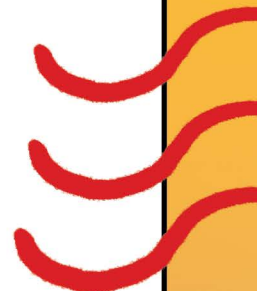


NATIONAL MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER

P E E R

M E N T O R I N G

G U I D E



**TIPS FOR QUALITY PEER MENTORING
CREATED BY PEER MENTORS AND
YOUTH MENTEES**

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A Program of **OJJDP**

This project was supported by Award 2019-JU-FX-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice, Office of Justice Programs. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

Launched in January 2014, the National Mentoring Resource Center is a comprehensive and reliable resource for mentoring tools, program and training materials, and provides no-cost training and technical assistance to youth mentoring programs across the United States. Formed in spring of 2021, the NMRC Youth Advisory Council is currently composed of young leaders who identify as youth mentees and peer mentors that convenes to provide thought leadership and guidance on ways to center and elevate youth voice and the mentee experience on the NMRC.

INTRODUCTION



Written by former peer mentors and youth mentees, this guide serves to inform and support young people interested in peer mentoring. Current peer mentors, aspiring peer mentors, and organizers/facilitators of peer mentoring systems can all find helpful tips to foster healthy and effective mentoring relationships.

WHAT IS YOUTH PEER MENTORING?

Peer mentoring relationships are relationships in which older youth and young adults offer advice and support to their younger peers following similar paths. From high school upperclassmen guiding underclassmen through academic and extracurricular endeavors, to college students guiding prospective students through the transition to higher education, peer mentoring relationships can be incredibly beneficial for both the youth mentee and peer mentor.

A peer mentor works to:

- Be an authentic and reliable source of guidance
- Offer valuable opportunities and solutions
- Listen, support, and encourage their mentee

How do you know if you're ready to be a peer mentor? If you have a genuine desire to positively influence another, share your experiences and knowledge with those who may need it, and to grow as a leader and advisor, peer mentoring may be for you!

WHY PEER MENTORING?

Peer mentoring can be a powerful form of mentoring as you work to help empower and support a young person who is not that much farther in age from you. At times, youth can be intimidated or feel uncomfortable with a much older mentor due to power dynamics or generational differences. However, with a peer mentor, the age gap is not as wide, so it creates a dynamic where youth may feel more comfortable to talk about and share experiences and feelings that are more relatable. As a peer mentor, you have potential to learn so much about yourself and from your mentee just as your peer mentee can learn so much about themselves and from you.



BENEFITS OF BEING A PEER MENTOR

- Becoming a peer mentor lets you cultivate your interpersonal and communication skills, and helps you learn how to best set boundaries and expectations for any future relationships you develop!
- Peer mentoring allows you to give back to youth in your community. By reflecting on and sharing knowledge you wish you would have known as a younger person (such as when you first started middle school or high school), you can positively inspire youth similar to you and directly contribute to positive changes in your community.
- While peer mentoring, you're able to gain a better understanding of yourself as not only a mentor, but a person as well. Becoming more self-aware of your strengths and areas of improvement will allow for better relationship building in any environment you may come across.
- As a peer mentor in a mentoring program, you will also be tasked with creating reports and tracking your interactions with your peer mentee and providing feedback to your program and mentee. These skills are essential life skills especially when it comes to communicating with others, staying organized and being consistent.

On being a peer mentor

“ Being a peer mentor has been an incredibly rewarding experience, as I have been able to give back to the community and pass on the advice to others that I wish I had received. ”

Jocelynn, 17, Heritage HS, Wake Forest, NC

“ I have loved being a peer mentor. I believe it has bettered me in unimaginable ways. I have been given the privilege to counsel students from underserved communities and helped them to achieve all that they are capable of. ”

Emilee, 18, Pleasant Valley HS, Brodheadsville, PA

BENEFITS OF BEING A PEER MENTEE

- Being a part of a mentoring program and having a mentor will provide you an entire network of support that you may not have been exposed to otherwise.
- Having a designated person to help support you will allow for better preparedness in navigating challenges you may face throughout any of your endeavors.
- Becoming a mentee also allows room for exploring your interests and strengths while simultaneously working on any areas that call for growth.



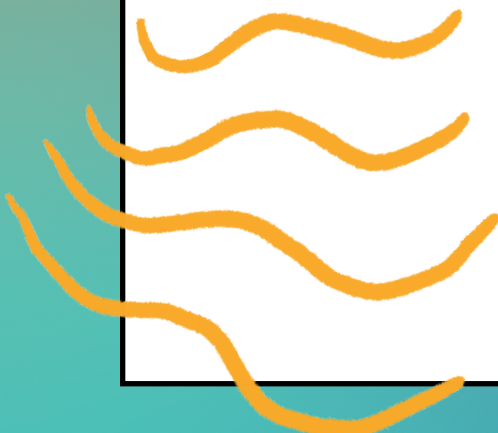
On being a peer mentee

“ Being a peer mentee has helped me so much with my transition from high school to college, I can’t imagine what it would have been like without someone my age guiding me through the process. ”

Amanda, 18, Newton HS, Newton, KS

“ I really enjoyed my experience with having a peer mentor. They exposed me to many opportunities to gain experience in my field. I also gained a dear friend! ”

Emma, 16, Riverside HS, Durham NC



**HOW CAN A
MENTORING
PROGRAM
SUPPORT A
PEER MENTOR?**



TRAINING FOR PEER MENTORS:

What support should I expect from my mentoring program?

If you are a peer mentor in a structured mentoring program, you can expect that your mentoring program will provide you resources to support you as you train to become a peer mentor AND throughout your time as a peer mentor in the program. Resources that programs provide to their mentoring matches should include but are not limited to:

- 🕒 Mentoring programs typically collect data on their mentoring matches for reporting purposes, to track program goals, and to ensure the safety of everyone involved. As a peer mentor, you should expect to complete reports and track when, where and how often you are meeting with your mentee. You may also be asked to document and rate and describe how the sessions went and what you did. Tracking the progress of you and your mentees' goals is important and will be helpful to see how far you both have progressed.
- 🕒 Mentoring programs should collect feedback from mentees on how they feel about their mentor and the program as well as collect feedback from the mentors on ways the program can best support them. Be prepared, as a mentor, to provide feedback on a survey to your mentoring program on how your meetings are going with your mentee!
- 🕒 If your program does not have a formal survey, don't hesitate to provide them feedback, whether that is via an email or written format or setting a time to meet with the coordinator, about what is working well for you and how they can better support you in being the best mentor you can be.
- 🕒 Mentoring programs should have set protocol for mentors to follow if your mentee discloses concerning information. Peer mentors should have a delegated adult to tell this information to proceed with next steps to prioritize the mentee's safety. Make sure programs provide training for mentors on how to handle challenging scenarios and that you are able to practice these scenarios in your mentoring program. It is extremely important that the program has processes in place to ensure both the mentor and mentee feel supported and safe.
- 🕒 Mentoring programs should provide mentors with relationship building resources and activities available for peer mentors to utilize. Speak to your mentoring coordinator if you feel like you don't have anything to talk about or do with your mentee!



HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE & SUPPORTIVE PEER MENTOR



BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTEE!



There is no concrete way in which you and your mentee will connect - a mentor and mentee bond can manifest in many different ways.

Try not to force the relationship. Allow for organic interactions to take form rather than doing things too quickly or abruptly.

For example: *Your mentee may be hesitant to share information about their personal lives right away, so refrain from asking invasive questions that may make them uncomfortable, such as questions related to personal relationships or grades in school. (Take a look at the boundaries section after this!) Focus on asking icebreaker questions that are open ended to allow them to steer the conversation. Find common interests and hobbies to talk about and do together. Consider asking: What are some things that bring you joy? What are your favorite things to do outside of school? Is there something you want to get better at, learn more about or try out this month? Create goals to support one another to improve certain skills or exploring new hobbies and interests together. Find common interests and hobbies to talk about and do together (consider asking what are some things that bring you a lot of joy or your favorite thing to do outside of school), or create goals to support one another to work on improving certain skills (or make time to explore new interests together.*

Keep an open mind when engaging with your mentee. A mentor should help guide their mentee on the path they make for themselves rather than trying to make decisions for them.



To help facilitate this way of thinking, rely on reaffirming statements like “How do you feel about that?”, “Is there anything you are worried about?”, “What do you need to help accomplish this goal?”, “How can I support you?” Statements such as these will help your mentee feel like they still have control, but have support if they need it.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTEE!

Note that something that may be bad news for others may not be bad news for your mentee. Try to defer from making judgements or showing strong reactions until you gauge how your mentee is feeling.

For example: *Your mentee comes to you and tells you that they are expecting a child. You may think that being young and pregnant would be devastating, however, it is completely possible that your mentee is excited about becoming a parent! They may already be facing negativity from peers and family, so try your best to prioritize the happiness and wellbeing of your mentee rather than expressing your own opinions. Ask open ended questions first and think about potential supports that could be available to them, such as a guidance counselor, a trusted teacher, your mentoring coordinator, or another supportive and caring adult. If this conversation is something that makes you feel uncomfortable, let your mentee know that and help provide and suggest resources where they can find another person to talk to and discuss potential next steps.*



Try your best to be actively mindful of the differences between you and your mentee when it comes to different lived experiences and identities. We suggest asking yourself the questions “In what topics should I seek to educate myself on to best serve my mentee?” and “How can I account for our differences?” Learn from your mentee what values and beliefs are important to them or what traditions or customs do they celebrate in their family or culture as well as what are some challenges do they face.



SETTING BOUNDARIES

- ✓ Boundaries are extremely important in building healthy relationships. It's critical to create them to feel comfortable in your role as a mentor.
- ✓ Establishing how you and your mentee will communicate is an important boundary to maintain. Ask your mentee the method and timing of communication they are most comfortable with and decide whether or not sharing social media will be right for you.
- ✓ Another example of an important boundary to set is where you both are comfortable meeting if you are not in a structured program that provides you a space. Some mentees may prefer virtual meetings, while others may prefer in-person. Be sure to prioritize the safety and comfort of both yourself and your mentee.
- ✓ It is vital to remember that boundaries are subject to change! As the relationship develops, you both may become comfortable in expanding the boundaries you originally created!
- ✓ As a mentor, you may feel like you have a lot of knowledge or experiences to share. Despite this, be mindful of not patronizing your mentee. This means to not quickly dismiss, shut down, or make fun of your mentee's ideas or thoughts, even if you feel like you know what is "right." Your mentee should feel like it is a two-way, equal partnership that you both have something to gain and learn from.
- ✓ To start a discussion on boundaries with your peer mentee, see the Communications template below that you and your mentee can both fill out to start getting to know each other!

**IN SUMMARY, AS YOU PREPARE TO BECOME
A MENTOR OR A MENTEE, REMEMBER:**

- ✘ Many believe that mentoring only goes only one way - with the older person teaching the younger new things. However, this couldn't be further from the truth. A mentor and mentee oftentimes have a symbiotic relationship in which they both learn and grow together.
- ✘ Mentoring will never be "one size fits all", meaning that each mentor and mentee match will have a different and unique way of interacting compared to another pair. Mentees have reported viewing their mentors as a friend, family member, or trusted adult, and more!
- ✘ A mentor-mentee match will not always be perfect. Sometimes the connection doesn't happen immediately, and that's completely okay! Communicate with your mentoring program (if applicable) or talk to a trusted friend or adult in your life about your mentoring experience and ways you can potentially make it better. Give it some time and don't be afraid to provide feedback. If you have a bad mentoring experience that doesn't feel like it is progressing or working well, it is perfectly okay to not continue the relationship as long as you communicate with your mentee or mentor. No need to feel guilty!
- ✘ You got this! It takes time to build confidence in your role as a mentor and with most things in life that you may not have had experience with before, so it is okay to be nervous. The most important thing to remember is if you care and enjoy helping others, being your authentic, genuine self is the key to creating a rewarding and strong relationship, and the best way that you can effectively support and guide one of your peers!



MEET THE AUTHORS & THE NMRC YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ivette Maza Cabrera

Ivette Maza Cabrera is a first-generation Latina graduate of CUNY Queens College. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, along with an honors minor program in business. She is an alumnus of the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge Program (SEEK) within CUNY, an alumnus of America Needs You Fellowship, and a fellow Youth Advocate of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. Ivette also holds a Mental Health First Aid USA Certificate and promotes mental health awareness within minority communities. She has decided to pursue a doctorate in Clinical Psychology and is currently waiting for her placement results.



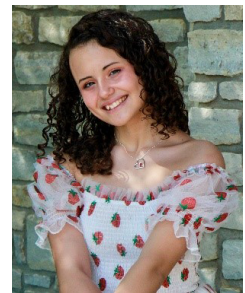
Rachel Estrella

Rachel is a senior at Duke University studying neuroscience. She has spent several years as a peer mentor through programs at her high school and university and has benefitted from peer mentorship in her undergraduate career.



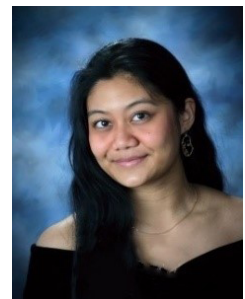
Kyndall Izabella Miller

Kyndall is a full-time student, writer, activist, and aspiring lawyer from Covington, Kentucky with a fierce passion for getting marginalized children the resources they need. After being a mentee for four years, she served as a board member for her local mentoring program Covington Partners to help ensure that a student's perspective was shown in all mentoring-related decisions. Now a first-year college student in Louisville, she majors in both criminal justice and social work and is a loyal volunteer at the Legal Aid Society. Kyndall has worked with MENTOR National as well as the NMRC to make sure that mentoring will continue to clear the path to success for children across the globe.



Grace Thwin

Grace served as a mentee in MENTOR's grassroots advocacy program, Youth Advocacy for Mentoring, and completed a policy memo on supporting first-generation youth entering higher education.



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COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATE

Hi! My (preferred) name is _____

I look forward to developing the relationship with my mentor/mentee!

Personally, I best communicate via: e-mail video chat call text in-person. I know our schedules might or might not match up, but I am sure we can work something out.

Currently, the days I am available are M T W TH F SAT SUN at _____am & _____ pm. Although I am excited to get to know each other, some topics are sensitive and I would love to respect each other's privacy. Personally, I would prefer not to speak about:

Let's get to know each other! Circle which one(s) you would like to talk about.

- What are you most proud of recently?
- What does your ideal day, weekend, or vacation look like?
- What are some things you wish to accomplish in life?
- If you could write a book that's guaranteed to be a bestseller, what would you write about?
- If you could see one movie/show again for the first time, what would it be and why?
- What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
- Describe how you envision your life in 10 years.
- Describe the best meal you have ever eaten.
- If you could have someone follow you around like a personal assistant, what would you have them do?

My question(s):

Contact Info

E-mail:

Phone Number: () -

Meeting Location(s):