

Mentoring: Parent FAQs

What should I do if my child cannot attend a meeting with the mentor?

To encourage responsibility in your child, have him/her call the mentor when a meeting must be rescheduled. If the youth is very ill, you may want to call yourself. Be sure you have the phone numbers to reach the mentor at home and at work.

What if family plans conflict with a meeting?

The mentor should complement or add to family opportunities. Time with the mentor is not intended to displace time with the family. You should continue your normal family plans, including get-togethers, special trips, and vacations. As much as possible, the mentor and your child should plan their time together around your normal schedule. It may be helpful to let the mentor and your child know about planned family events. The mentor and your child should let you know when they are planning special activities. Good advance communication will help avoid conflicts.

Can I or other family members go with my child and the mentor?

A mentoring relationship is special, in part, because it is a one-to-one relationship. Even teens who feel very close to their parents sometimes need to talk with friends outside the family. The mentor is an adult friend with whom your child can talk about things that concern him/her. The mentor and your child will inform you about their plans each week. If at any time you are uncomfortable with their plans, please let them know. Mentors will be sensitive to parent concerns and will try to find an arrangement that acceptable to you.

How can I be sure that the mentor will support my rules and regulations?

Talk with the mentor about rules or regulations you expect to arise in his/her relationship with your child. If you have strict rules about bedtimes, places the youth may not go, or foods he/she may not eat, please discuss these with the mentor. By making this information known at the beginning, you can help avoid misunderstandings later.

What if the mentor says things with which I do not agree?

No matter how carefully mentors and protégés are matched, you may find some areas where your beliefs or ideas differ from the mentor's. If these are important to you, let the mentor know. You can request that the mentor NOT question your most important beliefs or values when with your child. Mentors are expected to discuss parents' beliefs and values respectfully. Letting your child know that you respectfully disagree with the mentor can help your son/daughter begin to form opinions on his/her own. This is especially important during early adolescence as part of young people search for their own identity. The mentoring program is a chance to explore different points of views.

Who will pay for the activities of the mentor and youth?

Mentors always pay their own expenses but are not responsible for the child or the family. If the planned activities involve fees, you or your child will be asked to pay for the youth's share. You need not pay for activities that you feel are too expensive. The most important part of the mentoring program is the relationship between the mentor and the youth, not a lot of costly activities. However, because activities help build competence, we hope all mentor/youth pairs can do special things occasionally. The youth should not expect the mentor to buy things for him/her. As with any friend, this should be appreciated when and if it occurs, not expected on a regular basis.

If my child has misbehaved, should I allow him/her to see the mentor?

The mentor's weekly visits should not used to discipline your child. Time with the mentor is a pleasure but it is also a time of learning and growth. Punishing your child by denying time with the mentor puts you in opposition to the mentor instead of emphasizing your mutual concern to build your child's confidence. Even if your child is grounded, the mentor should be allowed to see him/her. Do let the mentor know the reason for the youth being grounded.

How often should I be in contact with the mentor, and how much should I say about family problems/concerns?

Get to know the mentor well enough to feel comfortable with him/her being with your child. Before each meeting, discuss plans and times for returning home. Try talking directly with the mentor about your child in front of your child. If there is something the mentor should know, call when your child is not around.

What if there are concerns or questions I don't want to discuss with the mentor? Please feel free to call the program coordinator. He/she is here to help make the program work for students, mentors, and parents. He/she will call you several times during the year to see how things are going.

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