



Mentoring For Social Justice

The Governor's Prevention Partnership stands in solidarity with communities here in Connecticut and across America as we condemn unjust killings driven by institutional racism in our country. As leaders in the fight for youth prevention, we understand that our work provides an opportunity to equip mentors and practitioners with the resources they need to best support the students of color that they serve day to day. That's why we work hand-in-hand with our national partner "MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership" to provide culturally responsive, inclusive trainings.

"Timely, relevant, and important". That is how Danielle Sittol of the Greenwich Youth Services Bureau described part one of a two-part Zoom training called "The Essentials Training: A Curriculum for People Who Mentor Black and Latino Young Men and Boys". This free, virtual training ran by The Partnership engaged participants in a conversation about privilege, vulnerability, and the importance of critical consciousness when mentoring Black and Latino youth. Group discussions, smaller break out rooms, and a social identity matrix activity led mentors and practitioners to powerful realizations about themselves and how they can better serve the youth in their lives.

Danielle appreciated the humility of fellow mentors and practitioners who understand that their work with youth is invaluable and that they must be humble to do this work well. Lydia Matlock works for an organization in Kansas called "Give Something Back" that provides scholarships and mentoring to students who have faced economic adversity and other adversities such as incarceration of a parent or foster care. Lydia said that as a white woman, this training was especially critical for her to attend, "The social identity matrix exercise was enlightening, and the entire training was timely and powerful. If you mentor even one student of color, you should attend this training".

Donn Reid, a mentor to four youth and the chief value officer for Domus Kids, echoed these sentiments, “The connection and honesty in our small breakout sessions was powerful. This training encouraged me and other people in the field to start with ourselves and how we walk through the world to become better advocates for youth”.

LaKisha Jordan, who serves as a member on our Board of Directors and a Corporate Responsibility Officer for KeyBank, who sponsored the training, delivered opening remarks for what she described as the “timely and critical” training. After part one, she said “I am optimistic that the world we have been living in will evolve for the better. Change will not happen overnight but together, through critical discussions like this one, we can make real progress.” This training is just one part of the work that The Partnership is doing to help build better structures that serve youth of color. We are committed to doing our part in the fight for racial justice and inclusion.

Roland Harmon, Co-President and Chief Program & Administrative Officer has renewed this promise to our staff, partners, and state community, “The Partnership is continuing its commitment to culturally responsive programming that strengthens the capacity of communities and organizations to serve boys and young men of color. We are assessing our program service delivery models, will lean in to convening conversations that address systemic racism and expand the development of tools and resources for mentors to support to discussions of race and justice issues raised by their mentees.”

The Governor’s Prevention Partnership has never strayed from our mission of promoting positive outcomes for all of Connecticut’s youth. This vision is inclusive and requires a critical consciousness that we continue to build internally and help build externally. As the world evolves for the better, our youth and the organizations that serve them can count on us to help build capacity for leadership into a more inclusive future.