

About Mentoring

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is the presence of a caring individual who provides a young person with support, advice, friendship, reinforcement, and constructive role modelling over time.

Mentoring can take many different forms. Some people may be familiar with more formal mentoring programs, such as the variety of programs organized by the Big Brothers Big Sisters societies. Mentoring can also take many other forms, like coaching, youth groups, scout leaders, and more.

Why is Mentoring Important?

Mentoring is a powerful way of lending support to a young person by teaching skills, listening to their perspectives and creating a sense of belonging. Research tells us that, over time, consistent interaction with a mentor increases the likelihood that a child or youth will complete high school and experience success in life.

The strong relationships between mentors and youth improve academic performance, behaviour, and attitudes toward school. Mentoring helps improve peer and family relationships, and helps Alberta's youth develop the confidence, self-esteem and the social skills they need to become a productive member of society.

Spending as little as an hour a week with a young person can make a difference in their life...and yours.

Getting Involved

What Can Albertans do to Support Mentoring?

Mentors are urgently needed in communities all across the province, especially in rural areas. There are many more children and youth on waiting lists for mentors than there are mentors available. Albertans can volunteer as mentors in their communities and provide support to agencies that deliver mentoring services across the province.

Who Can Be A Mentor?

Many people think it takes special skills or accomplishments to be a mentor. Not so! Mentors come from all walks of life, have different life experiences and different things to offer. What mentors have in common is the desire to make a positive difference in the life of a child or youth. You don't need to have superhuman qualities to be a mentor, just human ones. Mentoring offers you the power to transform lives and make a difference. If you want to get involved, there are many flexible mentoring program options available to fit your schedule and lifestyle.

The Mentoring Impact

On Children & Youth

Children and youth with mentors are less likely to be absent from school, use drugs or alcohol, or demonstrate violent behavior.

Youth in care with mentoring relationships had higher educational attainment, less suicidal risk, less physical aggression, improved general health, and lower risk of contracting an STI.

Youth with a mentor were more likely to complete high school or a High School Equivalency Diploma than those without a mentor.

Mentored youth report more positive mental health, fewer depressive symptoms, greater acceptance by their peers, more positive beliefs about their ability to succeed in school, and better grades in school.

On Mentors & Employers

When employers support youth mentoring, 73% of employees report strong career satisfaction.

Mentoring has been identified as the number one form of skill-based volunteerism companies offer for their employees.

Employees involved in mentoring develop a better understanding of customer and community needs and a deeper appreciation for the cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of both the youth they served and their coworkers.

Common Definitions

Social Skills or Personal Mentoring

Focus is aimed at supporting a particular population to address issues common to that group, or at building specific behaviours and practices, or at supporting an individual or group through a critical time of change development.

Cultural Mentoring

Focus is to share the customs, values and practices of a specific culture, tradition or group with the child, youth or group being mentored

Career Mentoring

Focus on assisting the child, youth or group being mentored in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to advance to, or begin on a career path

Teen Mentoring

Matches high school and upper middle school teens as mentors with younger students. Matches could be one-on-one, one teen with 2 or 3 younger students, 2 or 3 teens with a small group of younger students or a configuration that works for both school situations. Teen mentoring requires additional support

Tri Mentoring (Cascading Mentoring)

Also known as Cascading Mentoring, happens when a mentee in one relationship becomes a mentor in another relationship – often to a peer or a younger person. All mentors in this structure require ongoing training and support. Sometimes referred to as Big/Middle/Little.

Two-to-One Mentoring

In this type of relationship, one mentee has two mentors – giving the mentee the added experience of developing two relationships. Sometimes practices as Couples Mentoring, this relationship can also increase flexibility for the mentors as they can maintain the regularity of meetings with the mentee when the other cannot attend. Two-to-one mentoring can occur in workplace youth mentoring.

Peer Mentoring

When a person, perceived as an equal, mentors another, like two young people of approximately the same age. It can be a very powerful form of mentoring, but the young person who is the mentor may require additional orientation and support.

Group Mentoring

Is where a group of mentors are matched with a larger group of youth, ideally in one mentor to two youth ratio. In this structure, there is an opportunity for individual relationships to emerge more naturally, and youth to learn how to function well in groups and develop friendships. This structure appeals to adults who like working as a team and allows for some flexibility in attendance.

Family Mentoring

This is where a mentor spends time with an entire family talking and listening just like a friend would. By strengthening each family member, the family becomes better prepared to deal with life's challenges and responsibilities.

E-mentoring

Also known as online mentoring, this relationship is conducted using the Internet, using social media like e-mail, Facebook or Twitter. This form of mentoring is ideal for those who want to make a connection but have a busy schedule. It is also helpful in connecting youth in isolated areas with a broader community. During the summer months, e-mentoring can also serve as a bridge for mentors and mentees in a school-based mentoring relationship.

Matches one mentor with one youth on the Internet, by telephone or through social networks. Risk management (due diligence) is a critical component.

Community Leader

People from across Alberta recruited to provide a supportive voice to the mentoring project at a grassroots/ community level. Community Leaders might be local dignitaries, outstanding citizens, or senior business leaders in the community who have achieved prominence in their communities and can act in this role through their everyday work. Community Leaders may be called upon by local mentoring agencies to support their local programs further and to speak at public events or to local media on the subject of mentoring.

Online Mentoring

Mentoring is conducted through the Internet when transportation is an issue or when online contact is the preferred means of communications.

Cross-Age Peer Mentoring

Peers or youth who are older (typically three years or school grades higher), more knowledgeable, or have advanced skills serve as mentors to younger peers.

Team Mentoring

Matches several mentors working with small groups of children or young people

One-to-One Mentoring

This very personalized form of mentoring consists of one mentor and one mentee. Success in this type of mentoring requires the careful matching of personalities, the coordination of two schedules and ongoing monitoring to support the success of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring

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