

Frequently Asked Mentoring Questions

1. What Is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee. Through the relationship, the mentor helps the young person develop into a confident, competent, and contributing member of society.

2. What does a mentor do?

Depending on the program guidelines, mentors spend 1 to 2 hours a week being a friend to a child or youth. The mentor may act as a link to the community, a sounding board for ideas, a listener, a guide to setting goals, a role model or a support person. Because relationships and a sense of bonding occur over time, the duration and consistency of a mentoring relationship is very important. Ideally, mentors and mentees remain together for a year. Programs that take place at schools should last the length of the school year. Many mentoring relationships last for several years.

3. What types of mentoring programs are there?

Responsible mentoring can take many forms:

- *Traditional Mentoring*: one adult to one young person
- *Group Mentoring*: one adult with up to four young people
- *Team Mentoring*: several adults working with small groups of young people
- *Peer Mentoring*: caring youth mentoring other youth

4. What about the application process and training for mentors?

Reputable mentoring programs screen potential mentors through a criminal background check process. Potential mentors are also expected to complete an application form and take part in an interview process. Ordinarily, orientation and training takes place for mentors (and mentees), which includes information about program guidelines, mentor/mentee roles & responsibilities, and helpful ways to work with the child or youth. Mentors receive program contact information and resources for support. Ongoing training opportunities and meetings with other mentors are an important part of successful mentoring programs.

5. How can I be an effective mentor?

Listen, listen, listen. The most important first step is to get to know the person who you are mentoring. Find out what their needs and goals are. Once a rapport is established, then you can begin to help them create a plan for themselves. Remember, the best kind of help is encouragement and pointing out resources. Be yourself, be real, talk about mistakes you've made.

6. What difference does it make?

Nationally, studies show that youth who meet regularly with their mentors are

- 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs,
- 27% less likely to start drinking, and
- 33% less likely to hit someone.
- Mentoring reduces recidivism up to 80%.

7. How can I get involved?

Contact Maine Mentoring Partnership (a supporting organization of Jobs for Maine's Graduates) at (207) 620-7180 ext. 212 or email dbechard@jmg.org.