

### Do Mentoring Programs Work?

One example from the online Campbell Library (<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.php>) is a systematic review by Tolan and colleagues (Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, & Bass, 2008) that examined the impact of mentoring interventions in decreasing delinquency and other problems. If you read the report, you will see that all decisions made by the authors are explicitly stated. For example, they were very specific in their criteria for mentoring: (a) an interaction between two individuals over an extended period of time; (b) inequality of experience, knowledge, or power between the mentor and mentee, with the mentor possessing the greater share; (c) the mentee is in a position to imitate and benefit from the knowledge, skill, ability, or experience of the mentor; and (d) the absence of inequality that typifies other helping relationships and is marked by professional training, certification, or predetermined status differences such as parent–child or teacher–student relationships.

When selecting studies for their review, Tolan et al. (2008) also clearly stated four criteria: (a) studies that focused on youth who were at risk for juvenile delinquency or who were currently involved in delinquent behavior; (b) studies that focused on prevention or treatment for those at-risk youth; (c) studies that measured at least one quantitative effect on at least one outcome, including delinquency, substance abuse, academic achievement, or aggression; and (d) studies that were conducted in predominately English-speaking countries reported between 1980 and 2005. As you can see, systematic reviews are, well, extremely systematic! For the record, the review found that there was a modest impact of mentoring in reducing delinquency and aggression, but less of a relationship was found between mentoring and drug use and academic achievement.