort with child talking to their mentor about mental health	%	Comfortable with child's mentor helping child use an online intervention for mental health	%
	extremely uncomfortable	3.5	extremely uncomfortable	4.4
	somewhat uncomfortable	12.0	somewhat uncomfortable	9.9
	slightly uncomfortable	17.9	slightly uncomfortable	19.8
	neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	18.8	neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	19.4
	slightly comfortable	20.8	slightly comfortable	21.7
	somewhat comfortable	19.7	somewhat comfortable	16.8
	extremely comfortable	7.3	extremely comfortable	8.0

## Linear Regressions

**Dependent Variable:** comfort with child talking to their mentor about their mental health ( $R^2 = .182$ ,  $p < .001$ )

Independent Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Interpretation
Caregiver enrolled their child in a mentoring program for mental health reasons (no=0, 1=yes)	-.314	< .001	<b>Caregivers who enrolled their child in a mentoring program for mental health reasons were significantly <i>less</i> comfortable with their child talking to their mentor about mental health than caregivers who enrolled their child for other reasons.</b>
Caregivers endorsed confidentiality as a concern for their child talking to a mentor about mental health (no=0, 1=yes)	.294	< .001	<b>Caregivers who endorsed confidentiality as a concern were significantly <i>more</i> comfortable with their child talking to their mentor about mental health than caregivers who did not endorse confidentiality as a concern.</b>
Caregivers' perception of how helpful a child's mentor could be with their child's mental health (higher scores indicating more perceived helpfulness)	.839	< .001	<b>Caregivers who reported greater helpfulness of a mentor were significantly <i>more</i> comfortable with their child talking to their mentor about mental health.</b>

**Dependent Variable:** comfort with child's mentor helping child use an online intervention for mental health ( $R^2 = .038$ ,  $p < .001$ )

Independent Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Interpretation
Caregiver enrolled their child in a mentoring program for mental health reasons (no=0, 1=yes)	-.085	.095	nonsignificant
Caregiver has downloaded an app or used an online intervention for their own mental health (no=0, 1=yes)	.134	.196	nonsignificant
At least one of the caregiver's children has used online interventions for their mental health (no=0, 1=yes)	.905	< .001	<b>Caregivers with at least one child who has used a DMHI were significantly <i>more</i> comfortable with their child's mentor helping their child use a DMHI, compared to caregivers with no children who have used one.</b>

## Discussion

- Caregivers who enroll their child in a mentoring program for mental health help may not actually be comfortable with their child receiving such support from a mentor
- Confidentiality may be a concern for those who consider mentor mental health support for their child
- Higher perceived mentor helpfulness relates to more comfort with mentors
- Caregivers may be more comfortable with their child's mentor supporting DMHI use if DMHIs are familiar to them

## Implications

- Mentoring programs should be aware of parents' comfortability levels with their children's mentoring activities and should involve caregivers in decisions related to their child
- Reasons for referring a child to mentoring should be collected during mentee intakes
- Mentoring programs need to address confidentiality concerns by providing mentors with comprehensive training on mentee privacy
- Mentoring programs should explore ways to increase caregivers' perceptions of mentor helpfulness

## Future Research

- Investigate the role of individual mentor characteristics
  - e.g.: level of mentor expertise
- Qualitative data (e.g., interviews and focus groups) will provide more clarity on caregivers' comfort