

## Activity Guide For Facilitators and Mentors





## A Volunteer Florida Signature Project

### PROJECT IMPACT TIMELINE AT A GLANCE

Month	Activities Provided by the AmeriCorps Program to Student Beneficiaries
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend initial meeting with peers and facilitator</li><li>• Receive overview of AmeriCorps</li><li>• Complete community mapping exercise</li><li>• Identify one community problem to address</li><li>• Choose a service project to address the identified problem</li><li>• Participate in a reflection activity, discussing the link between service &amp; employment</li><li>• Receive role modeling and mentoring by AmeriCorps members</li></ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct first planning meeting to complete service project</li><li>• Identify resources (supplies) needed and determine project cost</li><li>• Join a committee to complete tasks for the service project</li><li>• Identify additional partners</li><li>• Develop a communication plan for promoting the service project</li><li>• Complete a reflection activity, discussing the kinds of careers/occupations associated with the service project</li><li>• Receive role modeling and mentoring by AmeriCorps members</li></ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify all necessary resources</li><li>• Choose the location where service project will take place</li><li>• Outline exactly how the service project will unfold</li><li>• Finalize any marketing materials for distribution</li><li>• Identify needed accommodations, such as transportation</li><li>• Complete a reflection activity, discussing the implementation of these tasks and their connection to employment</li><li>• Receive role modeling and mentoring by AmeriCorps members</li></ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete service project during Global Youth Service Day</li><li>• Participate in reflection activity, discussing accomplishments and how they relate to employment</li><li>• Receive role modeling and mentoring by AmeriCorps members</li></ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Celebrate and reflect on the completion of the service project</li><li>• Complete a reflection activity, discussing what was learned, the types of skills built, how these skills might prepare them for employment, and what type of careers they might consider as a result of participating</li><li>• Receive role modeling and mentoring by AmeriCorps members</li></ul>

# **PROJECT IMPACT ACTIVITY GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS AND MENTORS**

## **CAREER EXPLORATION THROUGH MENTORING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Project Impact was created by the Governor's Commission on Community Service, Volunteer Florida, as a signature project to accomplish three goals simultaneously. 1. Provide "hands-on" service opportunities for transitioning high school and college age students with disabilities introducing them to opportunities in AmeriCorps. 2. Provide career exploration through a community mapping exercise resulting in the completion of a youth-led service project. And 3. Create mutually beneficial partnership between national service grantees and disability organizations that establishes a foundation for future beneficial collaborations.

Preparing, planning and completing a service project is the framework that provides the foundation for Project Impact to bring transitioning students with disabilities together with AmeriCorps mentors. One of the major strengths of Project Impact is the power of the relationships formed between AmeriCorps member mentors and the students participating in Project Impact. Having a successful adult role model who demonstrates an interest in what a student thinks and feels about their community and their future is a powerful tool in facilitating personal change.

Although it may not be possible, it is always optimal for AmeriCorps members to meet with students participating in Project Impact before engaging students in completing activities in the activity guide. Inviting students to participate in a member led service projects or hosting a tour and meet and greet at the AmeriCorps program site are ways students and members can get to know one another and begin to form relationships prior to working together.

## **ACTIVITY GUIDE FORMAT**

The Activity Guide is separated into five sections. Facilitators will need to complete one section each month from January to May to implement Project Impact as it was conceptualized. The number of meetings required to complete each section will depend on the available time for each meeting during each month. On average three hours should be set aside to complete each section thoroughly. However completing the service project may take more time depending on travel time and the complexity of the project.

## **GENERAL RULE FOR FACILITATOR/MENTORS**

As a general rule facilitators and mentors should approach students with full participation in all project activities as the goal. Accomplishing this goal will require that facilitators and mentors adopt and apply the following guidelines in implementing the activity guide.

1. All activities can be adapted to be completed in groups with mentors providing prompts to students to complete activities.
2. Facilitators and mentors should also complete activities to provide examples of how activities should be completed.
3. Facilitators and mentors should provide opportunities for student/mentees to take a leadership role with each activity and encourage all students to develop their leadership skills.

## PROJECT IMPACT SECTIONS

- Section 1:** Learning About My Community and Myself
- Section 2:** Serving Others and Exploring Careers
- Section 3:** What I Learn from My Experiences
- Section 4:** From Vision to Reality
- Section 5:** What Changed for Me and for My Community?

## GUIDE POSTS FOR SUCCESS

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y) identified five Guideposts for Success that all youth need to transition to adulthood successfully. The Guideposts are: 1) School Based Preparatory Experiences, 2) Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences, 3) Youth Development and Leadership, 4) Connecting Activities, 5) Family Involvement and Supports. The effect community service has on each Guidepost was identified in the publication **Lessons Learned from Project Impact** by the National Service to Employment Project (NextSTEP) a grant funded initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service implemented by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. NextSTEP identified the following potential outcomes from participation in community service activities:

### GUIDEPOST 1

School-Based Preparatory Experiences grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options. Community service can:

- Provide informal career and interest assessment by trying out different roles and experiences.
- Provide learning experiences in a community setting, creating opportunities to define what their future workplaces and careers might look like.
- Provide a concrete activity relevant and valuable to any Individual Education Plan.

### GUIDEPOST 2

Career Preparation and Work-based Learning Experiences that expose youth to a range of experiences. Community service can:

- Increase employability by developing soft skills. These include interpersonal, communication, time-management, and teamwork skills.
- Expose youth to new career ideas and people of diverse ages, backgrounds, and cultures—people with disabilities and without.
- Provide an opportunity to gain real-world experience.
- Allow youth to gain perspective on abilities and limitations in a work environment.



## **GUIDEPOST 3**

Youth Development and Leadership through coordinated activities that encourage competency and self-esteem. Community service can:

- Encourage and empower youth as they discover their abilities and talents.
- Create opportunities to develop, practice, and master problem solving skills.
- Develop personal goals and objectives through exploration and reflection activities.
- Enhance self-esteem and self-advocacy skills through the pride and satisfaction of addressing a community need.

## **GUIDEPOST 4**

Connecting Activities such as programs and services that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. Community service can:

- Develop a commitment to service as another post-school option.
- Increase access and connection to employment, education, and community resources through newly formed networks comprised of peers, mentors, and professionals.
- Increase exposure to businesses in the community through intentional consideration of how future employment connects to the service project.

## **GUIDEPOST 5**

Family Involvement and Supports to promote social, emotional and occupational growth. Community service can:

- Connect youth with mentors and other caring adults.
- Expand peer and professional networks that can be used for occupational growth.

As facilitators and mentors, becoming familiar with the Guideposts and the potential outcomes identified by NextSTEP will be helpful in conceptualizing and effectively implementing Project Impact activities with mentees/students. Please use this [Guidepost Link](#) to review additional information regarding the Guideposts.



## CONTINUITY OF CONTENT

As facilitators and mentors, continuing to make a connection to the exercises with real world examples is extremely important. Building off of prior activities will also help students in making a connection to the content being provided. To assist students in maintaining a connection to the content, facilitators should review what was accomplished by students at the last meeting during the opening of each meeting.

## TEACHER SITE COORDINATORS

For Project Impact sites being implemented in school settings, continuity of content and on-going support of the project is important for students to continue making the connection between volunteer service and career choice and exploration. Teachers who are serving as site coordinators can assist in maintaining project momentum and student comprehension by:

- Completing any unfinished exercises with students between Project Impact meetings.
- Reviewing completed exercises with students prior to upcoming Project Impact meeting.
- Incorporating any relevant discussion related to Project Impact into already planned lessons with students.



# SECTION 1: LEARNING ABOUT MY COMMUNITY AND MYSELF

## SECTION OVERVIEW

*\*Note: Depending on the available time to implement Project Impact facilitator/mentors may need to present section content in multiple meetings. Be prepared to make adjustments in content based on allotted time.*

This may be the first time you will be meeting with students chosen to be part of Project Impact. Section 1 of the activity guide provides the foundation for the entire project. It is important to begin establishing mentor/mentee relationships with students participating in Project Impact during the implementation of these activities. By creating an atmosphere of trust and respect with students, both you and they will make the most of the five months you will spend together.

The purpose of this section is for mentee/students to choose and complete a service project that benefits the community and meets critical needs. This activity creates an environment which will present you with an opportunity to assist students in understanding: 1) how community service and volunteering provides a foundation for individuals to explore and choose a career, and 2) how community service and volunteering can help individuals develop employability skills that can lead to employment.

During this section AmeriCorps members will facilitate students in accomplishing the following:

1. Learning the purpose of Project Impact.
2. Getting to know one another through a career reflection ice-breaker activity.
3. Learning about AmeriCorps National Service.
4. Gaining an understanding of how service in AmeriCorps can help prepare individuals for their intended careers.
5. Completing a “Community Mapping Exercise”.
6. Completing a “Community Resources and Needs Exercise”.
7. Choosing and designing a community service project to meet the chosen community need.
8. Reflecting on what kind of careers are related to the service project.

## ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Learning the purpose of Project Impact.

Lead AmeriCorps member/mentor/facilitators paraphrase in your own words:

Good morning my name is ---- I would like to introduce the other member mentors who will be part of Project Impact and will be working with us for the next five months". [Introduce members-----.] "Project Impact is a signature project of the Governor's Commission on Community Service. Project Impact was created to help you learn about a program called AmeriCorps and to help you understand that by volunteering and helping others you can help yourself, learn about careers and learn job or employability skills. All while learning more about your community. Together we are going to complete a service project. You will decide what service project should be completed to help your community. While we prepare to complete the service project we will be discussing what kind of careers are related to the project we are completing and what kind of skills you need to perform that kind of job.

Now that you know who we are and what we will be doing, please tell us your name and what grade you are in.

## **2. Get to know one another through a career ice-breaker reflection activity.**

Refer to directions included and provide students with the handout “**Career Scavenger Hunt**” and explain:

“There are thousands of jobs out there, which make our career choices more difficult. Yet, the more we know about different job options, the better we are at choosing the right job for us. Project Impact is another opportunity to learn about careers and find a career that may be the one for you.

“During this activity you will learn about careers you may not have heard of before. How can you learn about all the different career choices out there? Well, you can become a career explorer, investigating the world of work, searching for careers that spark your interest and discover how your interests relate to those many possibilities.”

Provide the Handout “Career Scavenger Hunt” and ask students to identify and list three jobs for each of the five career categories listed. Mentors can help students complete the exercise in groups or individually. Review and discuss the handout in a large group. If students need more time to add jobs for each category, they can take the handout home or finish it in class with their teacher’s assistance. Once students have completed the handout encourage them to seek further information about the careers they identified.

## **3. Learning about AmeriCorps National Service.**

To introduce AmeriCorps, begin by:

- Describing your program and what members do for their service.
- Describe the organization your AmeriCorps program belongs to and the purpose of the organization.



#### **4. Gain and understanding of how service in AmeriCorps can help prepare individuals for their intended careers.**

- Discuss why you chose to serve in AmeriCorps.
- Discuss what your chosen career will be once you complete your service in AmeriCorps and what additional training you will need.
- Discuss what skills you are learning from your service in AmeriCorps that will prepare you for your chosen career.
- Use participating members' career choices as additional examples (if multiple members are assisting to facilitate Project Impact, each member should discuss their career choice and how AmeriCorps is preparing them for their career as long as the answers they share are different). Discuss broadly the impact volunteering and community service has on career exploration and eventual career choice.
- Use the link "**Talking About AmeriCorps**" to provide more details about AmeriCorps and how individuals can get involved.
- Discuss how volunteering in general can help you learn skills even if you do not plan to go into the career related to your volunteer experience.
- Identify some of the skills you will learn from participating in Project Impact.

#### **5. Completing a “Community Mapping Exercise”.**

The “Community Mapping Exercise” is the foundation for Project Impact. By the time this activity is completed, students will have drawn a graphic representation of their community. The exercise gives them an opportunity to think about their community and who and what is a part of that community. Use the **Community Mapping Exercise link** for instructions on how to complete the exercise.

#### **6. Completing a “Community Resources and Needs Exercise”.**

Once you have completed the Community Mapping Exercise use the **Community Mapping Exercise link** to facilitate students learning about their community resources and choosing a community need to design a service project.



## **7. Choosing and designing a community service project to meet the chosen community need.**

Once students choose a community need you will need to facilitate students designing a service project to impact the need they have chosen. Begin by brainstorming ideas to meet the particular need identified. Remind students that as they are considering service project ideas the timeframe for completing the service is very narrow. The project will need to be completed by a date sometime between the end of April and mid May of 2014. As ideas are put forward you will need to judge the feasibility of the group's capability of completing the service projects being suggested. You may need to guide students in coming up with a project that meets the available resource of the group. For example past Project Impact students identify completing a community center for youth after school. The need identified was young people have nothing to do after school and idle time creates opportunities for young people to get into trouble. Instead of being negative about the after school center redirect the intention by offering an alternative that accomplishes a similar outcome as the facilitators did with this example. Students were asked to consider the idea of creating an after school guide that would help students identify productive activities they could be a part of after school. This promoted youth using after school time constructively.

In the event you have difficulty identifying projects please use the links below to view additional resources for service project ideas

- [\*\*366 Community Service Ideas Link\*\*](#)
- [\*\*99 Community Service Ideas Link\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Community Service Ideas Ohio 4-H Link\*\*](#)

Generate between 4-8 ideas for community service projects to meet the need chosen by students. Once all of the ideas have been listed, you will need to use the same voting process used in selecting the need to choose what service project will be completed by students.

## **8. Reflecting on what kinds of careers are related to the service project chosen.**

After students choose a service project, ask that they identify five careers/jobs they think are related to that project. This can be done individually or in the same teams that completed the community mapping exercise. List the careers/jobs shared by each group or individual. Ask students if they would be interested in having any of the careers/jobs listed. If yes ask why. Once everyone has shared answers, ask students to choose one career they are interested in finding more information about and report the information they find the next time you meet. Students can explore: what education or training is needed for the job? How much does the job pay? What is the working environment like? What are other related careers/jobs? Encourage students to think of other things they would like to know and share what they've found with the group the next time you meet.

## SECTION 2: SERVING OTHERS AND EXPLORING CAREERS

\*Note: Depending on the available time to implement Project Impact facilitator/mentors may need to present section content in multiple meetings. Be prepared to make adjustments in content based on allotted time.

### SECTION OVERVIEW

Now that students have explored their community through the mapping exercise, listed resources in the community, chosen a need and service project to address that need, planning can begin to identify the tasks and resources needed to complete the service project.

Your role as facilitators and mentors during this section is to guide students through the needed steps to ensure the service project has the resources needed to be successful.

During this section AmeriCorps facilitators and mentors will guide students in accomplishing the following:

1. Reviewing what resulted from the last meeting and how students arrived at choosing a service project to benefit the community.
2. Completing the reflection exercise on what kinds of careers or jobs are related to the service project.
3. Identifying tasks and choosing a process and creating a timeline to complete the service project.
4. Identifying resources needed to complete the service project.
5. Reflecting on what kind of employability skills are being learned from planning the service project.



### ACTIVITIES

#### **1. Review what resulted from the last meeting and how students arrived at choosing a service project to benefit the community.**

Recap what took place during the last meeting(s) and review the purpose of Project Impact.

Remind students that Project Impact was created to provide a way for students to see how serving or volunteering benefits the community but also benefits the individual who volunteers. Remind students of what members said regarding why they chose to serve in AmeriCorps and how by serving they are learning skills that will support them when they begin their chosen career.

Review the process used to arrive at chosen service project. First students drew a map of their community, identified resources available in the community. Despite the resources available in the community there was a problem that needed assistance. The resulting need from the problem identified ultimately led to the chosen service project.

**2. Review and share reflection exercise on what kinds of careers/jobs are related to the service project that students were to complete in between the meetings.**

Review the instructions of the reflection exercise. Ask for volunteers to share what information they found out about the career they chose to explore. List the prompts provided regarding what education or training is needed for the job? How much does the job pay? What is the working environment like? What are other related careers/jobs?



**3. Identifying tasks and choosing a process and creating a timeline to complete the service project.**

Begin a discussion with students regarding the tasks needed to complete the service project. For example, if students had chosen a project to serve people who are homeless, tasks to support the project might be: a) Contacting local shelters or organizations that serve people who are homeless to identify what kinds of items would benefit someone who is homeless, b) identifying collection sites to collect donated items for the project, c) Creating collection containers to collect donated items, d) Creating flyers to advertise the project, e) Collecting items donated for the service project. Once a list of tasks has been identified, develop a process for the tasks to be completed. Will you develop and use committees or are you going to assign tasks to individuals? Or both?

Developing a list of tasks will help you decide on the process you use to prepare and complete the service project.

Regardless of how you decide tasks are going to be completed, you will need to develop a timeline identifying what tasks need to be accomplished based on how the project unfolds. Your timeline should include the date you will complete your service project, the dates of your meetings and weeks in between your meetings. With students identify the chronological order tasks need to be completed for the project to be completed successfully.

#### **4. Identifying resources needed to complete the service project.**

After the tasks and process have been identified, bring students together in one large group. Ask them to brainstorm to identify what resources will be needed to complete the service project. As individuals offer ideas keep a running list of items suggested. Ask students to explain why the resource is needed and how it will be used. If students become bogged-down in conversation regarding what resources are needed or miss important resources that haven't been identified, make suggestions or prompt them to include anything that may have been left out. Review the completed list with students to make sure all resources have been identified.

#### **5. Reflecting on what kind of employability skills are being learned from planning the service project.**

Now that you have had several meetings with students ask them to reflect on what kind of skills are being learned from participating in Project Impact. Explain that each participant will be provided with a checklist to identify the skills they have learned so far. Once they have completed the checklist have them choose one skill and when they return to the next meeting share with other students and facilitators the situation where the skill was learned and what happened. Let students know they can write down the answer, draw a picture of the answer, take photos to show the answer, or create a collage. [\*\*Click here to be taken to “Work Skills Reflection Activity for February”.\*\*](#)



## SECTION 3: WHAT I LEARN FROM MY EXPERIENCES

Planning for the service project should be completed and students should be well on their way to implementing the timeline. Reflecting on what has been accomplished so far and providing information of what is left to be done will help students/mentees and facilitators/mentors experience the success of their hard work.

### SECTION OVERVIEW

By now facilitator/mentors and students have:

- Chosen a community need to address.
- Identified resources needed for the project.
- Developed a timeline and process for implementing the service project.

During this section AmeriCorps member mentor/facilitators will facilitate mentee/students accomplishing the following:

1. Sharing information from the skills checklist reflection exercise.
2. Continuing to implement the timeline and related tasks to complete the service project.
3. Identifying jobs or careers they are interested in and explore possible volunteer opportunities that can help them learn more about the identified jobs/careers and acquire skills that would help prepare them for employment in that field.

### ACTIVITIES

#### **1. Sharing information from the skills checklist reflection exercise.**

Students were asked to identify skills from the reflection checklist exercise and choose one skill and identify the situation where the skill was learned and what happened. Students were given a choice to share the information using a written answer, a picture (drawing or photo), or a collage. Review the skills reflection checklist with students and ask individuals to share what skills they checked. Once everyone has had the opportunity to share ask for volunteers to identify the situation where one skill was learned and what happened. Ask students why the skill is important and how it applies to a particular job of interest to them.

#### **2. Implementing timeline and related tasks to complete the service project.**

Based on the schedule for implementing the project students should be one month out from completing their service project. Provide an opportunity for students to identify where the group is on the timeline and what tasks need to be completed before the service project can be implemented. Encourage students to try on leadership roles and provide direction so they can experience what it is like to be out front and lead.



**3. Identifying jobs or careers of interest and explore possible volunteer opportunities that can help them learn more about the identified jobs/careers and acquire skills that would help them prepare for employment in that job or career.**

After the students and mentor/facilitators have discussed what tasks are left to be completed to implement the service project, mentor/facilitators will lead a discussion on how individuals can explore careers by volunteering. Mentor/facilitators can use their own experiences to help guide the discussion by providing examples of volunteer activities they have completed in the past and the skills they have learned from volunteering. Mentors and facilitators can also encourage students to ask family members and other professionals they know what kind of volunteer activities they were involved in and what they learned from their experience.

To assist students in further exploring potential jobs or careers of interest, provide each participant with a copy of the “**Exploring Careers Through Volunteering**” handout. Read the instructions out loud and instruct students to write down four jobs or careers in the first column that interest them. Ask individuals to then think of related volunteer activities where they could learn more about the job or career they’ve identified. Have member/facilitator mentors work with students to identify volunteer opportunities related to the job or career identified by students. Once all students have identified volunteer opportunities, ask them to think of a related skill for that job or career they could practice or learn from the volunteer experience.

Note: This particular activity may take more time than available. Have students work on completing the activity between meetings and have them bring back completed handout to the next meeting.

## SECTION 4: FROM VISION TO REALITY

What began in January as a vision is now approaching completion. Mentor/facilitators and students have worked together to explore the community and gain an appreciation for how volunteer service can benefit the volunteer and the community. With the service project close at hand anticipation is building and everyone is eager to begin the project.

### SECTION OVERVIEW

In this section facilitators/mentors will:

1. Review the “**Exploring Careers Through Volunteering**” reflection worksheet.
2. Finalize and complete “Service Project Checklist”.
3. Complete “Work Skills Reflection Activity” for April.

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. Review the “**Exploring Careers Through Volunteering**” reflection worksheet.

At the last meeting students were provided the “Exploring Careers Through Volunteering” worksheet (see link to worksheet above) and asked to list four jobs or careers that were of interest to them. After the four careers were listed students were then asked to identify volunteer activities that could help them learn more about the particular job or career on their list. Once the volunteer activity had been included students were asked to list a skill related to the job or career they could learn or practice while volunteering.

Review directions with students and ask each person to share the information they identified for each section of the worksheet. If individuals are missing any information on their worksheet, work as a group to help them fill in any blank information. Remind students that the purpose of the worksheet is to provide them with useable information that can help them learn more about careers and gain skills. Encourage them to locate the volunteer activities they have identified and volunteer.

#### 2. Finalize and complete “Service Project Checklist”.

With the service project only weeks away, review the process used with students that brought you to this point. Ask students to share what activities you completed as a group to choose and plan the service project. Make a list of all the things that have been completed to bring you to this point.

Take suggestions from students to identify any items left to be completed to make sure the service project is successful and completed according to plan. Hand out the “**Service Project Check List**” to students and read the directions to them. As a group go through the check list first and ask students to provide any missing items that need to be considered in making a final check of items, resources and considerations in planning the service project.

### **3. Complete “Work Skills Reflection Activity for April”.**

Remind students of the “**Work Skills Reflection Activity**” they completed in February and introduce the “Work Skills Reflection Activity for April”. Provide each student with a copy of the reflection activity and read the directions out loud. Explain that when students completed the checklist in February they were asked to: choose one skill they checked from the list and to describe the situation when they learned the skill and what happened. The April reflection activity has identical checklist items however after students identify the skills they’ve learned, you are asking them to chose one skill and explain why the skill is important when you are at work. As with the reflection activity in February, students can write down their answer, draw a picture of their answer, take photos to show their answer, or create a collage. Ask students to share their work with everyone at the next Project Impact meeting.



## SECTION 5: WHAT CHANGED FOR ME AND FOR MY COMMUNITY?

The impact service has on individuals is not always immediately noticeable. And long after someone has a volunteer service experience it continues to influence the choices they make. Project Impact was created to provide multiple opportunities for students to experience: positive relationships, responsibility for decision-making, leadership, choice, career exploration and employability skills acquisition. Ultimately it is the journey that prepares us for our destination. Mentor/facilitators and students have completed a journey together that will provide each with the tools to travel further along and reach their own goals.

### SECTION OVERVIEW

In this final section students will:

1. Review and complete the “[Work Skills Reflection Activity for April](#)”.
2. Reflection activity: What Changed; For Me, For My Community?
3. Reflection activity: Describe your ideal job/career.

### ACTIVITIES

#### 1. Review and complete the “[Work Skills Reflection Activity for April](#)”.

Review the “[Work Skills Reflection Activity for April](#)” with students and ask for volunteers to share with everyone a skill they chose as being important while at work. Students can present a written answer, a photo or a collage of their answer.

As you are wrapping up the exercise, encourage students to think about developing and practicing skills and refer to this reflection activity as they volunteer and work and revisit the skills they learn from volunteer experiences and include them in future resumes.



## **2. Reflection Activity: What Changed; For Me, For My Community?**

Students have been on a five month journey of exploration. Leaning about their community and themselves. During this reflection activity ask students to share how they feel the service experience has made a change in them personally. You may need to give examples and prompt students.

For example: If your project worked with persons who are homeless you might ask “Have any of you ever helped someone who is homeless before? Is someone who is homeless more like people you know?”

Once everyone has had the opportunity to respond, move on to the next question, “How has the service project I’ve completed changed my community?” Prompt students if they have difficulty responding.

For example: “How did our service project help the homeless shelter?” If we did not complete our service project what would that mean for those who are served by the homeless shelter?”

Allow everyone who chooses to participate to share an answer. You and the other mentors may also share your thoughts and feeling but wait until students have had an opportunity to share first. List everyone’s responses and recap. Congratulate everyone and job well done.

## **3. Reflection activity: Describe your ideal job/career.**

For the final reflection activity have students describe their ideal job/career.

As with the work skill reflection activities, students can write down their answer, draw a picture of their answer, take photos to show their answer, or create a collage. Ask students to share their answers with everyone.

Here are some prompts to help students think about their ideal job/career.

- 1. Where would my ideal job take place? Outside in fresh air? In an office building? On the ocean? In the mountains?**
- 2. Who would I be working with? Seniors citizens? Children? Teenagers? Adults? Girls only? Boys only?**
- 3. What things would I do daily? Work with numbers? Work with wood? Work using a computer? Work with hand tools?**
- 4. Would I work with others or by myself?**
- 5. How much money would I make?**
- 6. Would I help people?**
- 7. Would I make a product?**
- 8. Would I work in one city or travel?**
- 9. Would I get dirty at my job?**
- 10. What would be the favorite part of my job?**

Note: This particular activity may take more time than available. Have students work on completing the activity between meetings and share completed descriptions of their ideal job/career at the next meeting.

## RESOURCES

1. [Project Impact Master Sign-In Sheet](#)
2. [Project Impact Master Agendas](#)
3. [Ice Breakers](#)
4. [Training New Mentors](#)
5. [Mentoring Fact Sheet](#)







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## APPENDIX

[Back to Activity Guide](#)

# Lessons Learned from Project Impact:

**Community Service During the Transition to Employment  
for Youth with Disabilities**



**NextSTEP**★  
National Service To Employment Project

## [Back to Activity Guide](#)

“Lessons Learned from Project Impact: Community Service During the Transition to Employment for Youth with Disabilities” is produced by the National Service to Employment Project (NextSTEP). For more information, please contact:

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NextSTEP is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (Cooperative agreement #09TAHMA001) and is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. NextSTEP partners with the State Employment Leadership Network of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and the US Business Leadership Network.

## Introduction:

Participation in community service has been found to break down barriers to employment, while building confidence, building careers, and building community for its members (NextSTEP, 2011). Opportunities such as Project Impact (see below for more) delivered through the Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida) are an avenue through which youth with disabilities can gain skills, explore career paths, develop social networks, and engage in challenging and meaningful tasks necessary to gain employment.

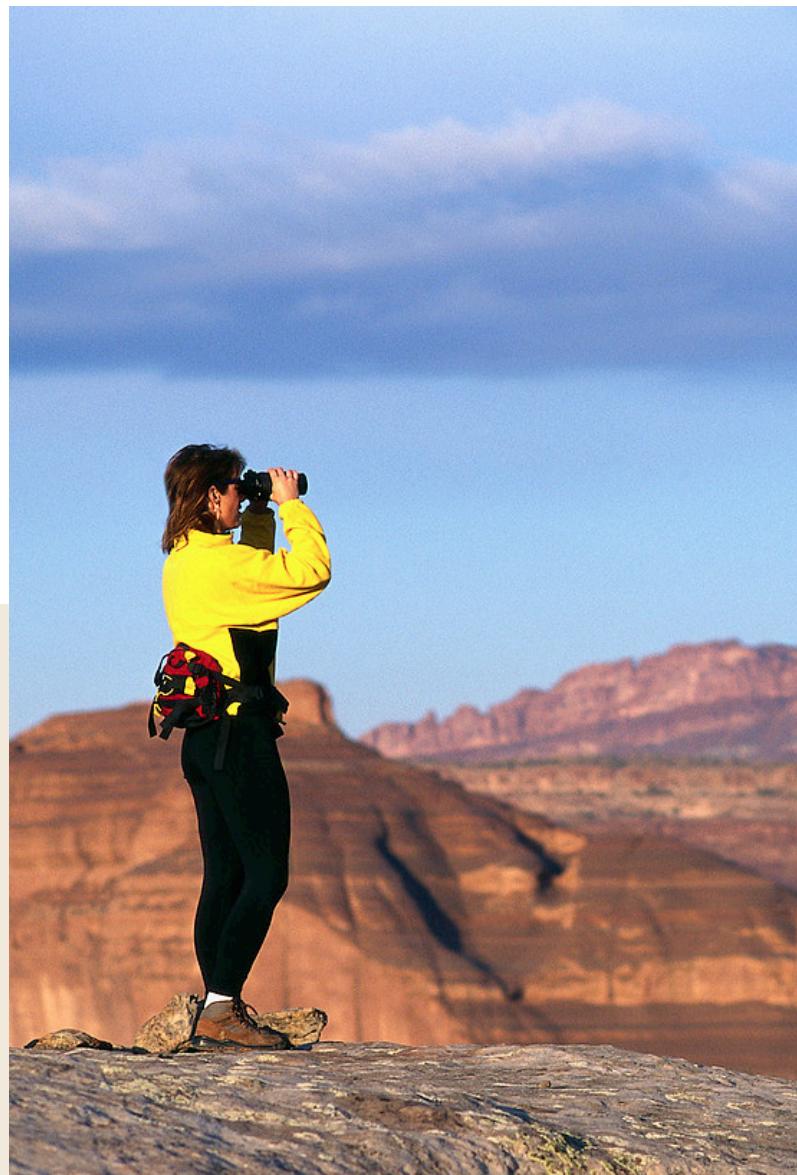
This brief offers ideas for school-based special education professionals, transition specialists, and other disability employment professionals on supporting engagement in community service and the value of service as a transition strategy for youth with disabilities.

## What is Community Service?

Community service means volunteering for a cause that helps people in a particular community. People volunteer and serve in many ways, both informally and formally. These opportunities are available through faith-based organizations, non-profits, governmental entities, and advocacy organizations.

National Service Programs funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/>) include AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps State/National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and Senior Corps. Volunteer Florida runs Project Impact and administers national service programs in Florida.

### Lessons Learned from Project Impact



## What is Project Impact?

Project Impact is an intensive community service experience that is planned and implemented over a five-month period for youth with disabilities in Florida. It starts with a student-led community mapping exercise. In community mapping, students identify a community problem and the resources needed to address it. The students develop a plan for a service activity that will address the problem, and then implement the service activity. Youth are guided through the model by trained AmeriCorps facilitators and mentors.

Each month, students meet with peers and their facilitator. Together they decide on a service activity to address an identified community problem. They participate in regular reflection activities that allow them to consider the skills they are developing and the impact they are having in their community. Please see Table 1 for a month-by-month overview of Project Impact student activities.

Once the plan is developed, the students identify supplies for the activity and determine expenses. They discuss areas of collaboration with other entities in the community and a plan for marketing the service project. Together the students outline exactly how the service project will unfold, their roles, and their responsibilities. After completion of the service project, they reflect on and celebrate their accomplishment.

Through Project Impact, Florida AmeriCorps programs, in conjunction with a range of community partners, have implemented 30 community-service projects with 300 students with disabilities in 12 Florida counties.

**Table 1: Project Impact Activities By Month**

Month	Student Activities
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend initial meeting with peers and facilitator</li><li>• Receive overview of different service programs</li><li>• Complete community mapping exercise</li><li>• Identify one community problem to address</li><li>• Choose a service project to address the identified problem</li><li>• Participate in a reflection activity, discussing the link between service and employment</li></ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct first planning meeting to complete service project</li><li>• Identify resources (supplies) needed and determine project cost</li><li>• Join a committee to complete tasks for the service project</li><li>• Identify additional partners</li><li>• Develop a plan to tell the community about the service project such as flyers</li><li>• Apply for funds to support the project through Volunteer Florida</li><li>• Complete a reflection activity, discussing the kinds of careers/occupations associated with the service project</li></ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify all necessary resources</li><li>• Choose the location where service project will take place</li><li>• Outline exactly how the service project will unfold</li><li>• Finalize any marketing materials for distribution</li><li>• Identify needed accommodations, such as transportation</li><li>• Complete a reflection activity, discussing the implementation of these tasks and their connection to employment</li></ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete service project during Global Youth Service Day</li><li>• Participate in reflection activity, discussing accomplishments and how they relate to employment</li></ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Celebrate and reflect on the completion of the service project</li><li>• Complete a reflection activity, discussing what was learned, the types of skills built, how these skills might prepare for employment, and what type of careers they might consider as a result of participating</li></ul>

## Project Impact Leads to Employability

We conducted 24 interviews with Project Impact participants about how the experience contributed to employment skill building and career exploration as part of the National Service to Employment Project (NextSTEP). For more on NextSTEP, see *Resources*. Participation in Project Impact influenced youth participants in three ways:

1. **Personal development.** Students experienced an expanded concept of their own talents and abilities, and increased their self-confidence.
2. **Vocational development.** Students practiced workplace skills and explored different career choices, interests, and options.
3. **Community development.** Students enhanced their connection to and integration into their communities in their new roles as problem-solvers.

### Impact One: Personal Development

- **Expanded self-concept.** Youth viewed themselves in a new light, discovering abilities and talents of which they were not aware before.
- **Greater self-awareness.** These new discoveries made the individuals more cognizant of their strengths and thus more confident. Many young adults recognized abilities such as creativity, leadership, and courage. Students who previously struggled with low self-esteem or felt confined to their disability-specific labels reported seeing themselves as more successful after the service experience. They no longer saw themselves as “different” and “disabled.”
- **Sense of pride and accomplishment.** New confidence encouraged many youth to engage in new activities and to feel proud of what they had accomplished. Many of these activities were previously unfamiliar; conquering them gave the participants great satisfaction and confidence in their own abilities.

*Continued on page 4...*

“[...] it was a turning point for me. It helped me be more open and being more accepting and trying to make me break out of that fear, like I’m not labeled, I’m just like everyone else. But I just have one difference than some other people.”

- Project Impact Alumni

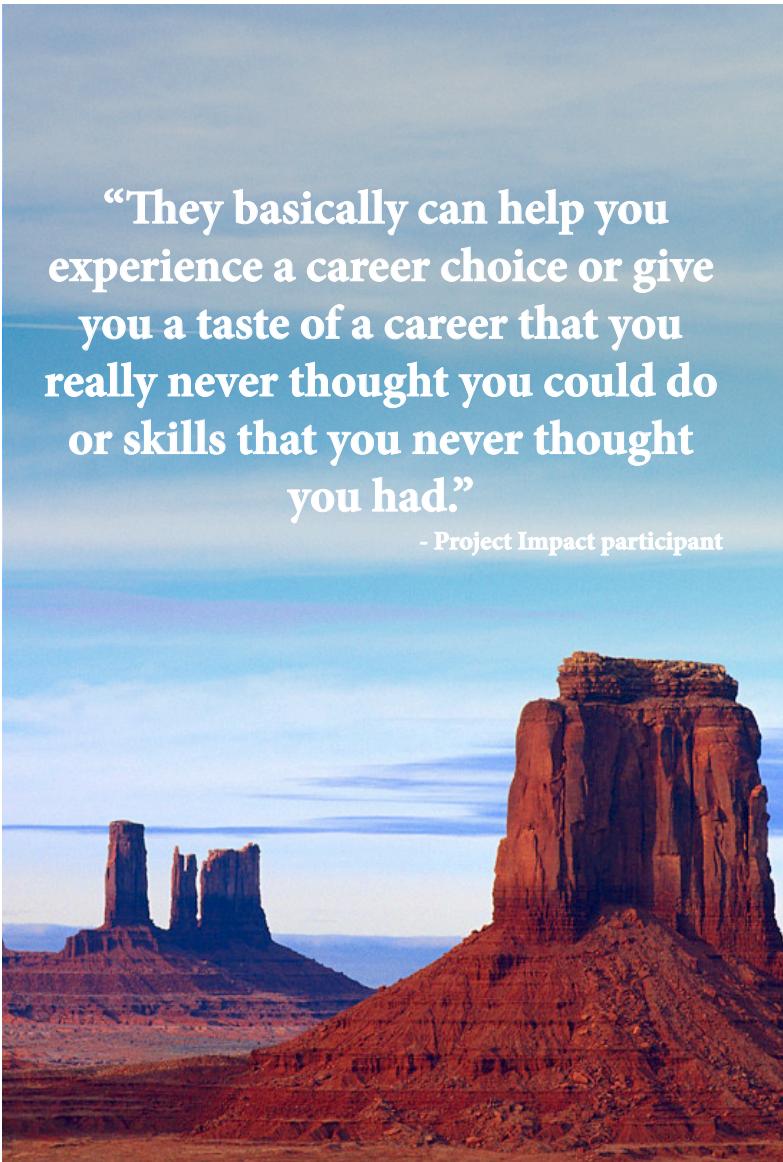


*Impact One: Personal Development continued...*

- **Adequacy and belonging.** Participation in Project Impact provided an opportunity to practice personal and professional interactions. Through these new friendships, networks, and connections, youth often felt they were contributing to and meaningful members of a group. Participants reported opening up to others and often feeling—sometimes for the first time—that they belonged and were just as worthy and adequate as anybody else.

**Impact Two: Vocational Development**

- **The opportunity to practice workplace behavior.** This included practicing and mastering the soft skills necessary for work, such as interpersonal, communication, time management, and teamwork skills. Young adults also had an opportunity to develop their work ethics—personal responsibility, collaboration with others, and being dependable and accountable. As a result, youth increased their employability and developed identities as employees.
- **Trying out different roles and experiences.** The experience helped youth narrow down their career choices and workplace preferences. By doing a variety of tasks (woodworking, helping children to read, caring for animals, creating flyers), they could discover strengths and talents that contributed to feeling more capable and confident as a future worker. Sometimes these tasks were unfamiliar, overwhelming, and challenging; after completing them, youth expressed pride and increased confidence. In the end, participants became more aware of what their future career might look like. Will they work in an office, work outside, have direct contact with people, or be independent? Will they want to do something creative? Project Impact helped many to get closer to a clear vision of their future career.



**“They basically can help you experience a career choice or give you a taste of a career that you really never thought you could do or skills that you never thought you had.”**

- Project Impact participant

### Impact Three: Community Development

- **Increased connection and integration.** Participants changed the way they viewed their surroundings and their role in society. Through community service, the young adults were able to interact with a variety of people of different ages, backgrounds, and cultures in their communities; people with disabilities and without. For many, this was an opportunity to experience communities different from their own immediate surroundings for the first time. They learned how to accept others and how to feel accepted in a large group. They reported that participation made them feel more included in their communities.
- **Viewing themselves as providers.** Many of the youth came to view themselves not as recipients of services, but rather as providers of solutions. Participants mentioned wanting to “help other people” as a result of their Project Impact experience.
- **Sense of ownership and meaningful contribution.** Hands-on participation and completion of the project made the youth feel that they were important and capable contributors. Seeing positive outcomes of their work gave them an empowering sense that they are capable of doing something very important for their communities.

**“...they’re able to go out and have that joy—receive that joy of giving back to their community, too. And that makes people feel good. It makes them feel good. It shows them that...there are a lot of things they can do.”**

- Project Impact Facilitator

### Recommendations: Community Service and Transition

Interviews with Project Impact participants indicate that the service experience positively influenced students personally, vocationally, and within their communities. Through increasing their self-confidence, learning and practicing workplace skills, trying out different vocational choices, and providing meaningful solutions to problems in their community, they have become more employable.

Employability, or the ability to gain and maintain employment, can be achieved only when an individual has acquired assets that can be presented to employers. As a result, community service experiences such as Project Impact can be a great option for youth with disabilities transitioning between secondary school and adult life. Statistics support that youth with disabilities experience higher dropout rates, lower post-secondary education participation, higher unemployment rates, and higher levels of poverty than their peers without disabilities (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2012).

In response to such challenges, the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Y) suggests that all youth need:

- Access to high-quality, standards-based education, regardless of the setting
- Information about career options and exposure to the world of work, including structured internships
- Opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills
- Strong connections to caring adults
- Access to safe places to interact with their peers
- Support services and specific accommodations to allow them to become independent adults

## Back to Activity Guide

Consider the following NCWD/Y Guideposts For Success, and how community service can help youth attain them:  
[www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts)

### Guidepost 1

**School-Based Preparatory Experiences** grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options. Community service can:

- Provide informal career and interest assessment by trying out different roles and experiences.
- Provide learning experiences in a community setting, creating opportunities to define what their future workplaces and careers might look like.
- Provide a concrete activity relevant and valuable to any Individual Education Plan.

### Guidepost 2

**Career Preparation and Work-based Learning Experiences** that expose youth to a range of experiences. Community service can:

- Increase employability by developing soft skills. These include interpersonal, communication, time-management, and teamwork skills.

- Expose youth to new career ideas and people of diverse ages, backgrounds, and cultures—people with disabilities and without.
- Provide an opportunity to gain real-world experience.
- Allow youth to gain perspective on abilities and limitations in a work environment.

### Guidepost 3

**Youth Development and Leadership** through coordinated activities that encourage competency and self-esteem. Community service can:

- Encourage and empower youth as they discover their abilities and talents.
- Create opportunities to develop, practice, and master problem-solving skills.
- Develop personal goals and objectives through exploration and reflection activities.
- Enhance self-esteem and self-advocacy skills through the pride and satisfaction of addressing a community need.

### Guidepost 4

**Connecting Activities** such as programs and services that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. Community service can:

- Develop a commitment to service as another post-school option.
- Increase access and connection to employment, education, and community resources through newly formed networks comprised of peers, mentors, and professionals.
- Increase exposure to businesses in the community through intentional consideration of how future employment connects to the service project.

### Guidepost 5

**Family Involvement and Supports** to promote social, emotional and occupational growth. Community service can:

- Connect youth with mentors and other caring adults.
- Expand peer and professional networks that can be used for occupational growth.



## Starting Collaborations

Collaboration with service programs can benefit schools as well as the service program. While schools can create community service opportunities for youth that allow them to gain valuable experience, service programs gain access to qualified, committed participants. The local service community may be unfamiliar with the school and disability community, and vice versa. Therefore, a critical first step is learning more about each other.

The most successful collaborations are built on knowledge, trust, and relationships that are mutually beneficial. It is important to become familiar with the service programs in your community and vice versa. Here are some logistics to help you:

- There are points of contact for each state's disability inclusion initiative. Contact your state's coordinator to learn more about the range of service options in the state and how youth with disabilities can be included:  
<http://serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=coordinatorslist>  
This person, or other members of the service commission, can help

you identify service programs in your community. They also may be able to share examples of this type of partnership occurring in other parts of the state.

- Once you've identified a local service program, set up short, informal meetings with its leadership. Be prepared to explain your program and the goals you hope to achieve.
- Invite service staff to meet school staff and students. Ask them to present an overview of the community service options other youth have engaged in recently.
- Coordinate a service-day for students to serve at an organization or within your school community.
- Service programs often have state- or county-level conferences and meetings. Present a workshop or attend sessions where you can stay abreast of local initiatives.

Adapted from *Creating an Inclusive Environment: A Handbook for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in National and Community Service Programs*

[www.serviceandinclusion.org/handbook/index.php?page=sectionix](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/handbook/index.php?page=sectionix)

## Replicating Project Impact at Your School

- Create structure—establish a timeline for identification and implementation of the service project and stick to it.
- Create formal agendas for each planning meeting that ensure full participation. Allow time for discussion about how each activity is building a skill needed for employment.
- Incorporate regular reflection activities that create an intentional platform for connecting each phase of the experience to skills gained and future career options.
- Use team-building exercises to increase peer connections, promote group problem solving, and build decision-making skills.
- Use committees to plan and implement different aspects of the project.
- Consider assessing the physical space and attitudes/sensitivity of staff at the service location. Provide accommodations and etiquette training as needed.

## Formal National Service as a Transition Option

You may have students who are interested in participating in more of a formal service opportunity, such as the national AmeriCorps programs. These service programs have members who volunteer full time or part time. They provide a structured opportunity for individuals to gain experience, work skills, and connections they can use later in job search.

To participate in AmeriCorps programs, students need to have completed high school, have a certificate of completion or be working towards a GED. Here's how to find out more about AmeriCorps for students you are working with:

1. Look at the service programs listed on the AmeriCorps website:  
[www.americorps.gov/about/programs/index.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/index.asp)

See how they relate to each youth's interests, abilities, and location. Use the interactive program selector to help choose the right program:  
[www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_individuals/ready/selector.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_individuals/ready/selector.asp)

If the student is planning on staying local, you may want contact the state service commission and disability coordinator to learn more about in-state service options.

2. Identify skills and behaviors that the individual can work on in preparing for a potential service experience.
3. Help the young adult apply for a service program. Most service programs have an online application process. Remember, this is a competitive process, so they will not automatically get selected to serve. It may also take some time for applications to be reviewed. Many service positions require a formal interview—an excellent opportunity for building job-search skills.
4. Discuss any accommodations necessary for working at a service program, and create a plan for support and monitoring progress toward personal and vocational goals. Engage your state's department of vocational rehabilitation in the process.

## Conclusion

Community service experiences such as Project Impact offer youth with disabilities the opportunity to build the personal and professional skills necessary to be employed. Community service during the transition from school to work is a way to get real-world work experience, explore careers, and practice and master the soft skills essential for employment.

Through the recommendations in this brief, disability professionals working with youth can promote involvement in service as a means for developing skills, facilitating personal growth and community connections, and creating a pathway to meaningful employment.



## Resources

**The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)** engages more than 5 million Americans in service every year.

CNCS website: [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)

Service stories: [www.nationalservice.gov/for\\_individual/current/stories.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_individual/current/stories.asp)

**The National Service to Employment Project (NextSTEP)** conducts research, provides technical assistance, and creates demonstration projects focusing on people with disabilities in volunteer and community-service roles.

NextSTEP website: [www.serviceandinclusion.org/nextstep](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/nextstep)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/service2employ](http://www.facebook.com/service2employ)

Twitter: @Service2Employ

**The National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP)** provides training and technical service to help national service programs include individuals with disabilities as active participants.

NSIP website: [www.serviceandinclusion.org](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org)

Service stories (audio): [www.serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=participants](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=participants)

**The Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida** grants funds to Florida AmeriCorps and National Service programs; encourages volunteerism for everyone from youth to seniors to people with disabilities; promotes volunteerism for disaster preparedness and response; and helps to strengthen and expand Volunteer Centers in Florida.

Volunteer Florida website: [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org)

[Back to Activity Guide](#)

**Lessons Learned from Project Impact  
Community Service During the Transition to Employment for Youth with Disabilities**

NextSTEP website: [www.serviceandinclusion.org/nextstep](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/nextstep)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/service2employ](https://www.facebook.com/service2employ)

Twitter: @Service2Employ



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NCWD/YOUTH  
**GUIDEPOSTS *for* SUCCESS**



SECOND EDITION

NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ON WORKFORCE AND DISABILITY

# ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE



The National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) was created to help state and local workforce development systems improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. Housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Washington, D.C., NCWD/Youth is comprised of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development policy and practice.

This document was developed and revised by the National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth, funded by grants/contracts/cooperative agreements from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Numbers E-9-4-1-0070 and OD-16519-07-75-4-11). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of tradenames, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor.

## GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS

The transition from youth to adulthood is challenging for almost every young person. This is particularly true for young people with disabilities. Yet, it is in those critical transition-age years that a young person's future can be determined. Part of a successful future includes finding and keeping work. The total employment rate is projected to increase by 15% in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Employment in occupations that generally require a college degree or other postsecondary credential is projected to grow much faster than other jobs across all occupations. Jobs requiring work-related training will still account for the majority of the new positions.

### CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Youth with disabilities, and particularly those with significant disabilities, often face difficulties in accessing the workforce development system. The workforce development system encompasses organizations at the national, state, and local levels with direct responsibility for

planning, allocating resources (both public and private), providing administrative oversight, and operating programs to assist individuals and employers in obtaining education, training, job placement, and job recruitment.

Today, there continues to be a stubborn dilemma facing youth with disabilities. In spite of supportive legislation (e.g., the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** (IDEA), the **Americans with Disabilities Act** (ADA), and the **Rehabilitation Act**), and identified effective practices, many of these youth continue to experience high unemployment as well as insufficient opportunities to obtain competitive employment with the potential of career growth. Many youth with disabilities, and particularly those with significant disabilities, experience poor education and employment outcomes. Certainly, some youth with disabilities have attained successful careers. Some of these youth have benefited from well delivered special education transition services, while others have received timely and appropriately

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delivered youth employment services; many of these successes reflect both circumstances. Yet, these successes are not the norm.

### Consider the following facts:

- Special education students are more than twice as likely as their peers in general education to drop out of high school.
- Youth with disabilities are half as likely as their peers without disabilities to participate in postsecondary education.
- The adjudication rate of youth with disabilities is four times higher than for youth without disabilities.
- Roughly 10% to 12% of all youth will present some form of mental health problem of significant severity to call for some sort of short-term special services and treatment at some point during their teenage years.
- More than half of youth identified with mental health needs will drop out of school, and only between 5% and 20% will enter postsecondary education.
- Approximately 5% of all school children have some form of a learning disability and are served under special education, while between 15% and 17% of all children have reading difficulties. Less than 8% of those with learning disabilities go on to college after high school.
- Two-thirds of those with learning disabilities have not been identified by the school system as having such disorders. The majority of this population is poor, disproportionately female, minority, and will not graduate from high school.
- Current special education students can expect to face much higher adult unemployment rates than their peers without disabilities.

YOUNG ADULTS  
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- Young adults with disabilities are three times likelier to live in poverty as adults than their peers without disabilities.

Little or no expectation of success, low educational attainment, few vocational goals, and confusing government programs with conflicting eligibility criteria have resulted in many youth with disabilities not making a successful transition from school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE CHANCES?

Research has identified educational and career development interventions that can make a positive difference in the lives of youth. Work-based learning experiences, preferably connected to curriculum content; student-centered individualized education programs that drive instruction; family involvement in and support of education and career development activities; and linkages to individually determined support services have all been proven, by both practice and research, to lead to the education and employment success of all youth, including youth with disabilities.

### All youth need the following:

- Access to high quality standards-based education regardless of the setting;
- Information about career options and exposure to the world of work, including structured internships;
- Opportunities to develop social, civic, and leadership skills;
- Strong connections to caring adults;
- Access to safe places to interact with their peers; and,
- Support services to allow them to become independent adults.



# THE GUIDEPOSTS

**N**CWD/Youth has identified Guideposts for Success based on what research tells us that all youth need to transition to adulthood successfully. The Guideposts provide:

- a statement of principles;
- a direction that will lead to better outcomes for all young people; and,
- a way to organize policy and practice.

## WHO SHOULD USE THEM AND HOW?

Youth and families should look for programs and activities that provide these features. Youth with disabilities should use the Guideposts in developing any individualized plans, such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE), and service strategies as required by the Workforce Investment Act.

State level policy makers should use the Guideposts as a strategic organizational framework which can assist them in moving the state's transition planning from a stovepipe focus on guiding categorical programs and funding to a more coordinated transition system focusing on successful outcomes for all youth.

Administrators and policy makers at the local level should use the Guideposts in making decisions regarding funding, in setting and establishing local priorities related to transitioning youth, and in evaluating the work of agencies supported by that funding.

Youth Service Practitioners should use the Guideposts, and tools that NCWD/Youth has developed to implement them in their work.

The Guideposts are based on the important following assumptions:

1. High expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities;
2. Equality of opportunity for everyone, including nondiscrimination, individualization, inclusion, and integration;
3. Full participation through self-determination, informed choice, and participation in decision-making;
4. Independent living, including skills development and long-term supports and services;
5. Competitive employment and economic self sufficiency, which may include supports; and,
6. Individualized, person-driven, and culturally and linguistically appropriate transition planning.

The Guideposts framework is organized in the following manner. After providing a detailed list within each Guidepost of what all youth need, the framework then describes additional specific needs pertaining to youth with disabilities. By addressing these specific needs policymakers, program administrators, youth service practitioners, parents, family members, and youth will have access to a foundation that will lead to work, further education, and independent community living.



...ALL YOUTH NEED  
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AND GRADUATION  
EXIT OPTIONS...

## GUIDEPOST 1

### SCHOOL-BASED PREPARATORY EXPERIENCES

In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills. **These should include the following:**

- academic programs that are based on clear state standards;
- career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards;
- curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences;
- learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary;
- supports from and by highly qualified staff;
- access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures; and,
- graduation standards that include options.

In addition, youth with disabilities need to do the following:

- use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling;
- have access to specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school;
- develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and,
- be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff.



## GUIDEPOST 2

### CAREER PREPARATION AND WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

**C**areer preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order for youth to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs, and will require collaborations with other organizations.

**All youth need information on career options, including the following:**

- career assessments to help identify students' school and post-school preferences and interests;
- structured exposure to postsecondary education and other life-long learning opportunities;
- exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation; and,
- training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills (sometimes called "soft skills").

In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including the following:

- opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing;
- multiple on-the-job training experiences (paid or unpaid), including community service, that are specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit;
- opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (so-called "soft skills"); and,
- opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway.

In addition, youth with disabilities need to do one or more of the following:

- understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices;
- learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs; and,
- learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training, and employment settings.

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## GUIDEPOST 3

### YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP



Youth Development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. **In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need the following:**

- mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings;
- peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities;
- exposure to role models in a variety of contexts;
- training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution;

...ALL YOUTH  
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- exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and,
- opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem.

**Youth with disabilities also need the following:**

- mentors and role models, including persons with and without disabilities; and,
- an understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities.



**GUIDEPOST**   
**CONNECTING ACTIVITIES**



Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. **All youth may need one or more of the following:**

- mental and physical health services;
- transportation;
- housing;
- tutoring;
- financial planning and management;
- post-program supports through structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies; and,
- connection to other services and opportunities (e.g. recreation).

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Youth with disabilities may need one or more of the following:

- acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies;
- community orientation and mobility/travel training (e.g. accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics);
- exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies;
- personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services; and,
- benefits-planning counseling, including information regarding the myriad of benefits available and their interrelationships so that youth may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency.

YOUNG PEOPLE  
NEED TO BE  
CONNECTED TO  
PROGRAMS,  
SERVICES,  
ACTIVITIES, AND  
SUPPORTS THAT  
HELP THEM  
GAIN ACCESS  
TO CHOSEN  
POST-SCHOOL  
OPTIONS.



## GUIDEPOST 5

### FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORTS

**P**articipation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. **All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults who do the following:**

- have high expectations that build upon the young person's strengths, interests, and needs and that foster each youth's ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency;
- remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood;
- have access to information about employment, further education, and community resources;

- take an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners; and,
- have access to medical, professional, and peer support networks.

**In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families, and other caring adults who have the following:**

- an understanding of the youth's disability and how it may affect his or her education, employment, and daily living options;
- knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation;
- knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and,
- an understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives.

ALL YOUTH  
NEED THE  
SUPPORT OF  
PARENTS, FAMILY  
MEMBERS,  
AND OTHER  
CARING  
ADULTS.



# COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Center for Workforce Development,  
the Institute for Educational Leadership

National Youth Employment Coalition

Center on Education and Work,  
the University of Wisconsin, Madison

National Center on Secondary Education  
& Transition, the University of Minnesota

The PACER Center

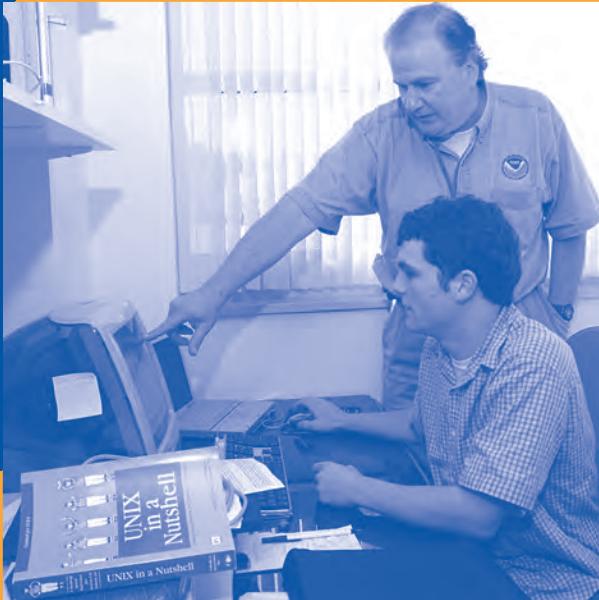
**NCWD/YOUTH**

1-877-871-0744 (toll free)

1-877-871-0665 (TTY toll free)

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info>

[contact@ncwd-youth.info](mailto:contact@ncwd-youth.info)



## NCWD/YOUTH

1-877-871-0744 (toll free)  
1-877-871-0665 (TTY toll free)  
[www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)  
[Collaborative@iel.org](mailto:Collaborative@iel.org)



## Career Scavenger Hunt

Deciding what career or job would match your interests and abilities begins with considering the thousands of jobs and career options that are available to you in the world of work. Below are five career categories. Identify three jobs in each category that you are interested in learning more about. You can use the internet (*Occupational Outlook Handbook* at <http://www.bls.gov/OCO>), ask your teacher, parents or other older adults to help you identify your choices for each section.

1

1. Find 3 careers related to the health professions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Find 3 careers in hotel management

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Find 3 careers in education.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Find 3 careers in science.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Find 3 careers in technology.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Talking About AmeriCorps**

*Adapted from "Talking About AmeriCorps", from the Corporation for National and Community Service*

As an AmeriCorps member, you have a unique opportunity to help get the word out about what AmeriCorps is and how other people can participate. Just imagine the impact on communities if all the AmeriCorps members who have served during the past five years each recruited just one person to join.

### **What is AmeriCorps?**

In 2012 there were more than 15,000 AmeriCorps service locations throughout the United States. Many are run by organizations you may have heard of, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, Habitat for Humanity, City Year, and American Red Cross. Others are run by smaller, local organizations, such as community centers, local governments, and faith based organizations.

### **Where do AmeriCorps members serve?**

AmeriCorps members serve throughout the country, and they have a variety of skills and interests. Some people stay in their own community or work nearby. Other people choose to relocate and work in a community across the country.

### **What training do AmeriCorps members receive?**

Each program provides training to help members do the best job possible. For example, a member in an education project may receive training on how to teach or be a tutor. Another member who is recruiting volunteers to restore low-income houses will be trained in public speaking or volunteer outreach.

### **What are the requirements?**

Applicants to AmeriCorps must be at least 17 years old, but each program sets its own requirements and age limits depending on need and structure. Some programs are looking for people with college degrees, and others accept people who have not finished high school. There is no upper age limit for most programs. All members must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

### **What are the benefits?**

Members of AmeriCorps programs get the chance to try new things, learn new skills, and gain valuable experience. Many programs offer health insurance during the service term and may provide housing, transportation, and other benefits. Some projects offer part-time positions for those attending school, working a job, or caring for a family.

## How can people apply?

Visit the AmeriCorps website [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org) to learn more and apply directly to specific programs. State commissions on community service also have information about most programs.

### AmeriCorps Talking Points

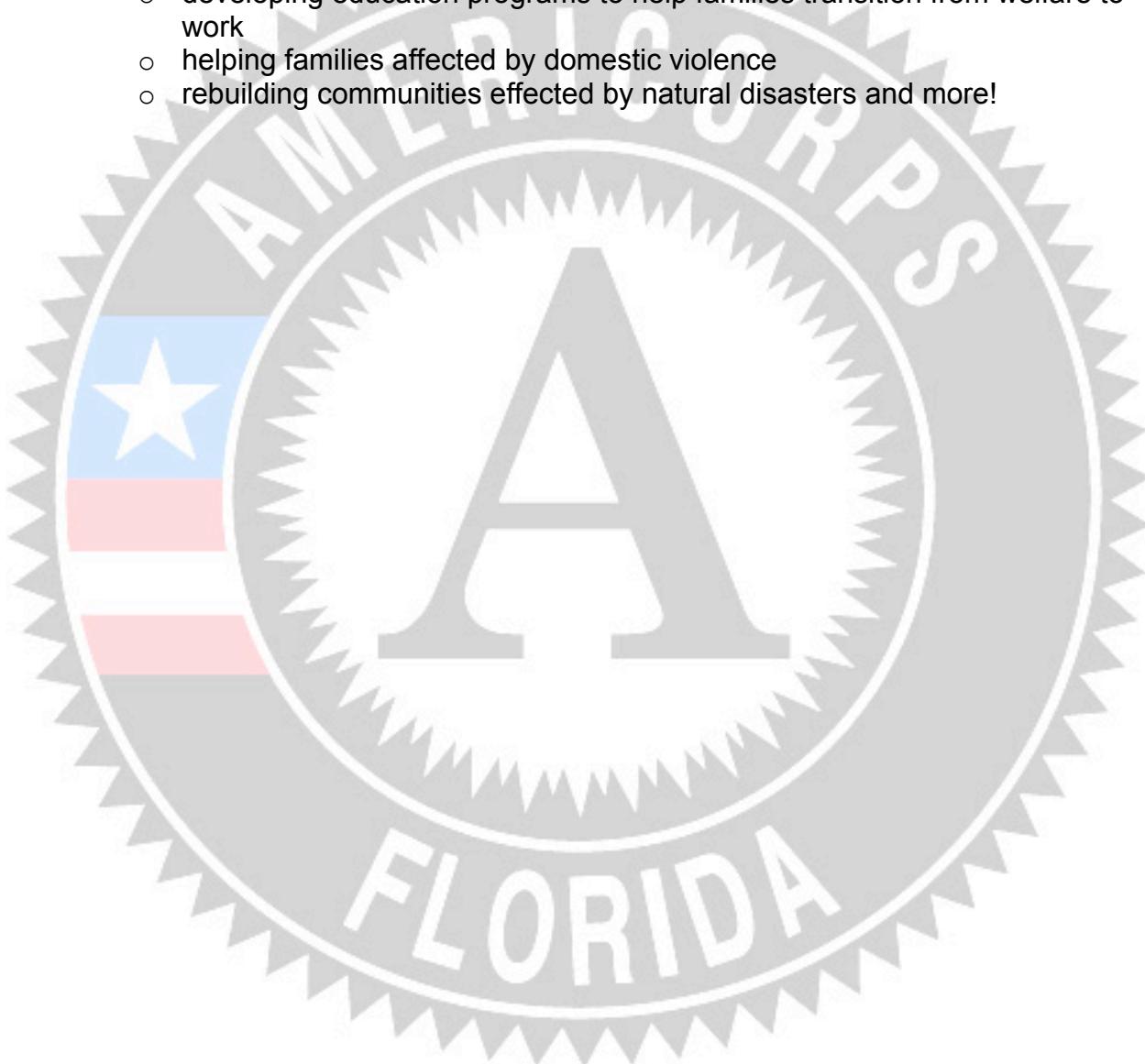
- AmeriCorps members serve in a network of more than 15,000 local and national nonprofit organizations throughout the country to improve communities and better the lives of people.
- Since 1994, more than 800,000 members have served in neighborhoods and towns throughout America.
- Members work on different issues and in different communities on locally identified issues. They are all tied together by being AmeriCorps members and focusing on meeting community needs.
- Some members serve in teams while others are one of a few organizers of a grass roots community initiative. They work in large and small organizations, in rural and urban areas.

### What all AmeriCorps programs have in common.

- **It's Adventure.** AmeriCorps is an adventure—a way to put idealism into action. AmeriCorps lets people live up to their dreams—to help children learn, protect the environment, or bring needed services to a low-income community. There are opportunities in AmeriCorps for anyone who's willing to do something special, something unique, something exciting.
- **It's Experience.** AmeriCorps is a real-life education and work experience wrapped into one. Members learn teamwork, communication, responsibility, and other essential skills that will help them for the rest of their lives. And they gain the personal satisfaction of taking on a challenge and seeing results.
- **It's Benefits.** Most AmeriCorps members earn a living allowance, health insurance, student loan deferment, and training. After they complete a full-time service term (usually 10 to 12 months) they receive an education award to help pay for college, graduate school, vocational training, or to pay student loans. Part-time members receive partial amounts.

- **It's Helping Others.** AmeriCorps members serve communities in many ways by:

- tutoring children and adults
- building new homes for low-income families
- helping protect the environment by working in national parks
- working with homeless families as they move to permanent housing
- building computer learning centers for low-income communities
- developing education programs to help families transition from welfare to work
- helping families affected by domestic violence
- rebuilding communities effected by natural disasters and more!



## DRAW YOUR COMMUNITY: IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND RESOURCES

*Adapted from "Active Citizen 101" Draft by the Constitutional Rights Foundation for the Corporation for National and Community Service.*

The Draw Your Community, Community Mapping Exercise consists of three parts: 1) Draw Your Community a graphical representation of the participant's community based on their perceptions, 2) Community Resources, identifying what resources exist in the community by reviewing the maps completed by participants, 3) Community Needs, identifying community needs by a facilitated conversation about what problems resources are unable to completely solve. Once an adequate list of needs is generated participants will then choose a need a service project can be designed to impact.

### Part 1. Draw Your Community

Explain to participants that they will be completing a service project that will impact a community problem.

1. Write the word “community” on board. Ask participants to brainstorm what makes up a community. (The people, businesses, culture, schools, parks, and so on). List responses on the board or chart paper.
2. Separate participants into even groups. Distribute one piece of chart paper and a set of markers to each group. Ask participants to think about their community and to draw their impressions of it on the chart paper provided. Make sure they include the things they see, hear and feel about their community and to include the different community elements discussed at the beginning of the exercise.
3. Ask for volunteers from each group to display and explain their drawing(s) to the rest of the group.

### Part 2. Community Resources

4. As groups present their Community Map make a running list of “Resources” that come up. Explain that resources are things that all people in the community rely on. Give examples that come from the maps presented, schools, hospitals, police, nurses, doctors, parks. As you are nearing the end of the list ask participants think about the "Needs" in their community or those problems despite resources the community is still working to solve.

### Part 3. Community Needs

5. Pose the question to participants: “What is a Need?” Wait for responses then provide this answer. “A need is something you have to have and cannot do without”. Example: food-you need it to sustain yourself. Explain that needs are a result of a community problem. If participants have difficulty identifying needs it may be helpful

## [Back to Activity Guide](#)

to walk them through a process of identifying a problem first and then identify the needs that are result of that problem. For example homelessness is a community problem and needs related to the problem of homelessness may be:

- a. the need for a homeless shelter
- b. more affordable or subsidized housing
- c. help individuals who are homeless navigate available resources for people who may become homeless.

In coming up with a list of needs encourage participants to think of a community problem and identify the needs that are a result of that problem.

As participants generate a list of "Needs" write them down on a separate peace of chart paper.

Provide an additional example:

Individuals may also become homeless because of the loss of employment. The needs of an individual in this circumstance may be:

- a. access to employment counseling.
- b. food to feed family members
- c. transportation to look for a work

In this example hunger is the problem which may have several underlying causes however the resulting need is food.

6. Once participants have generated a healthy list of needs, 10 to 15, begin the process of paring down the list to the final need that will be addressed by a service project they design. You will facilitate participants choosing a need by successive votes. This may take several rounds of voting to choose the final need. Remind participants they can only vote once per round. At the end of each round of voting eliminate needs with the fewest votes until only one need remains.



# 366 Community Service Ideas

**Categories:**

- General Ideas
- Children, Family & Friends
- Crime
- Government
- Those with Special Needs
- Performing Arts & Sports
- Senior Citizens
- On the Calendar
- Safety
- School Activities
- Helping the Hungry/Homeless
- Neighborhood Enhancement
- The Environment
- Helping Animals

## **General Ideas:**

1. Set up a Help-O-Meter to keep track of the number of hours youth volunteer in the community.
2. Organize a recognition program for the volunteers who lead community organizations.
3. Work in a concession stand to raise money for a good cause.
4. Make a gift for the secretary of a non-profit organization you are associated with.
5. Take photos during an event and donate them to the event organizers.
6. Volunteer to be a museum guide.
7. Plan an Ethnic Awareness day.
8. Design a campaign to promote tolerance and understanding of differences.
9. Volunteer at a health fair.
10. Volunteer as a counselor at local summer camp.
11. Volunteer to do office work at a local non-profit agency.
12. Set up a web page for a non-profit agency.
13. Volunteer to lead a club of youth.
14. Share a talent through teaching a class.
15. Make birthday cards for the elderly.
16. Run or walk in a charity race with friends.
17. Stage a carnival to promote community spirit.
18. Ask your mayor to sign a proclamation for an important community event.
19. Ask your governor to sign a proclamation for a national event.
20. Practice random acts of kindness.
21. Stage a marathon to raise money for a cause.
22. Organize an exchange between rural and urban individuals to promote understanding.
23. Volunteer to help at charity auctions.
24. Volunteer your talents at a charity auction.

## **On the Calendar:**

1. Conduct a community service project during the Big Help Day in October.
2. Plan a Memorial Day program.
3. Recognize veterans in your community.
4. Participate in National Youth Service Day in April.
5. On Thanksgiving, make sure your family knows what you are thankful for.
6. Trim a mitten Christmas tree to donate mittens to local schools and homeless shelters.
7. Organize a coat drive in which old coats are donated for use by needy people.
8. Contact a local tree farm about donating a Christmas tree to a nursing home, homeless shelter or needy family.
9. Decorate a Christmas tree at a nursing home, hospital, school or homeless shelter.
10. Ring the bell for Salvation Army during the holidays.
11. Deliver a May Day basket.
12. Offer safety tips for youngsters during Halloween.
13. Conduct an Easter Egg Hunt for needy children.
14. On St. Patrick's Day, don't only wear something green, care for something green!
15. Volunteer to return shopping carts during National Supermarkets Month in February.
16. Make Spring baskets for seniors' residential facility, neighbors or homeless shelters.
17. On International Picnic Day in May, take your family or friends on a picnic. You supply the food and let Mother Nature supply the ants!
18. Make a Halloween Safety Kit for youth.
19. Give your Mom a hug and a homemade card for Mother's Day.
20. On Johnny Appleseed Day in March, deliver apples to homeless shelters.
21. July is Anti-Boredom Month. Help your friends fight boredom by becoming active community volunteers.
22. During July on National Cheer-Up Day, share a smile and cheer someone up.
23. Mow the lawn for your Dad on Father's Day.

**Know how. Know now.**



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

The 4-H Youth Development program abides with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

# Back to Activity Guide

## Children, Family & Friends:

1. Surprise your parent(s) or neighbors and offer to babysit a sibling, relative or friend.
2. Design a game for young children.
3. Explore history by interviewing a nursing home resident about how they grew up.
4. Check on either a younger student or an elderly person after school.
5. Read a book to a younger kid a blind person or an older neighbor.
6. Cheer up a sick friend with a visit or phone call.
7. Celebrate a birthday by asking friends to donate items for causes instead of gifts.
8. Make get well cards for people in hospitals and convalescent homes.
9. Become pen pals to a younger person or someone from another country.
10. Knit or crochet baby blankets.
11. Conduct a clothing repair or sewing workshop for needy people.
12. Assemble a new parent's kit for the arrival of a newborn.
13. Collect old magazines and donate them to day care centers.
14. Quilt a blanket for newborn babies.
15. Plant a tree or present a tree to the parents for each baby born in your community.
16. Collect unused make-up, perfume and other cosmetics for a center for abused women.
17. Make a cancer or aids quilt or mural to remember people of who have died from these diseases and remind others of their life.
18. Write a kids' book author and ask them to donate signed copies, auction the books off and donate the money to local library.
19. Donate old eyeglasses to an organization or place that recycles them for the needy.
20. Collect old stuffed animals and dolls, clean them up, repair them and donate them.
21. Organize a babysitting service for foster families.
22. Collect old clothes and donate them for a dress-up area at a daycare.

## Safety:

1. Take a life saving class.
2. Create a play that teaches young children how to stay safe at home.
3. Design a flier of after-school safety tips and deliver it to daycare centers and grade schools.
4. Check railroad crossings and make signs to promote safety.
5. Offer a safety workshop prior to July 4th.
6. Ask your parents to help you get your town to fix dangerous intersections.
7. Conduct a bicycle rodeo to help children learn bicycle safety.
8. Create an poison awareness campaign.
9. Ask your fire department how you can help others learn about fire safety.
10. Get permission to fix up your town's fire hydrants.
11. Make emergency kits for your home.
12. Collect money for a good cause.
13. Create a holiday safety video.
14. Start a campaign against teen suicide.
15. Volunteer at a police station.
16. Become a certified lifeguard and volunteer at a swimming pool.

17. If you're good at fixing bikes, volunteer to teach others how to fix their bikes.
18. Conduct bike safety checks for your neighborhood.
19. Sponsor a drug free post prom event.
20. Organize a drug free pledge campaign.

## Crime Fighting:

1. Start a Crime clue box.
2. Survey your neighborhood to find out what people think are the leading crime causes.
3. Start a neighborhood watch program.
4. Join a community crime prevention organizations such as DARE or McGruff Program.
5. Work with local government to start a victim's aid support service.
6. Create a TV or radio public service announcement against drugs and alcohol.
7. Paint over graffiti.
8. Organize a self defense workshop.
9. Create a billboard for goo graffiti, allow people to paint sections.
10. Produce an anti-crime, anti-drug, anti-violence play.
11. Sponsor a TV blackout event that kids spend time with their family rather than watch TV.
12. Create and distribute a list of hotlines for kids who might need help.

## School Activities:

1. Paint a mural over graffiti.
2. Volunteer to be a teacher's aide during your study hall.
3. Collect coupons and small gift certificates for students who show progress in school work.
4. Hold a used book sale and donate the money.
5. Organize a "get acquainted" lunch for students at your school.
6. Set up a buddy system to match new students with ones who have attended school.
7. Start an anti-smoking campaign that encourages students not to smoke.
8. Encourage the school cafeteria to donate left over food to local homeless shelters.
9. Tutor students who are learning English as a second language.
10. Feature community minded people on a school bulletin board.
11. Make new kid survival kits for new students at the school.
12. Have your class hold an old videotape drive and donate them to your library.
13. Invite local police officers to present a drug awareness or bike safety assembly.
14. In art class, make drawings and decorations for senior citizens.
15. Collect school supplies to give to kids who need them.
16. Form a study group to help younger kids with their school work.
17. Collect children's books for the needy.
18. Volunteer for student council and school government committees.
19. Tape you and your classmates reading a story and give it to a children's hospital.
20. Form a campus safety escort service.
21. Put on an information fair on how little kids can be safe at home.
22. Tutor a student that needs help learning English or some other subject.
23. Conduct a canned goods drive during a school event and donate the items to a local food bank.

## **Back to Activity Guide**

24. Arrange for student music performances during lunch.
25. Make a New Kid Survival Kit.
26. Start a New Buddy Club for new students.
27. Create a play that teaches young children how to stay safe at home while their parents are away.
28. Provide child care during a PTA meeting.
29. Conduct a seatbelt check at school as students leave the parking lot.
30. Organize a safe walk to school event.
31. Recognize teachers during National Education Week.
32. Volunteer to be part of a school flag raising ceremony.
33. Assist an after-school little league or other sports program for younger children.
34. Volunteer to serve as a crossing guard before and after school.
35. Set up a volunteer referral service between your school or organization and other community organizations.
36. Write or make a picture book to read to a younger youth.
37. Inspect school playgrounds for hazards.
38. Write a proposal for a sports safety clinic to your coach and school officials.
39. Organize a Safe Walk Service to escort young children to and from schools.
40. Make simple reading and math flash cards for a preschool or day care center.
41. Organize a reading hour for children at your local school or library.

### **Government**

1. Telephone residents and encourage them to register to vote.
2. Provide a voter pick up or transportation service for seniors.
3. Campaign for a candidate who is running for an office.
4. Organize a public issues forum for candidates.
5. Contact your juvenile court system. Find out if they have a "Kids in Court" program to match older kids who have been in court as abuse victims with younger kids who are facing a court experience.
6. Go door to door to register votes.
7. Design and paint a community mural.
8. Become an advocate. Contact your legislators on issues close to your heart.
9. Contact a local organization about donating flags to public institutions.

### **Helping the Hungry and/or Homeless:**

1. Help cook and/or serve a meal at homeless shelter.
2. During National Nutrition month in March, organize a nutrition awareness campaign.
3. Organize a food scavenger hunt to collect food for the needy.
4. Alter and repair clothes for the needy, elderly and homeless.
5. Gather clothing from your neighbor and donate it to a local shelter.
6. Make "I Care" kits with combs, toothbrushes, shampoo, etc. for homeless people.
7. Bake bread on National Bread Day in November and deliver to the hungry, homeless or just your neighbors.
8. Help with repairs at a local homeless shelter.
9. Donate art supplies to kids in a homeless shelter.
10. Make a care package with mittens, socks, T-shirts, etc. for a child at a homeless shelter.
11. Collect grocery coupons to give a local food bank.
12. If your community doesn't have a food bank, work with local officials to start one.

13. Clip coupons and give them at your local food pantry or homeless shelter.
14. Pack and hand out food at a food bank.
15. Organize a neighborhood group to plant, tend and harvest a vegetable garden.
16. Donate the produce to a food bank.
17. Sponsor a food drive at your school or parent's workplace or business.
18. Prepare a home-cooked meal for the residents of a nearby homeless shelter.
19. Bake a batch of cookies and deliver them to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
20. Raid your closet and attic to find toys and clothes to donate to a homeless shelter.
21. Assist with sorting and organizing items donated to a homeless shelter.
22. Food drive - set up collection bins in stores, banks, movie theaters, and schools.
23. Start a program to help poor people build their own houses.
24. Assist in a shelter day-care room, taking care of children while parents look for jobs.
25. Help raise money for Reading Is Fundamental Open Book Program - Have a Read-a-Thon or Book Auction.
26. Take homeless children on outings.
27. Make first aid kits for homeless shelters.
28. Contact a homeless shelter in your community and see if they already have a reading center and need help to keep the project going.
29. Set up a Saturday Reading Hour where you visit a homeless shelter once a month, bringing books to share and leave behind.
30. Collect items to deliver to homeless shelters (blankets, sheets, towels, toys, books, disposable diapers.)
31. Become a Big Buddy for one or more of the children at the homeless shelter.
32. Find out about low-cost housing in your area for the homeless people.
33. Contact job training and placement centers in your community.

### **For Those with Special Needs:**

1. Volunteer to help at a Special Olympics event.
2. Set up a buddy system for kids with special needs at your school.
3. Raise money for Braille or large print books for blind or visually impaired people.
4. Volunteer at an agency that works with children with disabilities.
5. Read books or the newspaper on tape for blind or visually impaired people.
6. Make gifts with friends for kids in the hospital.
7. Prepare sack lunches and deliver them to homeless or homebound people.
8. Bring toys to children in the cancer ward of a hospital.
9. Work with physically challenged kinds on an art project.
10. Build a ramp for a person in a wheelchair so it is easier for them to get in and out of their house.
11. Clean a neighbor's yard who can not do it themselves.
12. Get your class to put together a library at a children's hospital.
13. Give valentines and other cards in individuals who are in the local hospital.
14. Hold an Athletics Contest.
15. Visit a rehabilitation center. Learn about patients with special needs. Volunteer to help.

### **Neighborhood Enhancement:**

1. Help neighbors paint and repair their homes.
2. Arrange for the local health department to conduct neighborhood health checks.
3. Volunteer to teach classes on a sport you enjoy and know a lot about.
4. Contact Habitat for Humanity to see how you can support them in your community.
5. Work with the local health department to set up an immunization day or clinic to immunize children against childhood diseases.
6. Organize a newcomers group in your neighborhood to welcome new families.
7. Produce a neighborhood newspaper.
8. Train to become a guide for your local tourist bureau.
9. Make maps of local parks, libraries or historic sites.
10. Research local historic sites and provide the research to visitor's bureau.
11. Petition your city to make drinking fountains and/or restrooms in public areas available.
12. Volunteer to clean up trash at a community event or county fair.
13. Make signs to label community buildings and sites of interest.
14. Set up an art exhibit at a local business, school or nursing home.
15. Design a mural or quilt highlighting important aspects of the community.
16. Organize a campaign to paint storm drains to prevent dumping of hazardous materials.
17. Set up an informational display at a local library.
18. Volunteer to help with Vacation Bible School.
19. Organize a community chorus, orchestra or band.
20. Volunteer to help set up for a community event.
21. Distribute leaf bags during the fall encouraging residents to clean leaves from their streets and yards.
22. Adopt a pothole and raise funds to repair it.
23. Plan native flowers or plants along highways.
24. Adopt a billboard and use it for a public service announcement.
25. Campaign for additional lighting along poorly lighted streets.
26. Clean up vacant lot.
27. Collect supplies for persons who have been in a fire or natural disaster.
28. Help fix a run-down playground.
29. Start a yard of the week award for your neighborhood.
30. Participate in an Annual parade.
31. Spruce up and paint the community or youth center.
32. Plant a community garden. Adopt a town monument and keep it clean.
33. Clean an elderly neighbor's driveway and sidewalk after a snowfall.
34. Clean up after a natural disaster.
35. Organize a local blood drive with the American Red Cross.
36. Plant flowers at town hall.
37. Organize a campaign to raise money to buy and install new playground equipment for a park.
38. Survey community agencies to learn the leading causes of accidents in your community then design a campaign to reduce accidents.
39. Paint a mural or clean up a local park.
40. Plant flowers in public areas that could use some color.
41. Mow the lawns and care for the plants of neighbors who are away on vacation.

42. Conduct a community accessibility check to identify potential barriers for individuals with disabilities.
43. Plan a disabilities day where friends or classmates are given a physical disability for day and are forced to function during the day.
44. Read aloud to a person who is visually impaired.
45. Build park benches.
46. Paint fences or park benches.
47. Help winterize homes in a poverty-stricken neighborhood.
48. Lend a helping hand at a local community center.
49. Identify corners where bushes and trees make it difficult for drivers to see.
50. Conduct a neighborhood drive to collect used furniture.

### **Performing Arts & Sports:**

1. Form a band with your friends and give free concerts.
2. If you play an instrument, help a friend learn to play.
3. Serve as an usher at a sporting event.
4. Get your marital arts or dance class to give a demonstration at a youth center, nursing home or school.
5. Write and produce a play about a current issue.
6. Serve as a coach for a youth sports team.
7. Teach a friend how to in-line skate.
8. Start a collection drive for old sports equipment and donate it to needy families.
9. Get friends to assist at a sporting event.
10. Provide refreshments at a local race or sporting event

### **The Environment:**

1. Plant a garden or tree where the whole neighborhood can enjoy it.
2. Set up a recycling system for your home and participate in your neighborhood curbside recycling pick-up.
3. Organize a car pooling campaign in your neighborhood to cut down on air pollution.
4. Set up a seed or a plant exchange in your neighborhood.
5. Grow fresh flowers and deliver them to someone to brighten their day.
6. Pick up a trail during National Trail Day in June.
7. Make bird feeders for public places.
8. Collect Old phone books in your neighborhood for recycling.
9. Adopt an acre of a park or a mile of roadside to keep clean.
10. Elect a family "energy watchdog" to shut off lights, radios, and TV's when not in use.
11. Help everyone in your family conserve water.
12. Clean up trash along a river or in a park.
13. Create a habitat for wildlife.
14. Create a campaign to encourage biking and walking.
15. Test the health of the water in your local lakes, rivers or streams.
16. Got places to be? Burn energy on your bike instead of taking the family car.
17. Participate in the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program, 703-790-4000.
18. Start a butterfly garden at home, at a community center, senior home or school.
19. Sponsor an environmental slogan contest in school.
20. Build a bluebird trail.
21. Collect aluminum cans and donate the money to a favorite charity.
22. Get together with friends and make conservation posters for the community center.
23. Encourage your parents to buy products made from recycled materials.

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24. Conduct an energy audit at your school.
25. Monitor the indoor air quality.
26. Organize an asbestos check.
27. Test the drinking water for lead.
28. Adopt an acre of rainforest.
29. Plant a commemorative tree to honor someone.
30. Create a children's nature garden, labeling plants and trees and scheduling guided tours.
31. Replace trees that have died.
32. Take household toxic waste to a proper disposal facility.
33. Check indoor radon levels.
34. Adopt highways and clean up clutter.
35. Volunteer to separate recyclables.
36. Organize a hazardous waste collection.
37. Start a recycling center at school.
38. Host a recycling fair.
39. Hold an invention contest with entries made out of recycled goods.
40. Form a volunteer lawn mowing service with your friends.
41. If you see a tree that's in trouble, try to save it. Pamper it, water it, or don't water it as the case may be. Find out what's wrong with it and how to make it better.
42. Pick up litter.
43. Use a lunch box instead of throwaway bags.
44. Practice the 3 R's in your house: Reduce, recycle, reuse.
45. Adopt a park with your friends and keep it clean.
46. Bring a backpack when you shop or reuse those little plastic sacks.
47. Clean up a beach or riverbed.
48. Start a compost pile and encourage your family to use it!
49. Plant trees.
50. Plant a commemorative tree to honor someone.
51. Ask your school to use recycled paper.
52. Repair homes or abandoned buildings.
53. Start an Environmental Club.
54. Hold a recycling contest.
55. Check homes and public buildings for lead based paint.
56. Clear a new trail at a nature center or park.
18. Get a group together to sing or present a play at a nursing home.
19. Do something creative on the holidays for the Senior Citizens (cook a meal, bake cookies, dress up in costumes, etc.)
20. Take a pet to a nursing home.
21. Do art projects with people in nursing homes (Finger painting.)
22. Organize a sing-a-long.
23. Offer to read to people in a nursing home.
24. Write letters to people in a nursing home, if you can't go and visit.
25. Teach an elderly neighbor a new card game.
26. Call up elderly people who live on their own to see if they need anything.
27. Teach your senior friends how to use computers.
28. Get with friends and form a Clean Up Club to help elderly with their house cleaning.
29. Be a friend to the senior citizens.

### Helping Animals:

1. Volunteer at an animal shelter. Help clean up, play with the animals, or do whatever's needed to make the shelter a nicer "temporary" home for the animals.
2. Become a foster parent. Some shelters have temporary foster care programs. You take care of a pet until they can find a permanent home for it.
3. Control animal populations.
4. Find out about raising a dog for persons with disabilities.
5. Raise money for pet causes by organizing a pet photo session.
6. Organize a pet show for a local nursing home.
7. With the support of a vet clinic, organize a neuter and spay campaign to get animals neutered and spayed at a reduced rate.
8. Set up donation centers for animal products to be donated to needy.
9. Learn about pet therapy and do pet therapy with your animal at nursing homes and day care centers.
10. Form a "we love animals" club and volunteer to care for animals at a children's zoo.
11. Plan a special awareness event during Be Kind to Animals Week in May.
12. Organize a community dog wash.
13. Volunteer to clean out animal shelters at homeless shelter.
14. Collect and sort newspapers to donate to a local animal shelter.
15. Collect food and supplies needed for a local zoo, animal shelter or food bank.
16. Adopt a Zoo Animal.
17. Learn about pet therapy and do pet therapy at local nursing homes or child care centers.
18. Find homes in shelters for abandoned pets.
19. Talk to a Wildlife Conservationist or Game and Parks official. Check out their volunteer opportunities.
20. Clean wooden duck house before each nesting season.
21. Care for a neighbor's pet.
22. Find out about volunteer opportunities at a local wildlife sanctuary or survival center.

*These 366 Community Service Ideas were compiled by Janet Fox, 4-H Extension Specialist.*

*References and suggested resources:*

- Kid's Guide to Service Projects by Barbara Luis
- The Kids Can Help Book by Susan Logan
- 1998 National Youth Service Day 10th Anniversary
- Youth Service Project Ideas



## 99 Community Service Ideas

1. Hold an egg hunt for kids in a shelter.
2. Go "4-H Extreme": Try a community service activity you've never done before.
3. Form a childcare group in your community.
4. Donate time or money to your local Red Cross.
5. Create a senior prom for a local senior home.
6. Collect baby equipment and supplies for new parents w/ limited resources.
7. Fill a laundry basket with household items for a relocated homeless family.
8. Help build a Habitat for Humanity home for a low-income family.
9. Give your time to a younger child – plan a Harry Potter or other book-themed party at the local library.
10. Have a garage sale and donate the money you earn to a charity.
11. Hold a rally to encourage more young people to be involved in their communities.
12. Organize a give center where those who cannot afford gifts can get clothes, toys and other items. This is a place where people can find gifts to give to other people.
13. Mow an elderly neighbor's lawn.
14. Participate in a "walk a kid home from school" program.
15. Participate in a violence prevention project in your area.
16. Teach a card game to an elderly person.
17. Lead a bingo game for nursing home residents.
18. Plan a "private volunteer recognition party" with live music and food.
19. Repair and donate toys to a shelter.
20. Organize a mitten, hat and scarf drive.
21. Learn how to play a game such as chess and teach someone else how to play it, too.
22. Volunteer for a cause you believe in.
23. Collect, repair and donate used bikes to a community agency.
24. Make posters or displays promoting 4-H to put in local store windows.
25. Walk dogs from the local animal shelter.
26. Make sandwiches and cookies for a soup kitchen.
27. Volunteer to help at your county fair.
28. Collect pet food for an animal shelter.
29. Make, send or deliver Valentine's cards to veterans.
30. Make a quilt to give to a museum or an elderly person.
31. Collect blankets for a local shelter.
32. Arrange to donate your old working computer to an after-school program.
33. Set up a pen pal relationship with someone from another country and share ways you can help your neighborhoods.
34. If your community doesn't have a food bank, work with others to start one.
35. Visit someone who needs a friend.
36. Help train Special Olympics athletes.
37. Set up a book exchange so kids can trade books they've read for ones they haven't.
38. Learn American Sign Language and teach it to someone else.
39. Sponsor a health fair that offers free blood pressure, vision and hearing tests.
40. Hold a puppet show for hospitalized kids – make them laugh.
41. Become a library helper.
42. Organize a river cleanup.
43. Photograph a local event and donate the pictures to your local historical museum.
44. Build birdhouses and donate them to a nature center.
45. Work with the fire department on safety programs.
46. Sponsor a bike-a-thon and give away bike safety prizes.
47. Find out what a homeless shelter needs and then just "do it."

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48. Connect with another club and do a joint community service activity.
49. Help a kid by helping a parent.
50. Fill bags or baskets with summer games for kids and give to a parks department.
51. Help build and fill shelves at a food bank.
52. Organize a car wash to raise money for a cause.
53. Sponsor a babysitting class for a group of middle schoolers.
54. Organize and promote a community-wide cleanup week.
55. Trick or treat for canned goods and donate the collected items to a local charity.
56. Tell someone about what you have learned in 4-H.
57. Highlight your club's community service activities on a Web site.
58. Research a community issue and create a display or flyers on it to share with community members.
59. Volunteer at your local humane society.
60. Teach seniors your dances and ask them to teach you theirs.
61. Collect used sports equipment that you can donate to families with limited resources.
62. Sponsor food drives for a domestic violence shelter.
63. Build a playground for kids with physical disabilities.
64. Teach tobacco prevention activities at a camp.
65. Deliver demonstrations on health and exercise in schools.
66. Update the signs on and refurbish a park trail.
67. Adopt an acre of rainforest.
68. Teach someone to read.
69. Improve your environment by starting an advocacy group and sharing information with your town council.
70. Make pajamas for kids at a youth center. Ask your local sheriff's department for its location.
71. Make a presentation about youth who are involved in community service activities.
72. Start a Web site for your club or group.
73. Photograph old barns and homesteads in your community.
74. Coach a youth sports team.
75. Mail your letters with stamps celebrating different ethnic cultures.
76. Donate books or personal items to teens at a local juvenile detention center.
77. Test the health of the water in your local lakes, rivers or streams.
78. Organize a senior garden.
79. Arrange a clown performance for people with special needs.
80. Organize a hunter safety program in your community.
81. Plant a tree.
82. Celebrate other cultures with art exhibits, performances and poetry readings.
83. Build flower boxes for Habitat for Humanity homes.
84. Write letters for an elderly person.
85. Raise a Leader Dog for the blind or a service dog.
86. Learn your rights and responsibilities as a citizen or resident.
87. Perform an act of kindness for a friend.
88. Give some of your allowance to a charity you believe in.
89. Deliver holiday meals to the senior citizen group.
90. Collect crazy and fun hats for kids receiving chemotherapy treatments.
91. Clip coupons and leave them at a local food pantry.
92. Help a youth worker.
93. Give away hugs.
94. Donate old eyeglasses to an organization that recycles them for people with limited resources.
95. Paint park benches.
96. Organize a "walk a kid to school day" and learn about the kids' neighborhood.
97. Identify a skill you have and use a volunteer experience to help improve it.
98. Talk to police officers to gather after-school ideas for kids and teens in the community.
99. Thank the care givers in your family – do something special for them.

# Ohio 4-H Clubs advisors handbook

## Community Service Project Ideas

### CITIZENSHIP

- Advocate for youth issues with governing bodies.
- Organize a Holiday Gift Center – where those who can't afford to buy gifts for their families can go to get gifts, clothes, toys, household items, food. Contact schools, doctors, and churches to refer needy families.
- Organize a community service class at the fair, where all 4-H'ers are encouraged to make and exhibit items that will later be donated to charities.
- Write a proposal asking that a vacant lot be turned into a playground or garden. Follow up, and offer to help build the playground or plant and care for the garden.
- Write a proclamation for community beautification week. Get the Mayor to sign it. Distribute copies to newspapers, radio stations, organizations, and businesses. Get kids to volunteer.

### CULTURAL EDUCATION

- Adopt a new immigrant family – help them connect to the community.
- Make ethnic holiday cookies for shelters, hospitals, or nursing homes.
- Organize a cultural festival to celebrate and share diversity (and food)!

### GLOBAL EDUCATION

- Investigate needs, publicize, collect and process items needed for disaster relief.
- Trick or Treat for UNICEF.

### INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

- Make monthly visits to a Senior Pal (non-relatives, not living in a nursing home).
- Establish a once-a-week visit and activity time at a nursing home.
- Collect oral histories from the residents of a nursing home, print and share them.
- Help an elderly neighbor – mow, pull weeds, shovel snow, paint, etc.

### UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL LIMITATIONS

- Older 4-H'ers conduct special 4-H program for institutionalized handicapped.
- Do a presentation or activity for a class of physically or mentally challenged students.

### COMMUNICATION ARTS

- Read or tell stories to preschool children.
- Tutor younger kids to improve their reading & writing skills.

### PERFORMING ARTS

- Hold a talent show in your local community.
- Go caroling at the homes of the elderly and shut-ins.

### VISUAL ARTS

- Make holiday cards for people in nursing homes, hospitals – year round.
- Make small seasonal decorations for shut-ins, nursing homes, hospitals.
- Design and paint a mural in a public place with permission!

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT, CHILD CARE AND BABYSITTING**

- Volunteer to help in preschools, after school child care.
- Lead a 4-H project for kids in after school programs.

**CLOTHING AND TEXTILES**

- Recycle discarded clothing into useful items for the needy.
- Make quilts for overseas, homeless.

**CONSUMER EDUCATION**

- Deliver demonstrations, presentations on consumer issues.
- Organize, promote, and volunteer in food recovery efforts to benefit those in need.
- Organize a neighborhood crime watch.

**HOME ENVIRONMENT**

- Help shut-ins with needed home maintenance, and renovation.
- Clean up or paint over graffiti.

**PARENTING AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION**

- Volunteer to help with childcare for those who can't afford to pay.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

- Deliver stewardship presentations to elementary classes.
- Participate in a stream clean-up.
- Help plant trees in the community or as buffers along the stream.
- Encourage homeowners to test home well drinking water supplies.

**ENERGY**

- Deliver demonstrations on energy conservation to schools, PTA, service clubs, etc.
- Offer to do home surveys to advise on weatherproofing and energy conservation.

**FORESTS, RANGELAND AND WILDLIFE**

- Organize an Arbor Day Celebration – plant trees in public areas. Get permission!
- Plant wildlife food plots in public and private lands. Get permission!
- Advocate for parks, greenbelts.
- Plant wildflowers in public right-a-ways. Get permission!
- Establish demonstration plot of native plants in a park. Get permission!

**OUTDOOR EDUCATION/RECREATION**

- Conduct a day camp for youth in poor neighborhoods. Partner with a youth organization.
- Organize a "Volksmarch" of historic parts of your area, at a beautiful time of year.
- Collect for, build and install playground equipment.

**WASTE MANAGEMENT**

- Organize an Adopt a Highway Campaign.
- Promote a special summer week for citywide cleanup.
- Demonstrate home and yard composting throughout the community.
- Get your school to start a paper or aluminum-recycling program.

**CHEMICAL HEALTH**

- Present anti-drug use programs for schools.
- Organize "kick butts" (anti-smoking) program at school.

**MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

- Advocate or raise funds for mental & emotional health services in the community.
- Organize and staff a youth crisis hotline.

**FOODS AND NUTRITION**

- Take food baskets to shut-ins.
- Help cook and serve at homeless center or shelter.
- Promote and take part in food recovery programs in restaurants, etc. for the needy.

**PHYSICAL HEALTH**

- Deliver presentations on health and exercise to teens, schools, service clubs, etc.
- Establish a fitness course in a public park. Get permission!
- Organize a bike hike. Share health tips with participants.
- Sponsor a community blood drive.

**SAFETY**

- Present safety demonstrations and programs at schools.
- Conduct safety surveys at homes, farms, tagging safety hazards.
- Sponsor a hunter safety course in the community.
- Campaign for streetlights or crosswalks at dangerous intersections.

**CAREER EXPLORATION AND EMPLOYABILITY**

- Volunteer with service agencies that allow you to explore careers of interest.

**CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

- Serve on church, community boards and committees.

**ECONOMICS, BUSINESS AND MARKETING**

- Help organize a benefit auction.

**INTRODUCTORY 4-H PROJECTS**

- Clean up a public place, such as a park, school grounds, courthouse lawn. Get Permission!

**HOBBIES AND COLLECTIBLES**

- Display your collection at a nursing home.
- Find a younger kid who needs a friend, and introduce them to your hobby

**LEADERSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

- Serve on church, community boards and committees.
- Serve as chairs/superintendents at the county fair.
- Serve as a junior leader in your club.

**LEISURE EDUCATION**

- Provide special holiday activities for nursing homes.
- Assess community leisure needs, campaign with authorities for needed activities.

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Identify something you are not good at and volunteer to improve your skills.
- Volunteer with groups with whom you share an interest.

**READING LITERACY**

- Collect used children's books and make them available to those in need.
- Set up a book exchange. Read or tutor younger children.

**SOCIAL RECREATION SKILLS**

- Lead bingo and other games for nursing home residents.
- Organize and conduct community celebrations.

### **VALUES CLARIFICATION/CHARACTER EDUCATION**

- Send letters to the editor and call in shows reacting to local concerns of youth.
- Give testimony before city, county, school boards & councils to address problems facing youth.

### **AGRICULTURE EDUCATION**

- Conduct a farm day for nursing home residents, schools, day care centers, etc.
- Assist with agriculture-related community events.
- Conduct a chick embryology program at a school, pre-school, day care center.

### **ANIMALS**

- Take pets to nursing homes.
- Raise guide dogs or helper puppies.
- Volunteer at the animal shelter.
- Get involved with the humane society.

### **PLANTS**

- Establish flower and vegetable gardens at nursing home. Help residents care for them.
- Establish kid community gardens in a vacant lot. Get Permission!
- Plant flowerbeds in public places. Get Permission!

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY LITERACY**

- Present science demonstrations in elementary schools.
- Tutor younger kids who have trouble in science.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING**

- Repair and paint a house for a needy family.
- Mentor young children to introduce them to computers.
- Make wooden holiday gifts for needy children.

### **PHYSICAL SCIENCES**

- Demonstrate model rocketry to younger youth and explain the science behind it.

Written by Nadine Fogt, OSU Extension, 4-H Educator, Fayette County.

## UNDERSTANDING MY SKILLS

Reflection Activity

To be completed in February

What skills (things you are good at) have you learned from Project Impact? Please check all that apply from the list below.

- Communicate/speak appropriately with peers
- Communicate/speak appropriately with teachers
- Talk in front of a large group
- Make decisions by yourself
- Make decisions together with your classmates
- Solve a problem or a disagreement
- Dress appropriately (have a neat and clean appearance)
- Be on time
- Speak clearly and politely
- Be courteous and respectful
- Be a good listener (does not interrupt others)
- Use good eye contact (look at the face of another person every few seconds when talking)
- Ask questions when you do not understand
- Overcome a fear (Do something even when you feel afraid)
- Take initiative (start to do a task on your own, volunteered to complete a task)
- Complete a task when asked
- Be enthusiastic (have a positive attitude, show interest)
- Cooperation--Get along well with classmates
- Cooperation--Get along well with teachers
- Participation—contributed ideas and suggestions
- Participated in group decision making
- Talked with a friend about working
- Talked with a family member about working
- Met someone new
- Thought about what kind of job you might like
- Solved a problem
- Voiced my opinion

Other

Now, choose **one skill** that you checked from the list. Describe the situation where you learned the skill and what happened. You may write down your answer, draw a picture of your answer, take photos to show your answer, or create a collage.

At your next Project Impact meeting, present your work to your classmates and teachers.

## **Exploring Careers Through Volunteering**

Experience is the equalizer! Deciding on a job or career path is an important decision because of the amount of time individuals spend working during a lifetime.

Although money is an important consideration, individuals should also consider the intangibles offered from a job or career like personal satisfaction, social impact, ability to improve individual skills, room for advancement.

To gain a clearer understanding of the demands of a particular job or career, finding volunteer opportunities that can approximate the actual job or career can provide invaluable information that can lead to a meaningful career.

In the space provided below write down the title of four jobs or careers you are interested in exploring and a corresponding community volunteer opportunity that can provide you with more information about that job or career. Additionally, identify a skill that is part of that job or career that can be learned or practiced from your volunteer experience.

Job/Career	Volunteer Opportunity	Learning or Practicing Skills
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

## Community Service Project Checklist

The following community service project checklist provides general items for consideration in preparing to complete a community service project. Blank spaces have been included for additional considerations. Place a Y for yes or NA for not applicable on the line provided for each checklist item.

1.  If working with school youth have permission slips to participate in the community service project been received from all students including emergency contact information for parents or guardians?
2.  Have photo/media release forms been for all participants been completed and secured?
3.  Has transportation been arranged?
4.  Have all needed resources/supplied for the service project been identified and secured? Please attach a separate listing of all needed and secured resources.
5.  Have all tasks needing completion during the service project been identified?
6.  Have all volunteers been assigned to task needing completion during the service project?
7.  Have arrangements been made for food and water/drinks if the project will last over the lunch hour?
8.  Have additional precautions been identified and taken for any safety issues that may be associated with the service project?

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9. \_\_\_ Will participants need orientation or training to complete the service project? If yes then who will provide the orientation or training?

10. \_\_\_ Has there been an a site visit to the service project site to determine if there are any potential barriers for participants with disabilities or other consideration regarding setup that need to be planned for and addressed.

11. \_\_\_

12. \_\_\_

13. \_\_\_

14. \_\_\_

15. \_\_\_

## USING MY SKILLS AT WORK

Reflection Activity

To be completed in April

What skills (things you are good at) have you learned from Project Impact? Please check all that apply from the list below

- Communicate/speak appropriately with peers
- Communicate/speak appropriately with teachers
- Talk in front of a large group
- Make decisions by yourself
- Make decisions together with your classmates
- Solve a problem or a disagreement
- Dress appropriately (have a neat and clean appearance)
- Be on time
- Speak clearly and politely
- Be courteous and respectful
- Be a good listener (does not interrupt others)
- Use good eye contact (look at the face of another person every few seconds when talking)
- Ask questions when you do not understand
- Overcome a fear (Do something even when you feel afraid)
- Take initiative (start to do a task on your own, volunteered to complete a task)
- Complete a task when asked
- Be enthusiastic (have a positive attitude, show interest)
- Cooperation--Get along well with classmates
- Cooperation--Get along well with teachers
- Participation—contributed ideas and suggestions
- Participated in group decision making
- Talked with a friend about working
- Talked with a family member about working
- Met someone new
- Thought about what kind of job you might like
- Solved a problem
- Voiced my opinion

Other

Now, choose **one skill** that you checked from the list. Describe your skill and **explain why this skill is important when you are at work**. You may write down your answer, draw a picture of your answer, take photos to show your answer, or create a collage. At your next Project Impact meeting, present your work to your classmates and teachers.

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Project Impact/Service Works Site

Date

Name	Signature	School/Affiliation
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
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14.		
15.		
16.		

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## Project Impact Service Works

Site

Date

Agenda

### **Section 1: Learning About My Community and Myself**

- 1) Learning the purpose of Project Impact.
- 2) Getting to know one another through a career reflection ice breaker activity.
- 3) Learning about AmeriCorps National Service.
- 4) Gain and understanding of how service in AmeriCorps can help prepare individuals for their intended careers using participating members career choice as an example (if multiple members are assisting to facilitate Project Impact, each member should discuss their career choice and how AmeriCorps is preparing them for their career as long as the answers are different). Discuss broadly the impact volunteering and community service has on career exploration and eventual career choice.
- 5) Completing a “Community Mapping Exercise”.
- 6) Completing a “Community Resources and Needs Exercise”.
- 7) Participants choose and design community service project to meet the chosen community need.
- 8) Reflect on what kind of careers are related to the service project.

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**Project Impact Service Works**

Site

Date

Agenda

**Section 2: Serving Others and Exploring Careers**

1. Review what resulted from the last meeting and how participants arrived at choosing a service project to benefit the community.
2. Complete the reflection exercise on what kind of careers/jobs are related to the service project.
3. Identifying tasks and choosing a process and creating a timeline to complete the service project.
4. Identifying resources needed to complete the service project.
5. Reflecting on what kind of employability skills are being learned from planning the service project.

Site

Date

Agenda

### **Section 3: What I Learn from My Experiences**

1. Participants share information from the skills checklist reflection exercise.
2. Continue implementing timeline and related tasks to complete the service project.
3. Have participants identify jobs or careers they are interested in and explore possible volunteer opportunities that can help them learn more about the identified jobs/careers and acquire skills that would help prepare them for employment in that field.

Site

Date

Agenda

#### **Section 4: From Vision to Reality**

1. Review the “Exploring Careers Through Volunteering” reflection worksheet.
2. Finalize and complete “Service Project Checklist”.
3. Complete “Work Skills Reflection Activity” for April.

## Project Impact Service Works

Site

Date

Agenda

### **Section 5: What Changed; For Me, For My Community?**

1. Review and complete the “Work Skills Reflection Activity for April”.
2. Reflection Activity: What Changed; For Me, For My Community?
3. Reflection activity: Describe your ideal job/career.

## Icebreakers, Energizers & Team-building Activities

### The Basics

This section includes a variety of icebreakers, energizers and team-building activities for use at your meetings. These are some suggestions on ways to have some fun, establish trust and build shared experiences between group members.

Team building activities and icebreakers are fun ways to start the process of building a strong team based on positive relationships. They can allow group members to get to know each other, practice different styles of communication, make group decisions, solve problems, work with people they wouldn't ordinarily, test leadership skills, and laugh together. Energizers can help renew the group or release tension that may develop.

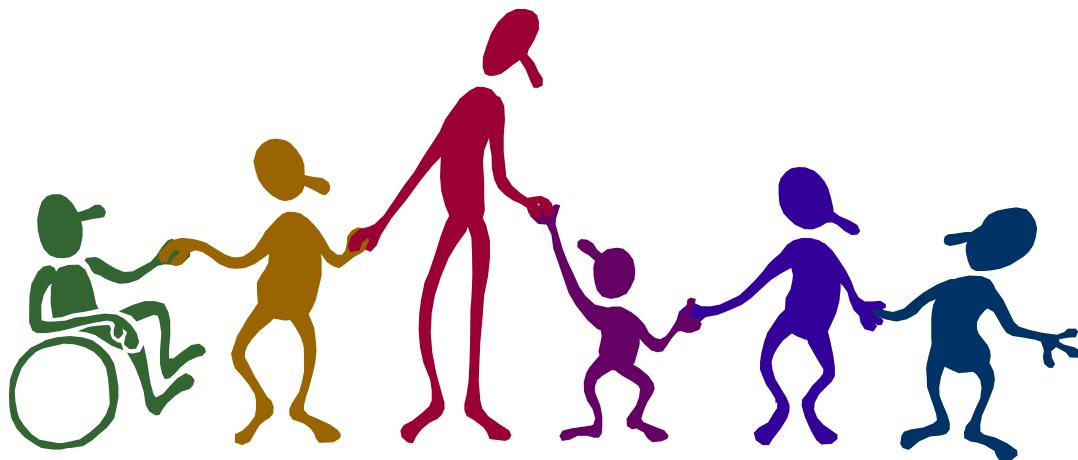
Initially, the adult leader assumes responsibility for creating a safe comfortable group environment, however it is essential that the youth are part of maintaining positive group energy. As the group becomes more established, youth can assume the role of planning and facilitating energizers and team-building activities. This is an excellent way to involve youth in the group and to foster leadership skills. The adult may need to work with the youth to develop skills in assessing the group so they can effectively plan and facilitate activities. The Awesome Activities tip sheet included in the *Leadership Development* section is a valuable resource for youth to help plan and facilitate activities successfully.

Some key points to keep in mind when planning team-building activities include:

- **Youth need to feel part of the group.** In order for youth to have a positive experience and remain active in the group, they need to feel like they belong.
- **Establishing trusting relationships between youth takes time and commitment.** Have a variety of on-going opportunities for youth to get to know each other and work together in different ways.
- **It helps to start out with less threatening activities.** Touching each other (eg. holding hands, etc.) can be uncomfortable for some youth. You might try out an activity where the youth select their own partner or use small groups, and advance from there. Of course, youth always have the right to pass.

**Additional Resources:**

- TRIBES book (See *Community Resources* section)
- Big Book of Icebreakers and Team Building (See the *Community Resources* Appendix)
- Ohio State University Extension: Building Dynamic Groups.  
[www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~bdg/word\\_docs/f/C06.doc](http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~bdg/word_docs/f/C06.doc)
- [www.residentassistant.com](http://www.residentassistant.com)



## **Icebreakers**

### **Group Profile**

Materials: newsprint, markers, tape

Preparation: Trace an outline of the human body on newsprint. List the following topics outside the outline next to the coordinating body part:

Head: dreams or goals we have (for our community)

Ears: things we like to listen to

Eyes: How we like other people to see us

Shoulders: problems young people may have to face.

Hands: things we like to make or do (with our hands)

Stomach: things we like to eat

Heart: things we feel strongly about

Right foot: places we would like to go



Directions:

Post outline of body on the wall. Invite participants to come up to the poster and write things or pictures to represent each area for them. This is done graffiti style, free form.

After everyone has had a chance to participate, ask for volunteers to report to the group on what is listed.

Discuss:

- What are common interests? Shared goals? Dreams?
- Were there any themes?
- What are the things we feel strongly about? How do these relate to our group's work?

### **Honey, I Love You**

The group forms and sits in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to start the game. That player approaches one person and says, "Honey, I love you." That person must respond by saying, "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile." If that person smiles while speaking these words, he/she becomes "it." If the person does not smile, the player who started out must approach a new person until he/she makes someone smile. "It" is not allowed to touch a player as he/she speaks, but anything else is fair play. This is a funny one, but participants should have worked together first and have some level of comfort with each other for it to work!

### Incorporation

Explain that this game is about forming and reforming groups as quickly as possible. Don't worry if you are not even into the first group by the time the next group is called, just head to the next group. The idea is to meet many different groups of people as fast as possible. Get into a group of three...go!

*Other suggestions:*

- A group of five with everyone having the same color eyes as you.
- With the same last digit in their phone number as yours.
- Wearing the same size shoe as you.
- Get into a group of three people and make the letter "H" with your bodies.
- Find everyone else born in the same month as you
- Think of the first vowel in your first name, find four with the same vowel.

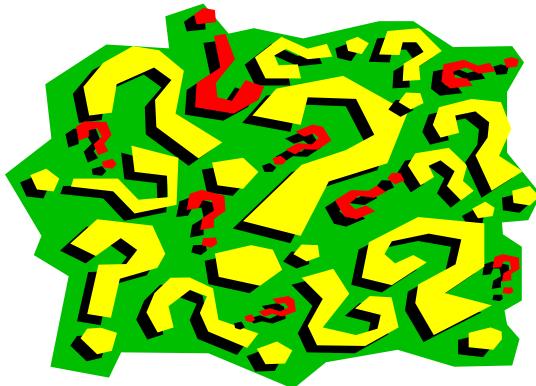
Reference: Martin, R.R.; Weber, P.L.; Henderson, W. E.; Lafontaine, K. R.; Sachs, R. E.; Roth, J.; Cox, K. J.; Schaffner, D. (1987). Incorporation (Section 2 p.9). LASER D.I.S.C. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Extension.

### Name Game

Form a circle with everyone standing up. The first person says their name and makes a motion or Symbol to represent him/herself. The next person repeats the name and symbol of the person before them, then says their names and adds their symbol. The next person repeats the name and symbol of everyone before them and then adds their own. Repeat until everyone in the circle has gone.

### Question Game

Each person writes down a question they want answered in the group. Roll up the questions into a ball. Each person throws her/his question to someone else. Take turns answering the questions. You can have more than one round and ask students to ask questions that increase risk. (It's a good idea to briefly discuss positive risk taking and getting to know people in the group).



### Raffle Ticket

Preparation: Create and make copies of raffle tickets; get a box to use for the drawing

Distribute raffle tickets. Instruct participants to find their partner based on their answer to first question on their raffle ticket. Participants complete the rest of the raffle ticket with their partner and put it in the drawing box. After everyone has completed their ticket draw a winning pair and give out small prize.

Then each person introduces his or her partner saying the person's name and something he/she is good at. Then the partner introduces the other person and shares their partner's favorite thing to do.

### Raffle Ticket\*

\*Find a partner who has the same zodiac sign as you (i.e. Gemini, Sagittarius...). You fill out one side of this ticket and have your partner fill out the other side. Then put this ticket in the raffle box. If this ticket is chosen you both win a prize!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are two things that you have in common with each other?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are two things you are good at?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. If you had the power to change one thing in your school or community, what would it be?

4. What is the biggest reason you want to participate in Youth Power this summer? Circle one.

- a. TAP is fun
- b. To have something to do this summer
- c. To meet new people
- d. Earn money
- e. Help make Bay Point better for me and other teens
- f. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Sign Up Here**

Materials: 6-10 pieces of large newsprint, tape, and pencils.

Preparation: Put pieces of the newsprint around the room. From the list of topics below, write a different topic of interest on the top of each newsprint. Also include a related question you want people to answer about each topic. (Topics can vary according to the age and interests of group involved):

- I like to speak or perform in public. (What group(s) have you spoken to or performed in front of?)
- I like to work on computers. (What programs do you know?)
- I can speak a language other than English. (Which?)
- I would be excited to travel in the U. S. or abroad. (Where? Where have you been?)
- Making friends is an important part of my life. (Who are your best friends?)
- My family is one of the things that makes me happy. (Something I like about them?)
- There are things that I would like to change in this school. (What?)
- There are things that I would like to change in our community. (What?)
- The voting age should be moved from 18 to 21. (If you could vote, what law would vote to change?)
- I have organized or helped to organize an event, celebration, fund-raiser, meeting, wedding, or conference. (Describe.)

Instruct participants to walk around the room, look at the different topics and sign their name on any of the sheets that represent topics in which they have an interest, and to make a comment answering the question on each sheet.

After everyone has had a chance to sign the sheets, ask one person that has signed each sheet to read the names of the people that have signed that sheet and any comments.

#### **Discussion:**

What interests does the group have? How many different interests are represented in the group? Which chart had the greatest interest? Which chart had the least interest? What does this say about the group as a whole? Is there a pattern? What comments are made?

Synthesis: Explain how these skills are important for community organizing and how each of them will contribute their interests and skills making the group stronger.

**Two Truths and a Lie**

Give the group some time to write down two things about themselves that are true, and one thing that is a "lie." Each group member will then share these facts about themselves and the rest of the group has to figure out which "fact" is actually a "lie."

**What's in a Bag?**

Materials Needed: 4 bags each with a small treat inside

**Directions:**

- Display four bags in an area where everyone can see them. Ask for 3 volunteers to participate in activity.
- Each volunteer selects a bag only on the basis of looks.
- Next, each volunteer can take a turn picking up the bag. They can keep their bag, trade with someone else or trade for the extra.
- Third, each volunteer can feel the object to try and figure out what it is. Each can trade with someone else or trade for the extra.
- Finally, each person gets to open the bag and see what's inside. Each has the opportunity to trade with someone else or trade for the extra.

**Process questions:**

- How did you first decide on the bag?
- How did each new piece of information influence your decision?
- How do you feel about the decision you made?
- How do other people in the group make decisions?
- How does this relate to our group?

**Who Am I?**

The leader tapes the name of a famous person on the back of each participant. (i.e. Fred Flintstone, Mary Lou Retton, Bill Clinton, etc.) The group member is not to see who is taped to their back. Their task is to find out who they are. The participants go around the room asking others **only** yes or no questions. If the member receives a "yes" answer, they can continue to ask that person questions until they receive a "no" answer. Then they must continue on to ask questions to someone else. When a group member figures out who they are, they take off the tag, put it on the front of their shirt, and write their own name on it. That person can then help others find out who they are. The exercise concludes when everyone has discovered who they are.

Variation: Use names of famous pairs (like Syskell and Ebert, Bert and Ernie) and do a partner activity after the game.

## **Energizers**

### **Chalkboard Sentences**

Tell participants they will be competing to see which team is the first to complete a group sentence. Next, divide participants into two teams. If the group contains an uneven number, one person may compete twice. The leader sets up blackboards or newsprint for each team. The teams then line up 10 feet from their board. After giving the first person in each team's line a piece of chalk or marker, explain the rules of the game. The rules are: Each team member needs to add one word to the sentence. Players take turns; after they go to the board and write one word, they run back to give the next player the marker, and then go to the end of the line. (The sentence must contain the same number of words as there are members on the team.) A player may not add a word between words that have already been written. After, discuss the value of anticipatory thinking and the importance of individual cooperating in a group task).

### **String Balloons**

Materials: String, 10-12" balloons, and a whistle

Give participants a piece of 12" string and a balloon to blow up. After blowing up the balloon, the string should be tied to the balloon and the other end tied to the right or left ankle. After everyone has completed tying their balloons, instruct participants to stand in a circle with their hands behind their backs, standing on one foot. It can be either foot. When the whistle blows, the group moves around each person, trying to pop someone else's balloon. Once a balloon is popped, that person sits down. The winner is the last person with the balloon still inflated and attached to the ankle.



### **The Wave**

Form a straight line with people standing behind each other. The leader starts off making an arm motion and the group members follow one at a time immediately following each other to make a wave. See how fast you can go. The leader can change the motion and the pattern of the wave.

### **Youth Power Chant**

Preparation: Make a poster with words to the following chant: "Ain't No Power like the POWER of the Youth, 'Cause the POWER of the YOUTH DON'T STOP!"

Explain that often when people come together to take on an issue they need to keep up their energy. One way of doing this together is at a rally or event; groups chant to raise energy and send a message (to participants and target.)

Facilitator repeats twice. Ask if any questions. Repeat once more. Then on count of three, everyone repeats together. Ask for volunteer(s) to make their own 'spin' on the chant and teach the group.



## Team-Building Activities

### Birthday Line Up

Explain to the group that this is a nonverbal exercise. The group is to form a single straight line, according to birthdays. For example, persons with January birthdays will be at the beginning of the line, earliest January dates first followed in order by later dates. The line progresses by months and days with December birthdays at the end. Persons with the same birthday share the same place in line. You must communicate non-verbally (no lip-reading or spelling in the dirt allowed). When the line is completed, each person will shout out his/her birthday, beginning in January.

### Group Juggling

Form a circle with everyone standing up facing the inside of the circle. The leader of the group will begin with one object in hand (i.e. a small ball). The leader will ask one group member to repeat their name, and then the leader will gently toss the object to that group member. The group member will reply "Thank you, (the leader's name)!" The leader will reply by saying, "Your welcome, (the individual's name)!"? The object will continue around the circle in the same manner, making sure everyone has received the object, until the object ends up in the hands of the original leader. NOTE: During the first round, once a group member has tossed the object, have them cross their arms to prevent repetition. The same pattern will start again with the leader adding more objects. Once an object has been dropped, the pattern starts all over with the first object. NOTE: the leader should mix up sizes and shapes of objects (i.e. a rubber chicken, toilet paper, etc.)

### Group Lap Sit

Facilitator Note: This activity can bring up issues about body image and size, although size doesn't matter for the actual activity. It's a good idea to know your group before trying this activity and remind folks they have the right to pass.

The group will start standing in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Everyone then turns to the right and put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you. The group will need to work together to communicate. At the count of 1-2-3 everyone is instructed to sit on the knees/lap of the person behind him or her. If this is done too quickly, group members will fall over.

Once this has been completed, the group may wish to try to walk in this formation. This is a dynamic activity - and one that will make the group feel a great sense of accomplishment when successfully completed!

### Human Knot

Participants stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle, placing both hands in the center. When the whistle blows everyone grabs the hands of someone else, being careful not to grab both hands of same person or the hands of someone right next to them. Once everyone is connected, the object is to untangle the knot, without releasing the grip, except for permissible pivoting, as long as touch is maintained. One pair will be instructed to release their grip. Try to form a straight line.

### Magic Carpet Ride (This works best with a group of 12-18 people per sheet)

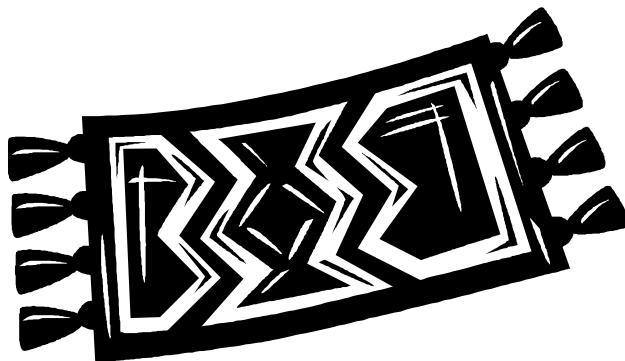
Materials: One double/full-sized bed sheet (a plastic tablecloth can be a good substitute)

Directions: Lay sheet flat on the floor or ground. Ask everyone to stand on the sheet. Now, turn the "Magic Carpet" (old sheet) over without anyone touching the floor or the ground in any way. No one may lift anyone off the sheet at any time.

Processing questions:

- Who had the ideas to overcome the challenge?
- Who was the leader of the group?
- How many different solutions might there be?

Reference: Sachs, B. & zumFelde, P. (1998) Magic carpet ride. [Let me grow in peace-team challenge-asset building](#). (p. 10). (Available from Lutheran Social Services, T793 State Route 66, Archbold, OH 43502)



### **New Planet Activity (Decision Making)**

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: copies of worksheet (1 per student on white); copies of worksheet (1 per group on colored paper). (See Tools at the back of this section for worksheet.)

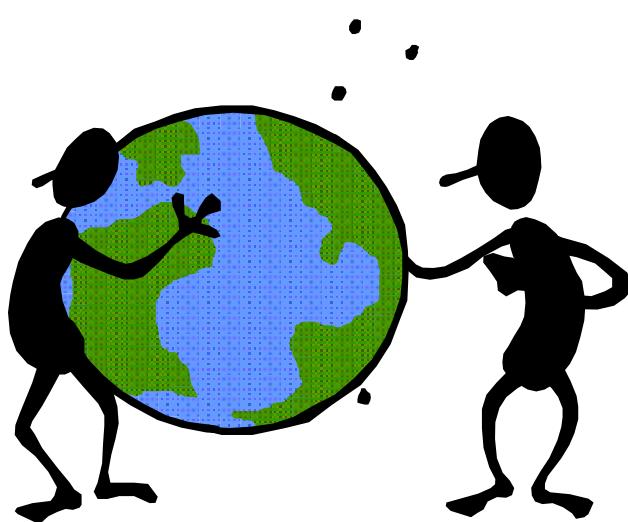


#### Directions

- Explain that each person will receive a list of 30 people. However, due to air pollution, the earth's ozone is too thin. In a few days, the earth will be too hot for people to survive. NASA going to send rocket to new planet so humans will not become extinct. However, only 10 of the 30 people can go to the new planet. Each person has 5 minutes to decide by themselves who will go.
- Distribute copy of new planet worksheet to each person (copies on white paper).
- Next, divide group into groups of 3-4. Give each group a worksheet on **colored** paper. Each group has 10 minutes to come up with their list of people for the new planet.
- Ask each group to pick a recorder and a reporter.

Group process questions:

- How did you make your decisions individually?
- How did your group make its decisions?
- What were some challenges? How did you handle conflict? Did you have to compromise?
- Did a leader emerge? What was the leader's style? How did she/he lead?
- What values influenced your decisions? Where do our values come from? What can happen when people with different values get together? (Point out any stereotypes that seemed to influence decisions. Reinforce no judgments in this group.)



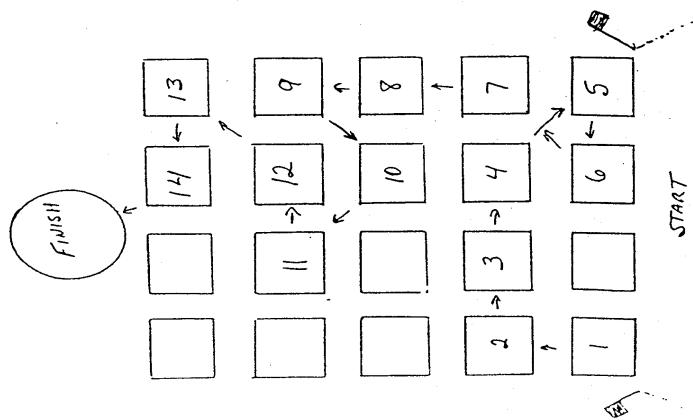
**Swamp Island Maze**

Materials: 20 8x10 sheets of paper and masking tape, "start" and "finish" boundary markers, Squeaker toy, a map of the "safe" specified route

Objective: To transport the entire team across the quicksand swamp using only the "safe" grass clumps in a specific order to cross the swamp. Referring to the map of the "safe" specified route, the Leader uses "Swampy" (the squeaker toy) to confirm the "safe" island pattern as players each take each step. The team member must return to the back end of the team's line if they step on an "unsafe" island. Team members must rotate turns attempting to discover the safe route across the swamp. There are exactly "14" mandatory safe steps to cross the swamp. Only one person may be crossing the swamp at any one time.

**Variations:**

- Do this activity without voice communication, no talking!
- Team members must all stay on the final safe island until all team members cross the swamp.
- Alter the safe clumps/route in some specific pattern (really devious!)
- Allow more than one person crossing the swamp at any one time, probably need a separate squeaker and facilitator for each crosser.



Reference: Fark, J. (1994) Swamp island maze. Team challenge: Introduction to low initiatives training. (Available from Ohio State University Leadership Center, 109 Agricultural Administration Building, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210)

### **Tower Building Activity**

Beforehand, construct a structure out of a combination of art and office supplies. Display the structure in a separate room.

Divide participants into groups of 4-5. One at a time, each person in the group has a chance to view the structure for one minute and then report back to the group what it looks like so the group will build.

Debrief questions:

- What was the experience like?
- What was it like to see the structure one time?
- Did any leaders emerge? What traits helped them to lead the group?
- How did your group communicate?
- How did you work out conflict?
- Did it get harder or easier as each person had a chance to look at the structure?



## Tools





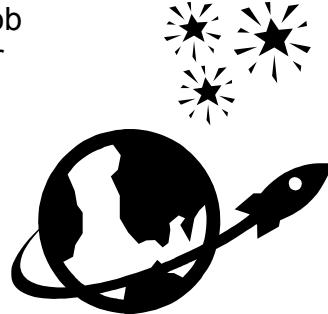
# New Planet Activity Sheet



Due to the pollution in the air, the Earth's ozone layer is way too thin. Days are getting hotter and hotter. In a couple of days, the Earth is going to be too hot for humans to survive. NASA has a rocket that will send people to a new planet so that they can repopulate and the human species will not become extinct...the only problem is the rocket can only take 10 people!!!

**Talk to your group and decide which 10 people should go to the new planet:**

1. 35 year old female, has 3 children, graphic artist
2. 12 year old male, straight A student, wants to be a police officer
3. 59 year old male, computer technician
4. 18 year old male, high school drop out, does not have a job
5. 24 year old female, pregnant and expecting twins, teacher
6. 25 year old female, fashion model
7. 15 year old female, pregnant, high school student
8. 16 year old male, boyfriend of #7, baby's father
9. 30 year old male, garbage collector, has a wife.
10. 21 year old male, photographer, single
11. 70 year old male, retired lawyer
12. 50 year old female, doctor, cannot have children
13. 45 year old male, investment banker, very wealthy
14. 40 year old male, dentist
15. 22 year old female, college student, studying the environment
16. 30 year old male, famous actor, known to use drugs
17. 14 year old female, soccer player, has part-time job as cashier
18. 38 year old male, pilot and astronaut, has the flu
19. 29 year old female, botanist (studies plants/trees)
20. 49 year old male, governor of California
21. 27 year old male, reporter for the local newspaper
22. 30 year old female, cook, owns her own restaurant
23. 10 year old male, farmer
24. 60 year old female, astronomer
25. 52 year old male, fisherman
26. 49 year old female, aircraft repairwoman
27. 22 year old female, singer, dancer, actress, smoker
28. 28 year old male, professional basketball player
29. 33 year old male, carpenter, has the chicken pox
30. 28 year old female, psychologist, counselor, has fear of flying



[Back to Activity Guide](#)

**Effective Strategies  
for Providing Quality  
Youth Mentoring in  
Schools and Communities**

# Building Relationships: A Guide<sup>for</sup> New Mentors



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



**NWREL**  
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
National Mentoring Center

 Hamilton Fish Institute

## About the Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities Series

Mentoring is an increasingly popular way of providing guidance and support to young people in need. Recent years have seen youth mentoring expand from a relatively small youth intervention (usually for youth from single-parent homes) to a cornerstone youth service that is being implemented in schools, community centers, faith institutions, school-to-work programs, and a wide variety of other youth-serving institutions.

While almost any child can benefit from the magic of mentoring, those who design and implement mentoring programs also need guidance and support. Running an effective mentoring program is not easy, and there are many nuances and programmatic details that can have a big impact on outcomes for youth. Recent mentoring research even indicates that a short-lived, less-than-positive mentoring relationship (a hallmark of programs that are not well designed) can actually have a negative impact on participating youth. Mentoring is very much worth doing, but it is imperative that programs implement proven, research-based best practices if they are to achieve their desired outcomes. That's where this series of publications can help.

The Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities series, sponsored by the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence, is designed to give practitioners a set of tools and ideas that they can use to build quality mentoring programs. Each title in the series is based on research (primarily from the esteemed Public/Private Ventures) and observed best practices from the field of mentoring, resulting in a collection of proven strategies, techniques, and program structures. Revised and updated by the National Mentoring Center at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, each book in this series provides insight into a critical area of mentor program development:

*Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring*—This title offers a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of successful youth mentoring programs. Originally designed for a community-based model, its advice and planning tools can be adapted for use in other settings.

*Generic Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual*—Much of the success of a mentoring program is dependent on the structure and consistency of service delivery, and this guide provides advice and a customizable template for creating an operations manual for a local mentoring program.

*Training New Mentors*—All mentors need thorough training if they are to possess the skills, attitudes, and activity ideas needed to effectively mentor a young person. This guide provides ready-to-use training modules for your program.

*The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring*—This guide explores the nuances of building a program in a school setting.

*Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors*—This resource is written directly for mentors, providing them with 10 simple rules for being a successful mentor and quotes from actual volunteers and youth on what they have learned from the mentoring experience.

*Sustainability Planning and Resource Development for Youth Mentoring Programs*—Mentoring programs must plan effectively for their sustainability if they are to provide services for the long run in their community. This guide explores key planning and fundraising strategies specifically for youth mentoring programs.

The Hamilton Fish Institute and the National Mentoring Center hope that the guides in this series help you and your program's stakeholders design effective, sustainable mentoring services that can bring positive direction and change to the young people you serve.

## Section I.

# What Is a Successful Mentoring Relationship?

**W**hat are the qualities of an effective mentor? What strategies do mentors use to engage and connect with youth? These questions are at the heart of all mentoring relationships.

Every year, thousands of volunteers come to mentoring programs because they want to make a positive difference in the lives of youth. But how are these volunteers able to make a difference? How does the magic of mentoring happen?

Several years ago, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a research organization in Philadelphia, set out to learn what helps successful mentoring relationships develop. They also wanted to understand why some mentoring relationships are not successful—why the mentor and youth do not meet regularly, why a friendship never develops between them, and why the pair breaks up.

P/PV looked closely at 82 pairs of mentors and youth, ages 10 to 15, in Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs around the country. They interviewed each mentor and youth, and returned nine months later to interview them again. By then, 24 of the pairs had broken off their relationship, while 58 of the matches were still meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Why were some relationships doing so well while others had come apart? The key reasons had to do with the expectations and approach of the mentor. Most of the mentors in the relationships that failed had a belief that they should, and could, “reform” their mentee. These mentors, even at the very beginning of the match, spent at least some of their time together pushing the mentee to change. Almost all the mentors in the successful relationships believed that their role was to support the youth, to help him or her grow and develop. They saw themselves as a friend.



<sup>1</sup>Those relationships are further described in Morrow, K.V., & Styles, M.B. (1995). *Building Relationships with Youth in Program Settings: A Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Available online at [http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/41\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/41_publication.pdf)

Those successful mentors understood that positive changes in the lives of young people do not happen quickly or automatically. If they are to happen at all, the mentor and youth must meet long enough and often enough to build a relationship that helps the youth feel supported and safe, develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and see new possibilities in life. Those mentors knew they had to:

- Take the time to build the relationship
- Become a trusted friend
- Always maintain that trust

While establishing a friendship may sound easy, it often is not. Adults and youth are separated by age and, in many cases, by background and culture. Even mentors with good instincts can stumble or be blocked by difficulties that arise from these differences. It takes time for youth to feel comfortable just talking to their mentor, and longer still before they feel comfortable enough to share a confidence. Learning to trust—especially for young people who have already been let down by adults in their lives—is a gradual process. Mentees cannot be expected to trust their mentors simply because program staff members have put them together. Developing a friendship requires skill and time.

What are the qualities of an effective mentor? This guide describes 10 important features of successful mentors' attitudes and styles:

1. Be a friend.
2. Have realistic goals and expectations.
3. Have fun together.
4. Give your mentee voice and choice in deciding on activities.
5. Be positive.
6. Let your mentee have much of the control over what the two of you talk about—and how you talk about it.
7. Listen.
8. Respect the trust your mentee places in you.
9. Remember that your relationship is with the youth, not the youth's parent.
10. Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship.

In the study of Big Brothers Big Sisters, mentors who took these approaches were the ones able to build a friendship and develop trust.

They were the mentors who were ultimately able to make a difference in the lives of youth. The following pages say much more about each of these mentor characteristics. The importance of each is illustrated through the voices of actual mentors and young people talking to you about their relationships and how they came to be.

We hope this guide will be a valuable resource to you as you move through your mentoring relationship. Don't forget to also rely on your mentoring program's staff for advice and support as you build trust, understanding, and a new friendship with your mentee.

“  
**Learning to trust—  
especially for young people  
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is a gradual process.**  
”

## About the Research Behind This Book

The P/PV research discussed in this book focused on Big Brothers Big Sisters' *community-based* program models. The advice and quotes in this book are derived from these community-based programs. Mentors in school-based settings (or other environments, such as worksites or churches) may have other important relationship characteristics and strategies in addition to those mentioned here. See the companion guidebook *The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring* in this series for additional information that may be relevant to building relationships in school settings.

**Section II.**

# The 10 Principles of Effective Mentoring

## 1 Be a friend

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Mentors are usually described as “friends.” But what does that mean? What makes someone a friend? One mentor talks about friendship this way:

*I'm more a brother or a friend, I guess, than a parent or anything. That's the way I try to act and be with him. I don't want him to think—and I don't think he does—that I'm like a teacher or a parent or something. I don't want him to be uncomfortable, like I'm going to be there always looking over his shoulder and always there to report him for things he does wrong and that he tells me. I just want to be there as his friend to help him out.*

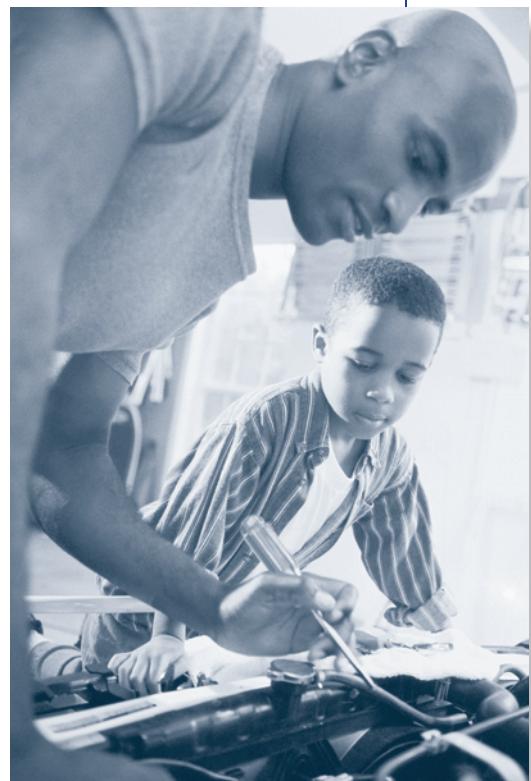
The reality is that mentors have a unique role in the lives of children and youth. They are *like* an ideal older sister or brother—someone who is a role model and can provide support and gentle guidance. They are also *like* a peer, because they enjoy having fun with their mentee. But they aren't exactly either of these.

Sometimes it seems easier to talk about what mentors are by describing what they should not be:

→ **Don't act like a parent.** One of the things your mentee will appreciate about you is that you are not his or her parent. However much they love their parents, young people might sometimes see them primarily as people who set rules and express disapproval. Youth need other adults in their lives, but they are unlikely to warm to a friendship with an unrelated adult who emphasizes these parental characteristics.

A mentor explains how he avoids acting like a parent:

*A couple of times his mom has said, well, you know, I was wondering if you could talk to Randy. He had some behav-*



*You can expose them to things and provide them with the opportunity to change, but you cannot actually, physically change them.*

 **DO focus on establishing a bond, a feeling of attachment, a sense of equality, and the mutual enjoyment of shared time.** These are all important qualities of a friendship.

A youth talks about her mentor and friend: *Oh, it's fun because I never really had a sister. It's fun, it's someone that, you know, you can do things with besides your mother.*

*... Well, I don't really do anything with my mother because we have like two separate things. She goes to work, I go to school, she comes home and, you know, we're just there. We don't do anything. So this really gives me a chance to do something with somebody I really like.*

It can be a challenge for mentors to step outside traditional adult-youth authority roles. The successful mentors are the ones who can be a positive adult role model while focusing on the bonding and fun of a traditional friendship.

## 2 Have realistic goals and expectations

What do you expect will change for your mentee as a result of his or her relationship with you? How will life be different? How will it feel different?

Strong mentoring relationships do lead to positive changes in youth. These changes tend to occur indirectly, as a result of the close and trusting relationship, and they often occur slowly over time. If you expect to transform your mentee's life after six months or a year of meetings, you are going to be frustrated. The rewards of mentoring are, most often, quieter and more subtle. As one mentoring researcher put it, "Mentoring may be more like the slow accumulation of pebbles that sets off an avalanche than the baseball bat that propels a ball from the stadium."<sup>2</sup>

Mentors might have specific goals for their mentees. They might, for example, want the youth to attend school more regularly and earn better grades. They might want him or her to improve classroom

<sup>2</sup>Darling, N. (2005). Mentoring adolescents. In DuBois, D.L., & Karcher, M.J. (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring*. (p. 182). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

behavior or get along better with peers. But these should not be the primary targets of your efforts. If they are—and if you spend your time together trying to direct your mentee toward these goals—you will just seem like another parent or teacher.

Developing a trusting relationship can take time and patience. You are unlikely to be able to achieve this trust if you approach the relationship with narrow, specific goals aimed at changing your mentee's behavior. Instead, you can:

 **Focus on the whole person and his or her overall development.** Do not focus narrowly on performance and change.

A mentor describes his goals for the relationship: *I want to provide my mentee with some stability in his life. I mean I don't think he's had too much, just because of his family life and his mother's changing jobs a lot and sometimes she works days and sometimes she works nights. And I think it would help him just to have somebody there that's going to be there and help. Hopefully, I can provide different experiences for him too . . . things like going to a professional basketball game or things where he can get out and see what's out there, because he doesn't get to do that much with his family. And simple things, like one of the first times we went out, we just went downtown to a park. And he'd never been there, and it's just right downtown, he lives just a mile from there, a few miles away from that. So it's just things like getting out and seeing things and knowing what's going on.*

 **Especially early on, center your goals on the relationship itself.** During the first months of meetings with your mentee, your primary goal should be to develop a consistent, trusting, and mutually satisfying relationship. You are very likely to find that you derive a sense of meaningful accomplishment from the relationship itself, from the growing closeness and trust.

A mentor describes his satisfaction with the evolving relationship: *He started to open up to me a little more. When we're together, he initiates a lot more conversation and stuff like that. . . . And I guess it does feel like, as I wanted it to feel, more like a big brother/little brother relationship instead of me being an authoritarian figure. I don't want to feel like I'm here and I'm older than you, so whatever I say goes. I don't want it to be like that.*

 **Throughout the relationship, emphasize friendship over performance.** A strong mentoring friendship provides youth with a sense of self-worth and the security of knowing that an adult is there to help, if asked. This friendship is central, and it is eventually likely

to allow you to have some influence on your mentee's behavior and performance outside the relationship. As your relationship becomes stronger and more established, your mentee may begin to approach you with requests for more direct advice or help. If and when your relationship reaches this stage, be sure to maintain a balance between attempts to influence the youth's behavior and your more primary goal of being a supportive presence. Keep the focus on your friendship.

A boy describes how his mentor's emphasis on performance has pushed him away: *Kids don't really want to, you know, listen to all that preaching and stuff. And then it's like: Are you done yet? Can I go now? I wouldn't mind getting some advice on girls, you know, maybe he can share a little bit of his knowledge. But I can't ask him about girls because he'd bring up school. I'd probably figure he would say, "Well, first of all you don't need to be worrying about girls right now, you need to worry about your grades, you know." I'm like, oh, brother.*

## 3 Have fun together

Young people often say that “the best thing about having a mentor is the chance to have fun,” to have an adult friend with whom they can share favorite activities. The opportunity to have fun is also one of the great benefits of being a mentor. However, for some mentors, fun might appear trivial in light of the scope and scale of unmet, pressing needs that may be present in the lives of their mentee. Thus, it is important to remember that fun is not trivial—for youth, having fun and sharing it with an attentive adult carry great weight and a meaning beyond a recreational outlet, a chance to “blow off steam,” or an opportunity to play.

There are a number of reasons why you should focus on participating in activities with your mentee that are fun for both of you:

 **Many youth involved in mentoring programs have few opportunities for fun.** Having fun breaks monotony, provides time away from a tense home situation, or introduces them to experiences they would not otherwise have.

A youth talks about life: *My mom doesn't usually stay at our house, she usually stays with her boyfriend. So it's like, you know, what did you have kids for if you're not going to pay any attention to them or whatever? . . . But I just say,*

*hey, my mom can do what she wants, I can stay home by myself, it don't really matter. I don't have very many people who stay with me. So I'm usually home by myself now. . . . I used to go home, stay in my room, watch TV all day and never do nothing. And then when I started seeing my mentor, it's like, I don't know, I just changed. I like doing things now. . . . You know, it's like I never got to do those kinds of things before.*

A youth describes his enjoyment of new experiences with his mentor: *I get out of my neighborhood now and get to go places. . . . I probably didn't see any movies before I had him, and I've seen about 100 movies now, which is fun because I was never in a movie theater before. That was exciting. . . . He's kind of made it easier for me to get around to places, so I'm not stuck in the house all the time when no one's home.*

 **Having fun together shows your mentee that you are reliable and committed.** One mentor explains: "To get kids to where they know that you really care and can be trusted, you just have to spend time with them and do things that they like to do." The observation is a good one. Youth see the adult's interest in sharing fun as a sign that the mentor cares about them. They experience a growing sense of self-worth when their adult partner not only pays persistent, positive attention to them, but also willingly joins them in activities the youth describe as fun.

A youth speaks about feeling cared for: *I think everybody needs a mentor. I think it changes their life a whole lot for the better. . . . With having someone I know that cares about me or that would rather, you know, have fun . . . like going somewhere with me or have fun being with me, then I think a whole lot of people would feel better about their self and, you know, be more confident in their self.*

 **Focusing on “fun” activities early in the relationship can lead to more “serious” activities later.** As your mentee comes to see you as a friend, he or she is likely to be far more receptive to spending some of your time together in activities that are less obviously fun, such as working on school-related assignments. Always be sure that these more “serious” activities are not forced upon the youth—that they are something your mentee seems agreeable to doing. Also be sure that activities such as schoolwork sessions are kept brief, and that they do not become the primary focus of your meetings together.

*A mentor talks about waiting: I wouldn't want to do it in the first year of the relationship . . . just go to the library, and then Burger King, and then go home. I don't think that's fair to him. I just didn't think it was the right way to start off, especially if he's got behavioral problems and doesn't like school, and then on weekends I cart him off to the library. I don't think that's fun . . . and it's one of my original objectives to let the kid be a kid again. But I think I can do it now [spend some time doing educational activities] because we've been together longer and I think he understands I'm trying to help.*

*A mentor describes how he keeps schoolwork in perspective: I'd say we work on homework on average maybe every two to three weeks.*

*It's not something to do every time because, quite frankly, I get sick of it too. . . . When we meet, I usually let him give his input, and then depending on what our schedule is that day, I can kind of work with him a little bit. It's like, we get a negotiating thing going—we'll do homework for a half hour if we can play football for a half hour.*

And remember, it is always possible to weave educational moments—real-life learning—into the most “fun” activities. This is the kind of learning that youth tend to enjoy—it is learning with an immediate purpose and an immediate payoff—and they often don’t even realize that they are learning. You can, for example, encourage your mentee to figure out the rules of new games, read road signs to help you figure out where you are going, or do the math to see if the two of you received the right amount of change for a purchase. One mentor discovered bowling. “Bowling is a great way to teach addition,” she says. “You’ve got to count the pins and add the scores.”

## Having Fun Together in the Community

How do youth and mentors spend their time together in community-based programs? There is an endless variety of activities matches can do together. What is important is that the mentee play a role in deciding on the activity, and that it be fun. Here are a few suggestions:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Play games                                   | Listen to music each of you enjoys       |
| Go to the movies and discuss what you see    | Shop for food and cook a meal            |
| Play catch                                   | Walk around the mall                     |
| Hang out and talk                            | Play chess                               |
| Find interesting information on the Internet | Take photographs together                |
| Watch TV and talk about what you see         | Spend time together “doing nothing”      |
| Eat at a restaurant                          | Do homework (although only occasionally) |
| Go bowling                                   | Go to a concert                          |
| Shoot some hoops                             | Go to the library                        |
| Go to a baseball or basketball game          | Do gardening together                    |
| Go to a museum                               | Do woodworking together                  |
| Read a book together                         | Talk about your first job                |
| Get involved in a community service project  | Give a tour of your current job          |
| Write a story together                       | Take a walk in the park                  |
| Create artwork together                      | Go bargain hunting                       |
| Have a picnic                                | Play miniature golf                      |
| Fly a kite                                   | Talk about the future                    |

## 4 Give your mentee voice and choice in deciding on activities

Be sure that your mentee is a partner in the process of deciding what activities you will do together. Giving your mentee voice and choice about activities will:

- Help build your friendship: It demonstrates that you value your mentee's ideas and input and that you care about and respect her or him.
- Help your mentee develop decision-making and negotiation skills.
- Help avoid the possibility that you will impose "it's-good-for-you" activities—like homework sessions—on your mentee without her or his agreement. This kind of imposition may make you seem more like a teacher or parent than a friend.

It might seem like it would be relatively easy to include your mentee in the decision-making process, but often it is not. Mentees might be reticent about suggesting activities because:

### **They don't want to seem rude.**

A girl speaks about her belief that she should agree to everything: *Well, I never have said where I want to go. She makes plans for the day, and she asks if I want to go there. I can't say "no" because I think that would be sort of rude to say, "No, I don't want to go there."*

A youth explains her reluctance to suggest activities: *Well, I think, you know, that she should be able to decide. She has the money and everything. . . . I don't want to, I don't like to depend on people, like borrowing and all that stuff.*

**It really is difficult for them to come up with ideas.** Many youth in mentoring programs have had little opportunity to travel outside their neighborhoods and so do not know what the possibilities might be.

If it is difficult for your mentee to request activities or voice preferences, you can use these approaches to make it easier:

 **Give a range of choices concerning possible activities.** Be sure the choices are youth-focused—be sure your mentee will enjoy the activities.

Mentors talk about presenting choices:

*Most of the time, he wasn't really that forthcoming with ideas of what to do. We'd sort of negotiate, but it was more of me throwing out ideas and him either giving it the thumbs up or the thumbs down.*

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*Sometimes we go back and forth: "Oh, you decide!" "No, you decide!" That type of thing. But I usually like him to decide because this is more for him than for me as far as I'm concerned. So I, you know, I usually ask him what he wants to do and if he can't come up with something, I give him suggestions.*

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*I don't care what we do. I suggest ideas, but it has to be okay with my mentee—because he's sort of the boss and these outings are for him.*

→ **Create an “idea file” together.** One good activity to do together is to make a list of activities you would like to do in the future. You can write the list on a piece of paper (or on a computer and then print it out), or use index cards and write one idea on each card. This is a great strategy because the list or file will help both of you when you are looking for ideas about activities you can do together. Making an “idea file” together is also an important symbolic act—it reminds mentees that you care about their preferences and value their input.

**A mentor talks about creating an “idea list”:** *Early on, we actually sat down and he made out a list of some things that he thought would be fun to do. I found that was helpful for me because that took some of the pressure off of me. You know, trying to say, “Well, jeez, what am I going to do? What would a 10-year-old kid like to do? What are we going to do this week?” But kids are so creative if you just put their minds to work. And he came up with a big list of more than 20 things, no problem.*

→ **Listen.** You can learn a lot about what might capture your mentee’s interest.

**A mentor describes how he discovered what would be fun for his mentee:** *At the beginning, in the feeling-out stage, it was like, “What do you like to do? What don’t you like to do?” and just run through suggestions and listen. And I think listening is the key. If you find out that he talks a lot about hockey, well, let’s see if we can get to a game or*

try and find places you can ice skate. And if he talks a lot about these martial arts things or video games or something like that, you know, think about what kinds of things you can do with video games or with something that he tends to like a lot . . . where there's still interaction between the two of you.

 **Emphasize to your mentee that her or his enjoyment is important to you.** If your mentee is extremely reticent and you feel as though you have to play the lead role in choosing activities, you can let him or her know you want the activities to be fun.

A mentor describes a simple act of reassurance: *When he can't decide, I suggest, but then every time I drop him off, I ask him, "Did you have fun? Because if you didn't, we'll do something else."*

If you show through your words and actions that you value your mentee's input, she or he is likely to notice, appreciate, and respond. As one youth says: "I can suggest whatever and we'll usually do that, but I don't have too many ideas. Usually he'll have something planned, and he'll see if it sounds good to me and usually it sounds fine and we just do that . . . because he usually thinks of things that are real fun."

### A potential challenge:

Once young people are comfortable enough to request activities, they might make requests that are extravagant, such as frequent trips to amusement parks and adventure centers they have seen advertised on television or heard about from their friends. Even more modest requests—for movies, video arcades, or restaurants—can cost more than you are comfortable paying, especially if the requests are made week after week.

To address this issue, you can:

 **Negotiate.** Particularly as your relationship develops, you are likely to find times when you and your mentee are negotiating about what activities you will do together. If you have a positive relationship, one where the mentee feels secure in your friendship and support, this negotiation can be a valued aspect of the relationship (particularly for teenagers) because it signals the presence of equality between the two of you.

Youth talk about their enjoyment of negotiation:

*We both decide things. Like if I want to do something, he'll say "okay," and if he wants to do something, I'll either say "yes" or "no," or "I don't like that," or something. But we never turn each*

*other down. . . . Nothing ever came between us to not work out so well, we've been always working out things together, really nothing's been bothering us.*

*That's the best thing right there . . . because like if I want to do something and she'll want to do something else, like I'll say, "Okay, we'll do yours this weekend," and then she'll say, "Okay, we can do yours next week." We compromise, that's the best word for it; we compromise . . . and we both always end up having fun.*

► **Feel comfortable about setting clear limits on the amount of money you will spend.**

**Extravagant requests are typical for youth and especially understandable for youth from low-income families or other disadvantaged circumstances. Take the requests in stride. You can negotiate with your mentee until the two of you find something that, while less costly, is still to the youth's liking. Your mentee will understand and will appreciate that her or his voice is still a factor in deciding on activities.**

“  
[T]hink about what kinds  
of things you can do . . . where  
there's still interaction between the  
two of you.  
”

## 5 Be positive

People who feel negatively about themselves tend to live down to their own self-image. And youth who are matched with mentors usually have a number of situations in their lives that are leading them to feel exactly that way. They might, for example, have problems with a parent or sibling, difficulties in school, conflicts with peers, or involvement with the juvenile justice system. One of the most important things you can do as a mentor is to help your mentee develop self-esteem and self-confidence. Doing activities together provides many opportunities for you to encourage your mentee to feel good about himself. You can:

## 20 Ways To Say “You’re Great!”

1. Terrific!
2. Great idea.
3. You did a great job.
4. I’m proud of you.
5. Fantastic!
6. You learned that fast!
7. I knew you could do it.
8. Keep trying—you’ll get it.
9. Exactly right!
10. Nice going.
11. Outstanding!
12. Will you show me how to do that?
13. Way to go!
14. Perfect!
15. Wonderful!
16. You get better at this all the time.
17. I know what you mean.
18. I hear what you’re saying.
19. That was beautiful.
20. EXCELLENT!

► **Offer frequent expressions of direct confidence.** Praise and encouragement help build your mentee’s self-esteem (see sidebar for suggestions).

Youth explain the importance of encouragement:

*Every time she tells me you can do good at this or whatever, it makes me feel like she really cares and that I can really do it. If she thinks I can do it, I can do it.*

*He’s really a good person to talk to because he listens . . . and he’s a person, like, if I tell him I want to do something, he encourages me.*

► **Be encouraging even when talking about potentially troublesome topics, such as grades.** Be supportive; don’t sound like you are criticizing.

A mentor describes how he deals with bad grades: When I found out about a failing grade, I just said that’s too bad. And I asked if there was any way I could help. . . . Working on education is just stressing its importance, and then complimenting him, just trying to pick him up if he feels down.

A youth talks about the importance of support: Well, I got an F, and he said, man, you got any problems, you come to me and I’ll help you with your schoolwork. . . and we’ll talk about it, and then we keep sitting there talking and stuff and it just makes me feel better.

► **Offer concrete assistance.** At times, your activities might include helping your mentee with schoolwork, and this assistance should be given in a way that helps build his or her self-confidence.

A mentor talks about helping: When he told me about a bad grade, I kind of focused on his other grades first—he said that he had done a good job with the other ones. And then I asked him if he wanted to do better in it, and then I kind of asked him how he could do better. And it was a pretty simple thing because he just didn’t do a couple reports. So we decided that, you know, the next ones he got I would help him with them if he wanted. And we did that twice. . . . It’s like what can we do together to help with this?

A youth talks about being helped: When I did my maps in social studies, she helped me because I couldn’t see it on the page real good. And she took my page and she put a typing piece of paper on it, and she clipped it with a paper clip on top of the page and she laid it down right on top of

*it, and I traced it. And she gave me some markers, pencils, and stuff. And every time I had a map, she took me over her house and every time I had a report—not every time, but when I had a report—she took me over her dorm and we typed it.*

“  
One of the most important things you can do as a mentor is to help your mentee develop self-esteem and self-confidence.  
”

## 6 Let your mentee have much of the control over what the two of you talk about—and how you talk about it

Along with doing enjoyable activities together, listening and talking are at the heart of your relationship with your mentee. The communication patterns you establish early on will be key to the relationship's development over time. Especially in the early, tentative phase of your relationship, your mentee should have a high degree of control over what the two of you talk about—it is important to respect the limits youth place on how much they choose to reveal about themselves. Take the time and effort necessary for your mentee to develop trust in you. While you know that your mentee should trust you, the reality is that you have to earn the trust.

Following these approaches can help you earn that trust.

- **Don't push.** It should come as no surprise to you that your mentee, especially at first, may be shy and reluctant to talk, especially about difficult-to-reveal issues, such as problems in school or at home. Be careful not to push your mentee to discuss issues that she or he feels are too personal or might risk your disapproval.

**Mentors talk about the importance of patience:**

*I knew that it was going to take her some time to loosen up, and you just can't force somebody to trust you. You can't force somebody not to be shy . . . you have to just wait.*

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*I think he's still a bit shy in telling me things about, I don't know, I could see him possibly talking to me about things like with his dad, but the thing I keep remembering is that, you know, when I was 12, that was hard to talk about. I mean it's hard enough to talk about it now, let alone then. And I don't want to put that kind of pressure on him.*

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*It really has taken a while for her to show, to demonstrate—and she's really not demonstrative in life—but she has really warmed up in the last few months and that's been just really lovely. She talks a lot more than she used to. And she talks spontaneously now, which really thrills me. And she tells me things spontaneously. It used to be I would always have to initiate the conversation. And now she really initiates a lot of conversations when we're driving in the car and tells me a lot of things. Like she even told me about a problem at home.*

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*He's a very quiet boy, and so he doesn't say a great deal about what's close to him. Only once in the year have we had what I would consider to be a conversation that he was a little more open about himself. It's not you don't have conversations about things that are serious . . . he did talk about his father some, but not too much. He's just very quiet. My own opinion is that's not a great surprise to me that a 10-year-old boy would take almost a year to start talking about things like that, I mean at least a quiet one. He definitely more routinely now talks about personal things—I don't mean great traumatic problems, but he will mention his father or something like that from time to time. Neither one of us are idle chat people. We may well get in the car to drive home and not say anything till we get there. And I consider that to be perfectly natural, as does he.*



**Be sensitive and responsive to your mentee's cues.** Follow your mentee's lead in determining what issues the two of you discuss and when.

**Mentors talk about the importance of silence:**

*I wait for the invitation to give her advice on problems—I'm anxiously waiting, but [laughter]. Once in a while, she'll ask what*

*I think about something, and I'll tell her. But if she doesn't ask my opinion, I try to keep it to myself.*

*When he doesn't talk and smile very much, then there's something really bugging him, and I just ask him is something bothering you . . . and he says no. I say you know you can blow off steam by talking to me if you want to. And he usually will—later.*

*You can tell sometimes they don't want to talk. She's very good sometimes when you get too close to home, changing the subject. That's what she'll do. And usually when she does that, I just let her do it.*

 **Understand that young people vary in their styles of communicating and their habits of disclosure.** Your own style of drawing out and supporting disclosure from your mentee may, to a large degree, determine the extent to which she or he feels comfortable speaking to you about personal issues. But remember that other factors will also influence your mentee's interest and ability in confiding. These factors include the youth's age, the amount of support available to her or him from other people, and cultural or family predisposition. Some youth open up only very slowly while some confide in their mentor just a few weeks or months into the match.

**Youth explain their reticence:**

*I'm shy, you know, it's like I feel scared. I know I shouldn't be but I am, you know. I don't tell her because, I mean it's like I know she could give me advice. I know I could talk to her about anything, just like looking at her and knowing she's right there for me, like I feel better, you know, like she's my friend. But it's not the same way as like my mother or my brother could, because it's like they know most of my friends, and she doesn't. If she knew more of my friends, maybe I could talk more to her.*

*I just keep that stuff [a cousin's arrest for selling drugs] to myself. I don't go out and tell nobody my family business; it just stays in the family.*

*Well, you know, I just don't really like talking about myself. I'm just one of those strange people.*

*The first week, I was like real nervous and stuff; I didn't want to say anything. Then like the second and third week and stuff, I was*

*real open to him. Just knowing him better made me feel like I could talk to him.*

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*It's not that I don't trust her; it's just sometimes I don't have that much problems.*

 **Be direct in letting your mentee know that she or he can confide in you without fear of judgment or exposure.** Having a mentor is probably a new form of relationship for the youth, who thus does not know whether, and to what extent, she or he can trust you. Make deliberate attempts to let your mentee know that you are a safe person to talk to.

Mentors describe talking about trust:

*The main thing at first was just gaining trust, that trust that she would confide to me, that was important first. I had to let her know that no matter what, she could tell me anything and I'd believe her and trust her and I'd support her. I think that's what these kids need. . . . I think it just takes a long time to build up a trust. And she's always saying things like, don't tell my mom and don't tell your boyfriend. And I say, Amanda, what you tell me is between Amanda and me, nobody else's business.*

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*I reiterate the point that you can tell me anything, that, you know, it's between you and me. I said, I'm not like your father. I said, I'm your brother; I'm like a big brother to you. And I said, I'm going to steer you away from something that's bad, and I said but I'm not your dad, I'm not going to punish you.*

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Youth explain how important these statements are to them:

*One time we went to a pizza restaurant and we were sitting down and talking and she, you know, she was acting like a sister to me. She told me I could come to her with anything. Any problems that I had I could come and talk to her, you know, about anything, just be open with her.*

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*When I first met him I didn't feel, you know, real, real comfortable talking to him about things. But then once he told me I could talk to him about everything, that made me feel better. I was more comfortable telling him stuff once he told me that. It felt good when I had something that I wanted to tell him, and he told me that he wouldn't tell anybody else. That made me feel pretty good because sometimes your friends say stuff like that but they tell people anyway.*

 **Remember that the activities you do together can become**

**a source of conversation.** Whether you are playing catch together or enjoying a snack after seeing a movie, having a conversation about the activity itself can help your mentee become more comfortable talking to you. This, in turn, can ultimately help your mentee feel safe about making more personal disclosures.

Mentors talk about talking about activities:

*My mentee is, as oftentimes is the case with kids, a little quiet, but when we get involved in something, he'll refer to something like, oh this is something like we did in class or this is something like I've done before. And he'll bring up subjects, and then it gives me a chance to say something. Sometimes just sitting in the car we don't say much. I say, how's school? Fine. What's Mom doing today? Um, don't know. . . . So you run out of conversation and when we get into our events or our programs, it gives a little more chance to communicate.*

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*He's actually pretty quiet. It's funny, because he can shift from being extremely quiet and kind of reticent to just going a mile a minute on a topic. . . . I wouldn't say it's easy for him to talk to me, but it's getting easier. As we have experienced more things together, then we have things to talk about—"Oh, remember we went to the IMAX theater," or "Wasn't that the place where we threw the Frisbee?"*

## 7 Listen

When your mentee does begin to “open up” to you, how you respond will serve to either promote or discourage his or her ongoing disclosure. One of the most valuable things you can do is to just listen—it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of being a great listener.

 **“Just listening” gives mentees a chance to vent and lets them know that they can disclose personal matters to you without worrying about being criticized.** The process of venting can also help them gain insight into whatever is bothering them.

Mentors talk about listening:

*He has talked about a teacher who recently gave him a bad grade. So basically, I just kind of listened to him sort of grouse about this*

*teacher. And in the same sentence, he was saying he was going to clean up his act, too, because he had been like talking out. So I didn't really, I mean, I didn't really add too much.*

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*If he came to me about an argument with his mother, I would give him a chance to get it off his chest without giving him advice. . . . I would let him talk it out. He might see where he was wrong. You know, I would just let him get it off his chest.*

► **When you listen, your mentee can see that you are a friend, not an authority figure.** Many youth appreciate being able to bring up issues and having an adult who responds primarily by listening. They recognize that listening is a form of emotional support, and they may have few other sources of support in their lives.

*Youth describe the feeling of being listened to:*

*She's a great listener. I can tell her anything, and she just listens. And you can tell that she's listening and not like she's going, mm hm, mm hm, you know, like, "Oh, yeah, what were you saying?" She listens and she goes, "I used to do that when I was little." And then like, you know, she tries to say don't worry about it. If you need to call me, call me. And she's like real supporting, so I really like her.*

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*I like it because there's no other man around the house and I like his personality and what we do and just talking to someone, just having someone to talk to besides your grandma. . . . Because, before, when I got into fights with people and I didn't have any friends, then I had one, him, I had someone to talk to . . . and he's always been nice and he always listens to me.*

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## 8 Respect the trust your mentee places in you

When your mentee does begin to talk to you about personal matters, be supportive. If you respond by lecturing or expressing disapproval, he or she is very likely to avoid mentioning personal matters in the future. Instead of seeking support and help from you, your mentee might become self-shielding by, for example, dodging conversations about problems and hiding school or family difficulties.

To demonstrate that you are supportive and nonjudgmental, you can:

- **Respond in ways that show you see your mentee's side of things.** This will encourage your mentee to continue sharing with you things that he or she might normally keep from an adult.

A mentor talks about understanding his mentee's point of view: *If he told me there was a teacher picking on him, I would try to listen to his story first and make him know that I believe his story. Because that's important with kids, especially adolescents. . . . I think what happens is if you right away say, oh, you know, it's probably because you did this or you might have done that, then they don't think that you're on their side anymore and they put this wall up and forget it. You know, they don't want to tell you another thing. But if you give them the idea that you're in their corner, and even if you don't agree with what they did, you're still in their corner, they'll understand they can keep telling you things.*

A youth talks about feeling understood: *Like if you get in trouble, if you can't talk to your mother, you can always go to your mentor and work things out, too, because I know he'll listen to me . . . because I can tell when my mentor listens to me because he understands what I'm saying. And like we can be face-to-face and he'll say, well, he'd been through it too when he was young.*

- **Reassure your mentee that you will be there for him or her.** Some youth may be reluctant to disclose things about themselves because they worry that their mentor will disapprove of them and, as a result, disappear from their lives. This is a reasonable fear for youth, especially those who have an absent parent and may feel responsible for the parent's leaving—youth often believe that they did something to drive the parent away.

A mentor speaks about providing reassurance: *He does confide in me quite a bit. More than I thought he would because there's a lot of trouble and he's got in fights and such and suspended from school. One time we were just talking and we were over at my house playing basketball and he was having a good time. And then I think sort of in the middle . . . things seemed to sort of go downhill for him. I think he realized that he may have done something that I may have thought less of him for—I think he got in a fight that time and was suspended. Anyway, I told him that I was in this relationship for a long time, and he just broke out and smiled. I think he felt, well, I really goofed now—*

*this guy isn't going to like me, and I just happened to say the right thing. And I really meant it—and I didn't know how to get that across so I just told him, I said, I'd like to, you know, I'm interested to see you when you're 25 years old or something; and he's 15 right now. So that to him, you know, meant probably a lifetime.*

► **If you give advice, give it sparingly.** A mentor's ability to give advice will occur at different times and to varying degrees in relationships, depending upon the mentee's receptivity and needs. In every case, though, do not let advice-giving overshadow other ways of interacting and other types of conversation.

Mentors speak about keeping the focus on friendship:

*It's been more of a fun relationship than anything. As far as advising him about anything, you know, maybe there'll be a one-shot advice thing here or there, but it's not anything that we dwell on for anything more than 30 seconds or less . . . not anything like, "Well, Marcus, I really think that this is important and we should really work on it together."*

*If we're doing something kind of fun, throwing the Frisbee, going to a movie, or something like that, I might give a little advice about something. It's more a friend kind of thing. . . . I don't want to make this some kind of lecture series: "Saturday afternoon lectures with Joe."*

► **If you give advice, be sure it is focused on identifying solutions.** The situations for which youth most commonly seek advice tend to involve arguments at home, struggles at school, and problems with friends. If your mentee asks you for advice, he or she is most likely looking for help with arriving at practical solutions for dealing with the problem.

A youth talks about getting helpful advice: *One time, these three boys at school wanted to fight me, and my mentor helped me. . . . I forgot what he said, but he told me something that was good . . . and I told my mom and she said it was a good idea, and I told my grandmother and she said it was a good idea, too.*

► **If, on occasion, you feel you have to convey concern or displeasure, do so in a way that also conveys reassurance and acceptance.** As your relationship develops into one of closeness and trust, there might be times when your mentee discloses something to you that causes real concern. As a supportive adult friend, you may be able to express that concern—but deliver your message in a way that also shows understanding.

meet with your mentee at a school or other location that is set by the program where you volunteer—which means you might not have any *direct* contact with the parents—your mentee will probably, at times, talk about his or her family. Even in this less direct situation, there are family boundaries you should be careful not to cross.

A mentor’s relationship with the youth’s family can be a crucial factor in determining the success of a match. It could affect whether your mentee perceives the relationship as meaningful and sees you as a reliable ally and, ultimately, whether you and your mentee meet frequently and over a long period of time. It is essential that you not become involved in family issues.

In some cases, problems may be initiated by the mentee’s family. For example, family members might try to involve the mentor in family disputes, draw the mentor into providing discipline to the youth, or attempt to have the mentor help in providing basic supports for the youth, such as clothing. In other cases, the mentor might cause problems by not respecting family boundaries. Mentors might, for example, observe or hear of situations that they view as neglectful or damaging parenting and want to intervene directly because they believe it will help the youth.

Crossing any of these family boundaries can negatively affect your ability to develop and maintain a supportive and trusting relationship with your mentee. To avoid being drawn into family tensions, and to ensure that you do not intrude yourself into the family, you should:



**Maintain cordial but distant contact with family members.**

Be friendly and polite. But keep to a minimum the amount of time you spend in conversation with them about the youth or about other family members. Try just to talk about activities you and your mentee are doing together, or keep the discussions in the area of general “chatting.”

*A mentor talks about maintaining distance: I guess I talk to his mother almost every week because I wind up seeing her. Like this morning, she bowls over here so I picked him up at the bowling alley and she's usually there too. What we talk about is just pretty much she'll ask me, "What are you guys going to do today and when are you going to be home," so she knows . . . that sort of thing. But on occasion, if he's still bowling or something like that, the last five or 10 minutes, we just kind of chat.*

*A youth talks about her mentor and her mother: When my mentor talks to my mom, it's, well, you know, come in, because like I'll not be totally ready. And they say hi, how*

*you doing, you know. Oh, so you're going to be doing this today, oh, okay, that kind of a thing. I mean I don't think that they're supposed to really be talking, because it's just for me and her, you know, not my mom.*

- **Keep your primary focus on the youth.** Refrain from developing relationships with other members of your mentee's family—they would compete with your relationship with your mentee.

Mentors talks about attempts of family members to intrude:

- *When we were first matched, her mom wanted to come along. She went about it in a roundabout way. She would say, well they're having this, that, or the other thing, and I was wondering if we could all go and that kind of thing. So it became very hard for me, you know. She would volunteer to get tickets to the circus; that was one of the things. So her mom and her sister and Lisa and I went to the circus, but all the attention was on all the other family members and Lisa just sort of faded into the background.*
- *Whenever I went to pick up Jackie, the mom got in on the conversations, was nagging her while we were talking, interrupting us, and kept trying to shift the focus onto her. I think she's one of these really needy people that needs attention so she's trying to get it from wherever she can.*

- **Resist any efforts by the family to extract help beyond providing friendship for the youth.** Do not allow your mentee's parent(s) to influence you into disciplining the youth or lecturing your mentee about his or her behavior at home or school. In joining with the parent in this way, you would be taking on a parental role yourself. In addition, do not allow family members to draw you into their problems or disputes. Resist any desire you might have to intervene with the family. If there is a problem in the family that seems to require outside services, contact program staff so they can deal with the issue. Also, do not hesitate to contact program staff about any difficulties you are having with the family and to ask them to talk to the family about your role.

*A mentor describes turning to program staff for help: I had to contact my match supervisor because there was just too much tension and I couldn't deal with it anymore. And I said, "You know, we need to address this issue and get this thing out in the air. It's probably better that you deal with it." And you know, once she talked to the mom everything was a lot better. I mean because every time I'd come I could sense friction. I don't like to feel uncomfortable that way.*

# 10 Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship

Building a relationship cannot be rushed. During the early period, when you and your mentee are getting to know one another, you may have to be particularly patient and persistent as you work to establish the foundation of a meaningful friendship, one that could ultimately help lead to positive changes in your mentee's life. At first, the relationship might seem one-sided—you might feel like you are putting out all the effort while your mentee seems passive or indifferent. Remember that this is the time when young people are going to be at their shyest and most reticent, because they do not yet know you. It is also the time when they may be testing you, because they could have limited reason to believe that adults can, in fact, be reliable and trustworthy.

To help build, and then maintain, the foundation of a trusting relationship, you should:

- ▶ **Take responsibility for making and maintaining contact.**  
Having *regular* meetings with your mentee is essential if you are going to be able to develop a strong relationship. You are the adult and must be responsible for being sure that the two of you meet regularly. If you are meeting with your mentee on a prearranged schedule at a school or other designated location, maintaining contact might not be a problem. But if you are in a program where you and your mentee schedule each meeting, decide where you will meet and what you will do together, you may find that your mentee does not return phone calls or behaves in other ways that make it difficult to schedule meetings. If you expect the youth to contact you, it is very likely you are going to feel disappointed and frustrated, and it also means that you very likely will not be meeting consistently. Be understanding—consider the situation from your mentee's point of view.

*A mentor describes the early months: It was basically me initiating a lot of the calls, which I have no problem with. That doesn't bother me because I know how kids are when it comes to that kind of stuff.*

As your relationship develops, your mentee might, at times, initiate contact—and that could be one indication that your relationship has evolved into a real friendship.

 **Understand that the feedback and reassurance characteristics of adult-to-adult relationships are often beyond the capacity of youth.** At times, some mentors feel unappreciated because they get little or no positive feedback from their mentee. They may interpret this as meaning that their mentee does not care about seeing them. But the fact that youth are reticent does not mean they are indifferent.

A mentor describes her frustration and eventual understanding: *One time that was kind of strained was when we were going to make tie-dye stuff and so we went to Target and got a bunch of plain t-shirts and a bunch of plain socks and went over to my house and, you know, we were doing it and it was fun, but she just never talked. So it was just kind of like, okay, you know, it was frustrating. But I didn't say anything about it. I mean I knew that it was going to take her some time to loosen up and you just can't force somebody to trust you, and you can't force somebody not to be shy—you have to just wait. It's kind of a grown-up thing to be able to say, "Gee, I really appreciate that." Because in a way, you know, when you're a kid you kind of expect it, which is fine.*

In some cases, mentors talk to program staff to find out how the youth feels about the relationship and to get reassurance that the youth is enjoying their time together.

And in all cases, mentors can allow themselves to recognize and appreciate the quiet moments that indicate they are making a difference. As one mentor explains:

*You know, Lisa being Lisa, you don't get that feedback in words, but you drive up and the kid is standing there and as soon as she sees you she smiles.*

## Some Questions To Consider

1. Think about yourself when you were the same age as your mentee. Was there an adult (other than a parent) whom you especially enjoyed spending time with? What were the qualities of that person that made him or her special to you?
2. What are three or four qualities you have that are going to help you be a great mentor?
3. Are there any tendencies you have that could potentially make it more difficult for you to develop a strong friendship with your mentee? (For example, do you like to talk a lot more than you like to listen?) What will you do to overcome those tendencies?
4. Think about the moment when you are going to meet your mentee for the first time. How do you think she or he will feel? What do you imagine she or he will be thinking?
5. Imagine you have just told an acquaintance that you have become a mentor. That person says to you, "What is a mentor?" What would you say? How would you describe your role?

## HANDOUT

### The Mentoring Relationship Cycle

Mentors have an easier time getting through trouble spots in their mentoring relationships if they understand the basics of the typical match “life cycle.” All matches go through a similar set of ups and downs and you will have an easier time working with your mentee and getting appropriate support from staff if you know what to expect.

The four main stages of mentoring relationships are:

1. The beginning
2. Challenging and testing
3. “Real” mentoring
4. Transition (toward closure)

The first two stages are critical as they lay the foundation for what the relationship will eventually become. If mentors are to be successful, they need to work through the difficulties presented early on so that the match gets to a place of trust and mutuality where “real” mentoring can take place. The chart on the next page offers examples of what these stages feel like for mentors and tips for communicating effectively throughout each stage’s ups and downs.

This information on the relationship cycle was **not** derived from the P/PV study of Big Brothers Big Sisters. The mentor relationship cycle material was adapted, with permission, from:

- Mentoring Resource Center. (2006). Overcoming relationship pitfalls. *Mentoring Fact Sheet*, 10.
- Rummell, C. (2006). Effective communication in the mentor/mentee relationship cycle. In A. Cannata (Ed.) *Ongoing training for mentors: 12 interactive sessions for U.S. Department of Education mentoring programs* (pp. 17–22). Folsom, CA: Mentoring Resource Center.

## HANDOUT

### Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

Stage	Characteristics	Effective Communication
<b>Beginning of the Match</b>  The beginning of any relationship is often awkward, and mentoring relationships are no exception. Your first few months will focus on getting to know each other, exploring similar interests, discussing expectations, and starting to form norms and bonds that will shape the rest of your first year together. During this phase mentors should work with their mentees to set parameters for the match, such as when to meet and for how long, what kinds of activities will take place, and how to contact each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Getting to know each other</li><li>■ The first impressions</li><li>■ Trying to see the positive in the relationship</li><li>■ Bonding</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Ask open-ended questions</li><li>■ Use body language that is open and not guarded</li><li>■ Active listening</li><li>■ Demonstrate empathy</li><li>■ Avoid “prescriptive” communication</li><li>■ Use prompts</li><li>■ Speak with language that you feel comfortable with</li><li>■ Don’t be afraid of silence</li></ul>
<b>Challenging and Testing</b>  Once the mentoring relationship is off the ground, it is normal for your mentee to start testing boundaries of the relationship. Though you’ve spent time affirming that you appreciate and enjoy your mentee, he may still want to see how far your commitment really goes. Because mentees often come from situations in which adults can’t always be relied on, trusting another adult is difficult for them, and they may even try to sabotage the relationship by “acting out.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Mentee challenges</li><li>■ Testing phase</li><li>■ Rethinking first impressions</li><li>■ Difficult feelings or emotions may surface</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Be consistent in your communication, even if it is difficult</li><li>■ Demonstrate respect</li><li>■ Build in problem-solving techniques in your open-ended questions</li><li>■ Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your interactions</li><li>■ Make sure to separate behaviors from who the mentee is</li><li>■ Disclosure of personal feelings and experiences when appropriate</li></ul>
<b>“Real” Mentoring</b>  In this stage, the mentoring relationship has reached full maturity. Trust and closeness have been established and the match is comfortable having fun and relating to one another. It is during this phase that mentors can use the trust they have built to move their mentees along the developmental pathway—asking them to think about goals or try new things. There may still be testing or behavioral issues, but they do not jeopardize the relationship itself. Mentors that reach this stage must be prepared to maintain this hard-won status—this is where the real impact of mentoring happens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Preparing for closure</li><li>■ Relationship may become deeper or mentee may start pulling away</li><li>■ Reflection</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Find common language to sum up your feelings</li><li>■ Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed</li><li>■ Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your mentee may have</li></ul>

Continued on next page.

*Handout continued, 2 of 2*

Stage	Characteristics	Effective Communication
<p><b>Transition (toward closure)</b></p> <p>The transition toward closure can be a difficult time for both mentors and youth. There may be many strong feelings about the match ending and it is important to not let the process of ending the match negate the many positives it provided to everyone involved. As the end of your match approaches, work closely with your match supervisor to end on a high note and make sure that the transition leaves the youth feeling positive and fulfilled about the experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Preparing for closure</li><li>■ Relationship may become deeper or mentee may start pulling away</li><li>■ Reflection</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Find common language to sum up your feelings</li><li>■ Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed</li><li>■ Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your mentee may have</li></ul>

# Additional Reading

The following resources all contain additional information and strategies for mentoring youth that you may find beneficial as your mentoring relationship progresses.

Cannata, A. (Ed.) (2006). *Ongoing training for mentors: 12 interactive sessions for U.S. Department of Education mentoring programs*. Folsom, CA: Mentoring Resource Center. Available online at:

[http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ongoing\\_training.pdf](http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/ongoing_training.pdf)

Cannata, A., & Garringer, M. (2006). *Preparing participants for mentoring: The U.S. Department of Education mentoring program's guide to initial training of volunteers, youth, and parents*. Mentoring Resource Center. Available online at:  
<http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/training.pdf>

Klapperich, C. (2002). *Mentoring answer book*. McHenry, IL: Big Brothers Big Sisters of McHenry County. Available for purchase at:  
<http://www.mentoringanswerbook.com/>

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (n.d.). *Learn to mentor* (online training). Alexandria, VA: Author. Available online at:  
<http://apps.mentoring.org/training/TMT/index.adp>

Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota. (2007). *Tools for mentoring adolescents* (series of fact sheets). Minneapolis, MN: Author. Available online at:  
[http://www.mentoringworks.org/Training\\_Institute\\_Tools\\_and\\_Resources.html](http://www.mentoringworks.org/Training_Institute_Tools_and_Resources.html)

Mentoring Resource Center. (2006). Overcoming relationship pitfalls. *Mentoring Fact Sheet 10*. Available online at:  
<http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet10.pdf>

Morrow, K.V., & Styles, M.B. (1995). *Building relationships with youth in program settings: A study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Available online at:  
[http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/41\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/41_publication.pdf)

North, D. (2000). *Responsible mentoring: Talking about drugs, sex, and other difficult issues*. Folsom, CA: EMT Associates. Available online at:  
<http://emt.org/userfiles/RespMentoringBooklet.pdf>

Probst, K. (2006). *Mentoring for meaningful results: Asset-building tips, tools, and activities for youth and adults*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute. Available for purchase at:  
<http://www.search-institute.org/catalog/productphp?productid=16424>

Rhodes, J.E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weinberger, S.G. (2000). *My mentor and me: 36 weekly activities for mentors and mentees to do together during the elementary school years.* Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership. Available for purchase at:  
<http://www.preventionworksct.org/publications.html>

Weinberger, S.G. (2001). *My mentor and me: The high school years. 36 activities and strategies for mentors and mentees to do together during the high school years.* Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership. Available for purchase at:  
<http://www.preventionworksct.org/publications.html>

Weinberger, S.G. (2003). *My mentor and me: The middle school years. 36 activities and strategies for mentors and mentees to do together during the middle years—including tips for talking about bullying.* Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership. Available for purchase at:  
<http://www.preventionworksct.org/publications.html>

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# MENTORING FACT SHEET

U.S. Department of Education ■ Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools  
Mentoring Resource Center

#10, July 2006

## Overcoming Relationship Pitfalls

Congratulations on your decision to become a mentor to a young person who needs your guidance and support! Mentoring is a rewarding and positive experience for all involved, but it is not without its challenges. A mentoring relationship is unlike many of the others in your life—it is formally created and has a purposefulness that your friendships and family relations may not. Because mentoring relationships are unique, you will need some perspective and some helpful tips as you move forward in your match.

Unlike many forms of volunteering—such as cleaning up a neighborhood or helping with an event—the impact of mentoring is not seen immediately. As one prominent researcher put it, “mentoring may be more like the slow accumulation of pebbles that sets off an avalanche than the baseball bat that propels a ball from the stadium.”<sup>1</sup> Because mentoring relationships take time to gain momentum, it is critical that mentors have patience and the ability to work through any difficult stretches. Matches that last longer have a greater chance of achieving program outcomes, while those that cannot get past those initial bumps in the road have the potential to do harm to the youth.<sup>2</sup>

### The Match Life Cycle

Mentors have an easier time getting through trouble spots in their mentoring relationships if they understand the basics of the typical match “life cycle.” All

matches go through a similar set of ups and downs and you will have an easier time working with your mentee and getting appropriate support from staff if you know what to expect.

The development of any relationship between two people depends on a complex mix of factors, including age, balance of power, roles and responsibilities, frequency of interactions, and natural bonds or level of commitment

involved. Relationships go through a series of stages as they develop and evolve, from the first moments of sharing a common interest to the satisfaction of a fully developed friendship.

Formal, one-to-one mentoring relationships also go through a series of stages. Each mentoring relationship begins, develops, changes, and evolves in unique ways. However, understanding the primary stages of mentoring relationships can help mentors nurture their new friendships and deal more effectively with challenges that may come up along the way. In this discussion we identify four stages of mentoring relationships: *beginning, building, testing, and transition*. This fact sheet focuses on the common pitfalls encountered during the first three

<sup>1</sup> Darling, N. (2005). Mentoring adolescents. In D.L. DuBois and M.J. Karcher (Eds.) *Handbook of youth mentoring* (p. 182). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>2</sup> Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

### When challenges arise in the mentoring relationship, remember:

*A mentor is . . .*

- A responsible and caring friend
- A role model
- A patient listener
- An advocate
- A nurturer of possibilities

*A mentor is not . . .*

- A counselor or social worker
- A parent or guardian
- A disciplinarian
- A party planner or money machine
- A savior

## MENTORING FACT SHEET

stages of the relationship. *Transition*, a topic to be addressed in a subsequent fact sheet, mostly refers to what happens as the mentoring relationship ends, something you are obviously trying to avoid as the relationship gets started.

### Phase 1: Beginning

Every mentoring relationship has a beginning phase—including that first meeting—that is often the source of much anticipation and sometimes a little anxiety. When you ask a mentor or mentee what makes him (or her) most nervous about this phase, you'll usually hear the same thing: "I hope he likes me."

#### **What it feels like:**

The beginning of any relationship is often awkward, and mentoring relationships are no exception. Your first few months will focus on getting to know each other, exploring similar interests, discussing expectations, and starting to form norms and bonds that will shape the rest of your first year together. It is during this phase that mentors should work with their mentees to set parameters for the match, such as when to meet and for how long, what kinds of activities will take place, and how to contact each other.

#### **Common pitfalls:**

Mentors can **get off on the wrong foot** early on by making all the decisions rather than sharing that job with their mentee. If you start off by calling all the shots, your mentee is more likely to close up and be reluctant to share her thoughts. A good friendship is a partnership, and although it may feel harder to share decisionmaking with your mentee, it's more likely to build a strong relationship down the road. Spending time at your first few meetings brainstorming a few activities to do in the future can help break the ice and make the mentee realize you value his opinions. If you can't agree on activities, try taking turns picking within the guidelines established by your program.

**Missed meetings** are one of the most common pitfalls for new relationships. Every missed meet-

ing means less time you have to build your friendship. Many young people have not yet developed strong organizational skills, so you may need to help them learn how to keep track of your meetings. Parents and guardians can also negatively affect scheduled meetings, especially if they have not bought into the program or do not understand the significance of consistent meetings. If possible, call your mentee the evening before a meeting, have him write down the next meeting in a school notebook or planner, and establish a routine for your meetings so they are easier to remember. Make sure the mentee knows how to reach you if he must break a date, either by calling you directly or by contacting the mentoring program.

Mentors should also be sure never to miss a meeting without notifying the mentee in advance. Because many of the youth who come to mentoring programs have a history of rocky relationships with adults, it is crucial that they do not get "stood up" by their mentor. If you are unable to meet, contact your mentee or the program immediately and reschedule the meeting time. Everyone knows things come up from time to time, but mentoring research tells us that consistency of meetings is a key to youth success.<sup>3</sup>

Another common issue mentors report early in the match is that **the mentee will not "open up"** or talks very little. This can be frustrating for mentors, who may see their mentee's reserve as a sign of boredom, ambivalence, or even dislike for the mentor. In fact, it's much more likely that the mentee is simply not yet comfortable with the mentor and is guarded about expressing thoughts or sharing personal information during conversations. Many youth have good reason not to trust every new adult who enters their life, and any attempt to push them to open up can have the opposite effect.

A few conversation techniques may help break the silence and help engage your mentee in productive, stress-free conversations. Start by finding an activity that you both enjoy doing. If you are in a

<sup>3</sup> Sipe, C.L. (1996). *Mentoring: A synthesis of P/PV's research: 1988–1995*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

## MENTORING FACT SHEET

really make a difference. In these situations, remember the information and advice you received in your mentor training about your role as a mentor. As a friend and champion of your mentee, you can do a lot to make your mentee feel better about herself and her situation. But many of the youth in the program are there because they come from tough situations, and your mentoring program staff can help locate professional help for mentees and families facing serious difficulties. If your mentee is unloading her problems on you on a regular basis, talk to your program staff about getting some extra help. And always alert program staff immediately if you believe your mentee is in danger.

**Mentors may also start to feel underappreciated** by their mentee at this stage of the relationship. Often mentors feel that they are giving up a lot of their time and energy and are never thanked for their efforts. Don't expect to be thanked for your dedication by your mentee. Most mentees don't have the maturity to thank their mentors nor do they even realize until years later the impact their mentor had on them. Sometimes it is a shyness issue; she may talk highly of you with program staff or other youth but feel embarrassed to express her feelings directly. Your mentee may not tell you, but she appreciates you more than either of you know. Try modeling courteous behavior when you are with her and tell her how much you appreciate her.

During this phase you may also encounter some **boundary issues with parents**, especially in programs that are community-based and contact with other family members is more frequent. Sometimes the mentee's family may begin asking for favors or assistance, such as asking you to take a younger sibling with you on an outing. You may get invited to family gatherings, and your mentee's parent may want to spend hours talking to you about her child's life. You may find it hard to refuse such requests, but it is important for mentors to set clear boundaries with parents just as they do with their mentee. As with other boundary issues, ask your match support staff for help, and encourage parents to contact the program for assistance if they need some additional resources for themselves or other children in the family.

## Phase 3: Testing

Once the mentoring relationship is off the ground, it is normal for your mentee to start testing boundaries of the relationship. Though you've spent time affirming that you appreciate and enjoy your mentee, he may still want to see how far your commitment really goes. Because mentees often come from situations in which adults can't always be relied on, trusting another adult is difficult for them, and they may even try to sabotage the relationship by "acting out."

### **What it feels like:**

This can be a confusing time for mentors, especially if the testing occurs after a period of trust-building and increasing rapport with the mentee. When your "perfect" mentee starts missing appointments, shows resentment, tries to get away with things, or has a hostile or sullen attitude, it's easy to take their behavior personally. You may feel that your mentee is avoiding you or does not like you anymore.

### **Common pitfalls:**

It's natural for mentors to respond to this testing phase by feeling **less interested in continuing the relationship**. Your mentee is making you feel less competent and you may begin to doubt your ability to make a difference in your mentee's life. This is a time when some matches fail, so it's important to recognize the testing behavior for what it is: a signal that your mentee wants you to "prove" that you are committed to the relationship.

Rather than taking your mentee's behavior personally, remember that it has nothing to do with you, but rather is a manifestation of his fear of being rejected one more time by one more adult. Stick by your mentee through this tough time and continue to reaffirm your commitment to the relationship. Reinforce the limits and boundaries you've established, if needed, but be sure to find new and ongoing ways to show your mentee that you think they are capable. Sometimes, testing can be a signal of other issues that are going on in your mentee's life, so be sure to keep the communication doors open.

**MENTORING FACT SHEET**

## Quick Tips for Getting the Help You Need

- Attend ongoing training offered by the program and offer ideas for additional training
- Take advantage of the ideas, suggestions, and support of other mentors in the program
- Actively participate during check-in phone calls and/or mentor support groups
- Honestly report how your match is going during check-in calls and on match logs
- Don't be afraid to contact program staff for any reason at any time
- Ask program staff to make contact with parents or guardians if needed
- Educate yourself about issues that face your mentee
- Remember that asking for help from program staff is a sign that you care about your mentee and are finding the best ways to make your relationship successful

## Additional Reading and Resources

*Handbook for Mentors*, by Sharyl Adams (Communities in Schools of Chesterfield, 1998).\*

*"Learn To Mentor" Online Training*, by The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR). (A resource page for new mentors, including an online tutorial and a list of activity links. Available online at: <http://www.mentoring.org/mentors/support/index.php>).

*Mentoring Answer Book*, by Cyndi Klapperich (McHenry, IL: Big Brothers Big Sisters of McHenry County, 2002).\*

*Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults*, by K. Probst (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2006).\*

*Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth*, by J.E. Rhodes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).\*

*Training Guide for Mentors*, by Jay Smink (National Dropout Prevention Center, 1999).\*

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\* Available to your program from the Mentoring Resource Center Lending Library at [http://www.edmentoring.org/lending\\_library.html](http://www.edmentoring.org/lending_library.html)

## Seek Out the Help When Needed

Any time that your mentee exhibits a period of challenging behavior, seek help from your program staff to get guidance and support. They may be aware of other issues in the mentee's life that could be contributing to the problem, and they can access school or community resources to help. Talking with other mentors about your experiences can also be helpful—it's likely they have experienced similar issues and may have some helpful tips. Get the help and support you need to get through the rough spots and keep working toward your mentee's goals.

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