

GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

It's not possible to anticipate every situation and the appropriate behavior to apply when one is mentoring. However, here are a few suggestions to use as general guidelines:

Do:

- Get to know your mentee. Try to really understand how things are for him or her now.
- Be positive, patient, dependable, honest and sincere.
- Be consistent, but flexible. Expect changes in plans.
- Encourage, praise and compliment – even the smallest of accomplishments.
- Be an active listener. Use language that's easy to understand.
- Give concrete explanations.
- Be straight, honest and sincere (people pick up on falseness and shallowness).
- Ask for opinions and participation in decision-making.
- Work with your mentee. Share your knowledge rather than giving advice.
- Be enthusiastic – it's contagious.
- Stress the positive.
- Be firm. Have your mentee assume responsibilities and hold him or her accountable.
- Help your mentee use mistakes as learning experiences.
- Be fair – they'll notice if you're not.
- Help identify your mentee's talents, strengths and assets.
- Tell your mentee about yourself, especially what you remember from your childhood years.
- Help them identify the significance for their own lives of the information you are discussing (e.g., possible future profession, similar experiences, etc.) – tell them how they can use the information.
- Take the initiative. A mentee who fails to call or attend must be pursued and the coordinator notified of the situation so that issues can be resolved and sessions can begin again, if applicable.
- If you're going to miss a mentoring session, call the coordinator and leave a message for the mentee. It is important to let the mentee know you did not forget about your mentoring session.
- Learn to appreciate your mentee's cultural and ethnic background.
- Be open to what your mentee can teach you or share with you.
- **Honor Your Commitment – This is extremely important! You'll hear this over and over again!**
- **HAVE FUN!**

Don't:

- Expect to have instant rapport with your mentee.
- Be lenient in order to be liked – it won't earn their respect, and they need consistency and structure.
- Lecture, moralize or preach.
- Tell them what to do (instead, you should suggest, invite, encourage).
- Share personal problems unless it is to explain your current disposition (e.g., tired or irritable).
- Make promises you can't keep.
- Be convinced that what mentees say is always what they mean.
- Pry into the young person's life. If a mentee pries into your affairs, it is okay to say that some things in your life are private just as they are in his or her life.
- Be afraid to admit that you do not know an answer or that you have made a mistake. Find the correct answer and learn together. It helps the mentee to see that you are learning too.
- Interpret lack of enthusiasm as a personal rejection or reaction to you.
- Be sarcastic or use excessive teasing.
- Refer to youths that reside in public housing as being from "the projects."
- Lend money.
- Violate confidences, with the single *exception of crisis intervention situations*, in which case you must contact the coordinator privately and immediately.
- Forget your own adolescence. What do you wish an adult had said to you or done for you at that time in your life?
- Attempt to become a surrogate parent to a child.