

The Institute for Child and Family Well-Being: Practice Brief

Mobility Mentoring®

Mobility Mentoring® offers a roadmap to growth and economic mobility through coaching, goal setting and the recognition of achievement.

The ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behavior is central to a productive and prosperous adult. These skills inform navigating stressful situations, developing long-term plans, understanding the impacts of immediate decisions on those long-term objectives, and parenting children. All of these are key ingredients to providing a nurturing environment that supports the health and well-being of children.

Executive Functioning refers to coordination of multiple types and streams of information in order to arrive at the more effective course of action, including prioritizing tasks, goals, and information¹. These skills are learned through observation and practice, often as age and experiences increase over time and is the foundation for healthy development, cognitive functioning, and successful self-regulation. Strength of executive function skills is predictive of academic and career outcomes.

“Mobility Mentoring is changing our program and for the better! Relationships between participants and workers will benefit greatly from this shift.” -Children’s Wisconsin Family Support Specialist

Mobility Mentoring® (MM) is an evidence-informed coaching model, developed in 2009 by EMPATH², focused on building economic mobility out of poverty. MM is focused on not just helping clients attain specific goals but helping them acquire the problem-solving and goal setting skills necessary for successfully managing their lives. MM is built on a foundation of evidence-based Motivational Interviewing (MI), which utilizes incentives and the Bridge to Economic Mobility rubric to determine their individualized goals within each of the model’s five pillars:

- Family Stability
- Well-Being
- Financial Management
- Education/Training and

¹ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016). Building Core Capabilities for Life: The Science Behind the Skills Adults Need to Succeed in Parenting and in the Workplace.

<http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

² EMPATH – Economic Mobility Pathways. Mobility Mentoring® – In the knowledge-based economy, snapping the cycle of poverty is more complex than ever. <https://www.empathways.org/approach/mobility-mentoring>.

- Employment/Career Management.

Using *extrinsic* motivation, fiscal and recognition incentives, in Mobility Mentoring has been demonstrated to increase *intrinsic* motivation, which has been shown as a key ingredient for people who report success and happiness in their careers³. An evidence-informed strategy, incentives are also used to present clear, and immediate, benefit of participation when future benefits may be too abstract for participants to see⁴.

Incentives have shown effectiveness in improving adolescents' adherence to treatment for the adolescent HIV infected population (when paired with MI)⁵, increased after-school program attendance⁶, and increased rates of abstinence from cannabis use over and above evidence-based treatment alone⁷.

Outcomes for Mobility Mentoring® include⁸:

- 94% of MM participants are working or in school
- 68% of participant goals are completed
- 76% of participants increase their credit scores
- 59% of participants unemployed at the start were employed by the end of the program
- 57% increased earned income within 24 months
- 43% of participants newly enroll in educational or training programs
- 20% decrease in public subsidies

Mobility Mentoring® is:

- Based in brain science
- Affordable
- Adaptable
- Trauma-informed
- Includes supported implementation

³ L Pavetti, M Stanley (2016). Using incentives to increase engagement and persistence in two-generation programs: a review of the literature with key insights. Family Income Support-Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

⁴ L Pavetti, M Stanley (2016). Using incentives to increase engagement and persistence in two-generation programs: a review of the literature with key insights. Family Income Support-Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

⁵ Charania A, Webb H, Cox D, et al P073 Do financial incentives (FI) and motivational interviewing (MI) promote adherence in vertically infected HIV positive adolescents? Sex Transm Infect 2017;93:A40-A41.

⁶ Vandell, D., Pierce, K.M., & Dadisman, K.(2005). Out-of-school settings as a developmental context for children and youth. Advances in Child Development and Behavior,43, 43-77.

⁷ Stanger, C., Ryan, S. R., Scherer, E. A., Norton, G. E., & Budney, A. J. (2015). Clinic- and home-based contingency management plus parent training for adolescent cannabis use disorders. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 54(6), 445-453.

⁸ Empath: Economic Mobility Pathways (2018). Mobility Mentoring 2018 Impact Report

ICFW and Mobility Mentoring®

The Institute for Child and Family Well-Being (ICFW) coordinated prototyping Mobility Mentoring® in one of Children's Family Support programs in that works with parents of children who were placed in out of home care. Early lessons learned include:

- Participants and staff respond positively to the Bridge to Economic Mobility as a tool
- The flexibility of the model allows for adaptations specific to programs
- Challenges exist in obtaining funding for fiscal incentives
- MM aligns with existing program theory and purpose.

MM provides structure and data driven approaches to case management for families living in poverty, who have experienced trauma, and are facing complex challenges. ICFW facilitated expansion of Mobility Mentoring® in Children's Wisconsin Family Support Programs in central Wisconsin. The ripple effects continue.

If you're interested in learning more about Mobility Mentoring, please explore these resources:

- Empath Mobility Mentoring: <https://www.empathways.org/approach/mobility-mentoring>
- The Intergenerational Mobility Project: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/innovation-application/innovation-in-action/intergen-mobility-project/>
- Using Brain Science to Design New Pathways Out of Poverty: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/partner-resources/using-brain-science-to-create-new-pathways-out-of-poverty/>