



Sexual and Gender Diverse (SGD)

YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM GUIDE



Boys & Girls Clubs



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Edmonton & Area



Alberta
**Mentoring
Partnership**
Your Mentoring Resource
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Introduction

[1.1] Background and Purpose of this Guide

There is a growing awareness that Sexual and Gender Diverse In-person mentoring relationships can serve an important role for SGD youth, as they would be well-positioned to offer ongoing support to the needs of youth, as they navigate through phases of exploring, accepting, and sharing their identity with others. Given that SGD youth face unique challenges, and there is a strong belief that mentors can help them positively navigate these challenges, many organizations have started taking an interest in developing new programs or improving existing programming to address the unique needs of SGD youth. This guide was created for BGCBigs (Boys & Girls Clubs and Big Brothers Big Sisters) Edmonton as a resource for the Alberta Mentoring Partnership. However, the guide can be a reference for youth and community organizations in Alberta and Canada who are interested in this topic.

The guide contains recommendations and best practices for working with SGD youth, and highlights program design considerations. The program design elements in this manual could be tailored for use in existing mentorship programs that wish to serve SGD youth more effectively or could provide the basis for standalone mentorship programs principally focused on SGD youth and mentors.

Specific uses of this manual could include:

- Improving existing youth mentorship programs to address the specific needs and challenges of SGD youth.
- Creating a new mentoring program targeted specifically for SGD youth, and SGD-identified mentors.
- Advice on supporting mentors who have been matched with SGD youth, and tips for improving their skills and the quality of their interactions with mentees.
- Understanding Canadian legal policy for youth-centered programs, and how it relates to the design of mentoring programs for SGD youth.
- Educating staff and community stakeholders on the issues SGD youth face, and how these could affect mentoring programs.
- Guidance for quality assurance program measurements for SGD Youth Mentoring Programs.

There are a number of existing high-quality resources which can provide insights and guidance for SGD Youth Mentoring Programs. This program guide is an amalgamation of information and represents an integration into one simple guide of the latest information.

There is a full list of references at the end of this guide from: BGCBigs Edmonton and their partnership with the Pride Centre of Edmonton, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, MENTOR National Mentoring Partnership, and the Youth in Care Program Design Guide.

Mentoring programs specifically targeted at SGD-youth are an emerging programming area. While this represents the latest understanding of best practice at the time of its compilation, users of this guide are encouraged to share program experience with BGCBigs and help improve this guide over time.

[1.2] How Mentorship Programs Can Benefit SGD Youth

Research into the effectiveness of SGD youth mentoring programs is still in its infancy. Therefore, there are only a few studies regarding rigorous measurement of program effectiveness. The National Mentoring Resource Center, in association with Big Brothers Big Sisters America has made the most extensive efforts to pilot and measure SGD youth mentoring programs to

date, however they have not published their outcomes yet. Initial research suggests the following positive impacts on mentees, mentors, and communities:

- In-person mentoring relationships may serve an important protective role for SGD youth, helping them to confront challenges such as lack of acceptance from peers and parents.
- Informal mentoring relationships with adults may promote positive educational outcomes among SGD youth.
- Mentors who take youth-centered approaches that are inclusive of the experiences and needs of SGD youth may foster greater benefits.
- Mentors appear well-positioned to offer ongoing support as the youth navigate through phases of exploring, accepting, and sharing their identity with others.
- Mentors who advocate may be able to support for SGD youth in ways that mitigated risks associated with stigma and victimization.
- Youth-serving agencies with inclusive and safe programming appear to offer additional levels of protection for SGD youth against risks, such as depression and suicide.

Because SGD youth mentoring programs are so new, this guide recommends that organizations include a research component into the program design.

[1.3] Unique Challenges Faced by SGD Youth

Sexually and Gender Diverse (SGD) youth face unique challenges that put them at higher risk than their non-SGD peers for things such as discrimination. The risks are complex, pervasive and can be community specific. A January 2014 report by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Project in the United States captures the following risk factors common for SGD youth:

- SGD youth rank non-accepting families as the most important problem in their lives.
- Over 70% of SGD youth feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- SGD youth are almost twice as likely to consider dropping out of school as their non-SGD peers.

- SGD youth are at higher risk for drug use than non-SGD peers.
- SGD youth are much more likely to be homeless or in foster care.
- SGD youth are over three times more likely to report that they have attempted suicide.
- While approximately 7% of youth generally identify as SGD, almost 14% of youth in custody identify as SGD.
- Significantly increased risk-factors for Transgender youth: A recent survey on the experiences of transgender students found that 54% had been verbally harassed, 24% had been physically attacked, and 13% had been sexually assaulted because they were transgender.

As research is emerging, organizations have begun to ask how they can improve programming to meet the needs of SGD youth. Building on the evidence from other at-risk youth programs, there is greater interest in mentoring programs designed specifically to meet the needs of SGD youth.

[1.4] Nuances Specific to SGD Mentoring Programs

Research shows a number of program design challenges unique to addressing the needs of this population.

Frequently cited challenges include:

- SGD youth fear discrimination by service providers. They also report experiencing discrimination after disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to service providers.
- Even when inclusive policies are in place, organizations may not outwardly appear welcoming to SGD youth and mentors, which may discourage SGD youth's engagement with the organization.
- Youth report that mentoring relationships are most useful when their mentor shares multiple demographic/identity similarities with them. For example, transgender youth from minority communities may have a preference for a mentor who is also transgender and from the same minority community rather than a cis-gender

white mentor. Successfully recruiting mentors with very specific demographic characteristics that match with youth participants can be a logistical challenge.

- Some SGD youth rank a lack of familial acceptance as a primary concern. The requirement of parental consent or overt identification as SGD programs may limit participation by youth who fear disclosing their identities to their family members.
- Some SGD youth from different segments of this community—including youth of color, gender non-conforming youth, transgender youth, youth at earlier phases of identity development, and youth involved with the juvenile justice or foster care systems—may experience intersections of risks that hinder their development of trust which negatively impacts the foundation of high-quality, effective mentoring relationships.
- Mentors who take youth-centered approaches that are inclusive of the experiences and needs of SGD youth may foster greater benefits.

To create the most successful programs, implementers should be aware and address the particular challenges in their program design. Consequently, this guide contains specific design suggestions to help address these challenges.

[1.5] Glossary of Terms

Below is a list of commonly used terminology in Sexual and Gender Diverse (SGD) programs, as well as some basic tips for discussing the relevance of gender to a wide variety of stakeholders.

It is recommended that implementers take steps to educate staff, partners, and other stakeholders about foundational terms and concepts as a part of the program development process.

PROGRAM ROLES:

- **Mentor:** An individual who develops a caring relationship with the mentee in a one-to-one or group setting to support their development, provide and offer a different perspective on the world.
- **Mentee:** The youth who is matched with the mentor and participates in the program.

- **Mentoring Coordinator:** The staff person who supports group and individual matching and supports the participants.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- **Heterosexual or straight:** usually describes someone attracted to people of a different gender.
- **Gay:** usually describes a man who is attracted to other men.
- **Lesbian:** usually describes a woman who is attracted to other women.
- **Bisexual:** usually describes someone attracted to their same gender and to another gender.
- **Pansexual:** one might experience attraction to people of a variety of genders. One might find gender is not a factor in attraction.
- **Asexual:** an umbrella term that includes people who do not feel sexual desire for people of any gender, and people who desire romantic relationships but not sexual relationships. Also, people who have periods of time in which they do not feel sexual desire.
- **Intersex:** an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, while in others they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.

GENDER IDENTITY:

- **Gender Identity:** a person's felt sense of gender. How a person feels on the inside, regardless of how their body looks.
- **Sex Assigned at Birth:** the sex that someone is assumed to have at birth, usually based on a visual assessment of their genitals. This is recorded on the person's birth certificate.
- **Transgender:** people whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Fluid:** a person whose gender identity or expression shifts between masculine and feminine, or across the spectrum.
- **Cisgender:** a person whose gender identity is congruent with (or "matches") their sex assigned at birth.

- **Two-spirit:** a term used by some Indigenous people to indicate that they embody both a masculine and a feminine spirit. Two-spirit may be used by people who fit into trans identity categories as well as by people who fit into gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity categories.
- **Non-binary:** People whose gender identity does not fit into male/female or man/woman or boy/girl categories.
- **Gender Creative or Gender Independent:** terms used to describe non-binary or gender non-conforming traits in children.
- **Femme:** a term used to describe someone who exhibits notably feminine traits, most often (but not always) referring to a lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman. This may also refer to a person who is biologically male and exhibits feminine traits.
- **Androgynous:** a term used to describe someone who identifies and/or presents as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.
- **Gender Dysphoria:** According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Gender Dysphoria is the formal diagnosis applied to transgender people seeking mental health support for their transition. This describes the distress that a person may experience when perceived as a gender that does not match their gender identity, or from physical characteristics that do not match their gender identity. Many transgender people experience gender dysphoria at some point in their lives, although taking steps to affirm one's gender identity can reduce or eliminate it.

GENDER EXPRESSION:

- **Gender Role:** this is the set of expectations and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Every culture and community has its own expectations about how men/boys and women/girls should behave, and these expectations often shift over time.
- **Gender Expression:** the concept that all people express their own understanding of their gender in multiple ways. We show our gender in the ways we dress, wear our hair, our mannerisms, and our interests. Gender can be expressed in countless ways.
- **Gender Non-conforming:** people whose gender expression does not conform with traditional norms for what is expected for their sex assigned at birth.

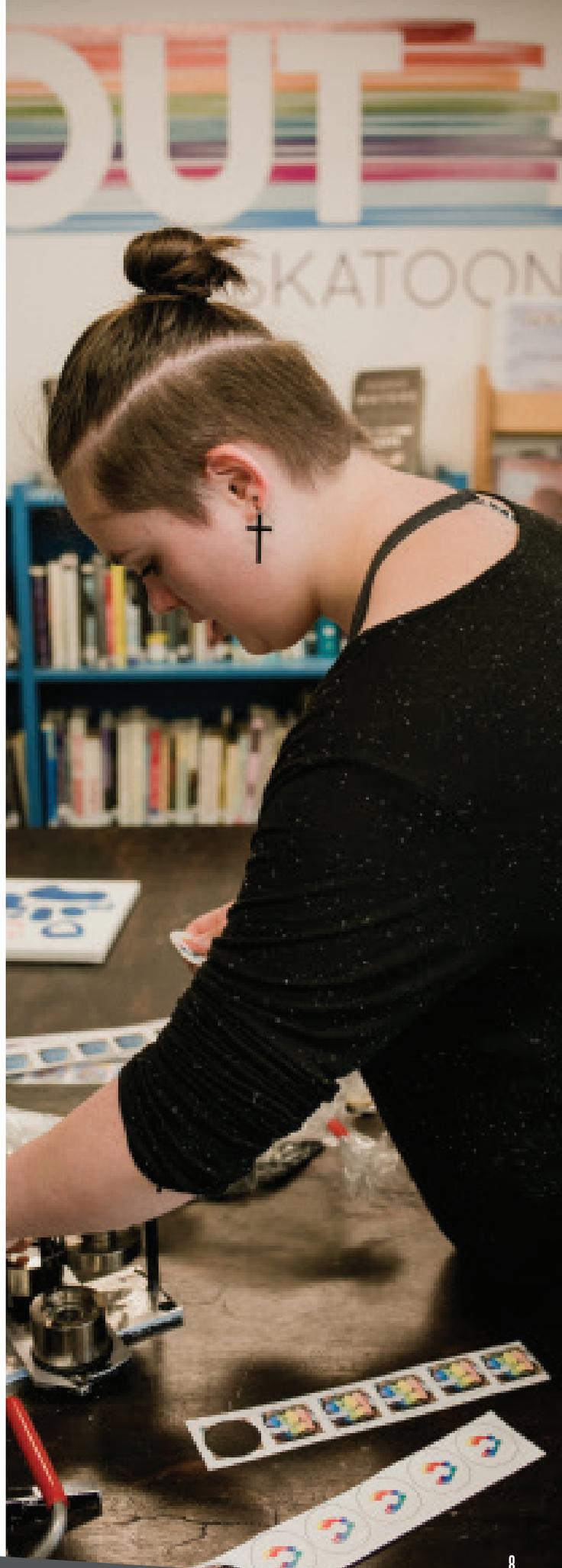
OTHER COMMON TERMS RELATED TO GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY:

- **Closeted:** a term used to describe an SGD person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Coming Out:** the process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to disclose that identity to others. The concept is used more in relationship to sexual orientation but can be applied to gender identity—though the process differs significantly between Sexual Orientation (SO) and Gender Identity (GI).
- **Butch:** commonly used to refer to masculinity displayed by a female, but can also refer to masculinity displayed by a male.



TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- **Sexual Preference:** a term sometimes used to mean the same thing as sexual orientation. Many SGD people find this term to be offensive because it implies that their sexual orientation is a choice.
- **Lifestyle:** Inaccurate term that many SGD people find offensive. Avoid using this term because just as there is no one straight or non-SGD lifestyle, there is no one SGD lifestyle.
- **Queer:** an umbrella term for SGD, to express a rejection of other gender and sexual orientation labels, or to describe sexual attraction to people of more than one gender. Historically, queer has been used as a negative term for SGD people. Some people still find the term offensive while others have embraced the term. It should be used carefully.
- **Gender Binary:** the idea that there are two genders – male and female based on sex assigned at birth. The gender binary is often considered to be limiting and problematic for all people, especially those who do not fit into either/or categories. Some transgender people fit neatly into binary gender categories.
- **Pronouns:** the words that indicate gender when referring to another person such as he/him, she/her, they/them.
- **Misgendering:** calling someone by the wrong gendered name or pronoun. For example, calling someone 'him' when they would like to be called 'her'.
- **Deadname:** Transgender people frequently change their name as a part of publicly expressing their gender identity. It is considered rude, offensive and a threat to safety to call trans people by their names assigned at birth. These names are commonly referred to as 'deadnames'.



2. Program Overview, Outcome Measurement and Evaluation

[2.1] Basic Overview of Program Design

There are a wide range of potential ways to implement SGD-youth inclusive programming, including integrating SGD-specific components into existing mentoring programs or developing programs designed and marketed primarily to SGD youth and mentors.

Prior to starting an SGD program, implementers should consider the following elements:

- Organizational mission, values, and culture.
- Policies and procedures.
- Community-specific factors (e.g. urban vs rural).

- Staff and volunteers.
- Mentor and mentee recruitment.
- Budget and resource needs.
- Local partners, funders, and stakeholders - particularly SGD community groups, religious organizations, schools, and local businesses.

Specific program design recommendations are in the Program Setup section and through the list of additional resources.

SGD youth exist in every community; so, all communities are likely to benefit in some way from a focus on SGD youth. Research suggests there is a high overall unmet need for SGD youth support. Risk factors that may make programming complex could include: poverty, racial diversity, and/or the local religious and social context. Consequently, it is crucial to engage with the local applicable stakeholders in order to understand and identify specific needs that will guide program design.

Early programs frequently report addressing internal staff, funder, and leadership challenges as a key aspect of setting programs up for success.



[2.2] Target Age Groups and Program Design Considerations

Program design will vary based on the needs of the local community, and the specific challenges faced by SGD youth.

One factor that may affect program design is the target age range of SGD youth as illustrated in the table below. As youth go through different developmental stages, they will face different challenges. Additionally, laws and policies may vary; particularly as they relate to parental disclosure and background checks.

Age group (years)	Challenges	Parent/guardian involvement*	Adaptations
6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to be concerned with navigating school system or environment. Parents may not feel equipped to support SGD children at this age, and may need separate support. Navigating the binary environment. Navigating relationships with gender dysphoria. Negotiating identity within peer relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents might reach out for help if their child is asking questions around identity or orientation. Parents will need to provide consent if they decide to pursue formal mentoring relationship for their child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program may benefit from recruiting younger mentors who are more relatable to younger mentees, and may have more recent experience dealing with similar issues. Co-programming and support for parents may be beneficial for this age group.
12-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to be concerned with navigating school and/or post-secondary environment. May be struggling with living in a non-accepting home. May experiment with sexual activity or substance use for the first time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents might reach out for help if their child is asking questions around identity or orientation. Parents will need to provide consent if they decide to pursue formal mentoring relationship for their child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with schools and Gay Straight Alliance programs.
18-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely focused on young adult issues such as relationships, sexual health, substance use, and navigating the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement may be minimal or not at all due to age of the young adult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend pre-identifying sexual and mental health providers who serve SGD youth; program will likely benefit from being able to refer mentees. Engage local post secondary institutions and employers.

*Legal requirements may vary from municipality to municipality; strongly recommend contacting local legal professionals to understand the full extent of local laws.

[2.3] Program Goals, Outcomes, and Measurement Tools

Specific goals and outcomes will vary according to the program. Programs that focus on SGD youth generally focus on four broad goals:

- Improvements in knowledge, policies, and organizational capacity.
- Mentor training and competency.
- Building resilience and capacity of SGD youth outcomes: e.g. knowledge, identity development, frequency of risky behaviors, and relationship to family and community.
- Scope and quality of community engagement and partnerships around SGD youth issues.

This guide lists potential outcomes and indicators for organizations to consider. As a part of the program design process implementers can outline and map goals and success indicators in a logic model format.

Short-term Goals and Outcomes:

- Stakeholders are aware of the challenges facing SGD youth and the potential benefits of mentoring.
- Stakeholders' support is demonstrated through donations of time and finances.
- Staff report having the necessary experience, skills, training and support to implement services.
- Organizations learn from each other and share learnings with others.
- Enhanced training and support help mentors to be confident and successful in their role.
- A model and delivery system for mentoring SGD youth is established, implemented and evaluated.
- SGD youth are regularly supported by mentors.

Mid-term Goals and Outcomes:

- Mentees increase knowledge of and connection to the local SGD community and resources.
- Mentees improve their sense of belonging and acceptance as demonstrated by growth of their

natural and formal support networks.

- Mentees make progress in identity development and improved sense of self.
- Mentees reduce risky behaviors (following up on those measured at entry into the program).
- Decreased bullying and harassment or improved peer relations reported by mentee.
- Mentees increased social competence as demonstrated through the utilization of improved social skills and use of healthy coping strategies.
- Mentees reduced negative self-perceptions related to their SGD status.
- Mentors are equipped through training and support to encourage and assist mentees' development.
- Mentors or mentees view the mentors as role models.
- Partnerships with the stakeholders in promoting, recruiting and supporting the program.
- The model and delivery system for mentoring SGD youth is evidence based and has a continuous improvement framework.

Long-term Goals and Outcomes:

- SGD youth and mentors demonstrate resiliency through healthy relationships and contributions to their community.
- Ongoing support for and engagement with SGD youth issues by community organizations.



Indicators

Potential Process Measures Include:

- Number of self-identified SGD youth who have access to a mentor.
- Number of mentors recruited, screened, selected and trained.
- Number SGD youth matched.
- Increase in number of SGD youth having a mentor.
- Overall demographic similarity of mentors to youth - along sexual orientation or gender identity, race and ethnicity, socio-economic background, and/or religious affiliation.

Potential Outcome Measures Include:

- Number and percent of mentees who report improved knowledge and understanding of their identity and SGD communities.
- Number and percent of mentees who report engaging in risky behaviors vs. initial measurements at intake.
- Number and percent of mentees who report bullying and harassment vs. initial measurement at inception of participation.
- Number and percent of mentees who report feeling of belonging or acceptance vs. initial measurements at intake.
- Number and percent of mentees who report a improvements in perceptions of external support or growth in networks of supportive peers and adults vs. initial measurement at inception of participation.
- Number and percent of mentors who report enhanced family support and acceptance by mentees.
- Number and percent of mentors who report feeling confident and successful in their role.
- Number and percent of mentors who report enhanced well-being as a result of their role as a mentor.

Potential Measurement Tools

Program measurement tools may vary depending on the specific program goals. Typical tools used to measure program outputs and outcomes are:

- Documented changes to organizational policies, procedures, forms, and communications.
- Surveys from mentors, mentees, stakeholders child services workers, parents/guardians or caregivers.
- Qualitative interviews with mentors, mentees, stakeholders, child services workers, parents/guardians and caregivers.

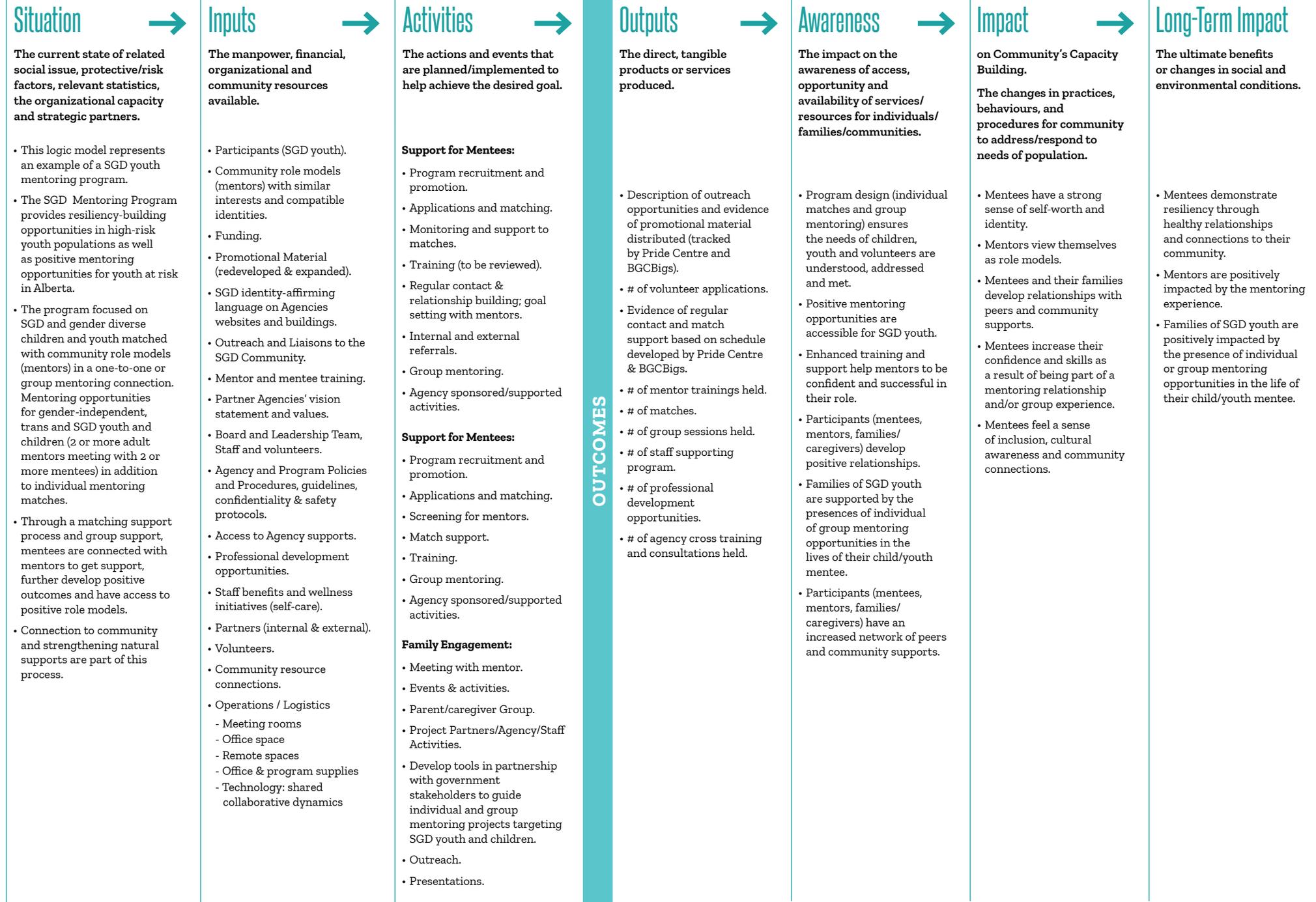


3. Program Theory and Logic Model

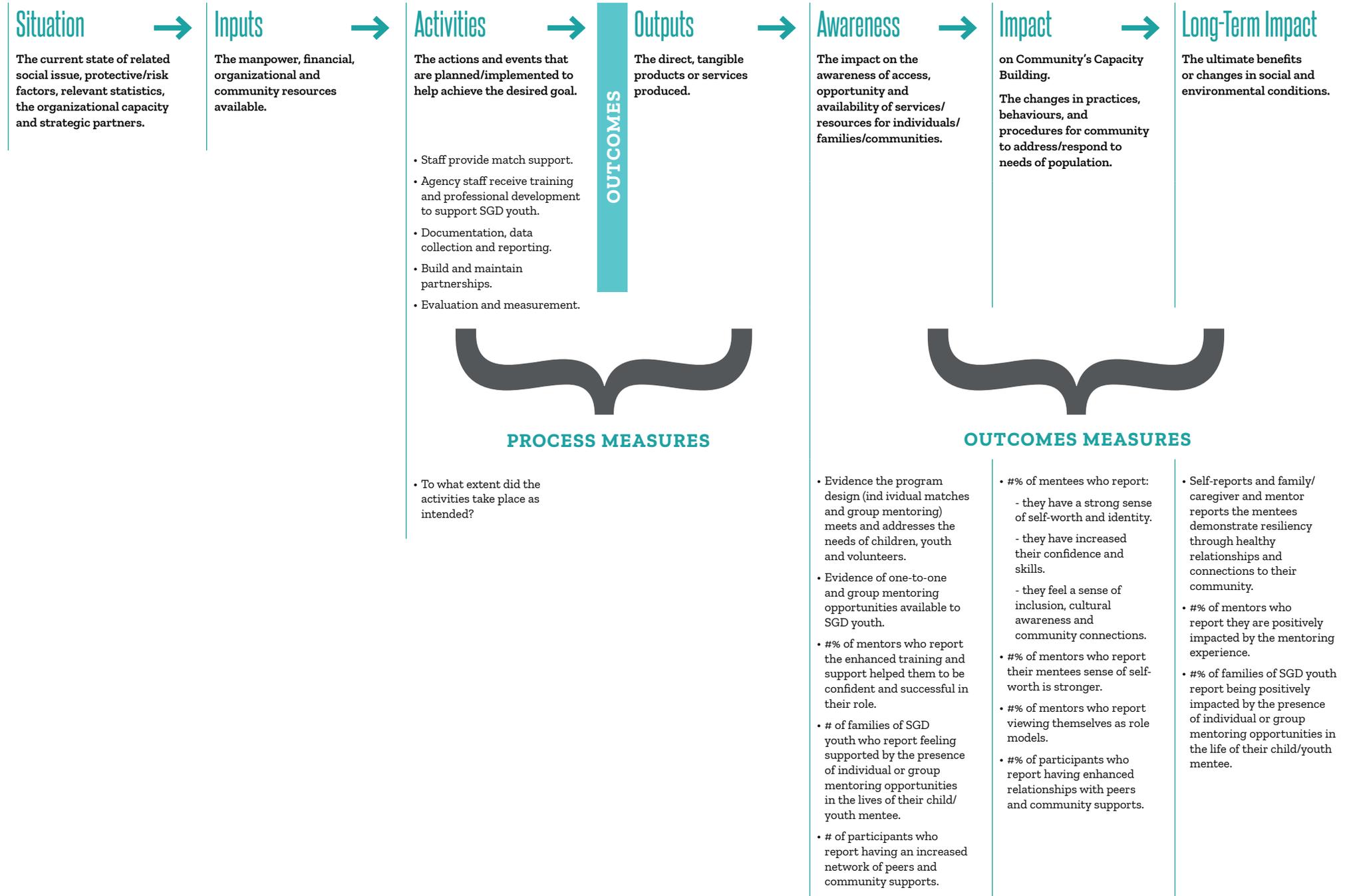
On the next page is a sample program logic model, which articulates the theoretical relationship between program inputs and activities with the intended outcomes and impact. It is recommended that organizations tailor their own logic model based on the unique needs and situation identified in their local community.



Sample Logic Model:



Sample Logic Model (continued):



4. Program Set-up

[4.1] Checklist of Program Set-up Activities

When starting a new program, it is important to ensure proper structures are in place. The investment of time to establish these structures will be reflected in the program outcomes. Program set-up is much like any other mentoring program, and the steps outlined below generally align with the suggested process for other youth mentoring programs.

One important difference for SGD programs is the amount of time needed for internal review and capacity building. Serving SGD youth in a way that engages them effectively, ensures their safety, and protects their confidentiality may require capacity building at many levels. This could include changes to: organizational mission and values statements, policies and procedures, documentation and media, and staff training and capacity building. Depending on staff attitudes, knowledge and skill levels regarding sexually and gender diverse people, deeper employee engagement may be necessary before SGD programs can be safely launched.

Program Set-Up Checklist:

- STEP 1: *Identifying the Population you want to serve*
- STEP 2: *Strengths and Needs Assessment – Does your community need this program?*
- STEP 2A: **Internal Review – Is your organization ready to serve SGD youth?**
- STEP 3: *Identifying Program Partners*
- STEP 4: *Defining your Program*
- STEP 5: *Creating a Budget*
- STEP 6: *Insurance*
- STEP 7: *Staffing & Staff Training*
- STEP 8: *Recruitment Strategies (Mentors and Mentees)*
- STEP 9: *Screening: Mentors and Mentees*
- STEP 10: *Training: Mentors and Mentees*
- STEP 11: *Goal Setting*
- STEP 12: *Match Supervision and Monitoring*
- STEP 13: *Evaluation - Measuring the Difference You Make*

[4.2] Organizational Approach and Policy Development

Before launching a program, implementers should consider whether or not existing policies and procedures need to be updated/refined to ensure readiness to serve SGD youth effectively. Additionally, implementers may want to consider how explicitly focusing on SGD youth in programming could reflect a shift in larger mission and values.

Mission and Values Considerations:

Focusing explicitly on SGD youth may cause implementers to consider how this may change the organization's perspective on its broader mission to serve youth. When considering SGD programs, we recommend considering integrating inclusion explicitly into mission and values statements. This practical step will serve as a signal to leadership, staff, partners, and funders of the organization's serious engagement with the topic, and will help guide the overall program development process.

Potential values and mission elements to reflect on are:

- A program that commits to intentionally providing inclusive, affirming, and safe mentoring services to all staff and participants.
- This commitment—often embedded in an agency's overall mission to provide services to all youth in the community is tied to a formalized process of continually improving and ensuring that programming reflects the unique experiences of everyone involved with the program. The process could include:
 - A commitment to safely serving SGD youth and working effectively with SGD participants, even if this requires managing relationships with staff members, prospective mentors, board members, donors, other stakeholders, and even youth participants whose views, behaviors, and attitudes are incompatible with this commitment.
 - Honoring and taking seriously the voices and experiences of SGD youth, supportive parents/guardians, and mentors and other allies in their feedback about how the program is serving SGD youth.

- A willingness to maintain program principles of inclusiveness, even in the face of pressure from funders, policymakers, or community members to change their work with SGD youth and SGD mentors in unproductive ways.
- A general adherence and commitment to ethical principles which take on critical importance with respect to serving SGD youth and SGD adults:
 - Promote the welfare and safety of everyone.
 - Be trustworthy and responsible.
 - Act with integrity.
 - Promote justice for young people.
 - Respect the young person's rights and dignity.
 - Honor youth and family voices in designing and delivering services.
 - Strive for equity, cultural responsiveness, and positive social change.
- Ongoing assessment of how the program can be more inclusive and welcoming and a recognition and mind-set of continuous learning and improvement.

Policy Guidelines

Whether integrating SGD youth into an existing mentoring program, or launching a dedicated program, implementers should consider adopting policies to ensure the protection of SGD youth and set expectations with staff and stakeholders in advance of program launch. Policies that other organizations have found useful in their programs are listed below. These could take the form of amendments to existing policies and procedures, or adopted as a separate code of conduct.

Specific Policy Guidelines to Ensure Effective SGD Youth Support:

- Program non-discrimination policies are explicitly inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression for all youth, parents/guardians, mentors, staff, and other stakeholders.

- Program policies—especially on site-based mentoring programs—include anti-bullying language that specifically mentions bullying related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and are applied to youth and adult participants and stakeholders. The policies are prominently accessible; consequently, they are well known by all participants and staff.
- Program policies and procedures provide guidance on how to approach exploration of identity and expression related to sexual orientation, gender expression, coming out and transitioning.
- Program develops and implements a confidentiality policy that is mindful of the SGD youth’s safety and well-being. It includes expectations about if or how information regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is handled by the participants and the organization. More specifically, the policy should prohibit staff and stakeholders from ‘outing’ mentees involved in the program (disclosing their SGD status to friends or family members without their prior consent).
- Program defines practices related to the potential fluidity of SGD youth, including how the program will update records over time given changes in sexual orientation, and/or gender identity and expression.
- Program records (e.g., intake forms or evaluation instruments) are inclusive of diverse SGD populations (i.e., personal gender pronouns, preferred name, etc.).

[4.3] Program Budget Considerations

Each program will be different in terms of staffing, operating, program and space financial needs. Financial support may be requested from the government(s) or other funding sources depending on existing resources and the scale of desired programming.

Consider the following when organizing your program:

Staff Salaries and Benefits

- Mentoring Program Coordinator, with specific knowledge of and connection to the SGD community.
- Supervision support to the Coordinator.
- Staff mileage.
- Staff training/professional development.
- Administration: Managing files, organizing committee meetings, liaising with the community.

Operating Expenses

- Marketing and recruitment materials.
- Staff registration and accreditation (if relevant).
- Screening fees (such as background checks and additional screening).
- Training materials.
- Office supplies.
- Insurance.
- Program evaluation.
- Costs generated from collaborating with other organizations.

Program Activities

- Training, recruitment, retention.
- Food, drinks, and thank you gifts.
- Activity supplies.
- Transportation.

[4.4] Program Staff

Depending on the program approach, starting an SGD youth mentoring program may benefit from recruiting a dedicated program staff who is merited given the scale of the desired program. Otherwise, it is recommended to carefully review staff knowledge and competency around SGD issues, and invest in training and capacity building. Ensuring properly equipped program staff is an essential element of delivering safe and effective care. MENTOR, National Mentoring Partnership's SGD supplement says "There is a growing recognition in the mentoring field that the failure to provide thoughtful, responsive, and inclusive programming leaves [SGD] youth at risk for additional harm each time they receive services from ill-prepared staff and incompatible mentors."

That said, organizations might be surprised by the existing level of competency within organizations. Some staff may already be educated in issues facing SGD youth and the implications for programming, and there may be employees who identify as SGD within the organization or at partner organizations who can help implementers develop competency. Focusing on SGD issues may also be an opportunity to expand SGD representation and allyship within the staff team.

Below are some tips and recommendations for recruiting and training program staff, including a sample job description.

Dedicated Mentoring Coordinator

If hiring staff, this guide provides a sample job description to help organizations understand the profile and competencies required to run this type of program effectively. Please see sample job description below, which is based on other implementers' experience. This job description can also help identify where training and skill development might be needed for existing staff who may be integrating SGD youth into existing mentor programs.

Please note that a fully qualified Mentoring Coordinator with the applicable experience and competencies could take a significant amount of time to recruit. The effectiveness of the services and program oversight is increased when the organizations management team is qualified and trained in SGD issues.



Sample Job Description:

MENTORING COORDINATOR

The key responsibilities of this position include:

- Recruiting, screening, training and matching volunteer mentors from SGD communities to participate in the mentoring program for youth.
- Providing ongoing support to SGD youth who are a part of the program, ensuring they have positive relationships with mentors in the community.
- Supporting mentor involvement in group programming for SGD youth and children by matching SGD mentors with group activities.
- Providing a safe, engaging and positive place for youth and volunteer mentors to be.
- Providing ongoing support, training and monitoring to mentors working with youth.
- Working collaboratively with partner organizations and SGD community groups to provide and promote opportunities and benefits for youth having mentoring relationships.
- Marketing the mentorship program.
- Community engagement; in particular, building collaborative relationships with partners to understand SGD community needs/trends.
- Maintaining up-to-date electronic casework notes, statistics and other required reporting in compliance with relevant standards, processes and outcomes.

The successful candidate will have:

- University degree or college diploma in a related human service field with a focus on youth development, equity studies, social work are an asset.
- 2 to 3 years combined experience in a role involved with youth programming, restorative justice environments, volunteer management and partnership development.
- Strong familiarity with SGD communities, human rights and inclusion.
- Exceptional verbal and written communication skills, with an ability to assess and adapt to diverse audiences and learning styles.
- Experience in program development, implementation and assessment.
- Ability to exercise critical thinking skills with equitable and consistent judgment and ethical decision-making.
- Ability to work flexible work hours including evenings and weekends.
- Valid driver's license, clean drivers abstract and access to a vehicle.

Note: Candidates must be capable of performing independently as well as part of a team environment and have excellent interpersonal skills.

Training Existing Staff

The process of training existing organizational staff on SGD issues, policy changes, and effective ways of supporting SGD youth is an essential element of launching programming. Again, failing to provide robust training for staff could result in risking additional harm to SGD youth if programs are launched without it.

While this process may seem simple, other organizations report awareness and capacity building of existing staff to be a key challenge to launching programming.

MENTOR, National Mentoring Partnership's SGD supplement, recommends the following checklists of training activities for training key program and non-program staff:

Program staff is trained on critical information related to SGD youth:

- Definitions related to sexual orientation (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.).
- Definitions related to gender identity/expression (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, etc.).
- Demographics of SGD youth, including the estimated numbers of SGD youth at the national or provincial and local levels.
- Risk factors for SGD youth at home and at school/in the community, including research that documents heightened experiences with homelessness, addictions, mental health, youth justice involvement, victimization, and bullying, as well as deficits in accessing developmental assets often associated with growing into a healthy adulthood.
- The intersectionality of SGD youth with race, ethnicity, poverty, geography, and other demographic characteristics, as well as how intersectionality can magnify youth risk factors.
- Common sexual behaviors among youth and youth attitudes about sex and identity (including SGD youth) and how these behaviors and attitudes may differ.
- Resilience and protective factors for SGD youth.
- Other relevant theories and research applicable to serving SGD youth, such as processes of healthy identity development, the importance of creating a safe and affirming program climate, and/or principles of trauma-informed care.

All staff and volunteers should also be trained on ATTITUDES, SKILLS, and PROCEDURAL ACTIVITIES that will allow them to serve SGD youth and adults effectively:

- It is important to get to know each mentee and their unique strengths, challenges, and areas for potential growth. It is not advisable to assume that identifying as SGD is inherently determinative of any level of risk or specific negative behaviors or experiences.
- Barriers to trust that SGD youth may face when participating in mentoring relationships.
- Exploring their own biases (conscious or unconscious), attitudes, and levels of comfort regarding serving SGD individuals and how to recognize when these factors can lead to negative interactions, even unintentionally.
- Understanding the coming out process for SGD youth, including uniquely experienced developmental milestones for understanding, accepting, and sharing an SGD identity, handling disclosures, understanding youth choices and concerns related to being out, and how to provide support over time during critical moments and changes in identity and expression.
- Avoiding countertransference of one's own experiences as an SGD youth or young adult onto the mentee ('Countertransference' refers to influencing a mentee by reacting emotionally or judgmentally to information shared by the mentee).
- Managing known information about "out" status of mentees, as articulated in the organization's confidentiality policy. These policies should ideally respect mentees' desires around confidentiality and disclosure of information. This can be especially critical for youth whose parents or guardians might not be receptive to changes in their status and for youth who may not be out in all parts of their lives.
- Responding non-judgmentally and with empathy to mentees' disclosures about risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., sex practices, substance abuse, skipping school, etc.) and engaging in meaningful discussions about such behaviors.
- Skills for working effectively day-to-day with SGD youth and adults, such as respectful use of personal pronouns and affirming language to engage with parents/guardians of SGD youth.

- Awareness of how the intersecting identities of SGD youth (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) impact their individual experiences and the support they will, in turn, need from their mentors and the program as a whole.
- Boundary setting and other relationship skills that can prevent misunderstandings (e.g., helping to channel mentor/ mentee boundary setting conversations into strategies to help the mentee identify traits and characteristics of healthy, age-appropriate, and respectful relationships).
- Handling circumstances where parents or guardians of SGD youth express negative reactions or struggle to understand their child's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Local referral resources for the health, safety, and well-being of diverse groups of SGD youth.

Staff are trained on HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY with SGD youth, volunteers, parents/ guardians, and community members during recruitment, enrollment/intake, and match support.

Staff training involves ROLE-PLAYS, SCENARIO-BASED DISCUSSIONS, AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE REACTIONS TO SITUATIONS and learn effective ways of responding and ensuring youth safety and confidentiality is prioritized.

For additional information and resources about how to train staff effectively, please consult the list of resources at the end of this guide.

[4.5] Physical Space and Signals of Inclusivity

Physical Space

Physical space not only concerns what is on walls, but also what happens behind them. For several years, some parts of the country have been engaged in a stigmatizing political debate about what constitutes ethical and appropriate access to bathrooms and other gender-specific public facilities. This is a debate that mentoring programs can easily avoid while making all feel welcome in their buildings. Mentoring programs should make sure that they have facilities that can be accessed by all participants. Offering gender-neutral

bathrooms and changing facilities is one of the simplest solutions to many of these concerns, but all aspects of facilities should be reviewed to see if they are welcoming or offer any safety risks. Although originally written for public school settings, the [Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Policy Guidance](#) resource by the District of Columbia school district offers best practice tips for ensuring that facilities and other program infrastructure are supportive of SGD youth.

Signals of Inclusivity

This set of recommendations is placed last in this section to connote that programs cannot effectively embrace and serve SGD youth and SGD mentors in their work by simply putting up some visual cues. Inclusive and responsive services are felt deeply by participants, and cosmetic changes to a program's website, talking points, or office walls is unlikely to convey that sense of belonging if that is the extent of the change. Programs should view improvements to their office environment and online presence as somewhat of an advanced step in this process, not an end unto itself. That being said, visually signaling that the program is a welcoming and safe one is extremely important.

Research suggests that even small gestures like "Safe Zone" posters can have a huge impact on how SGD youth view adults around them and who they identify as potential mentors or supports. Studies of school environments have found many positive benefits (e.g., greater sense of belonging, feeling safer) to youth from visual and other nonverbal signals that the environment they are in is safe and respectful and that any negative experiences will be addressed. These benefits certainly extend to other spaces where adult-youth and youth-youth interactions take place, such as mentoring programs.

As noted previously, asking SGD participants for their perspectives on how elements like website language can be improved is an excellent starting point.

5. Program Launch

[5.1] Mentor Recruitment and Engagement

It is essential to effectively promote the program and recruit volunteers in order to run a strong mentoring program. Ensuring both adequate numbers of volunteer mentors and diverse participants will ensure that the needs of the children and youth can be met.

BEFORE YOU START: Criteria should be established before recruiting mentors. Develop a mentor role description that outlines the position, time commitment, responsibilities, and benefits, as well as the eligibility criteria, qualifications and attributes that mentors should have to be effective in their role.

Multiple methods of recruitment can be used to increase both the number and diversity of potential mentors, so it is important to plan recruitment activities through a coordinated approach. Utilize a variety of tactics that can include anything from a formal marketing campaign to casual conversations. Keep in mind that recruitment can be a labour-intensive activity and will require time and staffing resources.

Advertising and promotion can take place on the agency

websites, social media as well as specifically identified publications and activities that reach the intended SGD population. For instance, advertise at the Pride Festivals, Queer Prom, affirming churches & faith organizations, SGD inclusive agencies & services, GSAs, etc.

Additional practical tips for mentor engagement and recruitment:

- Inclusive messaging helps to dispel concerns that potential SGD mentors might have about volunteering with a mentoring program. Historical discrimination of the SGD community and the lack of national workplace protections for SGD people leave many to question whether they are truly welcome as mentors. Importantly, many mentoring and youth serving programs until recently possessed policies, which explicitly excluded SGD adults from serving as mentors or otherwise participating in the program.
- An assumption that could be held by many SGD volunteers is that they are not welcome and will be rejected. Because of these fears, mentoring programs must specifically signal to the SGD community that they belong, are needed, and can play a valued role that makes a difference in a youth's life. Messaging—such as prominently displayed non-discrimination policies, affirmation statements of inclusion of the SGD community, and visual cues such as the rainbow flag and the trans pride flag—helps dispel potential fears of rejection and gives SGD volunteers clear signs that they, too, will be welcome and valued as mentors.
- In addition, messaging that intentionally affirms SGD participation in a mentoring program can also alert community members who are not supportive of SGD youth that they should self-select not to apply as volunteers. Signaling to prospective volunteers that transphobic, biphobic, and homophobic beliefs are not shared by the organization offer additional levels of protection for SGD youth who could be harmed by their presence in the program.

[5.2] Mentor Profile and Characteristics

This section includes general suggestions for desirable mentor characteristics, as well as tips and suggestions for mentors in and around the SGD community.

The Ontario Mentoring Coalition also identifies the following beneficial characteristics when recruiting and screening potential mentors:

- A high level of “social interest” - optimism, genuine desire to be helpful, and empathy.
- Positive character traits - for example, approachability, enthusiasm, commitment, availability, trustworthiness, maturity, communication skills, respect, and financial stability.
- Attunement - mentors should possess the quality of attunement, meaning the ability to anticipate a mentee’s needs in an empathetic manner.
- School and/or work performance - there is no evidence indicating high achievers make better mentors. Instead, it is important to look for consistent attendance, positive attitude and participation in other activities.
- Other commitments - consideration should be paid to a potential mentor’s schooling, extracurricular, work, or family responsibilities, which could limit their availability and thus may interfere with their ability to fully engage in the mentoring process.
- Special skills - although not necessary, those with special skills (e.g., the ability to speak a second language) can be beneficial to your program.

Mentoring programs for SGD youth benefit in particular from mentors who identify as SGD or are strong allies of the SGD community. Specific profiles:

- Youth report that mentoring relationships are most useful when their mentor shares multiple demographic/identity similarities with them. For example, transgender youth from minority communities will benefit more from a mentor who is also transgender and from the same minority community rather than a cis-gender white mentor. Successfully recruiting mentors with very specific demographic characteristics that match with youth participants can be a logistical challenge, but finding mentors with similar characteristics can be an important factor.
- Volunteers who may be uniquely able to empathize, and offer responsive support to SGD

youth are also desirable. For example, programs may want to specifically target volunteers with with experience living as part of the SGD community. Mentors who have navigated through the difficulty of understanding, sharing, and accepting their “otherness” may have a powerful part to play in the life of a young person who is also going through the same experience.

- Volunteers with a demonstrated motivation to support the community make good mentors. Many SGD mentors also want to give back to their community—especially feeling compelled to share their knowledge, insights, and resources with youth just beginning the lifelong process of coming out and learning more about their place in the world. Such individuals can be great role models for identity development, resilience, and strategies for overcoming stigma and bias.
- Allies—especially those allies who have SGD family members and friends and/or a strong commitment to social justice for SGD people—are also well positioned to serve as mentors to SGD youth. Allies can potentially offer additional perspectives of belonging and compassion to young people. Allies may also be well suited to serve as a conduit of information to family members, helping to dispel myths about SGD people while also offering additional resources and advocacy to the family as a whole.
- Program eligibility criteria ensure selected mentors do not exhibit indicators of homophobic/ biphobic/ transphobic behavior, especially given the potential to be matched with a youth who may not be out yet. Prospective mentors who display this behavior should be screened out during the intake process or removed from the program if such behavior is discovered after the match has begun.

[5.3] Mentor Screening

Once a volunteer is recruited, applies and completes the application process (checks and references), the potential mentor will undergo training, an interview, and then, if successful in the previous steps, be accepted and matched to a mentee.

It is typically best practice for all volunteers to provide three references, undergo a Police Information Check, and a Children Services Intervention Check.

Confirm what pronoun or name the volunteer wishes to be addressed by (legal name vs. chosen name). Police Record checks may be stressful for some volunteers, and as such there may be a need to provide additional time and support for this process. Be sure to ask the volunteer if there is anything the staff person should be aware of prior to contacting the references, in terms of confidentiality or keeping the volunteer safe.

The volunteer interview is thorough. Questions fall into the following categories:

- Motivation.
- Relationship Style.
- Mentoring Style.
- Persistence and Sensitivity to Rejection.
- Stability and Consistency.
- Attitudes Towards Youth and Matching Considerations.
- Match Criteria.
- Youth and Volunteer Safety.

See Appendix B for a list of forms used from application through to matching.

[5.4] Youth engagement

A wide range of SGD youth may benefit from a mentoring program, as SGD youth come from a variety of backgrounds and challenges. However, intersectionality is a key concept that is central to effective SGD youth recruitment.

Intersectionality, as a framework, notes that sexual orientation and gender identity are only two parts of a much larger self. Race, culture, and ethnicity, among many more features, are also defining ways in which a young SGD person experiences the world. Importantly, the majority of SGD youth growing up today are non-Caucasian and may be exposed to differing levels of stigma, bias, and struggle based on the intersection of their backgrounds. Youth who are experiencing homophobia, poverty, and racism, for example, appear to have increased levels of risk than their Caucasian and cisgender peers.

In addition, many SGD youth may also be exposed to real deficits caused by other factors in their lives, including

experiences with homelessness, caregiver rejection, delinquency, and victimization in school. Given this diversity among SGD youth, recruitment efforts of SGD mentees must not only speak to sexual orientation and gender identity, but also to a young person's broader identity, background, and need for mentoring. The majority of mentoring programs are already well positioned to provide services to young people facing adversity and challenges. However, as detailed in this supplement, additional care and intention is also critically important when sponsoring relationships for SGD youth.

Given the role of intersectionality in the lives of SGD youth, mentoring programs should explore a number of differing ways to conduct outreach and recruitment efforts. Below is a list of specific tips and strategies to recruit mentees.

Specific tips for Recruiting Youth Participants:

- Develop different materials for different age ranges. For younger ages, focus on social connections and fun. For older ages, focus on leadership or personal growth opportunities.
- Create opportunities for youth to self-refer.
- Work with schools, community agencies and youth professionals in the community to ensure the opportunity to participate in the program is well advertised.
- If adding SGD to an existing mentoring program, ensure updates to general recruitment that use inclusive language and visible cues that welcome SGD people.
- Look for organizations that specifically offer services to SGD youth, such as school-based Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs).
- Depending on the age range, consider partnering with prominent, well-known individuals in the community who have a broad youth following on social media (local sports stars, entertainers, YouTube stars, etc.).
- Because intersectionality is so important, consider reaching out to organizations that serve vulnerable youth in low-income, minority, and religious communities.

A Note on Youth Enrollment

Mentee Enrollment

Young people themselves may also exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, and this situation can be just as challenging as when mentors or prospective mentors display that behavior. Research indicates that many young people express homophobic and similarly bigoted remarks to their peers on a regular basis.

The good news is that these types of remarks have been declining in school settings for over a decade (except for negative remarks about gender expression, which seem to be holding steady). A mentoring program can expect that many of youth will at least make occasional remarks around their peers that qualify as homophobic/biphobic/transphobic. This may not mean that they harbor beliefs at a deep level about their SGD peers—some of this may be unfortunate youth slang—but some youth may embrace those negative beliefs.

Organizations will need to develop a strategy for understanding when homophobic/biphobic/transphobic sentiment in potential mentees could be risky for other participants of the program.

[5.5] Waitlist and Group Mentoring

A challenge of mentoring SGD youth is attracting and matching appropriate adult mentors. As recruitment and matching is a consistent and on-going challenge for organizations, transitioning youth wait longer than mainstream youth to be matched.

As a countermeasure, project sites have developed intentional, outcome-focused supports, programming and personal development opportunities. Connecting with youth on a consistent basis and keeping them engaged in healthy activities while waiting to be matched has been identified as an important component of the project delivery. Such contact builds relationships, understanding and trust between the mentoring program staff and youth, providing staff with an in-depth context of each youth when identifying potential mentors.

Group mentoring is the main approach to building connections with youth waiting to be matched. Just like 1:1 mentoring models, group mentoring models are facilitated by staff or screened mentors who are matched to specific youth.

Volunteers and participants come together on a regular basis in a safe, inclusive and affirming environment to foster relationships, skill development and the evolution of identity. SGD Youth Mentoring group activities can include: a music instruction program, a games / craft night, physical movement activities, a children's activity group. Youth have enjoyed programming specific to SGD activities including crafts that involve the rainbow or trans flags, exploring works by SGD artists, and self-expression focused activities, as well as those that foster communication, engagement and relationship building.

Prior to a mentor beginning with group programming, review the following:

- Review volunteer expectations (emphasis on cell phones use, punctuality, programming, etc.).
- Strength based behaviour management.
- Emergency Protocols (first aid kit, emergency exit, fire drill, tornados, lock down), risk occurrences and orientation to physical site (bathrooms, storage rooms, etc.).
- Sign in/out procedure and name tags.
- Roles of staff and volunteers.
- Volunteer follow up schedule.
- Notification process if a volunteer is unable to attend. Provide contact information for Facilitator.
- Introductions to staff, volunteers, and participants.

[5.6] Biological Parent, Guardian, and Caregiver, Involvement

In many cases, parents of SGD youth play a proactive role to seek out mentors for their children and may also want to actively participate in the process as they believe these mentors can provide positive support for their children, but also to them. In other instances, parents may not be supportive and the youth may not want them involved. Depending on the age group, parental or guardian involvement may or may not be required for programming. For programs targeting youth ages 16 or younger, parental or guardian consent is required, but for ages 17-24, parental consent is not required. Additionally, when parental consent is required, it is generally accepted practice for them to meet and agree to a proposed mentor prior to a match.

SGD Youth Living in Non-accepting Environment

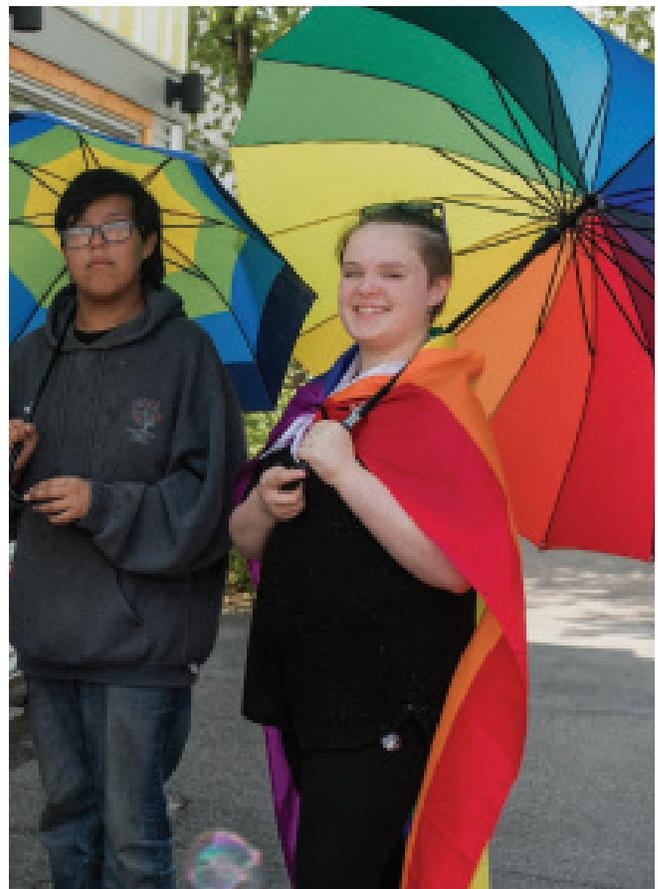
Youth who are 16 years old or under and who are living in a home where caretakers and guardians are non-accepting are a unique population. Typically, a “non-accepting” environment means that caretakers and guardians reject children’s assertions about their SGD status, frequently because it is in conflict with religious or cultural beliefs about proper sex and gender roles. Rejection of a child’s SGD status may result in caretakers and guardians trying to change a child’s SGD status and/or enforce punishment or abuse for perceived transgression. At a minimum, children in non-accepting homes are likely not to feel supported, validated, or loved for who they are. Living in a non-accepting environment may put them at higher risk for depression, abuse, and/or homelessness.

Recommendations for ways to support SGD youth living in non-accepting homes or who are not ready to disclose their identity.

- Robust partnership with local school administrators, teachers and GSA programs to ensure that they have the tools to support SGD youth living in non-accepting homes within the school context.
 - Encouraging and supporting these youth to participate in the traditional youth mentoring program or in group mentoring opportunities.
 - Raising the visibility of SGD employees, teachers, and administrators at schools to enable students access to SGD adults within the context of school environments (note: should be done only with prior consent of the individuals).
 - Raising the visibility of non-SGD allies at school who are specifically available to support these youth.
 - Ensuring that school resources such as counseling or nursing services provide effective information and advice to SGD youth.
 - Supporting GSA programming that raises the visibility of SGD students and adults on campus, and that they have the knowledge and resources to support SGD youth living in non-accepting homes.

- Supporting non-SGD-specific programming (guest lecture series at schools, job fairs, cultural events, etc.) in a way that raises the profile of SGD adults on campus.
- Depending on the exact nature of local laws and school-district policies, consider advocating for policy changes that would enable greater protection of SGD students in schools, such as:
 - Ensuring that schools have non-disclosure clauses for when SGD students disclose their SGD status to administrators and teachers.

NOTE: Accidentally disclosing the SGD identity of a child to a parent or guardian who is not accepting can cause severe harm to the youth. For this reason, it is recommended that organizations (i) develop a specific privacy policy related to confidentiality, (ii) that all staff and volunteers are required to agree that they will uphold the policy, and (iii) that all staff and volunteers are trained on how to implement it effectively.



Engaging Parents and Guardians who ARE Affirming of the Youth's SGD Identity

Parents and guardians can be important partners in building a safe and meaningful friendship between their child and the mentor. Parent/Guardian support, participation and input are crucial to a successful match.

The Edmonton SGD Youth Mentoring Program, developed co-programming with the Pride Centre to offer groups for parents and caregivers to enhance parents' network of support and benefit their child. The child/youth group mentoring program took place in an adjoining room at the same time as the parents' group. Parents noted the value of their children having access to this type of group as well as siblings able to participate.

As part of the evaluation, the external evaluator had the opportunity to engage with the participants.

Parental participants shared the following about the group:

"Super validating because other people know what I'm going through."

"It's important to have peers who are in (or know about) the trans/queer community."

"Knowing someone in a common situation, it's tough to talk about with people who don't know."

"Families don't always support queer/trans topics to the same extent; this group provides resources to help family members."

Parents and Guardians were made to feel welcome, heard and listened to. Each participant had the opportunity to share and ask questions. They were also asked if there was something special they wanted to discuss with the group. How to work with the education community to support their child was a common topic. Comments supported this group as positively impacting parents' network of peers and community supports.



6. Mentor and Mentee Training

[6.1] Mentee Training

Training begins with an online portion provided at no charge through the Alberta Mentoring Partnership. The online training includes:

- History of mentoring.
- Role of a Mentor.
- Dynamics of mentoring relationships.
- Support in your role as a mentor.

[6.1] Mentor Training

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership has worked with mentees, mentors and parents to develop a short orientation for both children and parents. The course, which can be used in group, school and one-on-one settings, provides an overview of some of the core concepts of being a mentee, including:

- What is a Mentor? What is a Mentee?
- Getting to Know your Mentor.
- Let's Be Safe and have Good Boundaries.
- My Strengths.
- All About me.

To access the online mentor and mentee training, visit albertamentors.ca/mentorship-training

BGCBig's in-person training is a strength-based approach. Contact BGCBig's Edmonton or the Pride Centre of Edmonton for more information.

SGD-specific Training Topics

In addition to the regular training, the mentor training can cover other topics such as privilege, poverty, understanding intersectionality and diversity awareness. Big Brothers Big Sisters America and MENTOR, The National Mentoring Partnership also recommend the following checklist of topics for mentors, in addition to the standard training:

When applicable and appropriate, prospective mentors are trained, ideally pre-match but early in their experience at the very least, on key information related to SGD experiences:

- Definitions related to sexual orientation (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.).
- Definitions related to gender identity/expression (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, etc.).
- Demographics of SGD youth, including the estimated numbers of SGD at the national or provincial and local levels.
- Risk factors for SGD youth at home and at school/in the community, including research that documents heightened experiences with homelessness, juvenile justice involvement, victimization, and bullying, as well as deficits in accessing developmental assets often associated with growing into a healthy adulthood.
- The intersectionality of SGD youth with race, ethnicity, poverty, geography, and other demographic characteristics, as well as how intersectionality can magnify youth risk factors.

- Common sexual behaviors among youth and youth attitudes about sex and identity (including SGD youth) and how these behaviors and attitudes may differ based on generation.
- Resiliency and protective factors for SGD youth.
- Other relevant theories and research applicable to serving SGD youth, such as processes of healthy identity development, the importance of creating a safe and affirming program climate, and/or principles of trauma-informed care.

Additionally, if time and resources allow, prospective (and current, if needed) mentors of SGD youth can also be further trained, ideally pre-match, on key skills and perspectives that will allow them to effectively mentor SGD youth, including:

- The importance of getting to know each mentee and their unique strengths, challenges, and areas for potential growth and not assuming that their SGD status is inherently determinative of any level of risk or specific negative behaviors or experiences.
- Barriers to trust that SGD youth may face when participating in mentoring relationships.
- Exploring their own biases (conscious or unconscious), their attitudes, and their levels of comfort regarding serving SGD individuals and how to recognize when these factors can lead to negative interactions, even unintentionally.
- Understanding the coming out process for SGD youth, including uniquely experienced developmental milestones for understanding, accepting, and sharing an SGD identity, handling sudden disclosures, understanding youth choices and concerns related to being out and how to provide support over time during critical moments and changes in identity and expression.
- Avoiding countertransference of one's own experiences as an SGD youth or young adult onto the mentee ('Countertransference' refers to influencing a mentee by reacting emotionally or judgmentally to information shared by the mentee).
- Managing known information about out status of mentees, which should be articulated in the

program's confidentiality policy. These policies should ideally respect mentees' desires around confidentiality and disclosure of information. This can be especially critical for youth whose parents or guardians might not be receptive to changes in their status and for youth who may not be out in all parts of their lives.

- Responding non-judgmentally and with empathy to mentee disclosures about risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., sex practices, substance abuse, skipping school, etc.) and engaging in meaningful discussions about such behaviors.
- Skills for working effectively day-to-day with SGD youth and adults, such as respectful use of personal pronouns and affirming language to use with parents/guardians of SGD youth.
- Awareness of how the intersecting identities of SGD youth (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) impact their individual experiences and the support they will, in turn, need from their mentors and the program as a whole.
- Boundary setting and other relationship skills that can prevent misunderstandings (e.g., not shaming a young person for having same-sex romantic feelings; helping to channel mentor/mentee boundary setting conversations into strategies to help the mentee identify traits and characteristics of healthy, age-appropriate, and respectful relationships).
- Handling circumstances where parents or guardians of SGD youth express negative reactions to their child's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (or changes or disclosures that happen during their time in the program).
- Local referral resources for the health, safety, and well-being of diverse groups of SGD youth.

Mentor training, ideally pre-match, utilizes role-playing exercises and other training techniques that allow mentors to practice positive, non-judgmental responses to sudden disclosures about the youth's identity, behaviors, or challenges (e.g., coming out to the mentor, revealing drug use, reporting victimization, safety planning etc.). This training should also reinforce information learned about confidentiality policies and respecting youth preferences around disclosure of information.

7. Ongoing Program Support

[7.1] Matching and Launching Mentor and Mentee Relationships

Matching Mentors and Mentees

In general, many positive benefits have been noted about the matches that are made. However, it can be challenging to find the right “fit” between a youth and adult on paper — let alone to get parental consent and engagement with the match, followed by arranging an initial meeting that allows the relationship to get a positive start with all participants in agreement on the next steps. Making these kinds of matches is both art and science and requires a lot of nuance and hard-earned expertise. Issues related to the sexual orientation and gender identity of both mentors and youth participants can further complicate this process and, if not handled properly, can leave volunteers and young people feeling rejected, or worse. The recommendations in this section are intended to help programs incorporate youth and mentor sexual orientation and gender identity and expression when considering criteria and initiating matches, while also setting the stage for those matches to get started on a positive, conflict-free note.

Regardless of the specific strategies used to make matches, we encourage all programs to allow (in their policies and procedures) for the matching of adults and youth based on shared orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression. While shared orientation or gender identity may not always be the most important criteria in matching a particular youth with a particular mentor, for young people who are still navigating through their coming out process having an adult mentor who has had the same developmental experiences can be highly desired. Shared life events (or milestones) can offer a range of benefits that speak to unique identity development experiences often associated with being SGD.

It is worth noting, however, that shared orientation or gender identity/expression is only one of the many criteria programs should consider when making matches. Ensuring a good fit in terms of interests and passions, compatible meeting times, mentor skills and youth areas of need, and personality traits (e.g., shared sense of humor) is similarly important. Adult allies—mentors with similar backgrounds, interests, and a commitment to the SGD community—could be well-positioned to build a close relationship and serve in an advocacy role. In contrast, adults and youth who share a similar orientation, but little else, may not enjoy a successful match. We encourage programs to consider all relevant criteria when making match decisions.

Matching Through Group Activities

Another strategy for successful matches involving SGD youth is to allow time for participants to get to know one another before progressing into the formal matching stage. One such strategy is hosting a “getting to know you” mixer between all the youth and adult participants in a cohort where they can interact, learn a bit about personal histories and interests, and then suggest potential matches with whom they think they might find success. Many mentoring programs find this approach to yield strong matches that have already found a bit of a “spark.”

Launching Relationships

MATCH MEETING

At the initial match meeting, the Mentoring Coordinator can provide the new match or group participants with basic goals to start out with. These may include:

- Building a relationship.
- Learning about new things.

- Meeting regularly.
- Asking questions and having open conversations about issues that matter to the mentee.
- Communicating for activities.
- Participating in match follow up with the Mentoring Coordinator.

A seasoned mentor shares the following advice: "Meaningful goals will be set through the conversation by the mentor asking, "how can I help you achieve your goals?" The goal ultimately should be something that is important to the mentee. It takes proactive listening skills to help a youth come up with a goal and set the goal, and get the tone right in being helpful, rather than a turnoff. The mentor has to find a way to constructively support the mentee in that goal."

Whether the match be one-to-one or part of a group, it is important to establish goals for the time together. These goals help guide and direct behaviour, and also increase the motivation to succeed.

TIP FOR SETTING GOALS:

Goals should be **SMART**

- S-Specific** – *Do we know what our goal is?*
- M-Measurable** – *How will we know the goal has been achieved?*
- A-Action-oriented** – *What actions are required to reach the goal?*
- R-Realistic** – *Is this goal attainable given our resources?*
- T-Time Bound** – *Do we have enough time to complete our goal?*

These goals should be reviewed at the In-Person follow up to track progress. New goals should be added as current goals are completed.

[7.2] Mentoring Activities and Resources for Mentors

Mentoring Activities

Suggested activities between mentors and mentees could include the following. However, mentors should consider what activities are age appropriate for their mentee.

- Cooking together.
- Going for walks.
- Meeting to talk.
- Taking in local festivals.
- Participating in group activities as part of what the agency offers.

Have fun, but please keep cost of activities in mind. Some ideas to reduce the cost of activities are:

- Check to see if you can access a City Leisure Pass, free bus tickets, etc.
- Look for programs at your local public library, recreation centers and parks.

Note: Be aware of the mentee's comfort level around their body. Young SGD people may not be comfortable in their bodies, so activities that involve physicality or touch may involve more sensitivities for the participant. Talk about it with your mentee. People may experience dysphoria (feeling out of place in one's own body) or self-scrutiny which may be barriers to physical activity. Make sure the activity location is accessible, and that any bathrooms/change rooms are accessible to transgender people (there is policy protecting people from exclusion based on their body).

Resources for Mentors

Below are some resources for mentors to help understand and tailor their mentoring approach. Topics include SGD models of identity development to provide potential frameworks for understanding where the mentee is in their own personal journey. Additionally, there are some general tips for structuring the mentor relationship.

Gay and Lesbian Identity Development Model

Stage 1: Identity Confusion

This is the "Who am I?" stage associated with the feeling that one is different from peers, accompanied by a growing sense of personal alienation. The person begins to be conscious of same-sex feelings or behaviors and to label them as such. It is rare at this stage for the person to disclose inner turmoil to others.

Stage 2: Identity Comparison

This is the rationalization or bargaining stage where the person thinks, "I may be a homosexual, but then again I may be bisexual," "Maybe this is just temporary," or, "My feelings of attraction are simply for just one other person of my own sex and this is a special case." There is a heightened sense of not belonging anywhere with the corresponding feeling that "I am the only one in the world like this."

Stage 3: Identity Tolerance

In this "I probably am" stage, the person begins to contact other SGD people to counteract feelings of isolation and alienation, but merely tolerates rather than fully accepts a gay or lesbian identity. The feeling of not belonging with heterosexuals becomes stronger.

Positive contacts can have the effect of making other gay and lesbian people appear more significant and more positive to the person at this stage, leading to a more favorable sense of self and a greater commitment to a homosexual self-identity.

Stage 4: "Identity Acceptance"

There is continued and increased contact with other gay and/or lesbian people in this stage, where friendships start to form. The individual thus evaluates other lesbian and gay people more positively and accepts rather than merely tolerates a lesbian or gay self-image. The earlier questions of "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" have been answered.

Coping strategies for handling incongruity at this stage include continuing to pass as heterosexual, and limiting contact with heterosexuals who threaten to increase incongruity (e.g. some family members and/or peers). The person can also selectively disclose a homosexual identity to significant heterosexuals.

Stage 5: "Identity Pride"

This is the "These are my people" stage where the individual develops an awareness of the enormous incongruity that exists between the person's increasingly positive concept of self as lesbian or gay and an awareness of society's rejection of this orientation. The person feels anger at heterosexuals and devalues many of their institutions (e.g. marriage, gender-role structures, etc.) The person discloses her or his identity to more and more people and wishes to be immersed in the gay or lesbian subculture consuming its literature, art and other forms of culture. For some at this stage, the combination of anger and pride energizes the person into action against perceived homophobia producing an "activist."

Stage 6: "Identity Synthesis"

The intense anger at heterosexuals -- the "them and us" attitude that may be evident in stage 5 -- softens at this stage to reflect a recognition that some heterosexuals are supportive and can be trusted. However, those who are not supportive are further devalued. There remains some anger at the ways that lesbians and gays are treated in this society, but this is less intense. The person retains a deep sense of pride but now comes to perceive less of a dichotomy between the heterosexual and gay and lesbian communities. A lesbian or gay identity becomes an integral and integrated aspect of the individual's complete personality structure.



Bilodeau's Transgender Identity Development Process

Exiting a traditionally gendered identity [by]:

Recognizing that one is gender variant, attaching a label to this identity, and affirming oneself as gender variant through coming out to others.

Developing a personal transgender identity [by]:

Achieving the stability that comes from knowing oneself in relation to other transgender people and challenging internalized transphobia.

Developing a transgender social identity [by]:

Creating a support network of people who know and accept that one is gender variant.

Becoming a transgender offspring [by]:

Coming out as transgender to family members and re-evaluating relationships that may be disrupted by this disclosure.

Developing a transgender intimacy status [by]:

Creating intimate physical and emotional relationships.

Entering a transgender community [by]:

Making a commitment to political and social action through challenging transphobia [and genderism].

Guideline for Mentors – Steps for Developing a Productive Mentee Relationship

In addition to standard mentor training, this four-step guide suggests an overall approach to a productive mentoring relationship.

Phase 1: Preparation

- This is the introductory phase of mentoring and includes a lot of paperwork. You email or call your mentee, ask them when they want to meet and where. You show up to the first meeting on time, in a public place, and bring all the materials you need. You are welcoming and prepared.
- You explore your OWN personal motivation for being a mentor and apply that to this phase. You are aware of your own personal struggles, values, and beliefs.
- You are aware of your expectations of the mentoring

relationship and your Mentee's expectations of the mentoring relationship.

Phase 2: Negotiation

- When you meet for the first time you are going to discuss confidentiality.
- Non-Verbal Communication is key in this phase. See your Mentee's body language and what they are saying vs. how they are acting. Make eye contact, turn toward them, show them that you are listening and making an effort.
- You are going to set boundaries with your mentee and discuss roles and responsibilities. A Negotiation Phase check-list is at the end of this manual.
- You are going to set goals with your mentee. A Goal worksheet is at the end of this manual.

Phase 3: Facilitation

- We talked earlier about the personal characteristics of good mentors. Those include:
 - Having an Identity: know who you are, where you come from, where you are going.
 - They respect themselves as well as others.
 - Able to recognize and accept their own power. They do not take advantage of this power.
 - They are open to change.
 - They make choices that shape their lives.
 - They have a sense of humor, are sincere, and honest.
 - They make mistakes and are willing to admit their mistakes.
 - They are able to maintain healthy boundaries.
- Effective mentors also know their own limitations when talking with a mentee. Remember, refer if necessary!
- As uncomfortable as it might seem, silence is a good thing! If you ask your Mentee a question, and they stare off, thinking about an answer, don't try to prompt them. Become comfortable with silence.
- Your Mentee is just as responsible as you for this process. The mentoring relationship is a two-way street, and you and your mentee are equally responsible and accountable.
- You can give your Mentee advice if they ask for it. But you are here to be a catalyst for change, and encourage separate decision-making skills.

- The only real ethical issue that you are going to face will be in regards to confidentiality and setting boundaries. If something occurs between you and your mentee that your gut tells you is outside of your realm of knowledge, refer your mentee to the match facilitator.
- During this phase you are meant to be accountable and follow your mentee's progress and growth.

Phase 4: Transition/Separation

- This phase is the most often ignored, because when your Mentee feels like they are ready to separate from the relationship, it may happen quickly and cordially.
- When you can see incredible improvement in your mentee's self-confidence, and they are meeting a lot of their goals with you, it might be time to start talking about separation and transition with them. It is important to start discussing this early, so that they know what to expect when you do separate and transition. There doesn't really need to be an end date to it. As long as you both are willing and committed to being in the mentoring relationship, it could theoretically last for a long time.
- Please do not allow your mentee to show up to a lunch meeting one day and tell you that they are ready to end the mentoring relationship and this is your last meeting. Let them know that you would like to meet at least one more time for a Transition meeting where you discuss goals and accountability over your relationship. At this point, it is recommended to meet with both the mentor and the mentee (together) to discuss the progress the mentee made.
- During this phase, it is easy for the mentee to regress back to beginning stages. They may make the transition easy, and they may also get nervous and retract being the person you first met. Be prepared for a possible regression to early feelings and behaviors in your relationship.

[7.2] Match Support

The program coordinator should provide on-going and comprehensive support to the matches throughout the program's cycle. This means offering professional assistance and advice in the following areas:

- Problem solving.
- Feedback and encouragement.

- Ideas for appropriate activities.
- Advice on positive mentoring.
- Positive reinforcement to both the mentor and the mentee.
- Supports to connect with family or community if this is appropriate within your program.
- Supports to connect with other necessary resources that could help support the mentee.
- Referrals to other organizations/experts in issue areas that are beyond the expertise of the mentor.

[7.3] Closure/Transition

When the match ends for any reason, the program staff will complete a match closure. During a match closure, each match participant should feel supported and comfortable. It is important to celebrate the match whenever possible and to help the match be remembered as a positive experience for those involved. The aim of a match closure is to provide closure to the participants, and to provide options for continued involvement with the SGD Mentorship Program if appropriate.

Outline of Closure Process:

Hold/Close Conditions

- If a match loses contact or follow-ups cannot be completed despite a variety of methods and attempts, a match can be put on hold or be closed.

Closure Meeting

- Whoever wants to close the match should personally communicate their desires to the other party.
- Encourage them to have a last meeting to celebrate the accomplishments of the match.
 - Reminisce about your favorite times together.
 - Discuss how much has happened/changed in your lives since you were brought together.
 - Share with your match any positive aspects of the match for you - encourage them to do the same.
- Try to complete the closure in person. If there is a reason not to close in person, complete a closure through phone or email.

8. Resources and Support

[8.1] Community Partnerships and Stakeholders

SGD Youth Mentoring Programs benefit from robust partnerships with local SGD/SGD organizations. There are several compelling reasons to partner with local, regional, and national SGD organizations—advocacy groups, Genders and Sexualities Alliances (GSAs), youth outreach centers, etc.—that can enhance what a youth mentoring program is able to offer young people and their mentors:

- Recruitment of SGD mentors and SGD mentees.
- Opportunities for matches to participate in SGD community events and national campaigns.
- Content expertise to support staff development and mentor training and provide additional information and learning opportunities to mentees.
- Creation or expansion of cross-program youth groups, including the formation of GSAs in new spaces and contexts.

- A referral network of other service providers and groups for when youth and their families have needs beyond what the mentoring program can provide.

Mentoring programs can think about what they offer that complements the work of other service providers. Depending on a young person's needs, mentors may be uniquely positioned to serve as the "connective tissue" that helps keep them engaged in critical educational, clinical, or vocational supports and making sure they maximize and add to the "web of support" that keeps them on a path to long-term success. Building connections that lead to other caring peer and adult relationships is an action noted in the research literature as being particularly valuable to SGD youth.

Program and/or organizations should also consider participating in national and local SGD awareness campaigns and events, such as local pride events, No Name-Calling Week, Transgender Awareness Week, National Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and others. These events will raise their profile in the SGD community, and could help with participant recruitment.



9. Program Evaluation

[9.1] Program Evaluation

The following recommendations offer ways in which mentoring programs can more effectively serve SGD youth by tracking and evaluating services provided and specific outcomes.

For programs expanding services to include SGD youth, they should evaluate to what extent mentoring opportunities were expanded for gender-independent, trans and queer youth and children by integrating group mentoring opportunities in addition to individual mentoring matches. Key questions to consider are operational in nature, and assess the ability of the program to reach and engage program participants.

Potential Service Evaluation Areas Include:

Promotion:

- To what extent do promotional materials reach specific target audiences, and are effective at program promotion.

Screening, One-to-One Matching & Group Mentoring:

- To what extent screening and matching processes are effective, efficient and streamlined.

Monitoring & Support:

- Monitoring and support practices effectiveness at assisting matches and group volunteers during matches and programming as well as during times of change, match closures/end of program transitions.

Training:

- The effectiveness of staff training in increasing employees' knowledge about, and skills for working effectively with, SGD youth.
- The effectiveness of mentor training in increasing mentors' knowledge about, and skills for working effectively with, SGD youth.

Evaluation programs should also assess the effectiveness of the program by collecting outcome information, and actively seeking input about the program from SGD youth.

Potential Outcome Evaluation Areas Include:

- Documenting and tracking outcomes relevant to SGD youth (e.g., improved feelings of social support or sense of belonging; reductions in gender identity-related stereotype threat or certain risky behaviors), noting that many of these outcomes will be relevant to other youth subgroups as well.
- Direct involvement of SGD youth in evaluation planning, which honors their input into how success is defined and can facilitate gathering feedback on how well the organization is serving them.

Evaluation programs should proactively gather information about the SGD status of young people as they enter the program. They may also want to, given the increased victimization and risky behaviors exhibited by SGD youth, consider assessing each youth's experiences of bullying and harassment, their trauma exposure, their levels of family support, and other aspects of their risks and protective factors. This is likely to be information the program will want to collect on all youth served, but it may be especially helpful in ensuring that SGD youth are matched with a well-prepared mentor who is able to meet their needs and form a strong relationship.

This information can also be helpful later in explaining differences in the impact of the program for some youth. For example, a program might find that SGD youth with fewer prior experiences with severe peer bullying, or less rejection from their parents, experienced stronger

relationships and better outcomes than their peers who had not been through those experiences prior to joining the program. Conversely, a program might find that these rejected youth benefitted the most from the program, implying that their mentoring relationship was a much-needed source of support and personal growth. Programs that do not have that level of information about each participant are less able to say who the program is best supporting and who might need even more intensive support. Examining these types of moderators can help programs fine-tune their services (e.g., extra training) and assess what types of mentors are a good fit for particular youth circumstances (e.g., the mentor traits needed to work with a youth experiencing rejection at home).

Programs looking to measure these risks and protective factors may want to start with that particular section of the [Measurement Guidance Toolkit](#), a free online resource developed by the National Mentoring Resource Center. This resource profile validated, ready-to-use scales that cover many of the additional pieces of background information about a child that might be useful in better supporting SGD youth. This information could also be useful in interpreting program outcomes and identifying the types of young people who most benefit (or not) from the services.

Training Evaluation

Much of the success of working effectively with SGD youth is grounded in the knowledge and skills of the staff and mentors directly engaging with them. Therefore, programs are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the training offered on this topic. Previous sections of this supplement have suggested the content for these trainings. Evaluations should assess whether the training has increased knowledge and feelings of self-competence in critical knowledge and skills (ideally compared to a pre-training baseline). These evaluations should ideally be completed immediately after a training so that participants can reflect on what they have learned, offer feedback on the training itself, and identify areas where they feel they may need more help. Programs are also encouraged to follow up with training participants several months after the training to see if they have applied any of the knowledge or skills gained in their work with youth. It can be helpful to understand, for example, that mentors know a lot more about SGD issues, but that they are having a hard time responding to critical relationship moments or are struggling to offer the right support to mentees who are engaged in a coming out process. These post-training follow-ups can identify areas for increased match support and ensure that the training being offered is actionable and applied directly in the relationships themselves.

Examining Program Outcomes

As noted above, most mentoring programs use a uniform set of outcome measures for all youth in the program; however, one strategy suggested by this project's working group was to make sure that evaluation work involving SGD youth takes note of the progress of the match on specific issues identified in goal-setting tools, "life plans," or other formalized documents that guide the time the mentor and mentee spend together. Given that SGD youth face numerous unique challenges that often place them at deficits when growing into a healthy adulthood, it follows that they will also have some very specific issues they want to overcome with a mentor's support or highly individualized goals related to their identity or expression. Programs may want to track this personalized progress toward, and attainment of, youth-specific goals. Most important, this evaluation process might indicate whether the program is meeting the needs of its SGD mentees.

Mentoring programs solely serving SGD youth may want to track outcomes that are relevant to that work, including tracking them through periods of transition or in rebounding from negative experiences.

Programs that exclusively serve SGD youth may emphasize outcomes such as:

- Increased knowledge of and connection to the SGD community and resources where they live, improved sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Identity development and improved sense of self.
- Reduced risky behaviors (following up on those measured at entry into the program).
- Decreased bullying and harassment or improved peer relations.
- Improved perceptions of external support or growth in networks of supportive peers and adults.
- Increased perceptions of social competence.
- Improved family support.
- Reduced stereotype threats or other negative self-perceptions related to their SGD status.

As always, we encourage programs to use only validated and reliable measurement tools, such as those suggested in the Measurement Guidance Toolkit or those provided by evaluation and research partners.

10. Conclusion

[10.1] Thank You / Supported By

Pride Center of Edmonton
Government of Alberta
BGCBigs SGD working group
BBBS Calgary
BBBS Winnipeg
MENTOR

[10.2] Contact Information for Additional Support

Alberta Mentoring Partnership
Address: 9428 109A Ave,
Edmonton, AB, T5H 1G1
Phone: 1-844-370-1768
Email: info@albertamentors.ca



11. Appendix

[11.1] Program Forms Used to operate program

Contact BGCBigS at 780.424.8181 or bgcbigs.ca/contact-us for additional information on the forms listed below.

Application:

- Partnered Volunteer Application November 2016
- Volunteer Permission and Release Agreement Summary

References:

- Vulnerable Sector Screening Checklist (Volunteers)
- BBBS Volunteer Registry – Request for Information (if previous BBBS volunteer)
- Reference – Family Member or Reference – Significant Other
- Reference – Employment or Reference – Teacher
- Reference – Personal

- Reference – Previous Volunteer Experience (Identify if they have worked/volunteered with vulnerable populations in the past 5 years)
- Physician – Therapist Request Form (Only if required)
- Physician – Therapist Reference Form (Only if required)
- Release of Information

Checks:

- Acceptable ID for Police Check and Child Intervention
- Consent to Share Information (CRIM and CYIM)

Training:

- Online Training Instructions 2013
- SFTS Volunteer Review
- Volunteer Pre-Match Training Questionnaire and Statement of Completion

Interview:

- Volunteer Interview Checklist
- Volunteer Interview Revised July 2017
- Volunteer Interview (Re-Screen) January 2017
- Vehicle Insurance Verification (Community Based 1-1 program only)
- Firearm Waiver – December 2014 (Community Based 1-1 program only if required)
- Volunteer Guidelines – AGENCY vol. Revised Jan 2017
- Volunteer Guidelines – CB Revised Jan 2017
- Volunteer Guidelines – Club and Group Based Revised Jan 2017
- Volunteer Guidelines – School and Site Based Revised January 2017

Handbooks (see following appendix section)

- Mentor Handbook
- Mentee Handbook
- Parent, Guardian, and Caregiver Handbook

11.2: Handbooks

The SGD Youth Mentoring Program

Mentor Handbook

What is a Mentor?

Congratulations on becoming a mentor! You may be wondering what exactly a mentor is. A mentor serves as an adult companion to a young person (a mentee), a positive role model, a listener, an instructor, a limit setter, a resource and guide. You will have access to support from the Agency and through training and regular meetings with staff. Do not hesitate to reach out if you need help. This is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in a young person's life. Thank you!

The following information is meant to give you some tips on being a mentor and getting started in your mentoring relationship, including some do's & don'ts, conversation starters, example activities and contact numbers.

Things Mentors Should Be:

- Be a long-term friend to the mentee and maintain consistent contact.
- Be willing to do activities that the mentee is interested in and introduce them to new ones.
- Be a listener, supporter, self-esteem builder and someone who can introduce the mentee to new experiences (see conversation starters for some ideas).
- Be a positive, supportive, non-judgmental role model.

Things Mentors Should NOT Do:

- Give the mentee or the mentee's family money or plan expensive outings.
- Give the mentee rides outside of scheduled activities, unless otherwise agreed upon (e.g. emergency/safety situations and previously discussed).
- Only work on school related activities, have some fun too!

- Promote the mentor's own social, political or religious beliefs.
- Try to be or take the place of a parental figure (instead be a supporting friend/adult figure in the youth's life).

Conversation Starters

In a focus group to inform this handbook, mentors expressed a desire to have a list of topics to help a new match engage in conversation and help to build a relationship. The following offers suggestions about potential topics. Asking about the mentee's interests and hobbies may open a world of topics to discuss and explore. If the mentee wishes to discuss experiences around gender identity and sexuality, the mentor's role is to listen and to help guide the mentee to resources. Questions can also be age dependent. Be aware of signs of anxiety and depression with your youth.

Questions about the previous week

- What did you do this week?
- What was something fun you did this week?

Questions about their family

- How many people are in your family?
- How many siblings do you have?
- Do you have any pets?

Questions about them

- What is your favourite food?
- What is your favourite ice cream?
- What is your favourite animal?
- What is your favourite color?
- What do you want to be when you get older?

Other Questions

- What do you worry about the most?
- What hurts your feelings?
- Who in your class is a really good friend?
- What makes someone a good friend?
- What makes someone a bad friend?

Questions about school

- Where do you go to school?
- What grade are you in?
- What is your favorite class?
- What is your least favorite class?

Questions about their activities

- What do you like to do for fun?
- Do you play sports?
- Do you play any instruments?
- Do you like to draw?

Questions about pop culture

- What is your favourite TV show?
- What is your favourite movie?
- What is your favourite song?
- What was the last movie you saw?
- What is your favourite book?

Affirming and Avoiding Misgendering

Respecting the mentee's gender is important in helping them build self-confidence. Respectful conversations build respectful relationships.

It is important to not misgender your mentee. Ask and pay attention to what they use. A key sign of respect is to call each other the way we want to be called. Be sensitive to that conversation.

One parent had this to say about understanding gender diversity within matches:

"(The mentee) really struggles with gender roles and (the mentor) helped... It was important for us to ask for a (trans) mentor who shared some of the same aspects as the mentee. The mentee loves the mentor. We all love the mentor."

Discussing Uncomfortable Topics

If you are in a situation and the mentee wishes to talk about a topic that may make you feel uncomfortable, such as sex or drug use, it is okay to acknowledge the importance of the question and respond at a later date, after connecting with the Mentoring Coordinator. One experienced mentor had this to say:

"I have fielded a lot of questions around emotions and relationships. In many years of mentoring no one has asked me about the mechanics of sex. It is important to talk about things like "What is a good relationship? What if someone is pressuring you?" and use a harm reduction approach: talk about protection, being safe, how they feel, ensuring consent, the relationship

is positive for the youth. All this while balancing confidentiality, the situation, the mentee's age and ultimately creating a safe situation for the young person."

Activities

Things to do with your mentee could include:

- Cooking together.
- Going for walks.
- Meeting just to talk.
- Taking in local festivals.
- participating in group activities as part of what the agency offers.

Have fun, but please keep cost of activities in mind. Some ideas to reduce the cost of activities are:

- Check to see if you can access a City Leisure Pass, free bus tickets, etc.
- Look for programs at your local public library, recreation centers and parks.

Note: Be aware of the mentee's comfort level around their body. Young SGD people may not be comfortable in their bodies, so activities that involve physicality or touch may involve more sensitivities for the participant. Talk about it with your mentee. People may experience dysphoria (feeling out of place in one's own body) or self-scrutiny which may be barriers to physical activity. Make sure the activity location is accessible, and that any bathrooms/changing rooms are accessible to trans people (there is a policy protecting people from exclusion based on their body).

Who can I call for Support or Help?

- The Pride Centre of Edmonton at 780-488-3234
- Resources
- 911 (Emergency)
- 211 (Community Resources Referral Line)
- 311 (City of Edmonton services and supports)
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

The SGD Youth Mentoring Program

Mentee Handbook

What is a Mentor?

A mentor serves as a friend, a positive role model and a good listener.

Things Mentors Should Be:

- Be a long-term friend to the mentee who maintains consistent contact.
- Be willing to do activities that the mentee is interested in.
- Be a listener, supporter, self-esteem builder and someone who can introduce the mentee to new experiences.
- Be a positive, supportive, non-judgmental role model.

Things Mentors Should NOT Do:

- Give the mentee or the mentee's family money or inappropriate gifts.
- Give the mentee rides outside of scheduled activities.
- Only work on school related activities.
- Do expensive, over the top activities.
- Be a parental figure.

What is my role in the mentoring relationship?

This mentoring relationship will bring you many exciting opportunities, skills, and knowledge. During your first meeting, you will have a chance to begin getting to know your new mentor. By the time this first meeting ends please make sure that you exchange necessary contact information and arrange your next meeting time and date. Please give this information to the Project Director before you leave.

As with all new relationships, you may find moments when things feel awkward until you have had a chance to find out what the other person is all about. After a while this will pass and the time you spend together will feel more natural and comfortable. In the meantime, here is a tool that may make it easier to start the relationship:

Activities

Things to do with your mentor could include cooking together, going for walks, meeting just to talk, taking in local festivals, participating in group activities as part of what the agency offers.

- Check to see if you can access a City Leisure Pass, free bus tickets, etc.
- Look for programs at your local public library, recreation centers and parks.

Who can I call for Support or Help?

- The Pride Centre of Edmonton at 780-488-3234
- Resources
- 911 (Emergency)
- 211 (Community Resources Referral Line)
- 311 (City of Edmonton services and supports)
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
- Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-387-5437
- Alberta Addictions Helpline 1-866-332-2322
- Alberta Mental Health Crisis Line 1-877-303-2642

The SGD Youth Mentoring Program

Family Member and Caregiver Handbook

What is a Mentor?

A mentor serves as an adult companion, a positive role model, a listener, an instructor, a limit setter, a resource and guide. Through these roles, the mentor will initiate the flow of the relationship using open communication.

Things Mentors Should Be:

- Be a long-term friend to the mentee who maintains consistent contact.
- Be willing to do activities that the mentee is interested in.
- Be a listener, supporter, self-esteem builder and someone who can introduce the mentee to new experiences.
- Be a positive, supportive, non-judgmental role model.

Things Mentors Should NOT Do:

- Give the mentee or the mentee's family money or inappropriate gifts.
- Give the mentee rides outside of scheduled activities.
- Only work on school related activities.
- Do expensive, over the top activities.
- Be a parental figure.

What is My Role in the Mentoring Relationship?

Parents and guardians are important partners in building a safe and meaningful friendship between their child and the mentor. Parent/Guardian support, participation and input are crucial to a successful match.

What Should You Do?

- Have open communication with your child, the mentor and the agency.
- Keep a working phone number or have access to a telephone in order for you and your child to stay connected with the mentor and the Mentoring Coordinator.
- Keep in touch with the mentor on a regular basis.
- Complete the ongoing follow-up phone calls or in person meetings with the Mentoring Coordinator in a timely manner.

Match Information

Talk to the Mentoring Coordinator about any change of address, telephone number or family situation which may affect the match. A working phone is helpful to making the relationship work.

- The mentor is expected to spend 2-3 hours a month with your child for the duration of the match.
- Regular contact is needed in order to build the friendship. If contact between your child and their mentor changes, contact the Mentoring Coordinator.
- It is important for both you and your child to talk with the mentor in order for the match to be successful. Return phone calls quickly to maintain open communication.
- You should always be informed about where your child is going, what time they will be home and what they plan to do on their outing with the mentor. It is important for you to ask about the outing once your child returns home. For instance, you can ask questions about their level of enjoyment and if they liked their time with

their mentor. Where there any issues that arose?
When is the next visit planned for?

If your child is not enjoying the time spent with their mentor, please contact the Mentoring Coordinator.

- Discipline of your child is not the role of the mentor. Do not stop your child from seeing their mentor as a form of punishment, as it is unfair to the mentor and it could be detrimental to the matches' success.
- If the family member feels it is essential to share personal information about the current situation of the mentee, do so in a respectful way.
- It is important to say "thank you" to the mentor so they feel appreciated.

Activities

Know when activities are planned and have your child prepared; make sure they have eaten before going out, they are ready on time and they are dressed for the weather and the activity.

- Talk with the mentor about any activities that you do not want your child to be involved in.
- Any costs for the activities should be shared. No-cost and low-cost activities are suggested.

If you have any worries about cost, please talk with the Mentoring Coordinator and the mentor.

Affirming and Avoiding Misgendering

The SGD Youth Mentoring Program puts a priority on affirming the gender identity of all involved, including staff, mentors, volunteers and children/youth. Respecting children's individuality is important in helping them build self-confidence. Respectful conversations build respectful relationships.

It is important to note, in this program conversations about pronouns are common and we put effort into making sure all participants are respected and avoiding misgendering.

Diligence and attention to what is universally used and recognizing that may change over time (particularly when a youth in transitioning) is important. Be sensitive to that conversation.

One parent had this to say about understanding gender diversity within matches:

"(The mentee) really struggles with gender roles and (the mentor) helped... It was important for us to ask for a (trans) mentor who shared some of the same aspects as the mentee. The mentee loves the mentor. We all love the mentor."

Who can I call for Support or Help?

- The Pride Centre of Edmonton at 780-488-3234
- Resources
- 911 (Emergency)
- 211 (Community Resources Referral Line)
- 311 (City of Edmonton services and supports)
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868