



Parent Packet

Mentoring Coordinator Contact Information

Cerro Gordo County	Jessica Prazak	641.421.2708	jprazak@masoncity.net
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What is a Mentor?

A mentor is an adult who provides a young person with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement, and to be a positive role model. Mentors are good listeners, people who care, people who want to help young people bring out strengths that are already there.

Mentors are not to take place of parents. Mentoring is a different kind of relationship for everyone—each child is unique, therefore, each mentoring experience is going to be unique!

Mentors in this program are not specialized as counselor and they do not provide respite care. They are individuals that volunteer their time to be a role model to youth in our community.

Qualities of Successful Mentors

To be a mentor, a person has to care enough to be committed to the youth. While each mentoring experience is going to be unique, the qualities of an effective mentor remain the same.

- ☺ **A sincere desire to be involved with a young person**
- ☺ **Respect for young people**
- ☺ **An ability to listen actively**
- ☺ **Empathize**
- ☺ **See solutions and opportunities**
- ☺ **Flexibility and openness**



Mentoring has a powerful role in shaping lives!

Everyone benefits from a successful mentoring relationship: the mentees, the mentors, and family members. Mentoring provides a young person with a wealth of benefits. From improved grades to an enhanced self image, the research shows mentoring helps young people.

Many adults have special memories of a person who played an important role in their life. That special person, who was most often older, was a source of support and nurturing that was not always available from peers, parents, or siblings. This “friend” may have been a grandparent, aunt or uncle, teacher, coach, supervisor, or co-worker. They may have provided inspiration, acceptance, challenge, a sympathetic ear, or exposure to new activities or ideas. Today we would call this special person a mentor!



What is the Commitment?

- **Pairs need to commit to meeting with their mentee at least 4 hours per month**
Meetings can be scheduled weekly or every other week, depending on mentor's schedules.
- **Minimum of one year** (school or calendar year depending of when they are matched, with the potential for continuing until student is through high school or no longer wants to meet).

Commitment is one of the key ingredients in a successful mentoring experience for both the mentor and the youth! There is a lot that goes into building a successful mentoring relationship with a youth. Having the youth develop and grow brings great rewards but it doesn't happen overnight and it isn't always easy. Everyone has to hang in there and be committed to the relationship for these things to happen.

Why was my child pick to get a mentor?

Youth that are eligible to be matched with a mentor will:

- Be in kindergarten through 12th grade in the school.
- Be referred by a teacher, school counselor, or a parent.

Reasons a youth may be matched with a mentor include:

- ⇒ Could benefit from one on one attention or needs another positive role model in their life
- ⇒ Grades
- ⇒ Truancy and/or Absence
- ⇒ School-behavior and/or discipline issues
- ⇒ Peer relationships or lack of relationships
- ⇒ Behavior outside of school
- ⇒ Family issues (divorce or separation, not getting along with siblings, death in family)



Mentor Screening Process-Who will be mentoring my child?

Mentor Target Audiences: Community members, church members, corporate employees, college and older high school students, civic volunteers, retirees, or anyone that has a sincere interest to be a mentor to youth.

Adults volunteering as mentors for the *One On One* project must:

- Be a high school senior or an adult over 18 years old.
- Submit a completed mentor application to the Mentoring Coordinator .

Application includes:

- ⇒ Personal background information
- ⇒ Education & employment information
- ⇒ Information on special interests and hobbies
- ⇒ Four character references
- ⇒ Information on desired/available times and locations for meeting with their youth
- Background Checks: National Sex Offenders Registry Check, Iowa Driving Record Check, State of Iowa Child Abuse Registry, and State Criminal Records background check.
Please refer to the Risk Management section for more information.
- Receive satisfactory reports on all background checks and from four character references.
 - * **Once all background checks come back, mentor go though a training, and agree to spend four hours per month with the child for at least one year.**

Matching Strategy

- All *One On One Mentoring Project* matches will be **same gender** matches.
- Youth are matched based on availability of mentors and interests.
- Meeting location preferences indicated by the mentor and the parent of the youth will be a criteria for match selection.
 - School-based only
 - Community-based only
 - Combination of school/community-based
- We try to match pairs based on their Interests of the mentor and youth.
- The youth and their mentor will formally commit to the match for the next year or indicate the desire not to become a formal match following their initial meeting.

Meeting Activities & Meeting Locations

Mentoring should be enjoyable for both the mentor and the youth!

Whether your child meets with their mentor at school or in the community they should always meet in a safe location. Doors and/or blinds where the meeting takes place should remain open. Meeting locations or activities should be discussed openly.

School based matches

Pairs may meet in the library, conference room, cafeteria, playground, or another room at school.

Community based matches

Possible locations include, but are not limited to: libraries, cafes, YMCA, museum/art center, or parks/ outdoor areas. Participating in a community service activity (walking dogs at the shelter or helping at the food bank) is a great activity to be involved in. Some matches may meet at the mentors home, with your permission. It is always recommended if the pair meets at the mentor's home, there is another person present.

Travel outside of your community

Pairs may travel outside the local community **with parental permission**. An example would be to the Minnesota Zoo, an ISU football game, or to the Des Moines Science Center.

It's important to keep the lines of communication open. Any activity with an inherently increased level of risk (archery is an example) should be cleared with the Mentoring Coordinator and parent/guardian. The options are endless– everyone just needs to be creative!

Keeping in touch

Through on-going contact, the Mentoring Coordinator will monitor satisfaction/progress of match relationship and follow-through, share information about the project, and address any needs or concerns of all parties involved. **Please contact your Mentoring Coordinator (refer to page 1 for contact info) any time they have a question or a concern.** As soon as staff becomes aware of any pending termination, a closure meeting will be set up and the youth and/or mentor are contacted to assess their desire to be re-matched.

Parents:

- ⇒ If you are interested in meeting your child's mentor we can set that up at school or if they are community based, the mentor and the Mentoring Coordinator meet with you and your child.
- ⇒ You will receive a Parent Memo from the One On One Mentoring Project 4-5 times per year.

Youth:

- ⇒ Pre and Post Evaluation Interviews
- ⇒ Face to face meetings at school at the beginning and end of the school year

When the Relationship Ends...

Match status will be assessed annually by the Mentoring Coordinator. The mentor, youth, and youth's parents will be asked to indicate whether they wish to continue or terminate the match.

Sometimes, unfortunately, things don't work out between a mentor and a child.

If this would happen, the following steps will be taken:

- We will set up a closure meeting between the youth and Mentoring Coordinator or referral resource staff (dependent upon wishes of youth or their parent)
- Decide what the benefits and successes of the match
- Discussion of any problems or concerns encountered
- Project policy regarding any future contact with the mentor
- In case of early termination, you will decide if you would like your child to be rematched.

Meeting Process

School Based matches

1. Your child, school counselor, and the Mentoring Coordinator meet to see what time works best for the mentor to visit during the school day.
2. The mentor will check into the office and meet your child in the counselors room or other room that is available.
3. They will spend time talking, doing homework or studying, playing games, etc.
4. Before leaving they will discuss their next visit.

Community Based Matches

1. The first meeting usually takes place at your home. The mentor, your child, parents, and the Mentoring Coordinator will meet and go over the guidelines and rules of the program.
2. We will exchange contact information and emergency information, just in case something would occur.
3. Set a date and a time for the first meeting to take place and what time the meeting will be done. Please make sure to make the mentor aware of drop off instructions. Mentors are not to leave your child at home alone, unless you specify otherwise.

Large Group Activities

1. If your child only has permission for school based visits, they will need special permission to participate in large group activities.
2. If the mentor is able to take your child to the event, they will call and the two of you can set up a time for the mentor to pick up your child.
3. Give the mentor your contact information and emergency information, just in case something would occur.
4. Set a time for the mentor to drop off your child, and please be there at the agreed time.

Risk Management & Liability

Overnight – overnight visits / sleepovers between mentors and mentees are NOT AUTHORIZED !!

The Nonprofit Risk Management Center defines risk management as a “discipline for dealing with uncertainty.” The area of greatest uncertainty, or risk, in a mentoring program involves the potential for harm to the young person being mentored or the mentor themselves. A growing body of research and information on mentoring best practices provides a framework for designing a prudent risk management system.

Liability Insurance To protect our mentors, families, and our program as a whole; we have liability insurance. Certain issues are important when the insurance company determines the acceptability of a risk. Our liability insurance carrier **does not allow overnight visits**, and also does not recommend that mentors be totally alone with a mentee for an extended period of time.

Why you ask? Our agent explained to us that insurance carriers are always concerned when there is isolation of a person of authority paired with a child. They would like to encourage and emphasize with all parties their stance on overnight visits. Our liability policy would be voided if something happened.

We don't have these rules to be mean and cruel, we have the rules to keep all parties safe.

Other questions we have answered:

1. My child's mentor's church is having an overnight retreat. Can my child go with their mentor? Yes. Just make sure you fill out the appropriate paperwork work with the church/youth group. An the mentor has all of your correct emergency information.

2. Can siblings or other family members or their friends go on mentor visits? If your child would like to invite a sibling or friend along on your meetings, a mentor's permission should always be secured for youth participation.

Remember, this relationship is between your child and their mentor. The program has told the mentors to limit the number of times a friend or sibling attends mentor meetings as the goal of the program is the one on one relationship. If siblings are going to be involved on a regular basis, they should be enrolled in the program.

3. Is it appropriate to ask my mentor to take my child if I have plans? If this works into the mentor's schedule it may be appropriate, as long as it is planned in advance. It is inappropriate to pressure or asks the mentor multiple times. The role of the mentor is to spend time with their mentee, not to babysit. As mentors and families get comfortable with each other sometimes boundary lines get blurred and sometimes parties feel that they are entitled to ask each other for favors. **If a you or your is in need of financial or other family services, the mentoring program can help you find these resources.**

4. My child still uses a booster car seat. What should I do when the go with their mentor? Let the mentor know your child uses a booster seat, and give the mentor the proper instructions on the use. When mentors are trained we cover the use of seat belts and sitting in the back seat, but it's always nice to confirm the instructions with the parents.

Risk Management: Transportation & Liability

If you have any questions related to the risk management policy or any questions in general, please contact your Mentoring Coordinator (*refer to page 1 for contact info*). The One on One Mentoring Programs are funded by the Mason City Youth Task Force.

The following letter is from our insurance carrier:

25 West State Street
Post Office Box 1448
Mason City, Iowa 50402-1 448
Phone 641-421-8000

FIRST INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.

June 7, 2006

Jessica Prazak
Mason City Youth Task Force
City of Mason City
10 First St NW
Mason City, Iowa 50401

Re: Mason City Youth Task Force Mentoring Program

I have reviewed the information you provided in regard to the Mentoring Program. Because the Youth Task Force activities are a budgeted item and under overall control of the City the City's liability policies would apply. These policies provide coverage for bodily injury, property damage, and public official's liability that result in claims where there has been negligence by the City of Mason City employees or volunteers while involved in Youth Task Force activities including the Mentoring Programs in the Outreach Programs.

The automobile liability policy also protects the City if a volunteer uses his or her personal automobile while involved in Task Force Activities. This coverage is on an excess basis, i.e., the volunteer's automobile liability policy would pay first, and the City's policy would pay on the City's behalf after their insurance is exhausted. There is no physical damage coverage in the City's policy for a volunteer's vehicle.

Liability policies would provide legal defense as well as other covered damages up to policy limits. I suggest you obtain evidence of insurance and driving record information for any volunteer using their personal vehicle.

Your volunteers are not covered by the City's workers compensation insurance. Any on the job injuries suffered by a volunteer will have to be handled at their expense.

As we discussed, you are performing background checks, checking references, and the sexual abuse registry as you screen your volunteers.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Richard R. Price, CPCU First Insurance Agency

Expectations of Participants

- ☺ Commitment to meeting for at least four hours per month, with at least 2 separate meetings.
- ☺ Please remember mentors are volunteering their time for this project also, so we need to work around everyone's schedules! Let the mentor know promptly if your child is unable to make a scheduled meeting.
- ☺ Contact the your Mentoring Coordinator or referral resource with any questions or concerns– we can't be there to help or support you if we don't know about it!
- ☺ Notify your Mentoring Coordinator of the need or desire to terminate the match (you are moving, etc.)
- ☺ Completion of the annual program evaluation/survey.
- ☺ Please inform the Mentoring Coordinator and your mentor of any address or phone number changes.
- ☺ Please remember your child's mentor is not their babysitter or provide your child with excessive gifts or money. If this occurs or you are uncomfortable with anything, please contact your Coordinator. Please read over the Parent Permission & Agreement form.

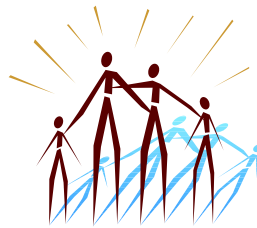


Please remember if you have any questions or concerns to contact your Mentoring Coordinator immediately!

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Studies show that students who meet regularly with mentors are less likely to begin using drugs, less likely to skip school, and less likely to get into fights.



Mentoring is a wonderful way for caring adults to share their wisdom with future generations and to strengthen their community.



"Adults who devote their time can make a huge difference in the lives of young people... in addition to helping with academic and social skills, mentors give youth the message that they are important and have something to contribute." - Hillary Clinton

