

## **YEAR 1 INTERVENTIONS**

VMN Year 1 utilized two technological interventions: a video-conference system and a secure online discussion (“blog”). A total of six live mentoring sessions (30 minutes each) using video-conferencing hosted by GoToMeeting™ were held over the course of 8 months. The mentors discussed various aspects of the mental health professions, focusing on psychiatrist and psychologist roles and career pathways. A rural psychiatrist and psychologist each served as a guest speaker to further personalize the rural clinical experience for the mentees. Between live mentoring sessions, the blog was used to maintain contact and facilitate discussions related to the live meeting topic areas. Students were encouraged to ask questions of mentors and other students via the blog (e.g., *What do I need to get into graduate school?*). Each live mentoring session was recorded and uploaded to the blog so that students unable to attend the live session could view the content.

## **VIRTUAL MENTOR NETWORK YEAR 1**

A total of 40 mentees (eight college students and 32 high school students; 17.5% male; 57.5% Caucasian; mean age=17.3 years [SD=2.1]; mean GPA=3.6 [SD=0.7]) participated in VMN Year 1. The majority of mentees were Nebraska residents (97.5%), and demonstrated a mix of ethnicities (American Indian/Alaska Native [n=1, 2.5%]; Asian [n=2, 5.0%]; Hispanic/Latino [n=11, 27.5%]; More than one race [n=3, 7.5%]). The majority of mentees had used some form of social media (92.5%), demonstrating a proclivity for using online modalities. The mentees attended six virtual real-time mentoring sessions. Approximately 47.5% of mentees utilized the blog between sessions to continue discussions and ask questions.

### **MFQ-9**

A total of 27 mentees completed MFQ-9 for their four mentors (two psychiatrists and two psychologists). The item, *I respect my mentor's ability to teach others* scored the highest (mean=4.01, SD=0.94), whereas *I share my personal problems with my mentor* scored the lowest (mean=2.74, SD=1.05) (Table 1).

### **Activity Survey**

A total of 28 mentees completed the survey. The means on the item “discussions were stimulating” were for real-time mentoring sessions and blog, respectively. For each of the six real-time 30-minute mentoring sessions, the mentees thought “time was well spent” (mean=3.29, SD=0.71). Mentees reported that their “key question was adequately answered” by mentors via the blog (mean=3.25, SD=0.59). Overall, the mentees “enjoyed” the VMN Year 1 project more than average (mean=3.96, SD=1.07). Additionally, 92.9% of mentees indicated that they would recommend the VMN Year 1 project to their friends and/or colleagues (Table 2).

Approximately half of the students actively engaged in the companion blog (n=19), which hosted weekly informational posts, recordings of mentoring sessions, and comments on current events by the mentors. Mentees were allowed to create posts, all monitored by a designated moderator. Of these, seven students were highly active on the blog, with robust near-peer conversations in the comments sections of the blog posts. The most engaged conversations revolved around questions related to the transition from high school to college, with college students often answering high school students' questions on this topic. The blog was not offered during Year 2 to focus resources (time moderating and screening, and facilitating posts, etc.) on more live distance sessions. Qualitative data revealed that the mentees desired a faster paced experience.

**Appendix**  
**Virtual Mentorship Network to Address the Rural Shortage of Mental Health Providers**  
**Keeler et al.**

High school students desired a varied exposure to a wide range of behavioral or mental career options. College students desired more specific and detailed conversations designed to help them transition into the next stage of career training/graduate school. These data were used to develop interventions for Year 2.

**Appendix Table 1.** Year 1 Key Qualitative Findings, Year 1

---

Students

I think it would have been more beneficial if I was in high school or a freshman in college. As a junior in college I felt like I had really good knowledge and most of the things were really repetitive.

I didn't really enjoy sessions, I felt as if they were slow and not very engaging.

I would like to be part of a college students-only VMN. The high school students had questions that I've already had answered in years past with BHECN. With a college-only interest group, questions and discussions would be more geared to us and our thoughts about professional exams, questions, and decisions. But I understand that as college students, we can ask questions that high school students might not think to ask.

The overall [Virtual Mentoring Network]...was very beneficial and I have gained a great deal of knowledge that I will be able to take going into college and am very appreciative of this opportunity given to me.

This was a very awesome experience...It was nice to hear the different professional responses to the questions I had...I would have liked more time with the mentors so I could have felt more of a connection to really...ask them questions.

Great opportunity to explore this career!

---

VMN, Virtual Mentorship Network; BHECN, Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska