

GOVERNOR CUOMO LAUNCHES NEW YORK STATE MENTORING PROGRAM

Led by Matilda Cuomo, Advisory Council Will Re-establish New York's Commitment to Mentoring

New Website Will Offer Information and Resources on How to Get Involved in Creating Opportunities for New York's Children

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today launched the New York State Mentoring Program, which will provide career and life guidance to children who are at risk of failing out of school or in foster care across the state. The Program—guided by its Advisory Board, chaired pro bono by the Governor's mother, Mrs. Matilda Raffa Cuomo—will identify, train, and match hundreds of business-based mentors with students in some of New York's most challenging elementary and middle schools.

To accompany the launch of the New York State Mentoring Program, the Governor also announced the launch of a website to provide information about available services and mentoring models, in addition to resources for volunteers interested in mentoring children in their communities.

"New York State has a long-standing tradition of giving children access to every opportunity possible to reach their full potential," **Governor Cuomo said.** "New York once led the way in mentoring when my mother established the first New York State Mentoring Program nearly two decades ago. Today we are recommitting ourselves to helping our youngest New Yorkers. This mentoring program will give at-risk students the support they need to succeed in school and life. With this program, New York is once again leading by example in securing a brighter future for our children."

Mrs. Matilda Raffa Cuomo said: "The New York State Mentoring Program was the first statewide one-to-one school based mentoring program for at-risk children in our nation. Thanks to my son, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, we are reinstating this vital program. I am proud to be formally chairing the Advisory Council to ensure every child has the opportunity to reach for the stars. We must care for all of our children—because they are our future."

In 1987, under the leadership of Governor Mario Cuomo, Mrs. Cuomo developed the nation's first school-based one-to-one mentoring program, the New York State Mentoring Program. Chaired by Mrs. Cuomo, this highly successful program screened and trained volunteers and matched them to children in their communities as a way to encourage at-risk youth to stay in school and earn a diploma. Before the program ended in 1995, it successfully connected nearly 10,000 of New York's neediest students to a network of highly trained mentors to help them succeed in school and graduate.

The New York State Mentoring Program:

The New York State Mentoring Program is designed to match some of the state's most vulnerable and disadvantaged students with volunteers from businesses and enterprises in all regions of the state. The program currently targets fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders and is expected to expand into middle school as the program develops.

The New York Mentoring Advisory Council will help identify private sector and nonprofit partners to identify mentors to work with at-risk youth in communities across New York State. Support for businesses and schools participating in this initiative will come from the State's 10 Regional Economic Development Councils. A trained coordinator in each regional council will work with the mentoring participants in their area.

Additionally, the Advisory Council will work closely with its partners in education to identify distressed communities – areas that have higher poverty rates and a higher need for mentoring programs – and expand the program to reach children in those communities.

About 40 percent of a teenager's waking hours are spent without companionship or supervision. Mentors provide teens with a valuable place to spend free time.

According to the National Mentoring Partnership, 25 percent of students who entered ninth grade in 2009 did not graduate with their peers. Additionally, 15 percent of elementary schools students have a high risk of chronic absence.

One-to-One mentoring is one of the best ways to reverse these negative trends. This format not only allows for the volunteer mentors to properly manage their busy schedules, but also provides much needed consistency to the mentoring relationship. A landmark Public/Private Ventures evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters programs showed that students who meet regularly with a mentor are 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip a day of school. Additionally, youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking. Mentoring provides children the opportunity to overcome challenges and achieve their maximum potential.

Mentors also help young people strengthen their communication skills, as well as progress towards realizing their career goals by expanding youths' knowledge base of professional resources and organizations.

Volunteers are encouraged to apply to become a mentor in their community by filling out an application at <https://www.ny.gov/content/get-involved-new-york-state-mentoring-program>. In his 2015 State of the State address, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the reestablishment of the State's commitment to mentoring with the creation of the New York State Mentoring Program. This program will allow New York to once again leverage the talent in the state's communities to guide children toward successful opportunities.