

tives that other states with more progressive education systems have implemented to encourage state employees to participate in mentoring programs. These mentoring programs have shown to help prevent delinquency of at-risk children and are expected to save New Mexico money in the long term as fewer at-risk children become criminal offenders.

Mentoring programs facilitate the conditions that lead to more productive and educated citizens who will benefit the state and will not become a burden on the state due to incarceration.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

There is no performance measure identified to use as a yardstick to analyze the success of the program. Long-term success may be difficult to measure.

FISCAL and ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

If an employee is allowed to use leave to mentor at risk children, there will be no direct fiscal impact. There is an indirect fiscal impact measured in terms of lost productivity if an employee is not at work; either work does not get done or somebody else has to perform the absent employees work. If only ten percent (10%) of the classified state employees participate in this program, the estimated cost per day of mentoring to tax-payers would be \$243.2, not including benefits (\$364.8 including benefits @ 50%). [19,000 classified employees * 10% participation rate * \$16.00/hour rate * 8 hours]. This equates to approximately \$128 base salary dollars per day for the average state employee.

There will be additional requirements on managers, supervisors, payroll staff, and/or administrative support in terms of tracking the leave. The automated HRMS payroll systems will have to be enhanced to track this additional category of time-off from work.

CONFLICT/RELATIONSHIP

House Joint Memorial 38 encourages:

- The Governor to initiate an educational enhancement leave policy that allows state employees administrative leave for educational mentoring activities; and
- The State Department of Public Education and local school boards to assist in the development and implementation of an educational enhancement program in the public schools that uses state employees as educational mentors.

Senate Bill 161 appropriates \$118.3 from the general fund to the Department of Labor to contract for an at-risk youth employment-training program in Bernalillo, Tarrant, Sandoval and Valencia counties. In the General Appropriation Act, the Legislature has historically appropriated \$700.0 to the Department of Labor for at-risk youth.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Current administrative leave policies for executive classified employees is intended for a specific purpose and allows an agency to authorize employees leave with pay for up to five consecutive work days when it is in the best interest of the agency to do so. A new type of leave would have

to be developed by SPO and approved by the Personnel Board.

There is no “cap” on the amount of leave that may be taken. SPO states a maximum cap of eight hours per month seems reasonable.

The employees who mentor students would need to do so on a voluntary basis subject to work demands and supervisor approval.

Local school districts may require background checks on volunteers working with students on school sites.

State agencies may need to address issues of per diem and transportation for state employees while mentoring students in the program.

The Department of Health provided the following information on the success of mentoring programs:

According to the SEARCH Institute, the involvement of a consistent, caring adult (other than the parent or teacher) in the life of a child has been proven to have a positive impact on the child’s behavior, achievement in school and social development. Children in low income, single parent homes are at higher risk than others for developmental problems of all kinds. Mentoring is a cost-effective approach that usually uses specially trained community volunteers as mentors. The costs are associated with training, coordination, administration and oversight, rather than paying the mentors. There are a variety of models in use throughout New Mexico, some funded with state resources and some locally initiated and supported. According to program staff, the barriers to successful implementation include the lack of adequate funding to support site coordinator stipends, mentor screening costs (up to \$60 per screening) and ongoing technical assistance from project staff.

Mentoring programs have been proven effective to improve health and learning among youth. In an evaluation of Big Brother/Big Sisters by Tierney and Grossman (1995), findings indicated that mentored youth were: 46% less likely than the control group to initiate drug use during the 18-month study period, 27% less likely to initiate alcohol use, 33% less likely to hit someone, skipped half as many days of school, skipped fewer classes, and showed modest gains in their grade point average; the quality of relationship with their parents was better for mentored youth; and mentored youth, especially minority Little Brothers, had improved relationships with their peers.

The New Mexico Commission on Higher Education notes that in 1999 it received a federally-funded, five-year state GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant. GEAR UP was launched in the federal Higher Education Amendments of 1998 as a new national effort to encourage more young people to have high expectations, stay in school, study hard, and go to college. GEAR UP focuses on providing at-risk middle school students and their families in the following programs and services: early college awareness activities, improved academic support, information on paying for college, and scholarship assistance. The program also emphasizes that as a result of pursuing higher education, a person has more future career options.

The Commission on Higher Education indicates that a state government employee mentoring

program would help to tie schools and the work place together. In addition, it could help students be more successful in school and increase community involvement and support for schools. Parents, counselors, and teachers are often beset with competing priorities, and having another adult in the school who is giving individualized attention to a student generally promotes better behavior and improved academic achievement. The more people volunteer in their community schools, and get to know teachers, students and administrators, the more likely it will be that they will support the schools in their community when it is time to vote on ballot measures for schools.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

How would long-term success of the program be measured?

If an employee was injured while on approved mentoring leave, would workers compensation insurance cover any related expenses?

Would the employee be eligible for mileage and per diem reimbursement if they had to travel?

Would the mentor be allowed to use state property, such as computers or other equipment?

JMG/njw