

# Supporting YouthBuild Students in Mentoring Relationships



Welcome to the world of mentoring! You have been provided with this information packet because a YouthBuild student you know has entered – or is about to enter – a very special kind of personal relationship: a *mentoring* relationship. This relationship will help the student grow as a person, set goals and overcome challenges, and prepare them for the transition out of YouthBuild and into the next phase of life.

This packet will explain what mentoring is all about, how the YouthBuild mentoring program works, and how you, as someone who cares about the student, can support this relationship and help build on the positive life changes that result from mentoring.

Remember, if you have questions at any time about the YouthBuild mentoring program, you can contact **Mentoring Coordinator [name] at [email] or [phone]**.

## So what is YouthBuild mentoring all about?

YouthBuild programs provide a wealth of services for students who are no longer enrolled in traditional high schools and are looking for a way to get their academic, career, and personal lives back on track. We offer classroom instruction and other academic support, job skills training, counseling and personal guidance, leadership development, and service opportunities that get youth involved in the community.

Recently, YouthBuild sites have added a formal mentoring component. Our mentors are adults from the community who volunteer their time to work with YouthBuild students, providing guidance and support as the student works toward their goals. Mentors are required to meet with their students four hours a month, for a minimum of 15 months. These mentors help the students get the most out of everything YouthBuild offers while also building a personal relationship that we hope lasts a lifetime.

### What a mentor is... and is NOT

<p>A mentor is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A role model</li><li>• A friend</li><li>• A “coach”</li><li>• A partner in learning</li><li>• A trusted guide</li><li>• A connection to other resources</li><li>• An advocate</li></ul>	<p>A mentor is NOT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A substitute parent</li><li>• A counselor</li><li>• A therapist</li><li>• A case worker</li><li>• A source of money or gifts</li><li>• A peer</li><li>• A negative influence</li></ul>
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## Who Serves as YouthBuild Mentors?

YouthBuild mentors are volunteers from the community. They agree to spend at least four hours a month meeting with their YouthBuild student (the pair is known as a “match”). They may have other phone, email, or text message contact throughout the month, but the goal is to have about an hour a week of in-person meeting time.

Our program’s mentors come from all walks of life – they are business owners, teachers, homebuilders, college students, faith leaders, and retirees. But they are all united in caring for the young people that YouthBuild serves. They must be at least **21 years of age**, although most of our mentors are a bit older than that. They have all expressed a desire to give back to their communities and have committed to helping the YouthBuild student that you know chart a course to a better future. They give their time, their talent, and their wisdom to our students.

Our mentors are also **safe**. All of them have been through a criminal background check and other screening measures that ensure that they are safe individuals and a good fit for the philosophy of the mentoring program: that the needs of the student always come first.

Our mentors receive **XX hours** of in-person training before they are matched with a student. This training teaches them how to relate to our students, explains the mentor role, and offers tips on providing appropriate support to the YouthBuild students no matter what goals or needs they have.

Once our mentors are prepared for their role, we introduce them to our students and allow each young person to have input into who they will be matched with. We help all of our students find a mentor that they will “click” with and who can provide the specific kind of support they need.



[Note for YouthBuild staff: This is a section that you may want to edit to provide specific details about where you recruit your mentors from or their demographics. You will also want to provide specific information about your screening process or the amount and content of your pre-match training. Anything you can provide to add more detail about who your mentors are will be helpful in this section.]

## What do mentors and students do together?

YouthBuild mentors support their students in a variety of ways and the activities they do together reflect this diverse approach.

- **Life Plan activities** – Over the course of the YouthBuild program, each student completes what is known as a “Life Plan.” This brief document charts the student’s short- and long-term goals for career, education, finances, personal health, relationships, and more. Mentoring matches use these youth-focused goals as a basis for many of their meetings. For example, a student who wants to attend college after YouthBuild might go visit several campuses with their mentor, or have their mentor help with the application process.
- **Group activities** – Every so often, all of our matches will come together for group activities and service projects that allow all participants to interact and have fun together. Occasionally, these events involve parents, caregivers, and other supportive adults in the students’ lives. We hope that you will be able to join us at some of these activities throughout the year!

Beyond these life plan and group activities, mentors and mentees also spend time just having fun and getting to know each other. Part of the value of having a mentor is learning about another person and seeing how they live their life and carry themselves in the community. So keep in mind that YouthBuild mentoring can be both purposeful and fun at the same time!

## Mentoring Meetings At-a-Glance

YouthBuild mentoring matches:

- Commit to a minimum of 15 months of meeting, beginning while the student is in YouthBuild and helping with the transition to life after the program.
- Meet in-person for four hours a month (ideally once a week), with additional phone/email/text contact encouraged.
- Get out in the community, away from the YouthBuild site, so that youth can engage their community, work on their Life Plans, and meet other potential mentors and advocates.
- Occasionally meet at the YouthBuild site for group activities and special events, such as matching ceremonies or graduation celebrations.

In addition to meeting with their student, mentors also meet regularly with YouthBuild staff so that they can learn more about how the student is doing in the program and provide focused support to help the student reach their goals. Our mentors compliment the other YouthBuild services while also providing a personal relationship that has special meaning beyond just the YouthBuild program itself. Our mentors really are here to make a long-term difference in your student's life.

### Who runs the mentoring program?

[Note for YouthBuild staff: You will need to develop this section yourself to describe the unique staff roles and structure at your organization. Provide the name, job duties (especially around match supervision and support), and contact information for the Mentoring Coordinator. You may also wish to include information about staff members who support the work of the Mentoring Coordinator, such as your site's Guidance Counselor, Career Advisor, or teachers. Photos of your staff, especially interacting with students, will also be useful here. If you have external partners that play a role in delivering the program, such as an organization that helps train mentors, you may wish to mention them here, as well.]



## Are there any program rules I should know about?

[Note for YouthBuild staff: Depending on how much information you want to share with parents, caregivers, and others, this is a section that you may choose to provide as a separate handout. If you make your program policies available online, you may wish to include that URL here, as well. The text below is just an example of what you might want to cover. You may wish to include your formal transportation, gift-giving, mentor conduct or other specific policies.]

Because a young person you care about is participating in the mentoring program, there are a few program rules and policies that you should be aware of so that you can better support the mentoring relationship:

**1. Attendance in the mentoring program is critical** – The whole point of mentoring is that face-to-face time that the mentor and student spend together forming a relationship. Therefore it is essential that students keep their scheduled meetings with their mentor. If either person is failing to attend their mentoring sessions, it can have a negative impact on the relationship and the program. So encourage the student to keep appointments and contact program staff if you feel like the pair is not meeting as frequently as they should.

**2. Overnight or out-of-town visits are not allowed by the program** – With parent or guardian permission, mentors may take their youth out of the local area for trips like college campus visits or participation in a sporting or recreational opportunity. But those types of trips will be rare and overnight stays at the mentor's residence are never permitted. Matches will spend the majority of their time together here in the area helping the student connect to local opportunities. Mentors may transport the student in a private vehicle for these trips, but must maintain appropriate insurance and obey traffic laws at all times.

**3. Mentors are not allowed to buy expensive gifts for their students** – Mentors are allowed, at their own discretion, to pay for activity-related costs, such as tickets to a museum or bus fare to a local event. They may also pay for snacks and beverages during meeting times. But they are not allowed to buy gifts for the youth or their family. Please contact program staff if you feel that mentors are giving gifts inappropriately, and do not ask the mentor to make purchases beyond the program guidelines.

**4. Our mentoring relationships are confidential, to a point** – We ask that our mentors keep the conversations and interactions they have with their mentee private and confidential. They are not allowed to share details of their mentoring experience with others. They can talk with parents, guardians, and others about how the relationship is going and activities they are doing. But we ask that all parties respect the personal nature of the mentoring relationship.

However, all of our mentors are required to report any information divulged by their student regarding abuse, criminal activity, or the possibility of harm to the student or others. So please understand that

while mentors need to keep their relationship private, they are also critical players in keeping our students safe, secure, and out of harm's way.

**5. Other unacceptable behaviors** – We hold our mentors to a high standard and expect them to behave appropriately and respectfully at all times when they are with their mentee. Unacceptable behaviors include:

- Drug, alcohol, or tobacco use during meeting time
- Possession of firearms
- Foul language
- Unwelcome physical contact or verbal abuse
- Denigrating or making inappropriate remarks about the student's family or peers
- Denigrating or making inappropriate remarks about race, religion, ethnicity, beliefs, etc.
- Criminal or reckless activity of any kind



Keep in mind that *students also must follow YouthBuild rules* if they are to participate in the mentoring program. They have an obligation to show up for meetings, follow through on mentoring commitments, and not ask the mentor to violate or bend any program rules. Violation of YouthBuild student policies, or mentoring program rules, may result in the loss of the mentoring opportunity.

You can see a full list of our program policies and mentor and student guidelines on our website at: [add URL here](#). And remember, if you have any concerns about the match, please contact [Mentoring Coordinator \[name\]](#) at [\[email\]](#) or [\[phone\]](#).

**[Note for YouthBuild staff: We strongly encourage you to put all program guidelines and relevant policies up on your website in one easy-to-find location.]**

## **Supporting mentored YouthBuild students: How you can help!**

One of the most critical factors for a successful mentoring relationship is the support and encouragement the student receives from parents, relatives, caregivers, and friends. The mentor will work most effectively when all the other important people in the student's life respect and support their efforts. So please recognize that you have an important role to play in this too!

The following tips can help support YouthBuild students and their mentors:

## In general...

- **Express your interest in the relationship** – Show your support by asking how it’s going. If students see that you care about this new relationship, they are more likely to give it a chance.
- **Help support the meeting schedule** – That face-to-face time is critical for mentoring relationships, especially during the initial phases of the match. Be understanding if the young person needs to meet with their mentor or spend time on mentoring activities. Work with the mentor to work around scheduling conflicts and reschedule meetings appropriately.
- **Participate in group activities when asked** – YouthBuild mentoring is about bringing people together. Join in the fun if the student or mentor invites you to participate in a group outing, service project, or other event.
- **Communicate openly with the mentor when the opportunity arises** – Mentors can be most effective when other people share information about the student’s strengths, personality, and needs. Give the mentor feedback on how you think the relationship is going and thank the mentor for their efforts.
- **Honor the mentoring relationship’s confidentiality and trust** – Their relationship is a personal one; respect those boundaries.
- **Communicate with program staff as needed** – You can provide feedback on how the relationship is going and help with program safety by informing staff about rules violations.
- **Encourage the student to stick with it when the going gets tough** – This is true of both the mentoring relationship and YouthBuild in general. Help the student work through any challenges that come up along the way. Like any meaningful personal relationship, mentoring pairs will have their ups and downs. Help the young person see the “big picture” value in the relationship and the positive nature of all the changes they are trying to make in their lives.
- **Help the student seek out even more mentors** – We all need multiple mentors throughout our lives, so encourage the student to become a “mentor magnet” who bonds with new mentors over time.

## Special tips for parents, caregivers, partners, and families

- For students under age 18, please provide written permission to participate and fill out all required paperwork. This includes special permission for outings and group events, as well as

any data collection related to program evaluation or reporting.

- Help facilitate meeting times and provide updated contact information. Mentors need to be in contact with the student frequently. Be sure to tell the program *and the mentor* if the student will be difficult to reach (a lost cell phone, for example).
- Respect the mentoring relationship:
  - *Be accepting of the mentor.* They are here to support the student; they *care*.
  - *Make it easy for them to do their mentoring work together.* Don't involve other family members or put undue restrictions on their mentoring time.
  - *Discuss your family's history, values, and culture with the mentor.* Help them understand who you are.
  - *Do not ask the mentor to provide more than the mentoring relationship.* Please do not ask mentors to overstep their bounds (see the previous section on mentor rules and guidelines).
  - *Voice your concerns when needed and work through any misunderstandings and communication barriers.* The staff of the program is here to help if things are not going as well as they could; be open to their support.
  - *Show your appreciation* for the work the mentor is doing.

## Frequently Asked Questions by Parents and Caregivers

### ***What if I don't like my student's mentor (or my student does not)?***

We follow a very detailed matchmaking process that we think allows us to make matches that have tremendous potential for a strong personal connection and long-lasting success. Our process also gives students a strong voice in choosing who they are matched with. So we would hope that these circumstances are very rare.

If you or your student feels uncomfortable with the relationship, please talk to the Mentoring Coordinator about your concerns. We do encourage you, however, to stick with the relationship through the often awkward getting-to-know-you phase. Remember that it will take some time to get used to this new person in the student's life. So be patient, follow the tips in this guide, and contact the staff if you still feel something is not right.

[Note for YouthBuild staff: You may want to edit the answer above depending on your matching process and who on the staff handles match problems.]

### ***What if I don't approve of an activity that the mentor has planned?***

Express your concerns to the mentor, ideally before the date of the planned activity. Be clear about what aspects of the activity you are uncomfortable with and give the mentor and your student a chance to explain their intention and specific plans further. See if there is a compromise that can be reached. Usually, this type of conversation will address most situations. Contact the Mentoring Coordinator with any serious concerns you may have. The program staff can help address any ongoing situations.

**What happens to the mentoring relationship once my student is out of YouthBuild?**

YouthBuild mentoring matches last for a minimum of 15 months, including a substantial portion of that time taking place after students have graduated or completed YouthBuild. They can continue to meet one hour a week as they had been during the formal YouthBuild program. As the 15-month mark approaches, the Mentoring Coordinator will talk with your student and the mentor and ask if they would like to continue meeting. They may choose to keep on going (which we hope for!) or they can choose to end the relationship. In those instances, we have a formal ending ceremony that we feel brings celebration, fun, and a sense of accomplishment to the moment.

**Who do I contact if I have concerns?**

[Note for YouthBuild staff: In addition to the Mentoring Coordinator, you may wish to provide a listing of multiple staff members and their roles.]

**Thanks for your support!**

Every YouthBuild student's relationship with his or her mentor is a chance to grow as a person, learn new skills and abilities, set goals and problem-solve life's challenges, and have a whole lot of fun doing it. We hope that you can play a big part in making it a success! Thank you for the caring and support you give our YouthBuild students and mentors. Together, we are changing lives and our community.