

# MENTOR GUIDELINES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

**CONGRATULATIONS!** As a mentor, you are now about to begin one of life's most rewarding and fulfilling experiences. Your commitment indicates that you believe in young people. You recognize the magnitude of the responsibility that you accepted in choosing to work with youth and agree to interact appropriately with your mentee according to the highest ethical standards at all times.

Be yourself! Please read the following guidelines carefully.

## **Your Role as a Mentor:**

- At the initial stages of the match, your mentee may appear to be hesitant, unresponsive, and unappreciative of the mentor relationship. This guarded attitude is simply a manifestation of his/her insecurity about the relationship. The mentee's attitude will gradually take a positive turn as he/she realizes your sincerity about being a friend. *Be patient!* Don't try to speed up the process by going out of your way to accommodate your mentee, such as seeing your mentee more than the prescribed one hour per week.
- Remember that the mentor–mentee relationship has an initial phase. During this phase the mentee is more interested in getting to know how “real” you are and how much he/she can trust you. Establish how you can reach your mentee: by phone, e-mail, or fax or at a designated meeting location. Experience proves that calling or e-mailing your mentee at school is usually the best way to make contact. Establish a time and phone number where you can usually answer calls or make contact. Mentees need encouragement to leave messages on your voicemail to confirm meetings as well as to cancel them.
- Don't try to be teacher, parent, disciplinarian, therapist, Santa Claus or babysitter. Experience demonstrates it is counterproductive to assume roles other than a dependable, consistent friend. Present information carefully without distortion and give all points of view a fair hearing. Listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgment. Don't criticize or preach. Think of ways to problem solve together rather than lecturing or telling the mentee what to do. Never “should have” your mentee.
- Respect the uniqueness and honor the integrity of your mentee and influence him/her through constructive feedback. The mentor empowers the mentee to make right decisions without actually deciding for the mentee. Identify the mentee's interests and take them seriously. Be alert for opportunities and teaching moments. Explore positive and negative consequences.
- Set realistic expectations and goals for your mentee and make achievement for them fun. Remember there is a big difference between *encouraging and demanding*. Encourage your mentee to complete his/her secondary education and pursue higher learning or vocational goals; provide access to varying points of view. Assist in making the connection between his/her actions of today and the dreams and goals of tomorrow. Don't get discouraged if the mentee isn't turning his/her life around or making great improvements. Mentors have a great deal of impact; it's not always immediately evident. Look for signs such as increased school attendance, improved grades, showing up for meetings and expressing appreciation.
- As a friend you can share and advise, but know your limitations. Problems that your mentee may share with you regarding substance abuse, molestation and physical abuse are best handled by professionals. If you have any concerns, *contact the mentor coordinator immediately*.
- Be supportive of the parent, even when you may disagree. Don't take sides or make judgments concerning any family conflict or situation. Leave the parenting to the parent.

**Discipline:**

There may be instances when your mentee's behavior is unacceptable. Again, remember the parent is responsible for the child's discipline. The following guidelines are to be used if the parent is not around to assume the responsibility for the child's behavior. Don't forget to inform the parent about the steps you took and why you took them.

- Never physically discipline.
- Never use abusive language.
- Don't use ultimatums.
- Most children will listen and respond to reason. Explain to your mentee why you find his/her behavior unacceptable.
- Don't give your mentee the silent treatment to solve the problem. Discuss your concerns.
- On very rare occasions, your child may need to be taken back home because of unacceptable behavior. Before taking this action, tell him/her what you are doing and why you made the decision. Taking your mentee back home because of his/her behavior doesn't necessarily mean the match (relationship) has ended. Before you leave make sure the child understands he/she will see you again and that you are not using his/her behavior as a pretext to abandon the relationship.

**Health and Safety:**

Protect the health and safety of your mentee and seek advice from school faculty or program staff whenever in doubt about the appropriateness of an event or activity and inform school or program staff of any persons, situations or activities that could affect the health and safety of the child.

- Do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs when with your mentee.
- Do not have firearms or weapons present while with your mentee.
- Always wear seat belts while in the car.
- Have adequate personal liability and automobile insurance coverage.
- Ensure your mentee has all the necessary protective items and is well supervised on outings.
- Do not leave your mentee alone or with strangers.
- If you have become aware that your mentee's safety or the safety of another is in jeopardy through disclosure (e.g., child abuse, sexual abuse), report your concern to the mentor coordinator or teacher immediately. Let your mentee know that you are required to do so. This requirement should always be discussed at the beginning of the relationship to inform the mentee of your obligation to report safety concerns.

**Activities and Money:**

Taking the first step in planning activities is primarily your responsibility; however, ask your mentee to help make decisions or have him/her plan an activity.

- The mentor-mentee match is a one-on-one relationship that takes time to build. Try to avoid bringing someone else when you are with your mentee. However, you may include others (e.g., spouse, friends, other mentees/mentors and relatives) from time to time.

- Whereas this program is mainly to assist your mentee with career exploration, tutoring, and self-esteem, there may be activities that you want to attend that cost money. Consult with your mentee about cost and find out how he/she will pay. You can assist him/her in paying his/her share, but we encourage you to discuss costs of activities with the parents.
- Entertainment is not the focal point of your relationship. Do not spend an exorbitant amount of money for activities, birthday presents, and so on.
- Always call your mentee before your scheduled meeting or appointment to remind him/her. Be sure you have parental approval for activities that take place away from school premises.
- Return your mentee home at the agreed-upon time. If you are unable to or there is a change in plans, always call the parent to let him/her know.

**Program Rules:**

- No overnight stays.
- Discussions between you and your mentee are considered confidential. Be careful about sensitive personal issues. The mentee’s personal or family life may be difficult to discuss, particularly early in the relationship. Your mentee may be ashamed of poor school performance, family culture and religion, financial problems and so on. It is important not to measure the success of the relationship by the extent of the mentee’s disclosure.
- If you have a concern you feel is beyond your ability to handle, call the mentor coordinator even if it seems trivial. There is no reason to feel helpless or hopeless.

**Your Measure of Success:**

- Your success is measured by many milestones.

Your mentee may realize for the first time that he/she . . .	Good indications:
✓ has potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ setting goals</li> <li>✓ developing new skills</li> <li>✓ aware of time management</li> </ul>
✓ is confident and self-assured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ increased cooperation with parents, teachers, and peers</li> <li>✓ behavioral changes</li> </ul>
✓ values education and the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ increase in school attendance</li> <li>✓ improved grades</li> <li>✓ respect for teachers</li> </ul>
✓ is a capable young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ a willingness to help others</li> <li>✓ ability to see the future</li> <li>✓ ability to plan for college</li> </ul>

- Your mentee will reward you through notes, e-mails or simply conversation. He/she may tell you how “great” you are, how you might have helped him/her with a specific problem, and so much more. It may be big or small. Whatever the compliment, know that what you are doing has had a significant impact on the future of this child.

- You will work with your mentee to establish mutual respect, friendship, motivation and measurable goals. Please don't hesitate to ask questions if you find any part of the guidelines unclear or confusing. The mentor coordinator is available to assist you in any way possible.

Your commitment and dedication to your mentee may be the most profound opportunity that you experience. The quality of the relationship you build directly influences the life and future of the child. Please exert every effort to maintain professional standards, improve your mentor skills and exercise good judgment when engaged in any activity involving your mentee.

Mentoring is not a panacea for all the problems/decisions facing your mentee and his/her family. The essence of mentoring is the sustained human relationship: a one-on-one relationship that shows a child that he/she is valued as a person and is important to society.

**YOU ARE A:**

POSITIVE ROLE MODEL  
FRIEND  
COACH  
ADVISOR  
SELF-ESTEEM BUILDER  
CAREER COUNSELOR  
ADVOCATE

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Courtesy of California Governor's Mentoring Partnership.

# MENTOR/VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All the information you are told about your student is confidential and sharing that information with others is prohibited. However, you are required to report certain things. Do not promise a student that you will keep confidential information secret. Tell the student that he/she is free to share confidential information with you but that you are required to report certain things. It is critical, not only for the welfare of the student, but also to protect yourself that you adhere to these exceptions:

1. If a student confides that he or she is the victim of sexual, emotional or physical abuse, you *must* notify ( name of program coordinator ) immediately.

Note on your calendar when this information was reported and to whom it was given. Remember this information is extremely personal and capable of damaging lives, so *do not* share it with anyone except the appropriate authorities.

2. If a student tells you of his/her involvement in any illegal activity you *must* tell (name of program coordinator) immediately. Again, note on your calendar when this information was reported and to whom it was given.

## SUMMARY

These procedures are designed to protect the students from harm and to prevent even the appearance of impropriety on the part of (name of program) and its participating mentors, volunteers and students. One accusation could, at the very least, seriously damage the reputation of all those participating and endanger (name of program).

Please know that we appreciate your participation in the (name of program) and that we appreciate your adherence to these procedures. If you have any questions, please call (name of program) at (phone number).

I have read, understand and agree to strictly abide by the (name of program) Mentor/Volunteer Procedures. I understand that failure to adhere to these procedures may result in my removal from participation in the program.

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Signature

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Print Name

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Date

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Courtesy of Florida Governor's Mentoring Initiative, *Mentor Tool Kit for Faith-Based Organizations*.