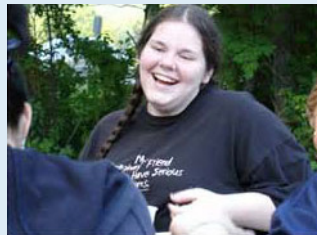


# *Mentoring Youth in Foster Care*



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# Contents

Introduction and Acknowledgments	1
Guiding Principles	2
Identification of Need and Population	3
Communication with State/Private Agency:	3
Mentoring Approach and Life Long Connections	4
Location—Stand Alone or Affiliation with Another Organization?	5
Funding	6
Staffing	7
Eligibility Criteria for Mentors and Youth	9
Recruitment of Mentors	9
Recruitment of Youth: Relationship, Relationship, Relationship	11
Mentor Screening	12
Youth Referral/Screening Process	14
Training	16
Transition Checklist	24
Matching Process/Program Administration and Delivery	25
Ongoing support	28
Problem Resolution	28
Termination	29
Creating Community	29
Policy Development	31
Evaluation	32
Liability and Insurance Issues	32
Advisory Board	33
Establish Relationships with Mentoring Partnerships and Other Volunteer Management Assistance	33
Frequently Asked Questions	34
Appendices	37

## Introduction and Acknowledgments

Each year approximately 20,000 youth nationwide leave the foster care system, discharged to “self,” without basic tools, community connections or family support. Making it on your own isn’t easy, but children “aging out” of foster care, usually at age eighteen, have it especially tough (Shirk & Strangler 2004). They are more likely than their peers to have difficulty completing high school, face mental health and substance abuse problems, and become involved with the juvenile justice system. These are among the first findings from the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago’s longitudinal study of youth aging out of foster care ([www.chapinball.org](http://www.chapinball.org)).

Permanent connections are an important support for youth as they transition out of foster care and mentoring is one strategy that can potentially lead to lasting, caring permanent connections. It has been shown to be effective in assisting youth in making a successful transition to adulthood. A young man who has had a mentor for almost 5 years stated “I used to hold back a lot but now I can talk more to other people and more openly about myself.” Mentoring is highly valued by young people for helping them with relationship problems, building their confidence and improving their emotional well-being. While the goal is always for youth to have reached permanency early in life, for some this does not happen and the mentoring relationship may be the gateway to those connections.

This publication is designed to help other communities and agencies plan for and implement mentoring programs for youth in foster care. It was made possible through a



grant from the Andrus Family Fund, a philanthropic foundation that believes that a vital factor in creating successful change is “recognizing and addressing the emotional and psychological effects of the change process.” This is done by focusing on transitions—those critical junctures in time and process that, if properly attended to, affect positive change. William Bridges’ work on transitions is a helpful framework in defining the psychological process that people experience as they move through change in their lives. This framework is what guides our program and the work we do with youth and mentors.

## Guiding Principles

Community Mentoring, formerly known as The Judge Baker Program, housed at the Muskie School for Public Service at the University of Southern Maine, has been in existence since 1997. The principles identified in the first year formed a sound foundation for the continuing success of the program. The programmatic design is anchored in pro-social values for positive youth development. The components and approaches utilized by the program are designed to engage and support both youth and mentors to:

- ▣ realize their dreams concerning a hopeful future;
- ▣ allow the expression of anger, hurt, and fear;
- ▣ affirm the uniqueness and special qualities of youth and their adult helpers;
- ▣ promote pro-social options acceptable to the youth;
- ▣ promote creativity, accomplishments and confidence building; and
- ▣ make significant connections to others, especially kinship members.

The program also recognizes and responds to mentors' legitimate need for affirmation, commitment, and respect from the sponsoring organizations (Judge Baker Children's Center, Jacobs 1993). Although these guiding principles underlie the work, it is also crucial to focus on relationship building and the promotion of positive relationships. Keeping lines of communication open, doing outreach, proactive problem solving, and maintaining positive relationships with everyone involved are essential components. The quality of the match relationship is emphasized rather than goals and outcomes because it is through this relationship that positive growth occurs. Being mindful of the guiding principles will serve to enhance individual development and establish positive relationship skills that may be transferred to future interactions such as school, jobs, etc. The program uses an inclusive, strengths-based approach to screening mentors and youth, working on issues that may come up, and recognizing that there are no "perfect people" or "perfect matches."

*it is ...  
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## Identification of Need and Population

As a result of being moved from home and family, changing schools, and dealing with past abuse and other trauma, youth in foster care face many difficult life challenges, including attachment and loss issues. One way to support youth is to connect them with caring adult mentors either from their existing networks or in their communities. Mentors can offer youth a different lens to view themselves and their own potential.

The first step in developing a mentoring program is assessing the need for the program. Important questions to consider include:

- ➡ Is there a need for a mentoring program for youth in care?
- ➡ Are youth mentoring needs being served by anyone else? Could they be?
- ➡ What demographic groups should be served and at what locations?
- ➡ What are the particular needs (age, gender, culture) for the youth in care population that will be served?

One way to answer these questions is to engage in discussions with youth, and state and private agency stakeholders. This will help determine what the state agency needs and if a mentoring program would help them meet their objectives. If more information is needed, a formal needs assessment may be required.

## Communication with State/Private Agency

Many people have a variety of roles in the lives of youth in care: birth parents, foster parents, case managers, group home staff, therapists, teachers, and particularly the state/private agency staff member fulfilling the role of legal guardian. A study conducted by

the Vera Institute found role confusion among educators, caseworkers and caregivers when supporting youth transitioning from foster care (Findelstein, Wamsley & Miranda, 2002). All key players should understand the important role they have in the life of a youth in care and establish and maintain good communication with the state or private agency that refers young people to the program. Without their cooperation and commitment, the program cannot exist. Good communication between caseworkers and program staff will promote the collaboration essential to supporting strong matches ([www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)).

### case example

Tim and Ryan get together every other Wednesday evening for a few hours. One week, due to a behavioral incident, Tim was moved out of his original placement. With communication less than ideal, it was only by coincidence that the program coordinator learned of the move and was able to inform Ryan before he made the unnecessary and potentially awkward trip to the prior placement. In this case, staff was able to reconnect Tim and Ryan. While placement change is an ongoing and sometimes unavoidable challenge, establishing strong relationships with all partners will minimize the negative impact and potentially support a match through any life change. Ongoing communication makes the mentoring relationship successful as well as supporting the goals of the entire team.

Consultation with all the agencies affected by the program early in the process will also be important. This includes:

- ▣ talking to residential placements, therapeutic agencies, and schools; and
- ▣ sharing plans and gathering input to establish channels of communication for both the development process and as a part of an ongoing collaboration.

(Information gathered from *www.mentoring.org* and *Partnerships for Success: A Mentoring Program Manual*.)

## **Mentoring Approach and Life Long Connections**

There are two major mentoring approaches—community-based or site-based. In community-based mentoring mentors and youth meet on their own in a variety of settings and engage in a range of activities with the goal of connecting youth to their communities and most importantly enjoying each other’s company and having fun.

Site-based mentoring can be school-based, workplace-based, corrections-based, agency-based, etc. and can be narrowly focused, e.g. educational achievement, or more holistic. By its very nature, site-based mentoring has a higher level of supervision. Each approach has merit and determining which to implement should reflect the needs of the foster care community and the goals or mission for the program.

- ▣ A school-based program might be ideal if the primary goal is to decrease the high school drop out rate for youth in care.
- ▣ A residential program may oversee mentoring for youth in their programs and choose a site- or school-based approach if the youth all attend the same school.
- ▣ A juvenile corrections-based program could expose youth in care to alternative life choices and prepare them for reintegration to the community.

## Location—Stand Alone or Affiliation with Another Organization?

Some agencies begin mentoring programs to expand the services they provide to the community. Many factors will help to determine whether the program will stand alone or be integrated into another organization. For example, a stand-alone or independent program might be more costly than a program that is part of another organization. If a stand alone program is the best fit, it will be necessary to identify leadership, financial backing and other forms of support to ensure the program will be sustainable. The benefit of being housed at a state or private agency is the direct link to referral sources and access



At first, the Muskie School of Public Service Community Mentoring Program staff was housed at the public child welfare agency office directly accessible and visible with the child welfare staff. In subsequent years it became part of the University of Southern Maine System and gained a research capacity as well as the infrastructure benefits of being attached to a University. However, direct access to child welfare staff was lost in this transition. Given that the mission is broad—“to support youth in foster care and assist them in their transition from foster care to adulthood”—being a community-based program has worked well.

to case managers, therapists, and other support staff. Careful review of the needs assessment data will help determine what services are already being provided in the community and what services are needed.

Mentoring programs have similar needs to any other program:

- ▣ training space;
- ▣ office space;
- ▣ office equipment for clerical functions; and
- ▣ administrative support for daily operations.

As you decide where to locate your mentoring program, you will get the best results from a careful cost-benefit analysis of all the factors involved.



## Funding

Viable funding options include expansion of an existing mentoring program and/or establishing the mentoring program as part of a larger community agency with a commitment to youth, particularly youth in transition. Such an agency would need to have other support services for youth in transition such as assistance with housing, employment, and education. In a community with several large social service agencies that have a range of programs for youth including foster care, residential care, emergency shelter, mediation and case management, any one of them could be a potential fit with a mentoring program.



Community Mentoring at the Muskie School is funded through a cooperative agreement between the university system and the state child welfare agency. Financial resources are provided by the state agency and the program is administered by the School. A requirement of any effective collaboration is the existence of a benefit to both parties involved. In the case of this collaboration, the missions of both the state agency and university system are enhanced and broadened.

The benefit to the state agency:

- ▄▶ Youth in care are matched with qualified mentors.
- ▄▶ The possibility of long term connections for youth which might extend into adulthood.
- ▄▶ Matches are supported by professional program staff.
- ▄▶ Mentors support youth in gathering resources and attaining goals.

The benefit to the university

- ▄▶ The ability to conduct research.
- ▄▶ The opportunity to present nationally at conferences and workshops.
- ▄▶ The development and dissemination of articles and other professional publications.

While the core program is supported through the cooperative agreement, grants from private foundations are utilized to support program enhancement and special initiatives. These funding arrangements have enabled the program to operate consistently since 1997, serving over 100 matches.



## Staffing

Professional and competent staff is critical to the success of a mentoring program since they are the program's public face and they connect mentors and youth to the program ([www.mentor.org](http://www.mentor.org)).

The necessary roles for staff at a successful mentoring program may be covered by separate positions or shared, and may include the following:

- ▣ supervision/coordination/management;
- ▣ coordination staff to work with youth and mentors;
- ▣ recruitment and program development;
- ▣ evaluation;
- ▣ clerical support; and
- ▣ training.

Good consistent supervision improves the quality of matches and increases the longevity of staff, which in turn supports the overall success of the program.

Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship bringing successes and challenges under any circumstances. For program staff to support matches; they need someone to turn to for questions, guidance, and advice. The unique issues related to working with youth in care make it especially important that program staff have ongoing support and clinical supervision. Program staff work with and build relationships on a multi-systemic level to create a collaborative approach to support the mentor, the youth and the match relationship. Some common issues may include frequent disruptions in youth living situations, visit changes with the biological family, and the loss of peer relationships. These situations sometimes result in behavior changes requiring good communication and ongoing support for both the youth and the mentor. Communication in these complex situations can be confusing, making it important for program staff to receive guidance in dealing with them.

### case example

15-year-old Meg has taken care of her younger siblings much like a parent. While she seems very mature when observed with her siblings, tending to their needs and protecting them from harm, she has no real friends and rarely engages in activities outside of her placement. In selecting a mentor for Meg it is important to ensure she is with someone who will provide opportunities for her to be involved in activities and have fun.

Coordinating staff perform the initial screening, matching and ongoing support to mentor and youth relationships. Youth in care may have issues related to experiences they have had or been exposed to, as well as the stigma of foster care itself. It is important to recognize that leaving home, family and community, moving from placement to placement and experiencing numerous disrupted relationships, etc., become barriers to learning as well as to positive social and emotional development.

For example, youth may appear very mature in one area, e.g., academics, but be very immature in another area, e.g., peer relationships. This difference may be due to experiences of being in care.

These issues are layered upon the normal developmental changes of adolescence and can create an especially difficult time for youth in the child welfare system. For these reasons, youth and mentors depend on the expertise and guidance of the program staff and the youth's care providers.

When recruiting staff, it's important to ensure they are qualified and understand the mission, purpose, and priorities of the program. The program needs individuals with experience in the child welfare system and a clear understanding of the unique needs and strengths of youth in care. Although mentoring staff may be the most accessible adult for a youth, when that youth calls with a dilemma, staff members must have the expertise to engage the rest of the youth's team to work through the issue.

To promote the mentoring program, staff may be required to participate in recruitment activities that involve public speaking. Therefore, staff must have strong interpersonal skills and be comfortable completing and presenting written and oral information. In addition, it is helpful to hire staff with previous experience in a mentoring program and demonstrated ability to collaborate as part of a team. Working with youth in care is different from working for a more traditional program where most contact is with a parent. Youth in care have numerous adults in their lives and it is important to collaborate with everyone to ensure the relationship is supported and successful. Staff at a mentoring program may have contact with caseworkers, therapists, foster parents, group home staff and/or Guardian Ad Litem.

#### case example

Steve, age 17, always wanted to play football and was finally able to try out for a team. He was doing very well and then came home one day and told staff at his placement that he had been kicked off the team. Upon further exploration his mentor learned that Steve had actually quit the team because he "didn't like being hit." Due to his background the experience of tackling and being tackled reminded him of being hit and raised too much anxiety for him to continue playing.



*Don't ever  
under-  
estimate  
the impact  
you can  
have on a  
youth's life.*

*Author Unknown*

## **Eligibility Criteria for Mentors and Youth**

Research has shown that mentoring is most effective when it is long term and comprehensive ([www.mentoring.org/program](http://www.mentoring.org/program)). Therefore, it is crucial that participants are dedicated to the mentoring relationship. One way to ensure this commitment is by requiring all participants to meet specific eligibility criteria. Mentors and youth need to clearly understand what they are agreeing to before they enter into a match. Understanding their roles and responsibilities will likely increase satisfaction and make things run more smoothly. (Please see Community Mentoring Youth Job Description and Community Mentoring Mentor Role Description on pages 37-38.) Having youth and mentors sign role descriptions can add another level of commitment to the process.

In addition, with increased recognition of the value of permanency for all youth, it is important that prospective mentors have a clear understanding of the kinds of situations youth in care experience and the possible significance and importance of the mentoring relationship to them.

## **Recruitment of Mentors**

Recruiting and working with unpaid volunteers can present the most challenging parts of running a mentoring program. Given that the program depends on dedicated and committed volunteers, thoughtful planning about who will be recruited and the methods used is important. In order to develop a comprehensive plan, questions to consider include:

- ▶▶ Can adults currently or previously involved with the youth be recruited as mentors, e.g. caseworkers, foster parents, graduate interns, relatives, coaches, teachers?
- ▶▶ What process will be used for recruiting mentors currently or previously involved with the youth?
- ▶▶ What process will be used to recruit adults not previously or currently known to the youth?
- ▶▶ Do volunteers need to have a particular skill area? (For example, if you are working with youth who have developmental disabilities, should mentors have some knowledge or experience with this population?)
- ▶▶ Where will recruitment occur (geographic, career etc)? How far will volunteers travel to meet consistently with a youth?
- ▶▶ Should mentors be recruited from a specific ethnicity or gender? Can local community organizations provide potential mentors, such as connecting Native American youth with local tribal organizations?
- ▶▶ What are volunteers' feelings, attitudes and experiences with the child welfare system and youth in foster care?

It's important to be aware of the value of long term or historic connections and it is often easy to overlook the pre-existing relationships that may be potential resources for youth in care (Furnas et. al, 1990). A review of the youth's past and present connections through genograms, eco-maps, and in-depth conversation may identify individuals appropriate to a mentoring relationship (see examples of maps on pages 39-40). The design of screening and recruitment materials should reflect the range of mentoring relationships that may be facilitated. During the process people may realize they are interested in volunteering, but are not comfortable being matched with a young person in a mentoring relationship. Other services volunteers could provide include:

- ▣ speaking at program trainings or events;
- ▣ coordinating activities;
- ▣ offering administrative support;
- ▣ providing transportation;
- ▣ contributing public relations and marketing services;
- ▣ becoming member of the program Board of Directors; and
- ▣ group mentoring.

Giving volunteers a variety of options enables more participants to be involved and allows their expertise to enhance the program. However, similar to potential mentors, it is important to provide these volunteers with role descriptions. Having a clear role description will help to reduce confusion and frustration among volunteers. To effectively recruit mentors, it is necessary to have a program information packet that includes an overview of the program, a mentor role description and a mentor application. When speaking with potential mentors, talk frankly about both the positive and challenging aspects of mentoring. In addition, provide information about the child welfare system and some of the circumstances that might be encountered when working with youth in foster care. This will help to give potential mentors a realistic view of the commitment they are making.

Other recruitment strategies include:

- ▣ Ask people. They often want to volunteer their time and just need to be approached. People need to be asked so they understand the benefits to youth, to themselves and to the larger community.
- ▣ Mentors recruiting mentors.
- ▣ Emphasize the personal benefits of mentoring when recruiting mentors from the larger community.
- ▣ Help mentors understand how they are part of building a better community where young people in foster care feel safe and valued.
- ▣ Assure mentors that they can make a difference in the life of youth who may have experienced significant loss and hardship.
- ▣ Target people already working in some type of human service profession such as fire departments, schools, colleges or universities, or other community organizations.

*Assure  
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youth...*

Periodic appearances and advertisements on television, radio and newspaper can help the program gain visibility and recruit mentors from the community. Many states have regional and statewide mentoring partnerships that meet regularly to schedule events to promote mentoring and share resources.

### **Recruitment of Youth: Relationship, Relationship, Relationship**

Recruiting young people is easier but still requires attention. One of the best possible scenarios is for youth to refer other youth. At the same time develop relationships with other potential referral sources, i.e., public/private agency caseworkers, social workers, teachers, foster parents, group home staff, etc. While under ideal circumstances a mentoring program for youth in care would have a physical presence within the state agency, the second choice is to hold periodic meetings with child welfare staff to ensure they are:

- ▄ familiar with mentoring and its benefits to youth, specifically the benefits of creating relationships and the possible connection to permanency;
- ▄ knowledgeable about appropriate referrals; and
- ▄ aware of the referral process.

Develop a recruitment packet for youth including a description of the program, a description of the activities youth and mentors might do together, and a youth role description. This will give youth an understanding of the program and an opportunity to see possible benefits for them. Recruitment requires ongoing effort and strategic planning.



## Mentor Screening

Mentors choose to volunteer for various reasons, including a desire to help a young person, to give back to their community and/or to gain a new perspective on life. It is important to talk to new mentors about their expectations for the relationship to ensure this program is the best avenue for them to fulfill their goals (Furnas, Renstrom, Walters, 1990). The purpose of screening is to determine if a volunteer has the qualities and the capacity necessary to become a mentor. A thorough screening process provides a sufficient exchange of information to minimize future challenges, prepare mentors for successful matches and begin to establish the foundation for resolving issues that may surface in the future. The screening process also provides an opportunity for candidates to withdraw if, for any reason, the program does not seem like a good fit for them.

The screening process should include:

**Initial Interview**—The initial interview is an informal discussion about the program, the mentor’s interests, and past volunteer experience. (See sample questions on page 41.) This is the first opportunity to identify issues for later exploration in the process as well as a time to screen out individuals not appropriate or safe for a close relationship with youth. During this time people also may conclude for themselves that the program is not a good fit for them.

**Reference Checks**—It is recommended that the mentor provide three references from different aspects of his/her life, such as friend, relative, or co-worker. These references can provide specific information about how the potential mentor approaches relationships in his/her life, who and what is important to the individual and what strengths and challenges he/she possesses. (See sample questions on page 43.)

**Life story**—The life story interview provides program staff with information about the potential mentor’s background and life experiences to identify both strengths and possible barriers to a successful match. Youth in care tell their stories often. This activity demonstrates the sacredness of one’s story and can sensitize the volunteer to the circumstances of youth in care. For more information on the format and questions used in the life story please refer to page 44.

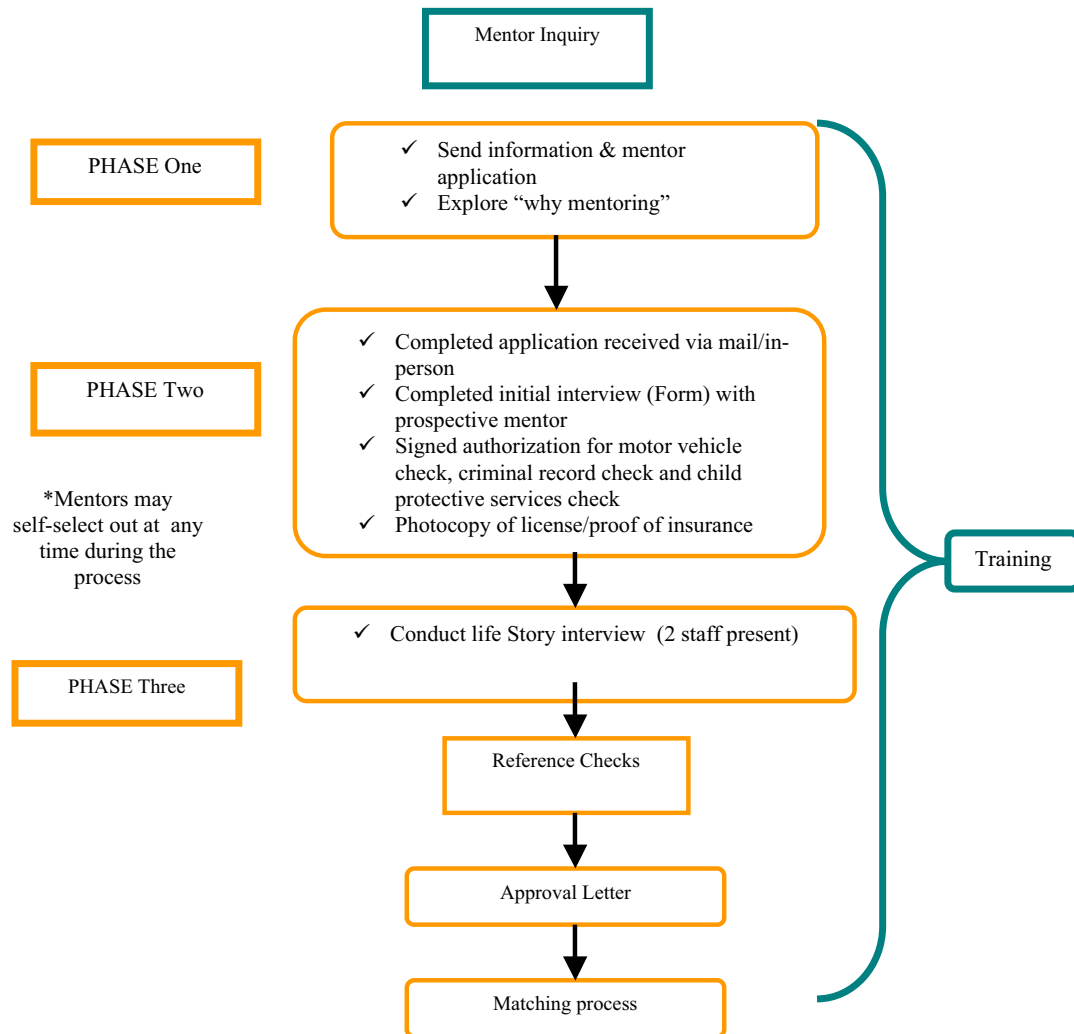
**Background Checks**—Prospective mentors must give permission for a Motor Vehicle Record Check, Criminal History, and a Child Protective Check. A local Department of Social Services, a state mentoring partnership or a national screening company, such as ChoicePoint or Lexus Nexus, can help with the completion of these checks.

### case example

Mary is a bright woman with a difficult history who wants to make a contribution to youth in her community. She has some major transportation and other mobility challenges and during the screening process she realizes the requirements of a community-based program would not work well for her. Program staff connect her with a site-based educational mentoring program, enabling her to make a contribution to the community but in a way that works for her.



## Community Mentoring Mentor Process



## Youth Referral/Screening Process

Although referrals can come from other sources, the primary source of information and permission is the youth's legal guardian/caseworker. Foster parents, teachers, therapists and others can refer youth, as long as the legal guardian provides consent.

Since youth in care often have decisions made for them, it is particularly important that they are consulted and are interested in learning more about the program. After the referral is made, program staff can have a lengthier discussion with the youth about program expectations.

Upon receiving a referral, program staff must gather background information and set up time to meet with the youth. It is crucial to obtain signed releases of information to talk with other professionals, such as teachers, parents, foster parents, therapists and others who play a major role in the young person's life. This information gathering, combined with direct conversations with the youth, gives a holistic picture of the youth and provides an opportunity to educate all parties about the role of a mentor. During each of these conversations some form of the following questions should be asked:

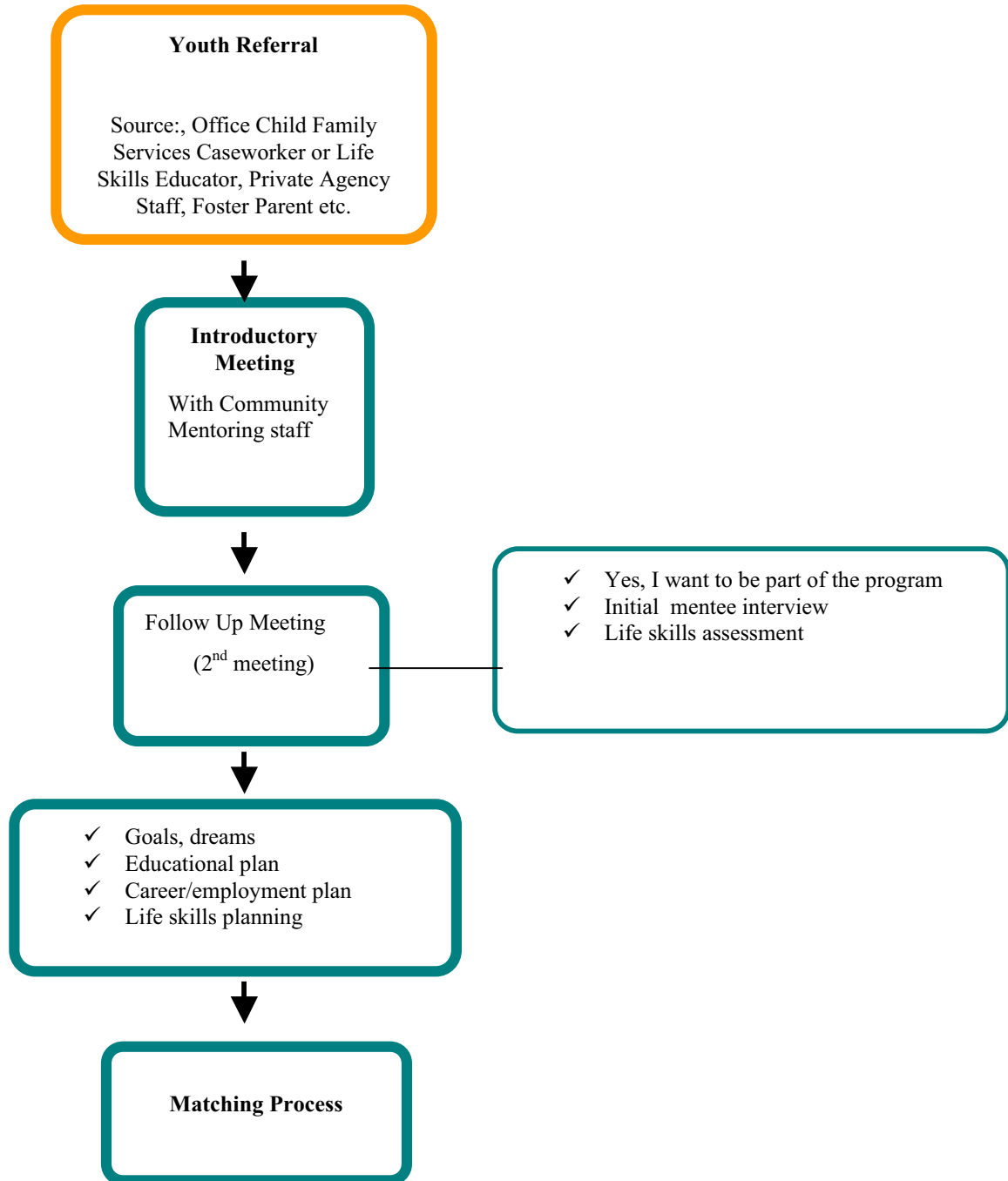
- ▣▶ Does the youth know about the referral?
- ▣▶ How well does the youth communicate?
- ▣▶ How are the youth's relationships at school? At home? In the community?
- ▣▶ Are there any safety issues the program should be aware of? Mentors and youth need to be assured that community outings will be safe and positive experiences for everyone.
- ▣▶ Is there anyone else important in this youth's life that program staff should talk with?
- ▣▶ Does the youth have any natural adult connections currently or from the past (coach, teacher, family members, etc.) that could be formalized into a mentor relationship?

In some cases, it may be determined that the program is not currently a good fit for the youth. However, referrals can always be held and reopened at a later date or the youth can be referred to another program that might be a better fit, such as a school-based program that offers more supervision.

The following is a map of the youth application process.



## Community Mentoring Youth Referral Process



## Training

Mentors may require help understanding they are a member of a large team working to meet the physical, educational, social and emotional needs of the youth. Thorough training can help mentors cope with the sometimes intense urge to try to rescue or save a youth. When mentors have a clear understanding of their role and purpose, they can be a resource to the youth and to the larger team.

The investment in initial and ongoing training of mentors will contribute to the success of the mentoring program in many ways. Mentors are most successful when they receive appropriate training and understand their role before they are matched. The overall training should be designed to help mentors become more skilled at developing caring relationships, gain confidence in their ability to make a difference in the lives of youth, and learn about the challenges for youth in foster care. This will both motivate and sustain their enthusiasm for the program (*www.mentoring.org*). It is important to review the program's policies and procedures and answer any questions that may arise. A clear understanding of the program and what is expected of the mentor will help alleviate anxiety about beginning the mentoring relationship.

The training schedule will vary according to the needs of the participants and should encompass new mentor orientation and adolescent development. For mentors' convenience the training can be delivered in one long session or several short sessions. Generally the process from application to completion of training requires six to eight hours and may take up to two months in order to accommodate individual schedules.

The typical new mentor orientation includes:

- ◆ A warm up activity for mentors to share their hopes and concerns for the mentoring relationship. Depending on the size of the group, this can be done as a full group or in pairs.
- ◆ Studies/information (e.g. Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development, Child Trends 2002. Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters November, 1995) can show how involvement in a positive consistent mentoring relationship leads to profound improvement in the youth's ability to function and thereby succeed as a productive member of society.
- ◆ An explanation of the unique needs of youth in care, highlighting how mentoring can become a vital part of a youth's support network.
- ◆ A review of the role of a mentor, including what the role of a mentor is not (activity on page 49).
- ◆ A discussion of the mentor role in relation to the caseworker, group home staff, foster parents, biological parents, and therapists, including the fact that a mentor may be the only unpaid adult in the young person's life.
- ◆ A brief description of the child welfare system and how the program works within the social service network.
- ◆ Information about the separation and loss youth in care have experienced in their lives and the resulting difficulty youth in care may have in forming trusting relationships with adults.

*Mentors  
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- Information about confidentiality (see example on page 50) to help mentors understand the importance of protecting the youth's story should be included.
- An explanation of all program policies and procedures with specific examples and stories to provide mentors an understanding of why the policies are in place. Questions and discussion should always be encouraged.
- An introduction to the William Bridges Transition Framework. This will assist prospective mentors in applying the model to their own change/transition process and then using this insight to support the youth they are matched with as they experience transitions.
- An understanding of the importance of approaching the youth as an individual by appreciating the youth's strengths and resiliency.
- A reminder to mentors that the most important part of the relationship is to have a safe and fun time!



The William Bridges Transition Framework is one tool Community Mentoring uses to help mentors learn how to support youth in transition (Bridges, 2004). The Framework is incorporated throughout training and reinforced in all interactions with mentors and youth. In summary, William Bridges differentiates between change and transition describing change as situational e.g. a new school, and transition as “the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation.” Change is external, transition is internal. Bridges believes that transition starts with an ending and only by acknowledging the associated losses do people become ready to move to the next stage, the “neutral zone.” This stage, he describes as the “no-man’s land between the old reality and the new” or the “no place between two someplaces.”

While ultimately the neutral zone will stimulate creativity and new possibilities, early on the response elicited is often resistance or sabotage. The third stage is the new beginning, the point at which people are into the new and they have begun to take on their new identity (Bridges, 2003). The mentor’s role in supporting youth through transition will vary subject to factors such as the type of change, the information the mentor has about the change etc. The youth will benefit from gaining an understanding of the purpose for the change, some vision of what the new picture will be, knowing what the plan for the transition is and what his/her part will be in it. The mentor may be able to support the youth in getting information, developing plans or understanding information that is available.

Community Mentoring uses an experiential training approach to familiarize mentors and youth, both matched and unmatched, with the Transtion Framework. A separate detailed guidebook has been written to describe that process (Heath, Markowitz 2006).

Have currently matched youth and mentors share their personal experience of the mentoring relationship at the orientation. Their participation provides a picture of what to expect and is a vehicle for the youth voice to be heard. If youth and/or mentors are unable to attend, other resources, such as videos or case scenarios, can be used.

Each mentor's training manual should include a copy of the policies and procedures, contact information in case of an emergency, articles on supporting youth in care as well as other resources.

Adolescence is a difficult time in life marked by physical and emotional changes that may be especially trying for youth in care. Forming one's identity, learning to establish intimate and meaningful relationships with others, overcoming doubts about ethnicity and sexual identity, and dealing with heightened emotions are just part of what an adolescent struggles with on a daily basis. One of the challenges for a youth raised in the foster care system is that a number of developmental needs may not have been met (Furnas, Renstrom, Walters, 1990). If a youth has scars from childhood losses, they will often reemerge during adolescence. While experiencing normal adolescent milestones, youth may also be trying to make sense and peace with what has happened in the past. It is a good idea to introduce mentors to the possible impact of both personal history and the foster care system itself on adolescent development.

For example: Zach came into care at age 6 as the result of physical and emotional abuse. He presented with behavioral issues including fighting, hitting, raging, destruction to property and withdrawal from people. By the time he reached 15 he had been in four foster homes and had experienced a psychiatric hospital admission. He currently resides in a group home. There are many factors impacting Zach's development during his adolescence, including the following:

- ▄▄ *The impact of his personal history*—Zach witnessed and experienced physical and emotional abuse in his home. He learned to act out aggressively and to avoid close relationships for purposes of physical and emotional safety. These behaviors were difficult for foster parents to manage and were a contributing factor to his placement disruptions.
- ▄▄ *The impact of living in foster care*—While each set of foster parents was well intentioned, each lacked the skill and support necessary to adequately address Zach's specific needs, leading to failed placements. Every placement disruption triggered another round of challenging and often more serious behaviors. As a result Zach has not developed the capacity to establish trusting relationships and therefore does not have a sense of belonging or connectedness, key components to positive development. During a time when gaining a sense of control over one's fate is a developmental task, the difficult behaviors Zach demonstrates are mechanisms he has used to exercise some element of control in circumstances that have left him with little control over himself and his fate.

*introduce  
mentors to  
the possible  
impact of both  
personal history  
and the foster  
care system  
itself on  
adolescent  
development.*

➡ *System barriers to normal development*—In addition to Zach’s personal barriers to his own development, life in a group home with numerous professionals making decisions for him has added obstacles. For example, although establishing peer relationships is important to his development at this time, access to the community is limited by program rules and a structure designed to accommodate state laws and policies intended to ensure safety and maintain accountability. Specifically, a request to spend the night at a friend’s may require a contact with the caseworker, a background check and several weeks advance notice. Similarly, getting a driver’s license, which opens the door to community access, employment and independence, is often not possible due to liability issues or simply because there is no means to pay for the driving time or a volunteer to help.

The role of the mentor requires sufficient knowledge to build a meaningful relationship with a youth and to know when to reach out for support.

Training in adolescent development should include:

- ➡ Activities that ask mentors to reflect on their own adolescence (see page 52).
- ➡ Stages of adolescent development – early: 10-13 years, middle: 14-16 years, and late: 16-21 years (Department of Health and Human Services 1997).

➡ Developmental needs during the adolescent years:

- sense of engagement;
- sense of identity;
- control over one’s self and fate; and
- connectedness to others.

(Please see pages 53-59 for more information.)

- ➡ A review of adolescent brain development and the impact of trauma.
- ➡ An understanding of how the beginning of a mentor relationship is a transition for both youth and mentors.



Youth often share that a mentor is the only person in his/her life “outside of the child welfare system” or the only non-paid adult in their life. Building a relationship with a mentor can be difficult for youth in care since they must learn how to build a trusting and positive relationship with a caring adult. In the pre-match phase, program staff help youth recognize that part of the mentoring matching process is to create “endings” or make peace with past negative experiences with adults. This enables them to move into the “neutral zone” and become open to “change” or a new experience with a positive adult. For many youth in care this process is difficult and they may begin to resist the change by missing scheduled meetings with their mentor and/or not contacting their mentor.

The utilization of the William Bridges model of transition (see page 58 for more information on the William Bridges Model) can support mentors in the initial relationship building phase and help mentors support youth by “hanging in there” during this and future transitions (Bridges, 2004). The model can provide mentors with tools and resources to guide youth toward a positive outcome. The following mentoring relationships are examples of different ways to support youth through their endings, managing the neutral zone and moving forward to their new beginnings (Belanger, Connolly, Markowitz, Morse, Wertheimer, Fall 2004.)



*... part of the mentoring matching process is to create “endings” or make peace with past negative experiences with adults.*

## **“Endings”**

### ***Joyce and Katie***

Joyce and Katie were matched a month ago and both are excited about beginning their relationship. Their plan is to get together every couple of weeks. Katie lives in a group home and will be turning eighteen in a few months, giving her a choice of whether to remain in state care. The rules and point systems at the group home are all she has known and the thought of more freedom and independence is beginning to make her nervous. She is doing well in school and looking forward to her senior year. She thinks she wants to go on to post secondary education and the staff at the group home has been very supportive of her plan. She recently started a job at the local library and enjoys her work.

In the past Katie had supervised visits with her birth mother, but has decided to end those visits because her mother rarely showed up.

---

### **Ways a mentor can support a youth during the “Ending” stage**

- ➡ Routinely check in to let Katie know that you are committed to the relationship and will be there for her.
- ➡ Set up a special time to celebrate Katie’s birthday together.
- ➡ Give Katie time to talk about how life in the group home will change once she turns eighteen. Being a good listener while avoiding triangulation is a great support.
- ➡ Offer to help Katie make a life book to honor her past and carry forward those parts that have particular meaning to her.
- ➡ Share information about your own eighteenth birthday.
- ➡ Acknowledge the losses associated with turning 18. Talk about what she is most worried about. Wonder with her what will be different after she turns 18.
- ➡ Point out to Katie the importance of an eighteenth birthday in foster care, including information about the option of a V-9 placement (a negotiated written agreement for extended care) and higher education tuition waivers.
- ➡ Talk with Katie about her future goals.
- ➡ Ask Katie what kind of support she needs to help her reach her goals.

## **“Neutral Zone”**

### *Sophie and Rachel*

Sophie and Rachel were matched a year ago. Sophie was living in a foster home and attending high school; she was involved in school activities and had an after-school job. She had limited contact with her birth family, but still felt very connected to them.

The mentor pair hit it off immediately and began weekly meetings—going shopping, out to eat, for walks, and to the movies. Although Rachel had a busy life she managed to make time for Sophie.

During this time Sophie was assigned a new social worker, turned 18 and began having more contact with her birth mother. Her mother asked her to move back home and she decided to do it, changing high schools and quitting her after-school job.

Sophie was immediately overwhelmed with her new school, her responsibilities for her younger siblings and frequent arguments with her mother. She stopped contact with her foster family and stopped calling or returning Rachel’s calls. Rachel was hurt and confused and didn’t understand why Sophie had cut her out of her life.

Sophie and Rachel met with Community Mentoring staff and Sophie told Rachel why she hadn’t returned her calls. Rachel explained to Sophie that she felt let down, but still wanted to be part of her life. They decided to continue their relationship, but to get together only once a month. Rachel reminded Sophie that she was always available by phone or e-mail.

---

### **Ways a mentor can help a youth in the “Neutral Zone”**

- ▮ Remember not to take any changes in the relationship personally.
- ▮ Remember the significance of birth family to youth in care.
- ▮ Understand how a youth might struggle with choices when faced with the possibility of returning home.
- ▮ Support the young person in his/her decisions.
- ▮ Understand how a youth might handle this change differently from the way the mentor would.
- ▮ Use this situation as a learning opportunity about different ways of communicating.
- ▮ Continue to offer unconditional support through phone calls, cards and e-mails.
- ▮ Re-negotiate how the mentoring relationship can occur, e.g., meetings, activities, etc.
- ▮ Support the youth in using this relationship to plan for future relationships.

## **“New Beginnings”**

### ***Sam and Alex***

Sam, who has been in foster care since he was four, was matched with Alex, a middle school teacher five years ago, at the age of sixteen. Over the years Sam lived in many foster homes and was given an option of out-of-state adoption. He chose to make the difficult decision to stay in foster care to maintain consistency in his school, community and relationships. In addition to participating in activities with Sam, Alex assisted him during this time by acknowledging the losses associated with his decision and standing by him during the ensuing period of confusion. As Sam began to move into his new identity Alex helped Sam celebrate the steps along the way. Joining a club for the first time was cause for celebration because it was a symbol of becoming part of the school community.

As Sam aged, the relationship changed. Sam, now in college, has a part-time job and actively participates in an advocacy group for youth in care. These activities provide him with a positive identity and purpose. He has created a solid network and though there have been several detours in his plan for independence, he is in a good place in his life.

Sam credits Alex with teaching him about communication and friendship. He continues to attend family celebrations at Alex’s home and feels he can call Alex anytime and talk with him about his life and concerns. He knows that Alex will always be there for him as a friend.

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### **Ways a mentor can help a youth during “New Beginnings”**

- ▣ Reinforce and celebrate lessons learned.
- ▣ Provide guidance and friendship.
- ▣ Teach good communication skills by modeling them yourself.
- ▣ Help recognize and celebrate accomplishments.
- ▣ Help plan for other changes and transitions that will occur.



The following is a **Transition Checklist** that can be utilized by mentors who are supporting youth in transition (Morse et. al., 2004).

## **Managing “Endings”**

- ➡ Have I focused on this youth’s strengths?
- ➡ Do I understand the youth’s history and the impact foster care has had on him/her?
- ➡ Have I been careful not to denigrate the youth’s past, but rather, found ways/strategies to honor it?
- ➡ Have I thought about the kinds of losses youth have experienced?
- ➡ Have I thought about how this youth has managed these losses?
- ➡ Have I found ways to “Mark the ending” in his/her life?
- ➡ Have I made a plan for giving the youth a piece of the past to take with him/her?

## **Managing the “Neutral Zone”**

- ➡ Have I regularly checked in with the youth?
- ➡ Have I tried to normalize the neutral zone by explaining it as an uncomfortable time that, with careful attention, can be turned to advantage?
- ➡ Have I identified the connections the youth has with people who will offer emotional support?
- ➡ Have I set short-range goals with the youth and identified checkpoints along the way?
- ➡ Have I worked with the youth to promote life skills and problem solving/critical thinking skills?
- ➡ Have I helped the youth transform losses into opportunities and try doing things a new way?
- ➡ Have I helped the youth pursue his/her interest areas, such as art classes?

## **Managing the “New Beginning”**

- ➡ Have I paid attention to the ending(s) and the neutral zone, or am I trying to make a beginning happen before it really can?
- ➡ How am I supporting and reinforcing the new beginning?
- ➡ How can I acknowledge small successes associated with the new beginning?
- ➡ Have I been a role model for the youth or found supportive resources to help him/her through the transition process?
- ➡ Have I found ways to celebrate the new beginning and the conclusion of this particular change and time of transition?
- ➡ Have I found ways to symbolize the new identity with the youth?
- ➡ Have I found ways to give the youth a piece of the transition to keep as a reminder of the difficult and rewarding journey we all took together?

## Matching Process/Program Administration and Delivery

Every program must have standards of operation to ensure the mission is fulfilled, as well as to add legitimacy to the process. Much thought and consideration should go into making a match. It is important to consider the values and attitudes of the mentor and youth as well as their overall personalities. Mentor areas of interest and their experience with adolescents will also influence the match. Some questions to consider:

- ▣ How long will the relationship last? Can they make a 6-month commitment? A year commitment?
- ▣ How often should youth and mentors get together?
- ▣ Where will activities take place?
- ▣ How will activities be paid for?
- ▣ Who will be responsible for transportation?
- ▣ What would make a good youth/mentor match?
- ▣ What is a reasonable commuting distance for a mentor and youth, a potential key to the success and longevity of a match? (*www.mentoring.org*)

Youth and mentor matches are made on the basis of shared social, cultural and educational interests. It is important to remember that each person comes to the program with distinct interests and an expectation of what the mentoring relationship will be. It is best to match a mentor and youth with shared interests to provide a foundation for the relationship. To ensure a successful match it can take months to complete the matching process.

### case example

Sam and Jack were matched because they both enjoyed spending time outdoors, particularly biking. Sam is a young man who spends much of his time mountain biking. Jack works at a bike shop and also does a lot of biking. They both enjoy watching sports and live in the same town. Equally important is the fact that they both have laid-back personalities and are open to trying new things.



## ***Geographic issues related to matching***

In a community-based program, potential mentors and referred youth may live a fair distance from each other. Physical distance is an important consideration when making a match. For youth in care, transportation to and from meetings can be a challenge. Obtaining a drivers license is generally difficult and someone to provide consistent transportation is usually not available. Therefore, much of the transportation responsibility will rest with the mentor. This issue should be fully discussed with volunteers before a commitment is made. Important points of discussion include:

- ▣▶ Is the mentor willing to travel to meet with a youth?
- ▣▶ How far is the mentor willing to travel?
- ▣▶ Does the mentor have reliable transportation?
- ▣▶ Is the mentor comfortable having a youth in his/her car?
- ▣▶ Does the mentor have sufficient insurance?

Even though some youth may be able to share the responsibility for transportation by setting up rides for themselves or by using public transportation, it is crucial this issue be discussed with both the youth and mentor before they begin seeing each other. If transportation is not discussed, it may very well become a barrier to a successful match. Generally speaking, matches living in close proximity tend to be the most successful. Since it is not unusual for youth in care to be placed away from their home community, an appropriate move closer to home may move a youth away from the mentor. Similarly, despite best efforts, unplanned relocation by the youth or the mentor may also result in a greater physical separation. A flexible and creative program will support the relationship or if necessary assist with a planned termination.

### **case example**

Kathy and Mike were matched around the activities they both enjoy. Kathy, the mentor, enjoys spending time outdoors, is very sports oriented and describes herself as a person who typically finds she has more in common with boys than girls. Mike is a youth who enjoys fishing, playing kickball, and any other outdoor activity. Mike stated that he is more comfortable with woman than men. While Community Mentoring generally facilitates same gender matches, staff decided that a cross gendered match would work best for both of these people. In a similar situation, a boy was matched with a couple both to honor his comfort level with women and at the same time address his developmental need to increase his comfort with men.

Once program staff identifies a potential match, a verbal presentation is made to the youth and potential mentor to determine if they both want to proceed with a meeting. While being cognizant of confidentiality, in this “profile sharing” the mentor is told what the youth enjoys doing and some goals they are working on.

Similarly the youth is given information about the mentor. If both parties wish to proceed, program staff coordinates and facilitates a “no strings attached meeting” for the youth and mentor. This first meeting is very brief (usually about 15 minutes) and informal and is just an opportunity for the potential match to be introduced and see if they are compatible. Since the beginning of any new relationship can be awkward, it is important to prepare both the youth and mentor by explaining this format. After the initial meeting, staff checks in with the youth and mentor to get feedback about the meeting. Some questions to ask:

- ▣ Do they have any questions?
- ▣ Do they want to move forward in the process?
- ▣ Do they want to meet each other one more time?

Usually, once a youth and mentor meet, they are excited to move forward for a “contract meeting,” so they can begin doing activities together.

The contract meeting is the final stage in the matching process and should include the youth’s primary support providers, such as foster parents, group home staff and the youth’s caseworker/guardian. During this meeting important information is exchanged. The youth and mentor identify specific activities they want to do together and decide the best meeting times. It is important that a primary care provider be involved in the meeting to ensure outings are consistent with group home or house rules and care providers are aware of how outings are scheduled. This initial meeting can also increase the likelihood that the care provider will support the relationship and will recognize opportunities to utilize the relationship to achieve the best outcomes for the youth. Program staff should clearly articulate that building a relationship can take time and as with any new relationship, the first few times they get together may feel awkward. The contract meeting concludes with both youth and mentor signing the contract and agreeing to commit to the relationship for the specified time. (See example contract on page 59-60.)

Although this meeting finalizes the matching process, during the first few months program staff should check in with the mentor and youth every two weeks to make sure that everything is going well. Setting the date for a six-week check-in at the contract meeting can ensure the team gets together again after the match has met a few times independently. The six-week check-in provides time to discuss how the match is going and any difficulties that may have arisen. It is important to encourage the match to talk about and resolve any issues sooner rather than later in order for the match to proceed smoothly.



## Ongoing support

Successful matches require ongoing attention from program staff. It is important for both youth and mentors to feel supported as they develop and maintain a relationship. Program staff should be available for advice, coaching and encouragement when needed.

Contacting youth and mentors within the first two weeks of the match to assess how things are going is extremely important. Follow up calls every two weeks for the next few months will also help ensure youth and mentors are making progress in developing a relationship. Some questions to ask:

- ▣ How is the match going?
- ▣ Are you enjoying your time together?
- ▣ How do you decide what activities to do together?
- ▣ Do you talk on the phone? Email?
- ▣ Are other people (e.g., foster parents, group home staff, caseworkers, etc.) cooperative and helpful?
- ▣ Do you need help with anything? Is anything interfering with your match?

## Problem Resolution

As in any relationship, issues can arise requiring some kind of intervention to resolve. This is particularly true when working with youth in care because of the number of people involved in each youth's life, and the frequency of placement and personnel changes. As the relationship matures, it is important to encourage participants to engage in independent problem solving while remaining available to assist or clarify roles when necessary.

For example, if a youth is missing appointments or not returning phone calls, it may be appropriate for mentoring staff to contact other team members, such as the case-worker/guardian/foster parent/youth, to determine what is happening. Has the youth moved/been hospitalized? Is he/she especially busy for some reason? Has he/she outgrown the relationship?

Perhaps a youth has not been completing his/her homework and as a result has lost community privileges, including contact with his/her mentor. In either of these situations a follow up meeting to discuss the issue with any combination of involved parties may be necessary. The mentor may be able to be part of the solution.

*...encourage  
participants  
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necessary.*

## Termination

Loss is a significant issue for many youth in care and endings in their lives have rarely happened in a productive manner. Therefore, it is especially important for mentoring relationships to end as a part of a planned process—to both celebrate the experience and acknowledge the change. It is best if mentoring staff are able to assist mentors and youth with closure of their relationship in a healthy and meaningful way. This may take the form of a celebratory dinner, cards, photographs, phone calls, etc. The William Bridges Transition Model discussed earlier has helpful recommendations for planning the termination as just another of life's many transitions. The transition checklist on page 24 is a good reference for identifying questions to keep in mind while developing the termination plan. Not every mentor/youth relationship ends, of course. Many youth and mentors choose to continue their relationship and recommit on an annual basis.

## Creating Community

For youth and mentors to gain a sense of belonging and give youth the opportunity to spend time with others who share their experiences, it is beneficial to sponsor a variety of group activities for youth and adults in the program throughout the year. When planning events it is crucial to take into consideration the abilities and needs of all participants so that activities will be adequately supervised, fun and safe. Events such as barbecues, recognition events, support groups and training opportunities help provide structure to the program and build a sense of community among participants, especially youth and mentors who have not yet been matched. It is a mechanism to keep them engaged in the program as well as a way for them to get to know other youth and mentors.





## What Youth Say about Mentors

In May 2004, youth in the Community Mentoring Program developed the following list of support they want from mentors as they go through transitions.

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Work on a big goal with me | Have faith                |
| Give advice                | Allow me to vent          |
| Show me respect            | Ask how to help me        |
| Explore the future with me | Share experiences with me |
| Listen to me               | Just hang out together    |
| Trust                      | Be consistent             |
| Celebrate success          | Be supportive of me       |

Activities youth identified they liked doing with their mentors:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Go to the library ( learn how to use the computer and look up information) | Take a walk or hike  |
| Go bowling   | Go on a bus ride (learn how to use the public transportation system) |
| Go to local fairs  | Bake some cookies  |
| Go to the movies   | Pick up applications for jobs, school, taxes etc.                    |
| Go apple, strawberry, or blueberry picking                                 | Play a board game  |
| Go on a picnic   |  |

Young people come with a variety of hopes and dreams. A mentor can support and provide focus to help the young person explore his/her aspirations.

*A mentor can support  
and provide focus...*



## Policy Development

Since each youth in the program may have experienced a variety of traumatic events, the program must be a dependable resource that promotes safe permanent relationships and community connections. A description of the program's mission and policies, program size and the population served provide both clarity and safety for everyone involved. Policy statements also provide participants with a clear understanding of expectations and relationship guidelines. In addition to role descriptions for youth and mentors, the following areas should be defined in a policy manual:

- ▣ relationship with guardian (state/private agency);
- ▣ permission for activities;
- ▣ confidentiality;
- ▣ photographs—youth and parent right to confidentiality;
- ▣ money—paying for activities, gifts;
- ▣ transportation—routine meetings and special activities;
- ▣ drug and alcohol use—mentor and youth;
- ▣ safety measures—for activities and with people;
- ▣ meeting places;
- ▣ relationships with foster parents/group home staff;
- ▣ emergency medical care;
- ▣ accident reporting; and
- ▣ child abuse reporting/mental health crisis.

Sample policies are included in the appendix.



## Evaluation

An evaluation process that demonstrates the degree to which the program is fulfilling its mission as well as providing data upon which to base decisions is very important for program improvement and sustainability. Two helpful pre-existing tools are Independent Living Tool Kit by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement ([www.ncroi.org](http://www.ncroi.org)) and Developmental Assets Profile by the Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)). However, any design that meets your program needs is appropriate.



Although Community Mentoring has many years of accumulated anecdotal information, we are just now developing a program evaluation tool to ensure that the program continues to meet a community need and that adjustments are made to keep the program updated and relevant.

## Liability and Insurance Issues

Establishing formal relationships carries certain risks, despite careful screening, good planning and appropriate training. The youth in the program may have a variety of behavioral issues and mentors may have their own well-disguised challenges. Mentors take on a certain risk by transporting youth and spending time alone with them. They must have the legally required car insurance and consideration should be given to any other liability insurance necessary in the event of a serious accident or allegations of wrongdoing. While the mentoring relationship is intended to be fun and rewarding, not all matches run smoothly.

Although such issues have not presented themselves to Community Mentoring, we recognize that the possibility exists and, therefore, must be factored into programmatic decisions. The possibilities of potential issues should always be shared with prospective mentors. It is critical to use all resources, particularly the screening process, to ensure the relationship is a safe one for both the youth and the mentor.



## **Advisory Board**

A program Advisory Board gives ready access to a range of different perspectives, particularly when important questions surface related to program structure and operations. It is easy to focus on doing things the way they have always been done and fail to see potential improvements. In the interest of continual improvement, having ready access to additional points of view is beneficial. A group comprised of staff, mentors, youth, a child welfare professional, a mental health specialist and a community partner is a good start.

## **Establish Relationships with Mentoring Partnerships and Other Volunteer Management Assistance**

Since most mentoring programs are small and consist of just a few staff members, collaborating with other mentoring programs is a way to get support and ideas in areas such as fundraising, recruitment, marketing, mentor training and problem resolution. Statewide mentoring partnerships can provide technical assistance to both new and existing programs.

Belonging to regional mentoring partnerships is a way to meet other mentoring staff and to collaborate on recruitment events, event planning, or exchange of training materials, tools and suggestions. A coordinated effort can help everyone promote their program and support mentoring initiatives in the community.

Another way to support small programs is to connect with other established volunteer agencies. The United Way is an excellent resource for programs that work with volunteers. Many state branches of the United Way have websites listing volunteer activities in the community, a potential recruitment source. In addition, the United Way and similar organizations can offer fundraising support, staff training and professional development activities.

Becoming connected and aware of other programs in your area can be a valuable program resource.



## Frequently Asked Questions

*Is mentoring relevant for youth in all types of care, such as group care, treatment foster care, foster homes, and independent living?*

Community Mentoring has found mentoring relationships have been equally valuable to all youth in care or transitioned from care. For youth in care, most of the adults in their lives are paid professionals. A mentor may be an opportunity for a reciprocal relationship with an adult, providing more normalized community connection.

*How does the role of the mentor fit with a larger treatment team?*

While each relationship will develop unique characteristics, clarification of the overall role of the mentor begins early and continues throughout the referral and screening process. The mentor may support treatment goals or may offer a different perspective based on the match relationship. However, the primary responsibility of the mentor is to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with the youth. Dilemmas will arise and lines of communication must remain open to prevent the mentor from inadvertently sabotaging the treatment plan and the treatment providers from inadvertently placing barriers in the way of the relationship.

*How are mentors prepared for the possibility of allegations of abuse or neglect?*

The program is designed to protect both mentors and youth. A thorough screening process, the voluntary nature of the program, frequent contact and meetings with program staff, ongoing training and guidance, support to step back if it is not working, and regular communication with other service providers all serve to minimize the likelihood that allegations will arise. Allegation avoidance is woven into the orientation but could be included as a separate topic.



### *What does the program do about inappropriate volunteers?*

If there is an immediate and obvious reason to screen out an applicant it is simple, though not easy, to decline the mentor's application. However when there are not obvious reasons, it becomes more difficult. The following are some suggestions if the person is not "a good fit for the program."

- ▀ Find another volunteer opportunity for the applicant, in your program or another program.
- ▀ Refer the applicant to another program that may be a better fit.
- ▀ Assist the applicant in recognizing the inappropriateness of this program for him/her.
- ▀ Politely decline his/her application.

### *On what basis would you screen out mentors or youth?*

Community Mentoring takes a holistic view of both youth and mentors and tries to determine how either could be included rather than screened out. However, a prospective mentor is screened out if he/she can not fulfill the basic commitments required or is not a safe person to be around youth. Similarly a youth would be screened out if the timing is not right for him/her or if the youth is not able to be in the community for safety reasons.

### *Where can the program get more information on mentoring or running a mentoring program?*

Community Mentoring at [www.communitymentoring.org](http://www.communitymentoring.org) or The National Mentoring Partnership, [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org) have excellent mentoring information.

*The little things? The little moments? They aren't little.*

*Jon Kabat-Zinn*





## APPENDIX



### **Community Mentoring Program Youth Job Description**

**Time Commitment:** 4 hours per month for 1 year

**Areas of Involvement:** Developing a relationship with a supportive adult mentor. Focus is on making healthy choices, setting educational goals, career exploration and most importantly having FUN!!!

#### **Qualifications:**

- ✓ Desire to build a relationship with an older adult friend
- ✓ Ability to communicate your wants and needs
- ✓ Willingness to try new things and getting to know someone new
- ✓ Demonstrate appropriate and safe behavior in the community

#### **Responsibilities:**

- ✓ Make a year's commitment to building a relationship with a mentor.
- ✓ Establish regular meeting times and inform mentor if appointments must be changed
- ✓ Maintain ongoing communication with Community Mentoring staff
- ✓ Continue to explore your educational and career aspirations with help from caring adults

**\*\*\*The matching process can take a minimum of 6 months. We appreciate your patience while we find the right mentor for you!**



## **Community Mentoring Program Mentor Job Description**

**Time Commitment:** 4 hours per month for 1 year

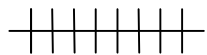
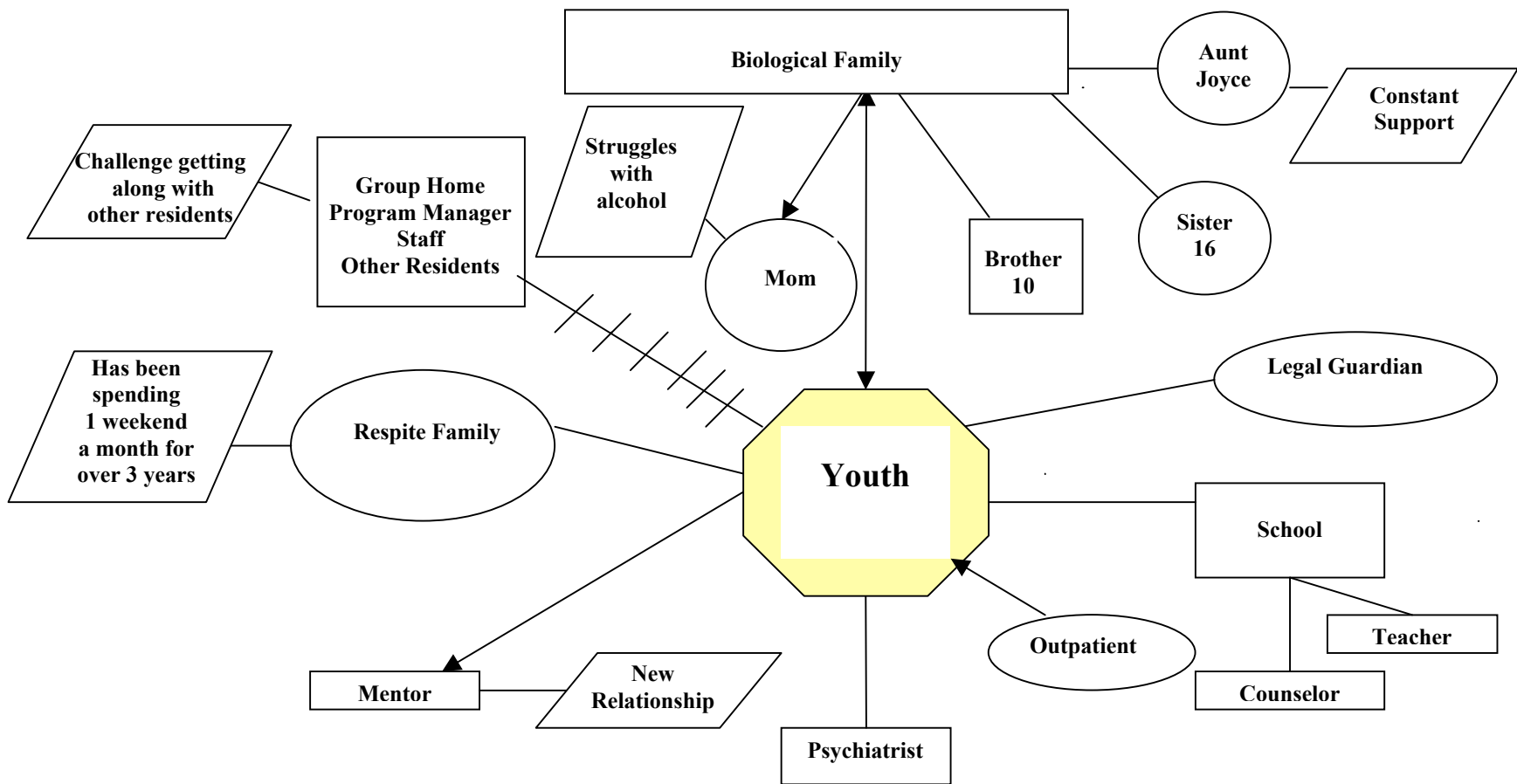
**Areas of Involvement:** Developing a supportive relationship with a youth in foster care. Focusing on long-term goals relating to their personal transition to self-sufficiency. Emphasis is on making healthy choices, educational success and career exploration.

### **Qualifications:**

- ✓ Desire to build a relationship with another person to help them achieve personal, educational or career goals.
- ✓ Ability to communicate with youth openly and without judgment.
- ✓ Strong listening skills
- ✓ Practical problem solving skills and ability to suggest options and alternatives.
- ✓ Sensitivity to persons of different educational, economic, cultural or racial backgrounds.
- ✓ Strong understanding of personal confidentiality.

### **Responsibilities:**

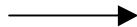
- ✓ Make a year's commitment to building a mentor relationship with a youth in foster care that encourages openness, trust and support.
- ✓ Establish regular meeting times. Inform youth if appointments must be changed.
- ✓ Help their youth find information and develop a community network that will support them as safe, healthy, productive, independent young people.
- ✓ Assist youth in establishing attainable goals around education and careers.
- ✓ Attend orientation and ongoing training sessions.
- ✓ Maintain ongoing communication with Community Mentoring staff



Conflicted or stressful relationship



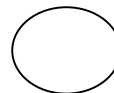
Positive relationship



An unequal relationship direction of the arrow indicates who 'gives' the most



Male

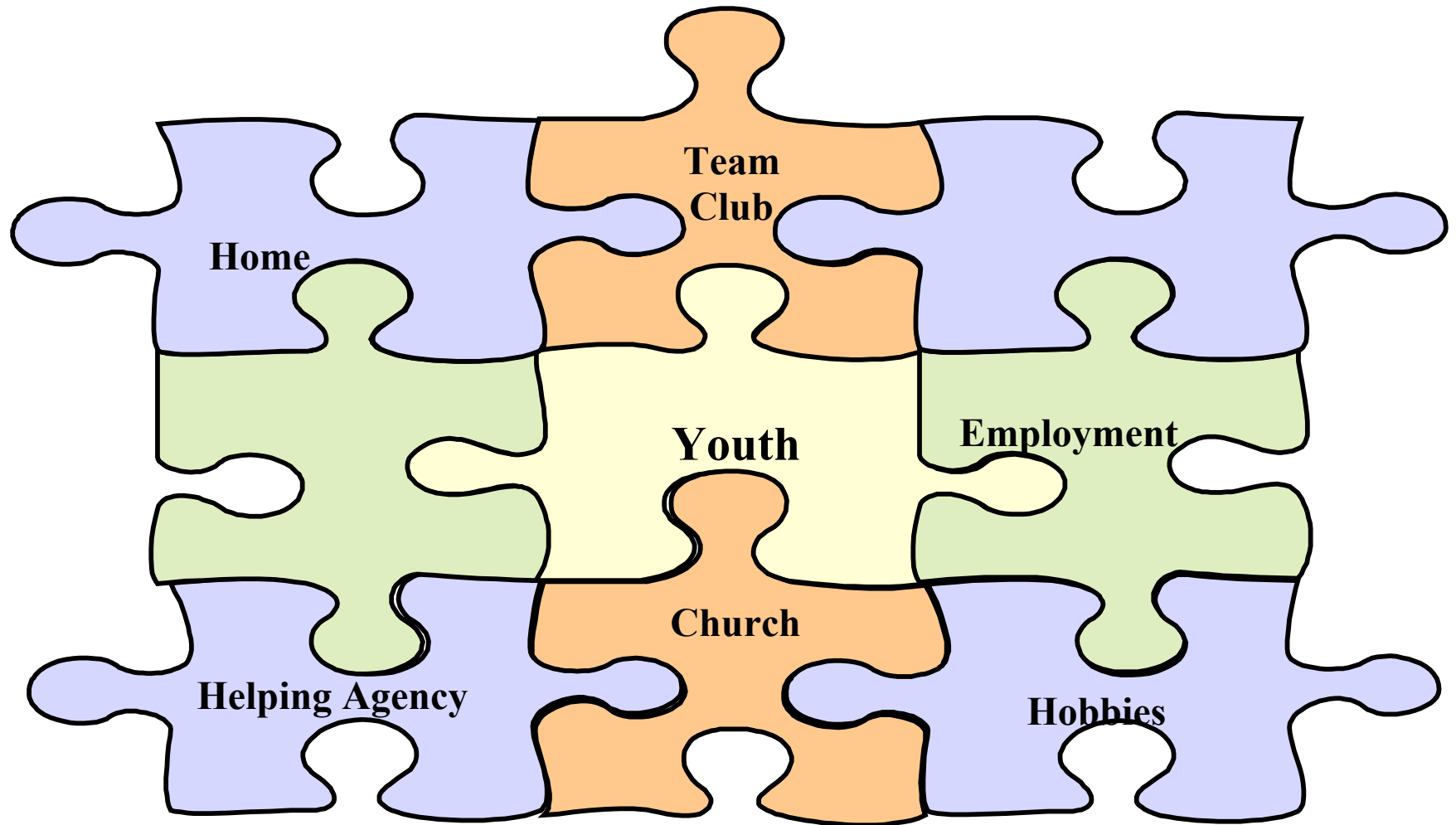


Female



Descriptive Statement

## Jacobs Support Eco Map



Fill in names.....

Who are my support links?

# COMMUNITY MENTORING

## MENTOR INITIAL INTERVIEW

Name of Potential Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1) Why are you interested in becoming a Mentor for young adults? (Asked on application).

2) Did you have a mentor growing up? If so, please describe.

3) Have you had any previous volunteer experience?

4) What did you enjoy most about your past volunteer experience? What were some of the challenges/problems you encountered?

5) What experiences do you have working with youth?

6) What type of job or career experiences have you had?

7) What type of activities do you like doing outside of work? (Asked on application).

8) What type of people do you enjoy working/spending time with?

9) What type of people are difficult for you to be with?

10) What is your definition of a close friend?

11) What would you like to be doing in 5 years?

12) What's your vision for this mentor relationship?

13) 'What if?' scenarios...

- a) Youth that you mentor wants to buy (basketball shoes, prom dress, etc.). The youth has asked his/her caseworker for a purchase order. The two of you go shopping for the item. The youth finds an item that costs more than the purchase order amount. He/she asks to borrow the money from you. What do you say?
  
- b) You and the youth have planned a really fun, special adventure. Right before the trip the youth gets grounded. He/she calls you and tells you that the foster parents/staff were very out of line, he/she didn't do anything wrong. The youth asks you to talk to the foster parents or staff and advocate for the youth. What do you say?

## Reference Form

Applicant(s) name:

Referenced by:

Phone:

(Note: responses will be kept confidential)

- 1.) How do you know the applicant and for how long have you known him or her?
  
- 2.) Do you have any concerns about the applicant(s)' ability to work one on one with a teenage youth? If so, please explain.
  
- 3.) How well does the applicant(s) get along with others in the community/workplace/setting where you see him or her?
  
- 4.) How would you describe the applicant(s)' personality? (e.g. what are her/his most positive and negative traits?)
  
- 5.) The youth in this project may have experienced neglect, sexual or physical abuse, and/or used drugs and alcohol, and or lived in multiple placements. How do you think the applicant would handle a youth with these types of experiences?
  
- 6.) Other comments:

Phone interview by:

Date:



## LIFESTORY INTERVIEW

The Lifestory Interview offers the applicant(s) the opportunity to share information about his/her family background and key events in his/her life. Applicants are encouraged to “tell the story” in anyway that they please-with props, or without. Have fun with this opportunity! It can be good practice for the day that you might share your story with a youth in the Mentor Project.

The following questions may be raised during the interview. All information will be treated confidentially and applicants may opt to withhold answers to some questions.

### ***Family Background***

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. What was your father’s name and occupation? Mother’s name and occupation?
3. How would you describe your parents?
4. How would you describe their marriage?
5. Did you have any brothers or sister? How would you describe them then? Now?
6. Did you have contact with any grandparents or other members of your extended family? How would you describe them? How frequently did you see them?
7. Which family members were you closest to when you were growing up?
8. How did members of your family demonstrate love and affection?
9. In what ways are you like your parents? How are you different from them?

### ***Adolescence***

1. Did you attend a public or a private school? How would you describe your school experience?
2. What activities were you involved in?
3. How would you describe your adolescence?
4. Who were your role models or “mentors” as a youth?
5. Describe any memorable experiences in high school that have had an effect on you as an adult.

### ***Post High School Experience***

1. Were you ever in the military? What branch, rank, and for how long?
2. Did you go to college? What were your studies and activities there?
3. What types of jobs have you held since graduating high school? (i.e. Describe your career experiences.)
4. How do you feel about your present job? What are your long-term career goals?
5. What have been your primary relationships since leaving home?
6. If you are married, please describe your spouse and/or your children.

# **Policies and Procedures**

## **Mission**

The mission of the Community Mentoring Program is to identify, train, assist and support community volunteers who are willing to make a commitment to developing a healthy relationship that will support and youth in foster care and assist them in their transition from foster care to adulthood.

## **Program Partnership**

The Community Mentoring Program represents a unique partnership between the Bureau of Child and Family Services of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Youth Development Unit of the Muskie School of Public Service and the University of Southern Maine and with the community at large.

## **Mentee Referral Process**

Mentees are young people ages 11 to 21 who are in foster care. Their DHHS caseworker and or life skill worker refers possible mentees to Community Mentoring. Young people and other community agencies also may refer a young person for the mentoring program. The referral is not complete until Community Mentoring staff and DHHS staff have communicated.

## **Mentor Screening Process**

Interested mentors are asked to participate in a three-part interview process:

1. Screening, information and motivation meeting.
2. Life Story Interview
3. Reference Check
4. Motor Vehicle and Criminal Record Check
5. Child Protective Services Check

## **Time Commitment**

Mentors are asked to dedicate at least 4 hours per month to the mentoring relationship. The initial mentoring contract is for one year. Mentors and mentees are asked to formally re-commit to their mentoring relationship on an annual basis.

## **Mentor Training Process**

Mentors are required to take part in a six-hour training program that covers the roles of mentoring, policies of the program, adolescent development, communication, relationship building, issues specific to youth in foster care, life skill development and planning for the future. Ongoing training is available and strongly encouraged.

## **Matching Process**

Youth and mentor matches are made on the basis of shared social, cultural and educational interests. Potential matches are asked to take part in an initial not strings attached meeting. One week after the meeting the youth and mentor are each asked if they want to pursue a formal mentoring relationship with one another. If yes, they take part in a matching/contract meeting to establish a plan of goals and activities that they wish to pursue.

## **Ongoing Support**

Community Mentoring staff provides guidance throughout the match so that the youth's needs are positively met. Staff is available for advice, coaching, encouragement, problem solving, mediation and direct intervention. Mentors are expected to maintain regular communication with the Community Mentoring staff. Community Mentoring staff is responsible for communicating to the mentee's DHHS caseworker and providing regular feedback on the relationship. The Community Mentoring staff offers ongoing training and group social activities.

## **Ending the Mentoring Relationship**

It is expected that matches will end as a result of a planned process. Many youth and mentors choose to continue their relationship and re-commit on an annual basis. The Community Mentoring staff is able to assist mentors and youth experience closure of their relationship in a healthy and meaningful way.

## **Mentor Screening and Monitoring**

Community Mentoring staff has the responsibility of screening volunteers and supporting mentoring relationships in collaboration with DHHS staff.

## **Department of Health and Human Services**

Youth in foster care have an ongoing relationship with their DHHS caseworker and their life skills worker. The DHHS caseworker generally serves as legal guardian to youth under the age of 18. Community Mentoring staff maintains an open line of communication with DHHS staff. There may be occasions when a youth needs permission from their DHHS staff person to take part in certain activities. Mentors are expected to inform Community Mentoring staff of any special plans i.e. travel out of state; overnights; recreational activities.

## **Money**

Mentors are not expected to provide money to their mentees. Recognizing a birthday or holiday with a modest gift is certainly thoughtful and acceptable. Mentors may want to take their mentees out to lunch or dinner. We do encourage youth to help introduce the youth to low cost ways to have fun. If you would like to participate in an activity for which youth do not have funding ask the Community Mentoring staff in advance for financial aid. Receipts must be presented for reimbursement. The Community Mentoring staff often has passes and other donated tickets to community events.

## **Transportation**

Mentors assume liability when transporting youth in their car. All mentors must show a valid drivers license and proof of insurance to Community Mentoring staff. Mentors will be screened for any violations with the Department of Motor Vehicles. All mentors and youth must wear seat belts in accordance with the Maine seatbelt law.

## **Drug and Alcohol Use**

It is expected that mentors refrain from substance use prior to and during mentoring activities. Substance use between mentors and youth is strictly forbidden and will result in termination of the relationship and could lead to criminal charges. If a mentor has any concerns about substance use by youth, the mentor should contact Community Mentoring staff.

## **Safely Measures**

All youth are expected to utilize safely gear appropriate to the activity in which they are engaged. i.e. while using power tools, safety goggles should be utilized; floatation devices for boats or canoes; helmets for bicycles and so on. Check with Community Mentoring staff regarding any question of guardian consent.

## **Photographs**

For youth under the age of 18, the Department of Health and Human Services is required to approve the sharing of photographs of youth in foster care in a public forum. For youth over the age of 18 show are their own legal guardian, the youth themselves are able to make this approval. Circulation of a photograph that identifies that a youth is in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services violates a youth's right to confidentiality as well as their parent's right to confidentiality.

## **Meeting Places**

Meetings between mentors and mentees should take place in public where possible. Plans for home visits to the mentors home should be discussed with Community Mentoring staff. DHHS staff must approve overnight visits and any out of state trips.

## **Foster Parents/ Group Home Staff**

Mentors are encouraged to make a point to touch base---“say hello” to the foster parents or residential and group home staff. Mentors are expected to follow the rules and expectations of the foster parents and group home staff.

## **Emergency Medical Care**

If the youth requires emergency care—call Child Emergency Service Caseworker 1-800-452-1999. This phone line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Mentors should know the child’s full name and the name of his/her DHHS caseworker. The youth’s foster parent or residential care provider as well as Community Mentoring staff should also be informed.

## **Accident Reporting**

Any accidents that occur during the mentoring relationship should also be reported to the Child Emergency Services Caseworker. Mentors should report the child’s full name and the name of their caseworker. The youth’s foster parent or residential care provider as well as Community Mentoring staff should also be informed.

## **Confidentiality**

Personal or sensitive information that the Community Mentoring staff or youth shares with the mentor is confidential. Any information that is shared that may be harmful to the young person’s or another’s safety, health or well-being should be shared with the Community Mentoring staff. All confidentiality procedures of the Department of Human Services will be observed. Mentors are required to sign off on the DHHS volunteer confidentiality.

## **Child Abuse Reporting**

Community Mentoring staff are mandated reporters for any information that they have regarding possible abuse or neglect of the children in the Community Mentoring Program. If mentors have any concerns about the safety or well being of a mentee, they should report those concerns immediately to the Community Mentoring staff.

# Role of a Mentor

**Objectives:** Understand the qualities of effective mentors and role of a mentor.

**Directions:** Give participants index cards and ask them to think back to their own childhood (the ages of youth that your program works with.) Ask them to answer the following questions on their index cards:

- ✓ *Identify one person, preferably not related, that was a mentor to them?*
- ✓ *Why was that person important to them?*
- ✓ *What was the result for them to have this person's interest?*
- ✓ *What were the qualities of this person that made them so valued?*

Ask participants to talk about the qualities and characteristics reflected in these people.

## **Facilitator:**

Capture their words on a flip chart and place checks next to words repeated most often. Place the comments in categories of communication, good listener, non-judgmental, etc. and tell participants the importance of these qualities and in fact they just described the role of a mentor.

Ask participants to reflect on the role their identified mentor played in their lives, such as friend, big brother, role model, guide...). Have a discussion about what these roles involve. Point out that mentors are NOT: parent, teacher, and or counselor.

You can conclude this activity by asking participants to have a brief discussion on their hopes for the mentor relationship and in what areas they feel confident and/or challenged.

## SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

Treat youth information as you would want your information treated.

Share relevant information with your program staff on a regular basis.

Seek clarification of unusual situations with the program staff to avoid talking about it with non-program persons.

Respect the right to privacy by not discussing with non-program persons your conversations with youth.

Be an active communicator. Confront problems as they occur. Be in touch with your feelings and emotions. Do not let them build up.

Keep in perspective comments you hear or actions you observe in your interactions with youth. Be respectful toward differences in values.

Channel questions from concerned parties about confidential issues to the Community Mentoring staff.

# VOLUNTEER SERVICES

## Confidentiality

The purpose of confidentiality is to safeguard consumers' rights to privacy. This is based on principles of legal rights, natural rights supported by Social Work values of respect for the integrity of individuals, and the security of the community to be free to utilize social and financial services in order to improve their lives without fear of exploitation.

Confidentiality pertaining to individual information is governed by the laws and regulations (Title 22 MRSA, Chapter 107, 4008 & 4009). A person who knowingly violates that chapter of the law commits a civil violation.

All information obtained in connection with mentoring activities is confidential.



1. \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the above statements.  
Name of volunteer and I agree to support and be bound by them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
( signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

## Adolescent Memories Activity

**Objective:** To take participants back to their adolescence to remind them of what their experience was and what and who was important to them at the time.

**Facilitator:** State that you are going to take the group on a journey back to their adolescence. Ask the group to close their eyes and go back to their adolescence for a moment.

Think about the following questions:

- ✓ *Who was your best friend?*
- ✓ *What were your hobbies or things you did for fun?*
- ✓ *What was your school experience like?*
- ✓ *Who were you close to in your family? Who were you most distant from?*
- ✓ *What was your burning social concern at that time?*
- ✓ *What was a positive aspect of your teen years?*
- ✓ *What was a difficult challenge or change you experienced?*

Divide the group into pairs and have them share some of the adolescent memories with their partner.

Ask the group to share some of their memories that might highlight the importance of peers, relationship with family, development of identity, etc.

# Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth

## **Sense of Industry and Competency:**

A sense of industry and competency refers to individuals' belief in their own abilities. According to research findings, interactions that appear to nurture the development of a sense of competency are those in which young people are engaged in productive activities and win recognition for their productivity. This fosters the development of stable identity during adolescence and the perception of the self as a potentially productive member of society.

Participation in sports, extra curricular activities involving the arts or hobbies, community service, religious organizations, part-time jobs (particularly apprenticeships), and clubs or community organizations also has been found to provide youth with the opportunity to win recognition for their productivity and develop a sense of competency.

## **Sense of Control Over One's Fate in Life**

Adolescents who have a sense of control over their fate in life believe that they can affect their futures. This belief appears to be nurtured when children and adolescents are engaged in interactions in which they can successfully predict the outcomes of their actions. When parents or other adults consistently respond to prosocial behaviors with positive sanctions and misbehaviors with negative sanctions, children and adolescents learn that their behaviors are related to particular responses. Similarly, when teachers or other adults in the community respond to adolescents' actual behaviors rather than to their preconceived ideas regarding adolescent behaviors, adolescents learn that they will be treated fairly based on their own actions.

## **Connectedness to Others**

Several studies have found that a strong predictor of positive developmental pathways during adolescence is the adolescents' sense that they are connected to other persons, their community and society.

Interactions that appear to promote development of a sense of connectedness to other persons are those in which adults provide social and emotional support to adolescents while permitting them psychological and emotional independence. Interactions in which adults tend to guide adolescents' behaviors through monitoring their activities also appear to promote the development of a sense of connectedness because they signal to adolescents that adults in the family or community care about them and are willing to be involved in their lives. In addition, peer interactions based on mutual respect and reciprocity foster development of a sense of connectedness because it is through these interactions that individuals develop empathy and intimacy.

## **Sense of Identity**

Development of a stable identity has been found to be associated with positive interpersonal relationships, psychological and behavioral stability, and productive adulthood. During the identity development process, adolescents' sense of competency, connectedness and control is brought to bear on the task of unifying their sense of self into a stable and consistent identity and integrating this self concept into their understanding of society, so as to feel a part of the larger culture.

Identity development is fostered when adolescents are provided with the opportunity to become involved in community service, when they receive support for their future goals from family members, teachers, and friends and when they have opportunities to express and develop their own points of view in their families.

“Critical Features of Positive Adolescent Development from Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth.” US Department of Health and Human Services, Family and youth Services Bureau, January 1997.

# Adolescent Development

## Early Adolescence (11-14):

- ✓ Push and pull of adolescence – independence vs. dependence
- ✓ Biological changes
- ✓ Plagued by an excruciating self consciousness
- ✓ Worry and wonder Who am I ? and Where do I belong? as part of identity formation
- ✓ Increase dependence on peers which manifests itself in a need to conform when it comes to things like fashion, music and other aspects of youth culture
- ✓ Conscious of their sexuality
- ✓ Concrete thinking stage
- ✓ Mood swings, boredom, and depression

## Mid Adolescence (15-17):

- ✓ Independence and identity become extremely important
- ✓ Rejection of adult values and ideas
- ✓ Ability to think abstractly and plan ahead
- ✓ Peer group influence
- ✓ Experiment with adult roles
- ✓ Testing new values and ideas
- ✓ Risk taking – “it can’t happen to me”
- ✓ Importance of relationships

## Late Adolescence (18-21):

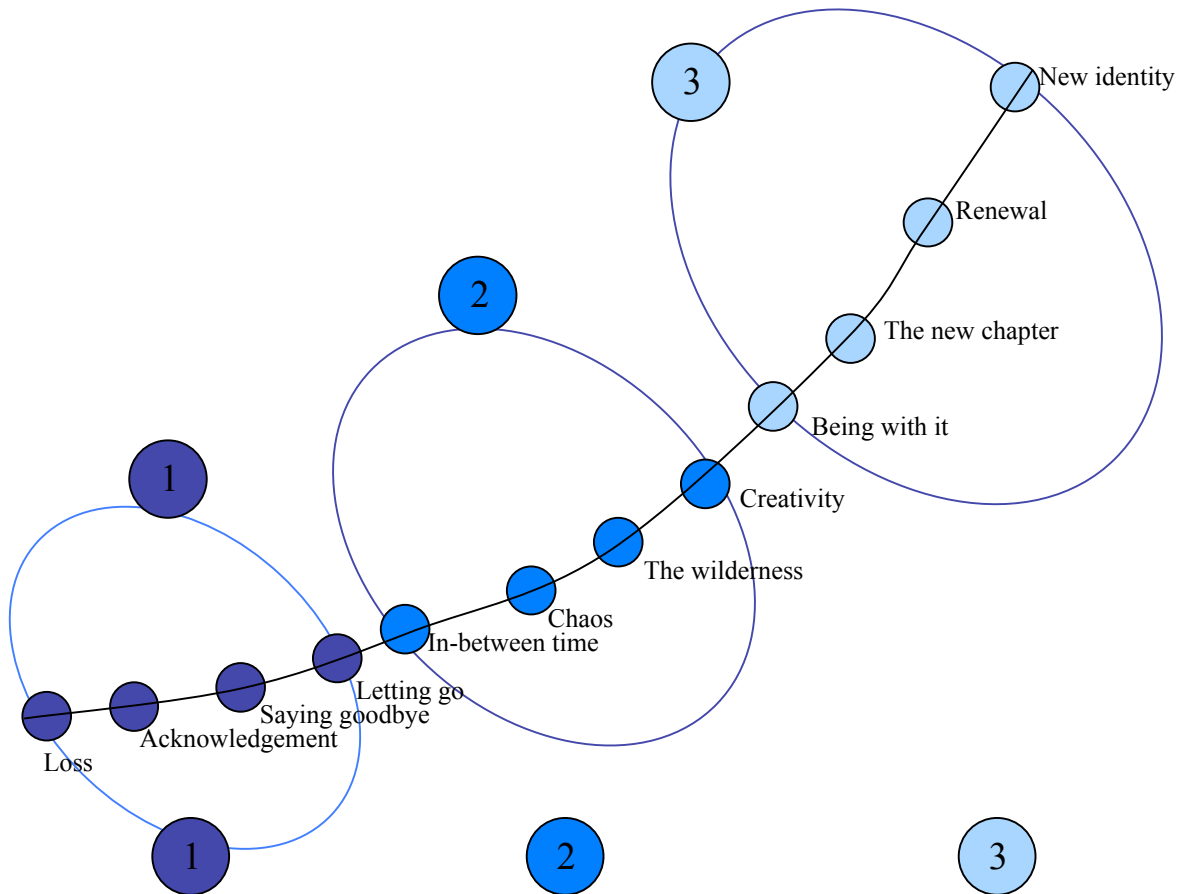
- ✓ Separation from parent
- ✓ What do I want to do with my life?
- ✓ More comfortable seeking adult advice
- ✓ Peers are important but youth can now evaluate their influence and opinions rather than wholeheartedly embracing them without question
- ✓ Intimate relationships are important
- ✓ Acceptance of adult responsibilities

- ✓ The transition from childhood to adulthood is a process, not an event.
- ✓ An individual's developmental history prior to adolescence, as well as current experiences, is part of the process.
- ✓ Nothing is predetermined by any given characteristics of the individual or of the environment round at its beginning.
- ✓ The pathways to adulthood take many forms.
- ✓ Any experience or event may be a turning point where a new direction may be taken.

<b>Critical Areas</b>	<b>Impact of Foster Care</b>	<i>Activities</i>
<b>Sense of Industry and Competency</b>		
<b>Sense of Control Over One's Fate in Life</b>		
<b>Connectedness to Others</b>		
<b>Sense of Identity</b>		
<b>Values</b>		

- ✓ Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth U.S. Department of Health and Humans Services, Family and Youth Bureau, January 1997

# The Transition Framework



## Endings

For change to work people need to end, acknowledge and let go of the old way-not only in terms of behavior, but also in terms of attitudes, self-image, assumptions, beliefs, and the hopes and fears that motivate behavior. To let go of those things is to experience a loss and one must mourn its passing, even though the old way may have been bad, hurtful, unpleasant, or even destructive.

## Neutral Zones

People not only have to let go of the old way to embrace the new one; they also have to get through an uncomfortable in between time, when the old way is going, but the new way doesn't yet wholly work or feel comfortable. This "neutral zone," or in-between time, is a very confusing and chaotic time; but it is also a very creative one. Everything is in flux, so it is a time when people can work out innovative ways of doing things; there is less holding people back than at other times. At the same time, people are likely to feel lost and even discouraged about the very change that sounded so good only a little while earlier.

## Beginnings

The final phase of transition is the "new beginning" not the "start," which may occur the very day a change is announced, but the "beginning," which occurs when people (have ended the old and traversed the neutral zone) are actually emotionally ready to do things a whole new way. Like a birth, the archetype of all new beginnings-this third phase of transition happens on its own schedule. Things can start on the day that you say that they will, but the beginning will happen when people are inwardly ready. And that will take a while, so transition always take longer-sometimes much longer-than change does.

William Bridges' transition framework ([www.wmbridges.com](http://www.wmbridges.com))



## COMMUNITY MENTORING

### THE "SO WE BOTH KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON" FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Mentor's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

The Mentor's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

The Mentor's phone number(s): (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_

Is it preferable to phone you at work \_\_\_\_\_ or at home \_\_\_\_\_ or cell phone \_\_\_\_\_?

The times when the mentor is most likely to be reached: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not call the mentor at these times: \_\_\_\_\_

The Mentor's Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Youth's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

The Youth's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

The Youth's phone number(s): (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_

Is it preferable to phone you at work \_\_\_\_\_ or at home \_\_\_\_\_ or cell phone \_\_\_\_\_?

The times when the Youth is most likely to be reached: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not call the Youth at these times: \_\_\_\_\_

The Youth's Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Caseworker's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

The Caseworker's email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Have you planned out how you are going to set times and days for outings? \_\_\_\_\_

---

How often do you want to meet? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the activities that you want to do together?

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

What concerns or comments do you just want to lay on the table?

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mentor: please think of me as a/an \_\_\_\_\_

Youth: please think of me as a/an \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below I express a commitment to:

- Meet for a minimum of one year
- Spend a minimum of four hours a month together

I realize that establishing a relationship takes time and there might be some awkward moments. I realize that communication is the key to making a friendship work. And I promise to voice my discomforts or dislikes.

Mentor's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Youth's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Our six week check-in will be on: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

**In an emergency, call: 911 or Child Protective Services at**

*Last updated: 21-Mar-06*

## **Community Mentoring Mission**

The mission of Community Mentoring is to identify, train, assist and support community volunteers willing to make a commitment to developing a healthy relationship to support youth in foster care and assist them in their transition to adulthood.

## **Program Partnerships**

Community Mentoring represents a unique partnership between the Office of Child and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Youth Development Unit of the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine and the community at large.

Community Mentoring is the only mentoring program in Maine to specifically match youth in Maine's foster care system with a mentor. It provides opportunities for youth in care to achieve their hopes, dreams and aspirations through creating meaningful relationships and helping youth rebuild a sense of community..

## **University of Southern Maine**

The University of Southern Maine, with a rich history reaching back to 1878, is a comprehensive metropolitan university offering associate, baccalaureate, graduate and professional degrees within the University of Maine System. The University of Southern Maine's fundamental mission is teaching, research and public service for the benefit of the citizens of Maine and society in general. In achieving its mission and fulfilling its responsibilities as a university, the University of Southern Maine addresses aspirations and needs of southern Maine and serves as a vehicle for linking southern Maine and the state to the nation and the world. The University actively encourages faculty, staff and students to contribute to and participate in state, national and international academic and professional communities.

## **The Muskie School of Public Service**

The Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service educates leaders , informs public policy and strengthens civic life through graduate degree programs, research institutes and public outreach activities.

By making the essential connection between research, practice, and informed public policy, the School is dedicated to improving the lives of people of all ages, in every county in Maine and every state in the nation.

## **The Institute for Public Sector Innovation**

The Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI) has a vision of competent and caring people in high performance organizations creatively working together to promote the public good. The mission is to promote individual and organizational effectiveness and responsiveness in a climate of change. The Institute achieves its mission by building partnerships in which we facilitate organizational change, promote the use of new technologies for greater efficiency, bridge the gap

between theories and practice, promote a holistic, competency-based approach and pioneer state-of-the-art training, human resource management and organizational development. The Institute models and fosters a set of common values or unifying themes in its work.

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## **The Muskie School of Public Service**

The Muskie School of Public Service educates leaders, informs public policy, and strengthens civic life through its graduate degree programs, research institutes and public outreach activities. By making the essential connection between research, practice, and informed public policy, the School is dedicated to improving the lives of people of all ages, in every county in Maine and every state in the nation.

## **The Youth Development Unit**

The Youth Development Unit partners with youth, communities, organizations, universities and policy makers at the local, state and national level to enhance their capacity to create services, opportunities, policies and supports for children and youth.



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