

Implementation Options

Check & Connect (C&C) can be implemented in an educational or community setting in a variety of ways. While our evidence for C&C was obtained through research studies using **dedicated mentors**, sites around the United States are piloting several different implementation options, as outlined below:

	Dedicated Mentors	School Staff as Mentors	Community Volunteers as Mentors
DETAILS	<p>Individuals hired part-time or full-time can serve as C&C mentors (including AmeriCorps volunteers).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads of 20-25 students for 50% FTE and 40-50 for 100% FTE • May be hired by districts, agencies, community-based organizations, or county or state governments • May be assigned at the building, district, or region level • May or may not follow mobile students from school to school 	<p>Teachers, school social workers, school psychologists, counselors, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel can serve as C&C mentors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads of 1-5 students each • Staff may be released from other assigned duties (e.g., lunch duty, bus duty, one class period) and/or paid a small stipend (<i>see backside</i>) 	<p>Volunteers from the community, undergraduate or graduate education programs, civic organizations, or businesses can serve as C&C mentors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads vary by mentor availability • Volunteers are typically assigned to students in one school
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sole focus is their C&C mentor role • More likely to make the recommended two-year commitment (except AmeriCorps volunteers) • Have more time for professional development • Have more time for family engagement • Low-cost if using AmeriCorps volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs less than using dedicated mentors • Staff may already have positive relationships with students • Staff know the school policies, environment, personnel, and available resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free or low-cost • Are probably willing and eager to be a mentor • May come from the same community as the students and may have backgrounds similar to the students
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be paid a salary; the nature of the funding used to pay their salary (e.g., grant funds) could limit the duration of their employment • May be new to the school • May encounter difficulty with obtaining access to school data unless the mentor is considered a district employee • May be the only C&C mentor at a particular school and thus may lack colleagues with whom to collaborate and problem-solve • If using AmeriCorps volunteers: limited availability, one-year commitment, and application process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on an additional duty may be difficult • May experience role confusion between their “real” job and their C&C mentor role; e.g., they may be responsible for grading or disciplining students (not part of the C&C mentor role) • May vary in their willingness, commitment, and follow-through as mentors • Scheduling C&C-related professional development may be difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and follow-through regarding their C&C mentor role may vary • Confidentiality issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May not have access to school data or other information ○ There may be issues related to family privacy and the information that can or cannot be shared with them • May lack experience with youth, families, or the school system • Scheduling C&C-related professional development may be difficult

Tips for Funding Dedicated Mentors or Using School Staff as Mentors

The primary expense for implementing Check & Connect (C&C) is staffing for mentors, whether hiring dedicated mentors or using existing staff (e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, teacher, principal, etc.) to serve in this role.

Writing a Grant to Hire Dedicated Mentors

Finding a Grant

- Look for funding in your community through local educational or philanthropic foundations that award grants.
- Keep apprised of your state department of education's (SEA's) statewide dropout prevention initiatives (sometimes SEAs make funding available to districts to implement programs like C&C).
- Consider federal education funding sources (some C&C sites have received funding from the U.S. Department of Education).
- Read the grant requirements carefully. What is the geographic area and content the funder is focused on? Look for content keywords like dropout prevention, school completion, student engagement, mentoring, character education, and/or youth development and determine if the grant requirements apply to your need.

Funding Websites

- Foundation Center Grants Database - searchable (foundationcenter.org)
- View current U.S. Department of Education Grant Competitions (ed.gov/grantapps) or specific initiatives:
 - High School Graduation Initiative (HSGI) grants (ed.gov/programs/dropout/awards.html)
 - Investing in Innovation (i3) grants (ed.gov/programs/innovation)
 - Safe and Supportive Schools grants (safesupportiveschools.ed.gov)
- Learn about AmeriCorps and how organizations can apply for an AmeriCorps grant at nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/

Using School Staff as Mentors

Schools or districts can:

- Redefine the positions of current staff, provide training, and adjust typical caseloads. Many different people can serve as Check & Connect mentors, including teachers, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and educational assistants.
- Provide a small stipend to school personnel who take on a larger caseload (e.g., 5 or more students).
- Relieve school personnel serving as mentors of other service duties (e.g., bus or lunch duty). Many secondary schools employ 100-150 staff. Clearly, many students could be served if each staff member was a Check & Connect mentor for one student!

(Excerpted from *Check & Connect: A Comprehensive Student Engagement Intervention: Implementing with Fidelity*, 2012, p. 33.)