

REMARKS
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

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OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL MENTORING SUMMIT

ON

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WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here and a privilege to hear from so many impressive people, all committed to serving America's youth. It's gratifying to see this level of support for our young people, especially from young people themselves.

Speaking on behalf of our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and for all of us at the Office of Justice Programs, we're honored to serve again as a presenting partner of the National Mentoring Summit. I'd like to thank our friends at MENTOR and their affiliates for making this summit possible, and to all the organizations represented here for the terrific work you do on behalf of youth.

I also want to recognize the leadership and staff of MENTOR for their partnership with my agency, and for all they do to manage our National Mentoring Resource Center. The resource center has been an incredible asset to mentoring programs across the country. Last year alone, it served 385 mentoring programs, and those programs connected with more than 75,000 youth through schools, community programs, faith-based organizations and other institutions.

I'm pleased that we will continue this very fruitful partnership, and we will build on it over the next year. You can expect to see a strong emphasis on services for commercially and sexually exploited children, like those offered through incredible programs like My Life My Choice, which you heard about earlier in the program.

You'll also see a deeper focus on programs that serve Native American and Alaska Native youth. Our goal will be to support tribes as they develop mentoring programs that can link young people to their tribal heritage and boost their self-esteem.

I'm excited about our plans to move forward in these critical areas of service. The need for skilled, committed mentors to reach these young people is vital, especially when so many factors conspire to undermine their sense of security and self-worth – whether it's exposure to drugs and violence, the pressures applied by social media or the criminal misuse of technology.

Young people are dealing with a lot, and sometimes that takes a serious toll. We know that adversity early in life often can lead to a host of issues: social problems, academic failure, delinquency and criminal offending, and – perhaps worst of all – a feeling of hopelessness. Without someone to restore a sense of value and worth, and to offer a guiding hand, these young people face challenges that they may not have the resources to overcome.

That's why the job of a mentor is so important. A mentor helps restore a young person's faith in humanity and provides concrete evidence of the good will that still surround her. A committed mentor provides confidence, direction and a roadmap for achievement and success. A mentor is a coach, a friend and an inspiration.

A good mentor is a bridge between a life of struggle and disappointment and a future brimming with opportunity. You should all be proud to be that bridge. I know I'm

proud to be part of an agency that supports amazing volunteers and professionals like you who work hard to help kids realize their potential.

Our Attorney General is single-minded in his commitment to protecting kids, and our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is filled with people dedicated to helping youth live productive, successful lives. In fact, if I could take just a moment, I'd like to publicly introduce the new administrator of OJJDP, Caren Harp. Caren comes to OJP with a strong background in juvenile justice and child protection. She's a seasoned prosecutor, a law professor and former director of the National Juvenile Justice Prosecution Center, among many other things. Caren came on board just last week, and we're thrilled to have as part of the OJP leadership team.

Caren and her great team will continue fighting for our youth. Still, we know that the future of our young people depends less on government programs than on the leadership and support of outstanding mentors. We're grateful for the contributions all of you make, each and every day, to our youth, to our communities and to our nation. We appreciate all you do, and I look forward to building on our successes.

Thank you.

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