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# EMBRACING COMPLEXITY AND COLLABORATION IN A MULTI-SITE EVALUATION:

## Insights From a Randomized Control Trial on Youth Mentoring

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# SESSION **OVERVIEW**

1. WHEN COMPLEXITY REQUIRES FLEXIBILITY: THE EVOLVING NATURE OF A LARGE-SCALE, SITE-BASED MENTORING EVALUATION

2. "WOW, THAT'S A LOT OF DATA!": USING A WEB-BASED DATA SYSTEM FOR LARGE-SCALE COLLABORATIVE DATA COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT, AND REPORTING

3. "COULD YOU FOLLOW UP JUST ONE MORE TIME": WORKING WITH PRACTITIONER PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE HIGH RESPONSE RATES FOR FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS IN A LARGE-SCALE, SITE-BASED EVALUATION PROJECT

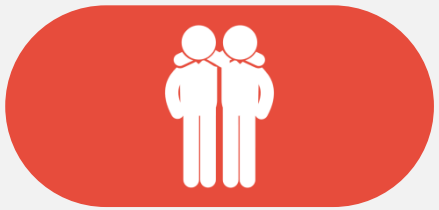
# MENTORING ENHANCEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM (MEDP)

## OJJDP

Grantees funded in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

## COLLABORATION

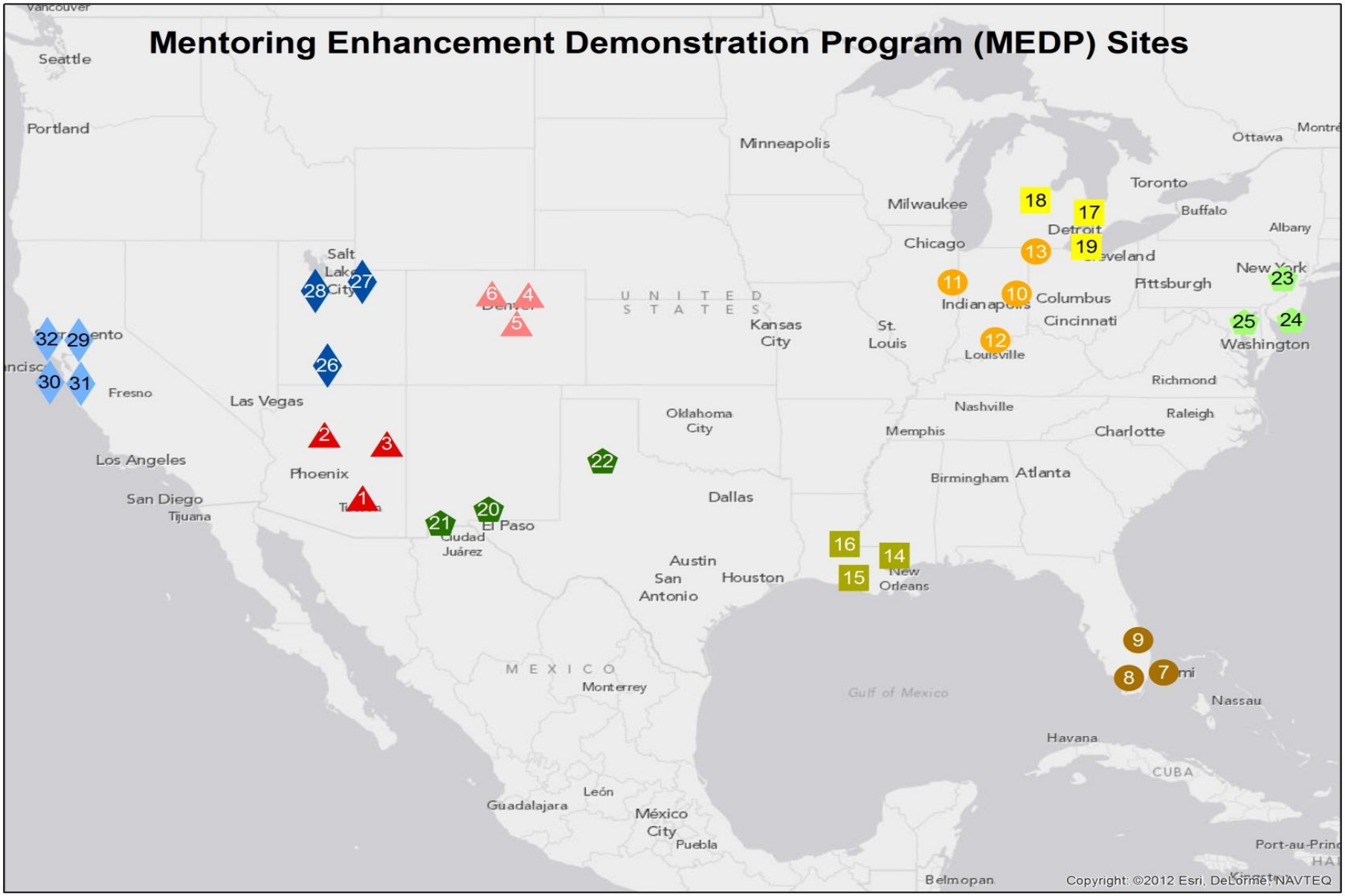
10 collaboratives, made up of 32 total mentoring agencies across 13 states funded for 3 years



## MENTORING

1-to-1 and group-based youth-adult mentoring in community and school settings; incorporating teaching and/or advocacy

# Mentoring Enhancement Demonstration Program (MEDP) Sites

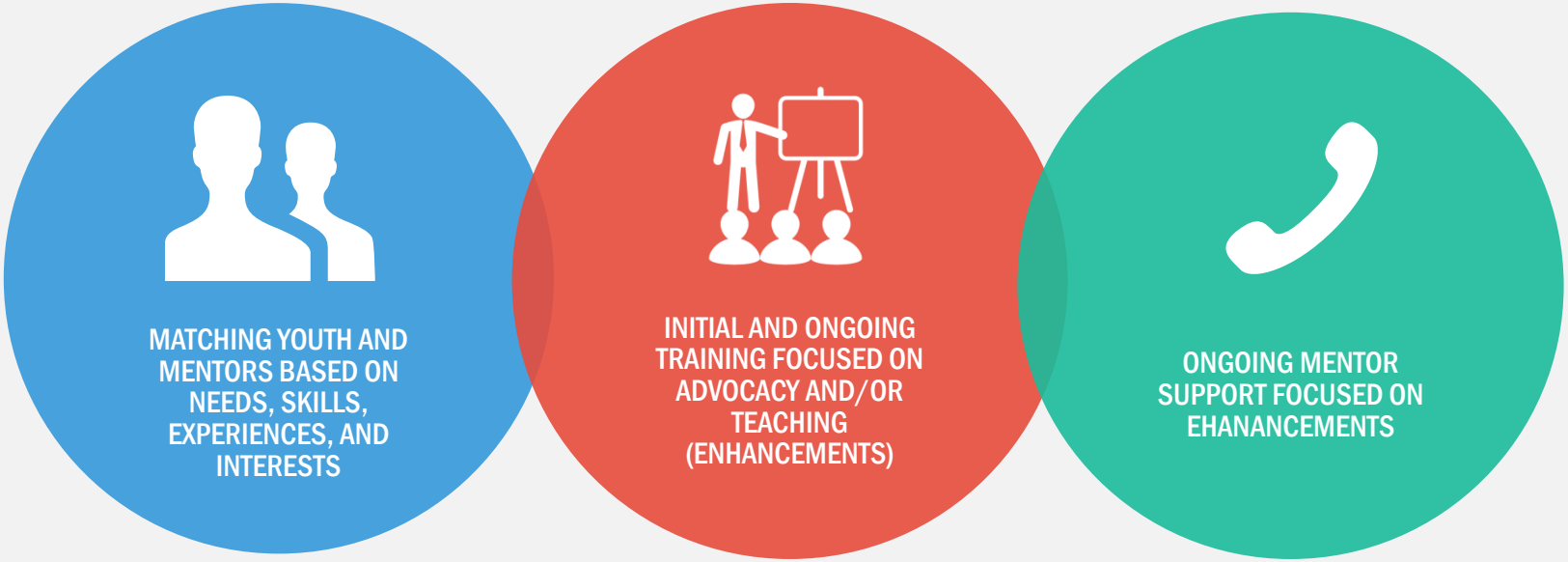


# MEDP GOALS

Improve the effectiveness of mentoring programs by supporting collaborations of qualified, established mentoring program sites

Promote and support systematic implementation of advocacy or teaching functions into mentors' roles to improve youth outcomes

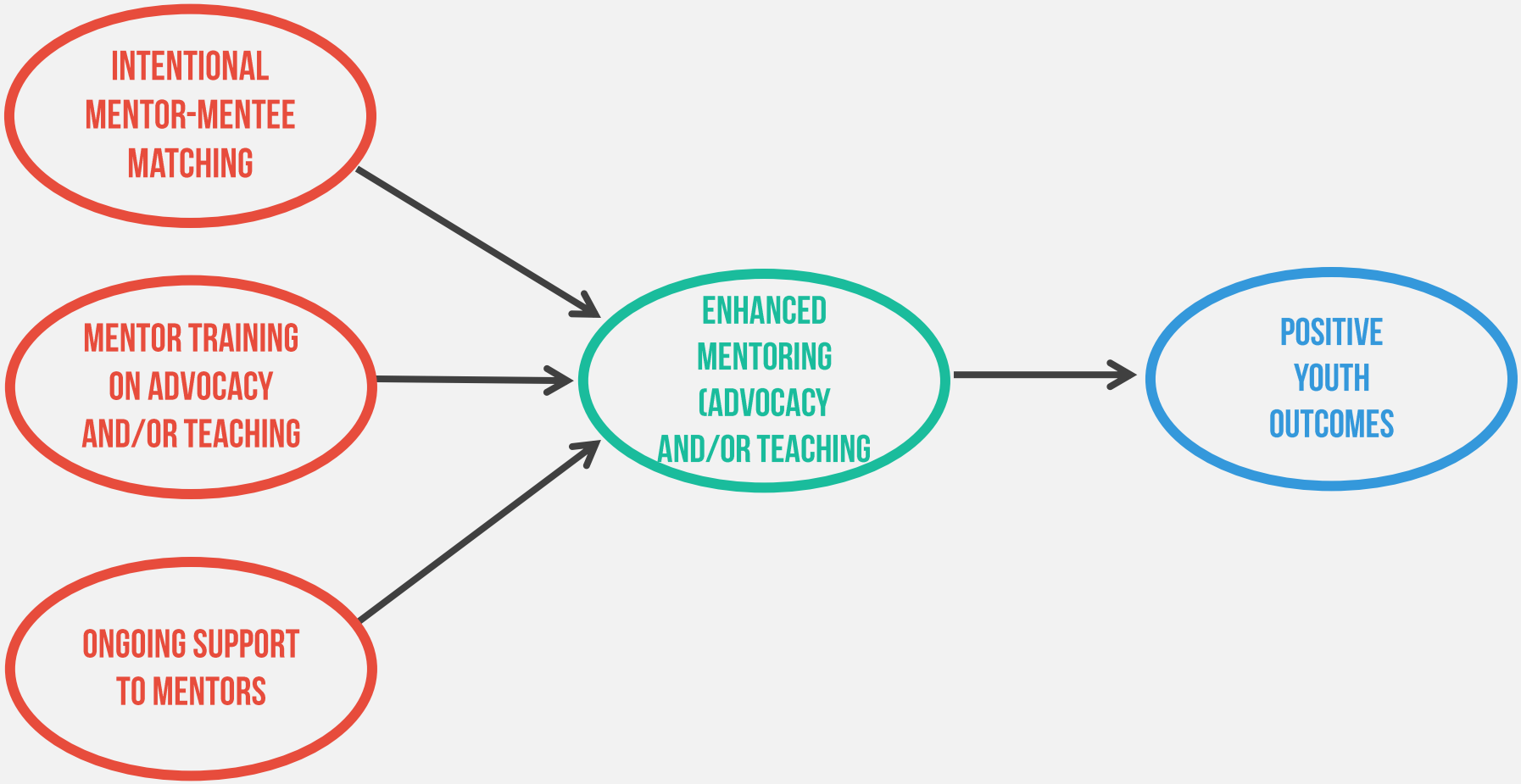
# MEDP ENHANCEMENT MODEL




## INFORMED BY RESEARCH

The grantee solicitation drew on the 2011 study by DuBois, et. al., *How Effective are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence*

# MEDP THEORY OF ACTION AND CHANGE



# EVALUATION DESIGN

## CRITERIA SET BY OJJDP:

- Five-year evaluation
- Experimental design with two groups
- Random assignment at the youth and mentor level

## ELEMENTS PROPOSED BY RESEARCH TEAM:

- Evaluability assessments
- Mixed-methods data collection
- Multiple data collection points (baseline, 12 months, 18 months)
- Multiple data sources (staff, mentor, youth, parent/caregiver)

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Do program's enhancements improve youth outcomes and reduce delinquency?

What are the mentoring program enhancements and how are they distinguished from standard practices?

To what extent are study participants exposed to the program enhancements?

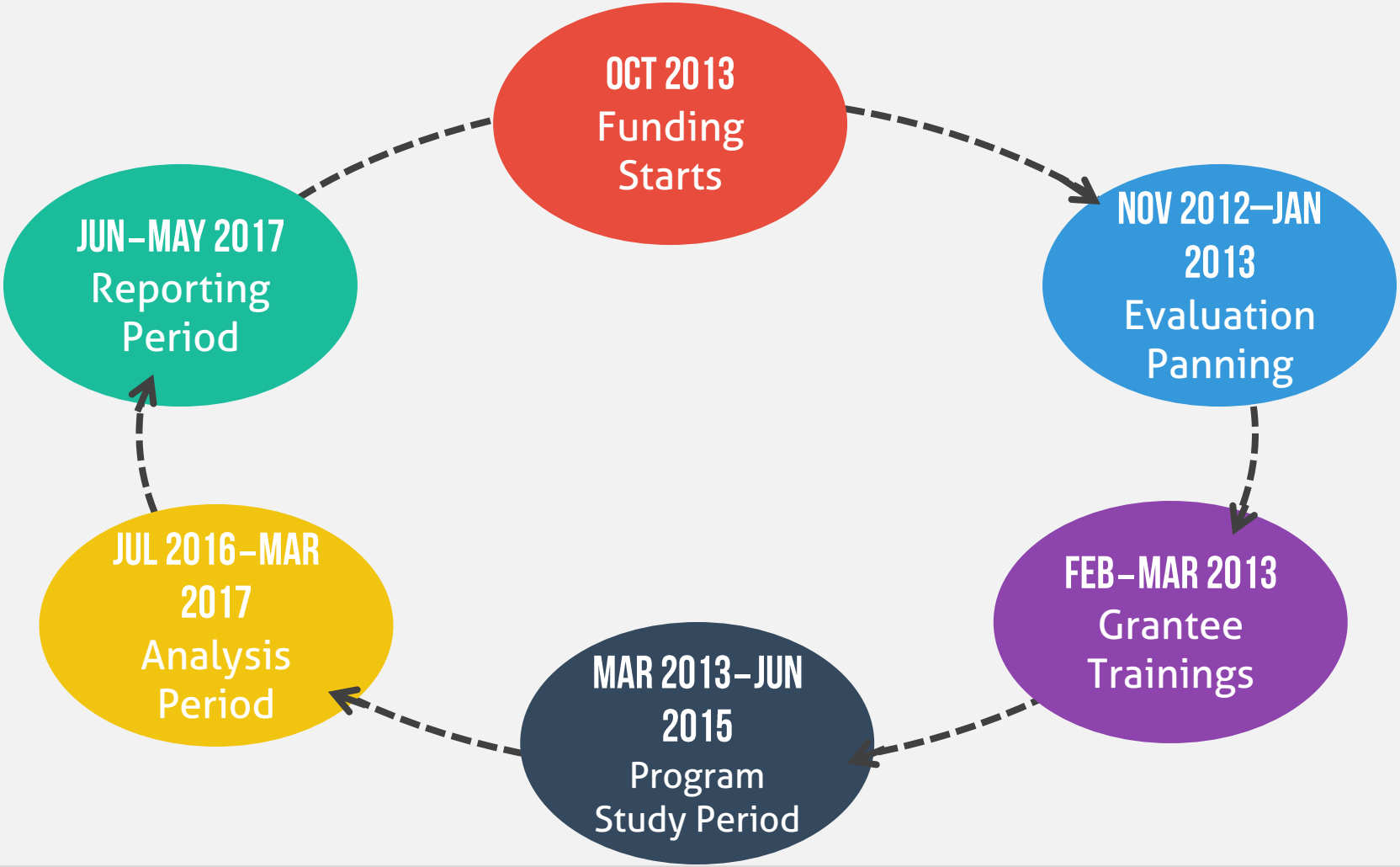
To what extent are the program enhancements implemented as intended?

To what extent do mentors incorporate teaching and/or advocacy into the mentoring role?

What affects implementation of enhancements?

What resources and supports are required to implement enhancements?

# EVALUATION TIMELINE



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# When Complexity Requires Flexibility: The Evolving Nature of a Large-Scale, Site-Based Mentoring Evaluation

# EVALUATION APPROACH

## DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION (DE)

DE suits the complex and dynamic context of MEDP—a new initiative with multiple stakeholders and sites.

While there is a client-approved evaluation plan, DE allows for adaptations as the context evolves.

The evaluation informs the intervention.

The evaluator's role is to support the decision-making processes as part of ongoing program implementation.

# UNDERSTANDING THE SETTING

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP AN EVALUATION PLAN

Review 10 grantee proposals

Administer/analyze survey on sites' evaluation skills and experience

Conduct grantee in-person training

# UNDERSTANDING THE SETTING

## BENEFITS OF GETTING TO KNOW OUR STAKEHOLDERS

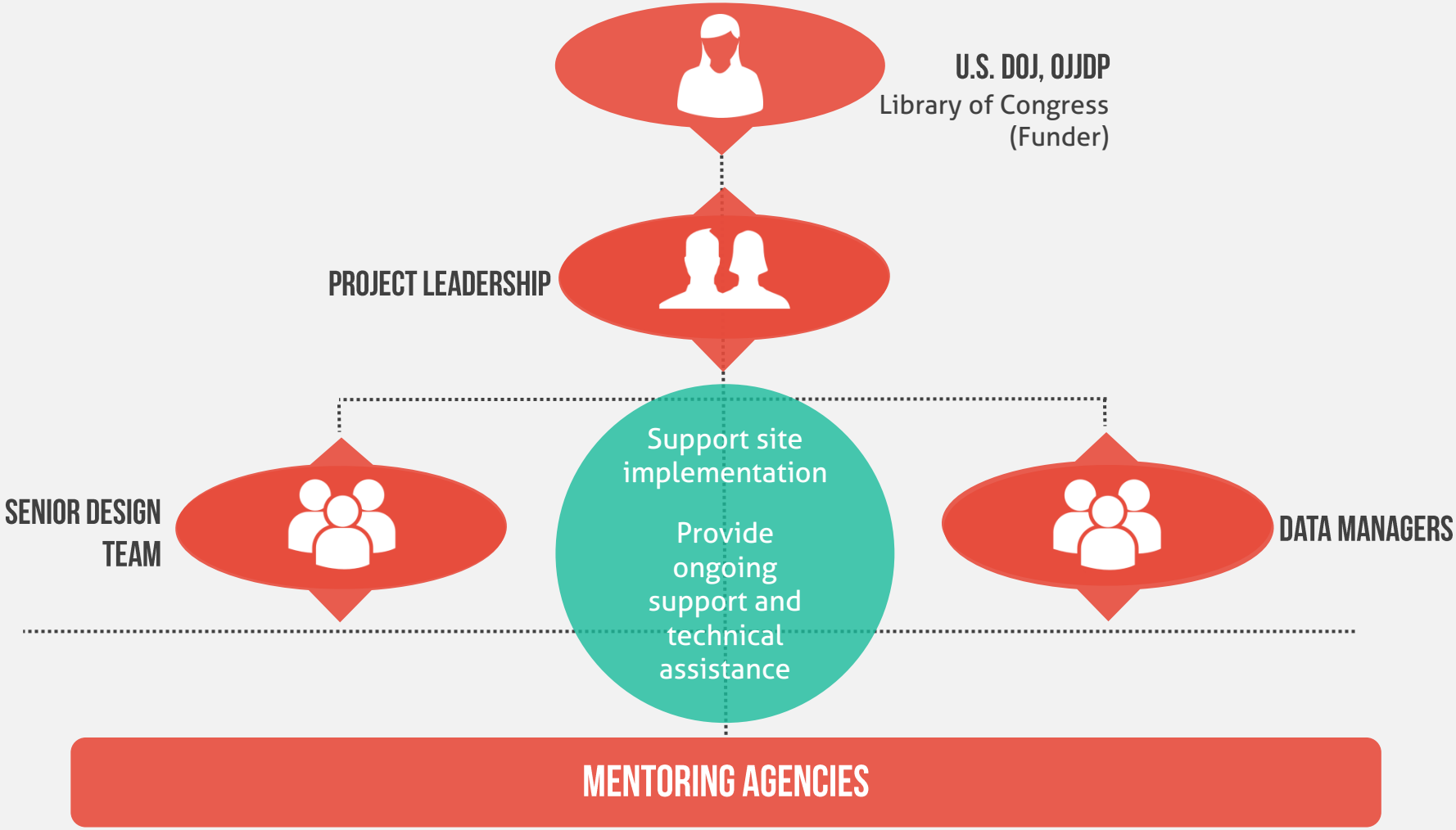
Identified changes needed to the randomization process

Identified unplanned data collection needs (e.g., online vs. paper surveys)

Identified available data collection tools (some programs have existing data collection system that can assist evaluation activities)

Identified evaluation capacity at each site and supports needed

# EVALUATION TEAM STRUCTURE



# BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

## CONSULTATION

By mentoring experts to support program implementation

## INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT

Ongoing check-in calls, emails, and hands-on training and technical assistance

## NEWSLETTER

Bi-weekly communication to share evaluation progress, highlight programs, identify data gaps and issues, and share mentoring resources

## WEBINARS

Broadcast to and archived for all sites, typically prior to study milestones

## "HOW-TO" GUIDES

To support sites in data collection and reporting

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM DE (SO FAR)

Strong understanding of contextual factors **informs needed adaptations to evaluation**

Extensive time spent on technical assistance **supports evaluation rigor and quality**

High level of support to sites benefits the intervention **but is a demanding process for the evaluation team**

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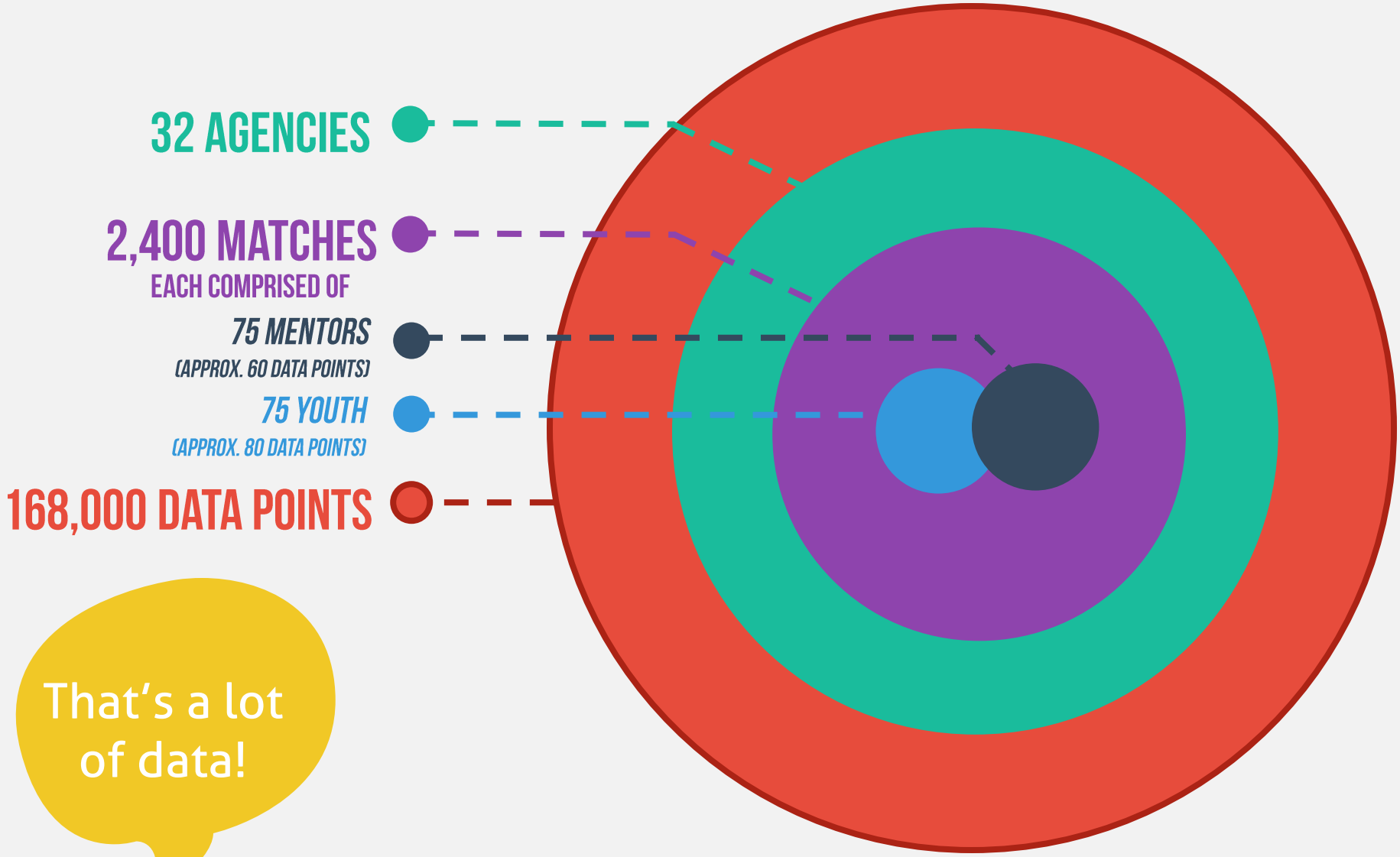
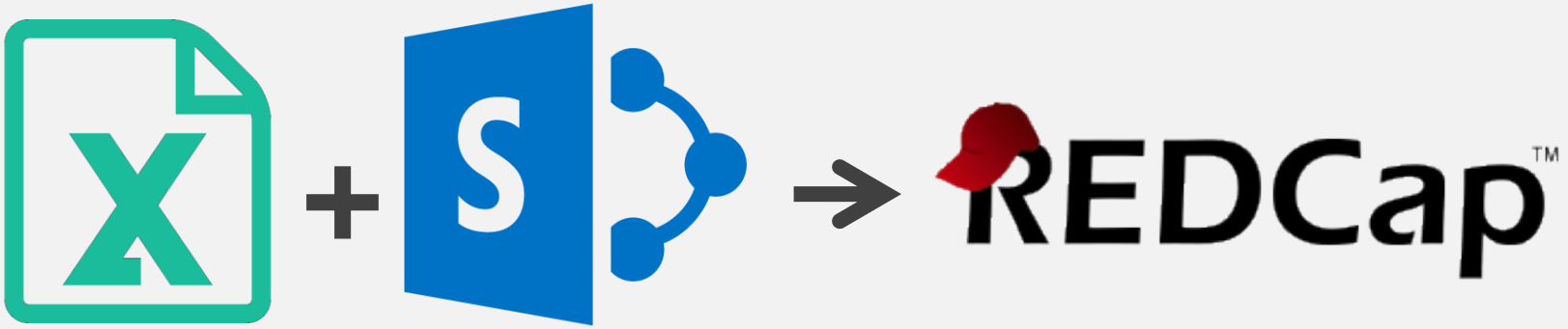
# "Wow, that's a lot of data!": Using a web-based data system for large-scale collaborative data collection, management, and reporting

## WOW, THAT'S A LOT OF DATA



# THE EVOLUTION OF DATA COLLECTION

*THEN* *NOW*



## EXCEL

AIR-created, spreadsheet "rosters" of (1) youth/parent and (2) mentor data; created by AIR, updated at each site

## SHAREPOINT

AIR-hosted, online repository of Excel rosters and scanned/PDF youth/parent and mentor files (e.g., consent forms, survey cover sheets)

## REDCAP

Vanderbilt University-created, AIR-hosted, online database of complete youth and mentor data (including files)

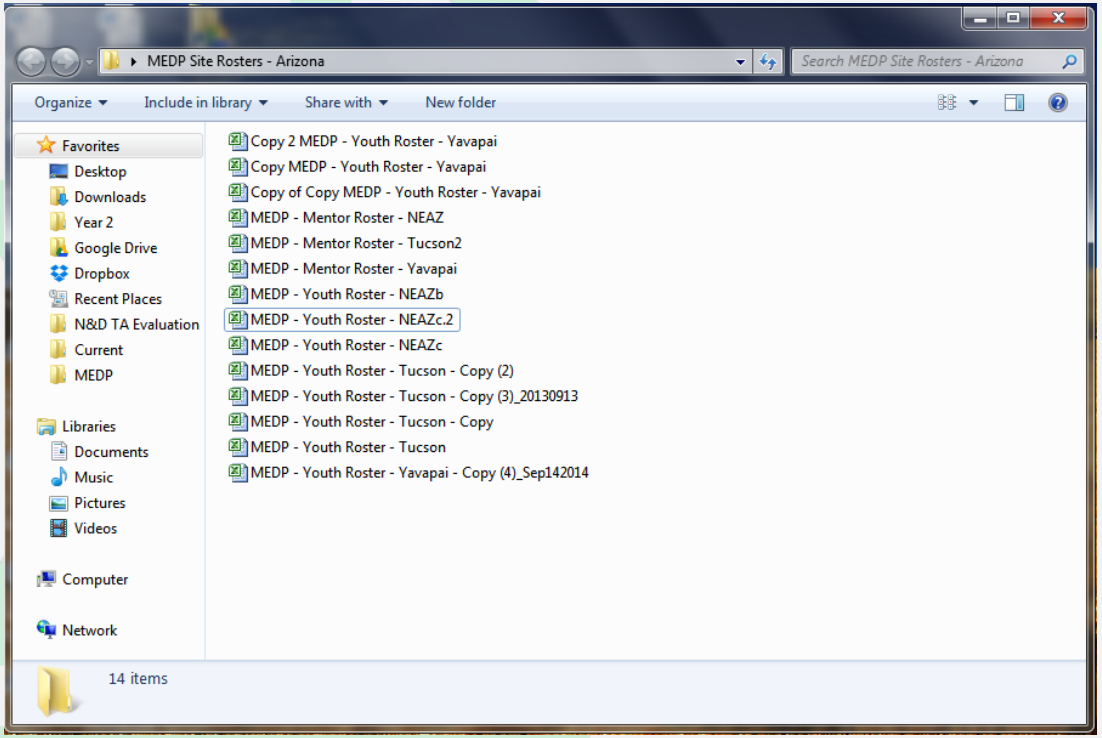
# THE EVOLUTION OF DATA COLLECTION

## FUN WITH SPREADSHEETS

64 spreadsheets updated by 32 sites, managed by 5 data managers

Site staff capacity for Excel varied widely

Version control was difficult to maintain



# THE EVOLUTION OF DATA COLLECTION

## MORE FUN WITH SPREADSHEETS (AND PDFS)

A web-based home for Excel files, **BUT…**

SharePoint maintains files similar to Windows Explorer

Multiple folders in multiple libraries were needed

Site staff faced challenges accessing the site and uploading forms in a timely manner.

Data managers struggled to monitor data uploads from 32 sites.

# THE EVOLUTION OF DATA COLLECTION

## AND THEN THERE WAS...

# REDCAP

REDCap is a secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases.

It is composed of a Consortium of 1,205 active institutional partners in 86 countries.

To learn more, visit http://www.project-redcap.org/

# REDCAP IS USEFUL FOR MULTI-SITE EVALUATIONS

1. Collaborative access to data
2. User authentication and role-based security
3. Quick reports of data points
4. Real-time data validation, integrity checks and other mechanisms for ensuring data quality
5. Document storage and sharing
6. Central data storage and backups
7. Data export functions for common statistical packages
8. Data import functions to facilitate bulk import of data from other systems

# HOW WE USE REDCAP

Separate mentor and youth case management (originating from the same place)

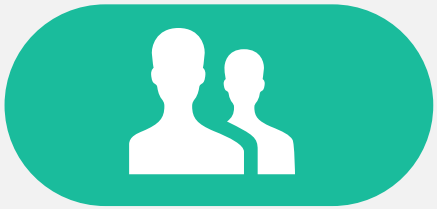
Site-specific (all 32!) case management (originating from the same place) with controlled access—each agency can only see their own data)

Data fields (60-70 of them) **AND** files uploads (e.g., consent/assent forms, survey cover sheets, incentive claim forms

Site- and AIR-initiated data imports for large-scale changes, data exports, data reports, and data visualizations to monitor data entry and gaps (e.g., missing and erroneous data)

WOW, THAT'S A LOT OF DATA

# REDCAP DATA REPORTS



Snapshots of mentor and youth enrollment, matches, and closures

Mentor, youth, and parent/caregiver survey completions

Missing and erroneous data (with direct link to corrections)

Site-requested/specific reports

(e.g., number of 14-year-olds enrolled)

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM USING REDCAP

**Significant benefits:** Using a dynamic data collection system supports data quality.

**A flexible system for efficiency:** REDCap has continuously evolved to meet the needs of the research team and the sites.

**Training and technical assistance to ensure data quality:** MEDP sites vary widely in their capacity to enter and upload data in a timely and complete manner.

**Ongoing monitoring:** Identifying gaps in data entry and communicating them timely is key to working with site staff who have many other demanding tasks of the initiative.

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# "Could you follow up just one more time": Working with practitioner partners to achieve high response rates for follow-up surveys in a large-scale, site-based evaluation projects

# RELIANCE ON SITE-LEVEL DATA COLLECTION

## THE EVALUATION TEAM RELIES ON AGENCY STAFF TO:

- Conduct consent/assent and collect signed forms
- Administer/facilitate baseline, post-training, and follow-up surveys
- Detail mentor training, match activities, and match support
- Collect school and juvenile justice records/data

COULD YOU FOLLOW UP **JUST ONE MORE TIME**

# RESEARCH–PRACTIONER PARTNERSHIPS

## MENTORING AGENCIES

32 separate agencies spread across 13 states

Some coordinated by a lead agency/coordinator

## EVALUATION TEAM

5 Data Managers, each assigned to 3 collaboratives

4 Senior Design Team Members

COULD YOU FOLLOW UP **JUST ONE MORE TIME**

# DATA COLLECTED TO-DATE

| | Current | Estimates |
|---|---|---|
| Mentor Baseline Surveys Completed | 2,523 | ? |
| Mentor Post-training Surveys Completed | 645 | ? |
| Mentor Follow-up Surveys Completed | 127 | 2,400 |
| Youth Baseline Surveys Completed | 2,184 | 2,400 |
| Parent Baseline Surveys Completed | 2,004 | 2,400 |
| Youth Follow-up Surveys Completed | 40 | 2,400 |
| Parent Follow-up Surveys Completed | 26 | 2,400 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Number of Matches | 1,921 | 2,400 |
| Number of Matches Closed | 165 | ? |
| Number of Rematches | 54 | ? |

COULD YOU FOLLOW UP **JUST ONE MORE TIME**

# THE TROUBLE WITH FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS

Baseline surveys were required for match initiation

**Mentoring relationship is the incentive**

Initially there were no incentives for follow-up surveys

COULD YOU FOLLOW UP **JUST ONE MORE TIME**

# CHALLENGES TO COLLECTING FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS

Timing varies from site-to-site Some mentors don't attend/complete training

Must be administered to both Enhancement and Control mentors

Lack of understanding of/regard for importance of survey

COULD YOU FOLLOW UP **JUST ONE MORE TIME**

# CHALLENGES TO COLLECTING FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS

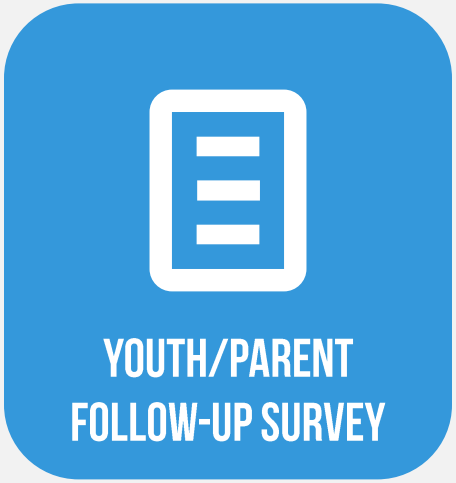
Completed as soon as the match ends

Some matches end on "bad terms"

The survey is long and there's no tangible incentive

Group-based mentors must complete multiple surveys

# CHALLENGES TO COLLECTING FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS




Completed at the 12- (and 18-month) mark of initial match

Some matches end long before 12 months

Some matches end on "bad terms"

Some families withdraw from program and/or move away

COULD YOU FOLLOW UP **JUST ONE MORE TIME**

# SUPPORTS TO INCREASE RESPONSE RATES

Added incentives for parents

Close monitoring of survey completion in REDCap

Easy-to-administer follow-up survey administration packets for site staff

Availability of surveys in multiple formats (e.g., hardcopy, online)

Surveys translated to multiple languages for parents

AIR will take on data collection when staff efforts have not succeeded

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS

The evaluation team knows how important all surveys are **but the mentors (and the sites) don't always know**

Flexibility may be required **to find ways to provide tangible incentives when initially there were none**

Sites with the most in-person interaction with mentors **have the highest completion rates**

Setting clear expectations for mentors early **results in higher completion rates**

# QUESTIONS?

Please Don't Hesitate.

# THANK YOU

For Your Time and Attention...

# CONTACT US

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