

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

MBK

My Brother's Keeper Success Mentors Initiative

A New Data-Driven Model Achieving Impact and Scale by Leveraging Existing School-Linked Resources to Serve Our Nation's Highest-Need Students

Closing the Opportunity Gap: Driving School Success

The My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Success Mentors Initiative is the nation's first-ever effort to reach and support our nation's highest-risk students by scaling an evidence-based, data-driven mentor model through our schools. Over the next three to five years, the initiative aims to reduce chronic absenteeism and drive school success by connecting over 1 million chronically absent students to caring, trained adults who can serve as mentors. These Success Mentors consist of people already, or easily, linked to the school (e.g., coaches, administrative staff, teachers, security guards, AmeriCorps volunteers, tutors, after-school providers, faith-based leaders, near peers and college students).



President Obama's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative is a collaborative, cross-agency effort to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by young people, including boys and young men of color, with the goal of helping all young people to reach their full potential.

Success Mentors receive resources, training and tools to help them identify the underlying causes of absenteeism, serve as motivators, problem solvers, and advocates, form supportive relationships, identify and celebrate students' strengths, promote student attendance every day, and help connect students with the necessary supports to keep them engaged in school.

MBK's *Every Student, Every Day* campaign focuses on helping the estimated 5 to 7.5 million students who are chronically absent from school each year to re-engage in their learning for school and life success. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing at least 10 percent of the

school year (roughly a month of school), is a leading cause of poor school performance and dropping out. Tragically, this challenge is most acute in our high-needs communities, where it is not unusual for one in four students to miss a month or



Broderick Johnson, Assistant to the President, Cabinet Secretary, and Chair of the My Brother's Keeper Taskforce, addresses audience at MBK Success Mentors launch.

more of school. Half of the high-needs students who fall off-track toward high school graduation are located in just 65 school districts nationwide—and chronic absenteeism often is the first flag of a problem.

There is good news, however; this problem can be addressed by using data to identify students and supporting them early, before it becomes easier to drop out than catch up. The U.S. Department of Education, Johns Hopkins University, and the White House developed the MBK Success Mentors Initiative to help solve this challenge.



The Model: School-Linked Caring Adults, Data & Existing Resources

The Success Mentor intervention's five core elements allow it to support at-risk students with impact, scale:

1. It relies primarily on **pre-existing school and community resources (e.g., staff and peers)**. School partners continue their efforts as before and are assigned students as mentees, receiving additional resources and tools to do their jobs with greater impact.
2. It **uses data to identify, target, and monitor the highest-needs students**, as well as measure impact for immediate action; all mentors can sign a simple agreement to protect the confidentiality of their mentees' attendance and other data.
3. It is **linked to a student support system created by brining school-linked partners to the table**. At weekly principal-led meetings, teams analyze data trends and devise school-wide absenteeism prevention strategies. Mentors flag challenges causing absenteeism and connect students to appropriate school personnel for resources or support.
4. **Schools elect to participate in the initiative and must agree to a few simple, but critical, pre-conditions** (e.g., weekly data-driven student success meetings with school partners and leadership and mentee data sharing);

5. **It is high-Intensity, continuous, and celebrates small success.** Mentors meet with students approximately three times per week in school all year. Mentors are trained to find their mentees' positive strengths, celebrate them, and engage with parents.

Research Base: Leveraging What Works

The MBK Success Mentors model combines elements of successful models, including New York City's (NYC) Success Mentor initiative. The NYC model reached approximately 10,000



students in three years with a low-cost, scalable approach, resulting in a statistically significant reduction in chronic absenteeism across all age cohorts from grades K-12:

- 18 percent reduction in absenteeism for students in poverty
- 31 percent reduction for students in temporary housing.
- Overage high school students with mentors were 53 percent more likely to remain in school the following year, compared to a group without mentors.



A 2015 report from *America's Promise Alliance* shows that drop-out rates in our highest-needs communities are often fueled by students experiencing "relationship poverty," which greatly increases the odds that they will drop out. The research shows that having a

caring adult in their lives was a major counterforce to dropping out. Having a caring adult in school, a core element of this model had the largest impact of all — reducing the likelihood of a student dropping out of school by 25 percent.

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Impacting 1 Million Students

The MBK Success Mentors Initiative has launched with cross-sector participation from school districts in 10 communities, and has now been expanded to 30 communities in total.

This effort is part of a large-scale, public-private collaboration with states, local communities, nonprofit, faith-based and philanthropic organizations nationwide. Collaborators include the **Ad Council**, **Attendance Works**, **City Year**, **MENTOR**, **Dr. Robert Balfanz of Johns**



**30 MBK SUCCESS
MENTORS
COMMUNITIES**

- Austin
- Boston
- Columbus
- Denver
- Miami-Dade
- New York City
- Philadelphia
- Providence
- San Antonio
- Seattle
- Albuquerque
- Baltimore
- Cleveland
- Dallas
- Detroit
- Flint
- Fresno
- Hartford
- Indianola
- Jacksonville
- Kansas City
- Los Angeles
- Milwaukee
- Minneapolis
- Oakland
- Orlando
- Pine Ridge
- Pittsburgh
- Portland
- Sacramento

— 5-7.5 MILLION —
**KIDS
ARE CHRONICALLY
ABSENT**



Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center, the Mott Foundation, the Arnold Foundation, United Way, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

In the next phase, college students from colleges near participating districts will serve as MBK College Success Mentors, leveraging federal work-study allocations. To build the most impactful intervention possible, a multi-year evaluation

and learning agenda will be incorporated into this effort and shared with interested school districts nationwide.

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