

May 11, 2010

Parents fear lack of confidence, bullying and depression as the top threats to their children: *VoxPop* survey

Eight in ten believe all adults share a civic responsibility to help kids in their communities get the guidance they need to be successful in life.

A quarter of Canadian parents have experienced difficulty accessing community resources to provide guidance for their child or teen.

Toronto, May 11, 2010 – When it comes to the future well-being of their children, Canadian parents worry most about the long-term effects of low self-confidence, being bullied and depression, according to a new *VoxPop* (Voice of the People) survey.

Conducted for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) survey examined parental fears towards the long-term effects of negative emotional states and behaviours common to children and teens, as well as attitudes about youth mentoring as a way to provide friendship and guidance to children and teenagers in need of a positive influence.

The survey found that a significant majority of Canadian parents fear that low confidence, bullying and depression are placing the future happiness and success of their children and teenagers in jeopardy. Sixty-two per cent of parents surveyed see lack of confidence as a direct threat to their offspring's long-term success, while 60 per cent fear the effects of bullying and 57 per cent worry about the long-term consequences of depression.

Other negative emotional states and behaviours considered by parents to be formidable obstacles to future success include: inability to control anger; lack of interest in school; drug and alcohol abuse; loneliness; internet/video game addiction and gang involvement.

“Youth mentoring is too often seen as a warm and fuzzy service that is nice to have, but not essential,” says Bruce MacDonald, president of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. “This national survey discredits that perception by illustrating that parents understand the pressing needs for mentoring in our society. Today's parents know that the qualities of confidence and caring for others are of key importance to the future success and happiness of their children and they understand that mentoring can make a huge difference in the lives of children and teenagers.”

The survey also found that Canadian parents greatly value the work done by community organizations, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, that help children and teenagers in need of support and guidance:

- **97 per cent** agreed that guidance from a volunteer adult mentor can play an instrumental role in helping troubled children and teens.
- **84 per cent** believe that it is valuable for children and teenagers in need of guidance to spend a few hours each week with an adult volunteer who provides friendship and support.
- **22 per cent** believe that they themselves would have benefited from having a volunteer Big Brother or Big Sister when they were children or teenagers.

Another striking finding of the survey was that nearly a quarter (24%) of Canadian parents have experienced difficulty accessing local mentoring services to help their child or teen.

“This research confirms that mentoring services, like those offered by Big Brothers Big Sisters, play an important role in helping children and teenagers develop self-esteem”, says MacDonald. “We are doing the best we can to help parents help their children and teenagers, but more volunteers and financial resources are needed to get the job done.”

The survey found there is general agreement among Canadian parents (81%) that all adults share a civic responsibility to help children and teenagers in their communities get the guidance they need to be successful in life.

“This *VoxPop* survey clearly reinforces the axiom that it takes a village to raise a child,” says MacDonald. “Those who volunteer or donate to help children and teenagers develop into self-confident, caring adults today make their communities stronger tomorrow.”

The *VoxPop* Big Brothers Big Sisters survey was conducted by Advanis, with assistance from Mustel Research Group, both of which are Gold Seal Corporate Research Agency members of MRIA. A total of 1,056 Canadian parents were randomly recruited by telephone to participate in a web survey from January 19 to February 25, 2010. The results are considered accurate within \pm 3.0 percent, 19 times out of 20.

About *VoxPop*

VoxPop is a campaign by the MRIA to give voice to Canadians on issues they care about and encourage participation in opinion research. The MRIA governs and represents Canada’s survey research industry. ***VoxPop: You speak. We listen. Things improve.***

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada is the nation’s largest youth mentoring organization, providing quality adult mentoring services for more than 27,000 children and teenagers. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada currently has 19,500 volunteer mentors working at 135 agencies that serve children in over 1,000 communities. Learn more about how Big Brothers Big Sisters can help your child or teen. www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca