

Five Questions for Potential Mentors

Thinking about becoming a mentor? We provided a list of answers to commonly asked questions that should help you get started.

What is the role of a mentor?

As a mentor, you might wear many hats. Mentors can be role models, cheerleaders, policy enforcers, advocates, and friends.

Successful mentors have a few qualities in common, including the following:

- A sincere desire to be involved with a young person
- Respect for young people
- Active listener
- Empathy
- See solutions and opportunities
- Be flexible and open

As you and your mentee begin your relationship exploring values, interests and goals, you will find yourself making a difference and having a positive effect on their life. What you may also be surprised to see is that you will be learning more about yourself, too. Mentoring doesn't just affect the young person. Mentoring is a shared opportunity for learning and growth. Many mentors say that the rewards they gain are as substantial as those for their mentees.

Good mentors are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to the young person, and even to be changed by their relationship. Accept the challenges and rewards of mentoring a young person and experience the benefits that will last each of you a lifetime.

How do I become a mentor?

Few bonds in life are more influential than those between a young person and an adult. You have decided that you want the responsibility and rewards of becoming a mentor. What is next?

Determine the type of mentoring relationship that is most suited to you. Responsible mentoring can take many forms, but should always include training and support from a reputable mentoring organization. These organizations provide helpful tools, best practices, designed activities and ongoing coaching to support you and the mentoring relationship. A reputable mentoring organization will always require a background check. Here are some things to consider as you make that choice.

Types of Mentoring: What are the types of mentoring opportunities?

- Traditional mentoring (one adult to one young person)

Can a mentor make a difference?

A recent survey of young people shows the powerful impact of quality mentoring. Youth who had been at risk for not completing high school but who had a mentor were:

- 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college
- 78 percent more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities
- 81 percent more likely to participate regularly in sports or extracurricular activities

Source: *The Mentoring Effect*, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, 2014

- Group mentoring (one adult to as many as four young people)
- Team mentoring (several adults working with small groups of young people, in which the adult-to-youth ratio is not greater than 1:4)
- Peer mentoring (caring youth mentoring other youth)
- E-mentoring (mentoring via email and the Internet)

What is the right mentoring setting for you?

Mentoring can take place in a wide array of settings, such as:

- At a workplace
- In a school
- At a faith-based organization
- At a juvenile corrections facility
- In a community setting
- In the virtual community (e-mentoring)

What could I expect to accomplish as a mentor?

Often as a mentor, you will find that you receive just as much as you are giving. You may find that your own sense of self improves, as do your relationships with children, and that you are more productive in your work and private life, and that you have fun.

You could expect that you would also help the young person:

- Foster caring and supportive relationships with teachers, family and peers
- Develop to their fullest potential
- Develop his or her vision for the future and explore career opportunities
- Develop a better relationship with their community
- Build skills to help them succeed in school and in life

To get started, check out what mentoring opportunities are available in your community. Find a mentoring opportunity today.

Tip sheet content adapted from content developed by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership; Rhodes, J.E. (2002). Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; and the California Mentoring Partnership.