

Mentoring Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *I am thinking about starting a mentoring program in my community. What advice and resources can you provide to get me started?*

A: Before starting a new mentoring program in your community consider partnering with an existing mentoring program or youth service agency. Chances are your community already has several programs in place that could benefit from your enthusiasm and vision. Review the following resources to learn more about approaching and building partnerships.

- Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum, Module 4: Forming and Maintaining Partnerships
www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/Mod4.PDF
- Mentoring Children in Foster Care: Considerations and Partnership Strategies for Senior Corps Directors
www.nationalserviceresources.org/sites/learns/resources/seniorcorps/products/Mentoring_Children_in_Foster_Care_Final_Revised.pdf

When creating a mentoring program from scratch allow yourself plenty of time to research your community, design your program, and hire quality staff. It takes most programs about six months to make their first match. Use the tools below to investigate the steps involved in starting a mentoring program.

- Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring: A Guidebook for Program Development
www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/foundations.pdf
- Generic Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual Guidebook:
www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/policy_manual.pdf
- Template: www.nwrel.org/mentoring/docs/whole_template.doc
- Starting A Mentoring Program
<http://emt.org/userfiles/StartMentWeb.pdf>

Q: *My program is looking for funding; where do I start?*

A: Funding sources for mentoring programs can be found in multiple places from various sources. One obvious choice is the federal government. Federal funding opportunities can be found at Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). Other sources of funds include state and county sources, foundations, individual donors, and special events. A fundraising plan is your first step to success. Learn more about funding sources and how to create a fundraising plan by reviewing the following resources.

- Fact Sheet 5: Getting Started with Program Sustainability
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet5.pdf
- Building a Sustainable Mentoring Program: A Framework for Resource Development Planning
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/sustainability.pdf
- Fact Sheet 9: Quick Sustainability Tips
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet9.pdf

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Q: *How do I work more effectively within a school environment?*

A: Partnering with a school can bring tremendous benefits to your program and to the school. Clearly defined and formalized roles, responsibilities, and administrative buy-in are crucial for success. You will want the school board and school principle to be champions for your program. One strategy for gaining support is to provide data about how your program will support school goals such as improved attendance, better attitudes towards school, and lower drop out rates. To learn more about research in the field of school-based mentoring review the following resources.

- Making a Difference in Schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Impact Study
www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/220_publication.pdf
- Access an audio file and PowerPoint slides from a presentation by one of the study's authors, Dr. Carla Herrera, at: <http://www.edmentoring.org/seminar3.html>
- Making the Grade: A Guide to Incorporating Academic Achievement into Mentoring Programs and Relationships
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/making_the_grade.pdf
- The Guide to Key Mentoring Research
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ws2_supplement1.pdf
- Dr. Mentor's 16 Steps to Effective School-Based Mentoring
www.mentorconsultinggroup.com/steps.html

Q: *We need ideas/curriculum for match activities, any suggestions?*

A: Match activities don't have to be elaborate or expensive. Going to the park, visiting the library, or simply hanging out and talking often result in quality bonding time for the match. Yet, as matches progress mentors and staff often run out of ideas for match activities. Planning activities in school-based environments can also be a challenge. Here are some ideas:

Activities We Can Do Together at School or During the School Day

- Read a book
- Study for a test
- Complete homework
- Join (or find out more about) a school club, sport, or activity
- Review previous tests and homework
- Discuss managing time effectively
- Do research on the Internet
- Do research in the school library
- Talk about what happened during the school day
- Talk about successes in school
- Talk about disappointments at school
- Discuss being accountable for your own actions, responsibilities
- Create a notebook to organize schoolwork
- Create academic goals (both short and long term)
- Learn effective study habits
- Discuss strategies for taking tests
- Talk about the best (and the worst) parts of school
- Work on spelling—and how to use a dictionary

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Activities We Can Do Together at School or During the School Day

- Visit a museum, aquarium, planetarium, art gallery, natural museum, national park, cemetery, or zoo
- Tour the public library
- Visit a job site
- Do a job shadow
- Interview someone who has an interesting job
- Research career qualifications
- Visit a high school, attend high school events
- Visit local universities
- Take a class together—learning a new skill together can be fun and exciting
- Take a nature hike
- Visit a farm
- Take a historical tour of your city or town
- Go to a cultural event (concert, play, symphony, rodeo)
- Go to an ethnic-themed event (pow-wow, MLK celebration)
- Watch an educational special or movie with an educational theme
- Talk with senior citizens about their life stories and historical events
- Participate in a summer reading program
- Go grocery shopping together; plan a menu for a meal, make a budget for it, compare prices
- Explore public transportation together

From: *Making the Grade: A Guide to Incorporating Academic Achievement into Mentoring Programs and Relationships*, http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/making_the_grade.pdf

Review the following resources for additional ideas on how to plan match activities.

- Ongoing Training for Mentors: 12 Interactive Sessions for U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Program, Chapter 9: “What Should We Do?” Planning Activities With Your Mentee
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ongoing_training.pdf
- A Year’s Worth of Mentoring Activities
www.mentoring.ca.gov/pdf/mentoring_activities.pdf
- Fact Sheet 2: Keeping Mentoring Relationships Going Through the Summer Months
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet2.pdf

Q: How much training do mentors need?

A: Research shows that mentors who receive 6 hours or more of pre-match training report being more satisfied with their matches than those that receive less training¹. Programs should plan to deliver about 6 hours of training before the mentor ever meets with their mentee. There are many training guides available to help you design and deliver your training. Review this sample list to get started.

¹ Herrera, C., Sipe, C.L., and McClanahan, W.S. (with Arbreton, A.J.A., and Pepper, S.K.). (2000). *Mentoring school-age children: Relationship development in community-based and school-based programs*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. Retrieved August 1, 2005, from http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/34_publication.pdf

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- Preparing Participants for Mentoring: The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Program's Guide to Initial Training of Volunteers, Youth, and Parents
www.edmentoring.org/pubs/training.pdf
- Technical Assistance Packet #5: Training New Mentors
www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/packfive.pdf
- Designing and Customizing Mentor Training
<http://emt.org/userfiles/DesigningMentorTrng.pdf>

Q: How do I conduct a criminal history check on potential mentors?

A: Criminal history checks are one piece of a larger screening process. Your screening process will most likely include the following techniques:

- Orientation and training
- Interview
- Reference checks
- State background check
- FBI/Finger print check
- Sex offender registry check
- Child abuse registry check
- Driving record check (if applicable)
- Ongoing monitoring and supervision

Beginning in November, 2007, the Corporation for National and Community Service will require background checks for all Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents, as well as AmeriCorps State and National participants that have recurring access to children, persons age 60 and older, and individuals with disabilities, and to grant-funded employees in those programs having such access. Unless approved otherwise, these programs must conduct (1) a criminal history records search (by name or fingerprint) of the State criminal registry for the State in which the program operates and the State in which the applicant is residing at the time of application; and (2) a National Sex Offender Public Registry search.

Each state has different laws and processes in place to run background checks. Some background checks are conducted using names, social security numbers, and/or fingerprints. Since many perpetrators move from place to place to avoid detection, a federal fingerprint based check is recommended. Review the following resources to learn more about screening and background checks.

- The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Program's Guide to Screening and Background Checks: www.edmentoring.org/pubs/screening.pdf
- SafetyNET (FBI background checks): <http://apps.mentoring.org/safetynet/index.adp>
- National Sex Offender Public Registry: www.nsopr.gov

Q: Where can I find a mentor for a child in need?

A: To find a mentoring program in your area, access the National Mentoring Partnership's web site at: www.mentoring.org