

CAYM Mentoring Best Practices

CAYM's mission is to train and support Christians in churches and ministries to provide safe and effective mentoring to our fatherless and motherless youth and their families. Our goal is to help mobilize the local Christian church to reach fatherless and motherless children in their communities. The following Best Practices offer “**standards**” for your ministry that you need to put into practice and abide by and some “**recommendations**” that your ministry should strongly consider. By following the best practices as outlined in this document, mentoring ministries can stay focused on their objectives of providing safe and effective mentoring that is God honoring in its objectives and practice. Overall, CAYM believes that Christian mentoring programs must be Christ-centered and Church-driven.

1. PRAYER

a. Christ-centered

- i. Pray often for your community and how God would help you connect your local church with the fatherless and motherless children and their families in your community.
- ii. Pray that God would provide the volunteers, youth, and resources you need to run your mentoring program.
- iii. Pray that God will lead you to faithful and committed mentors and protect you from anyone who could cause harm to children, the ministry, and the church.
- iv. Prayerfully consider whom God might want you to match in a mentoring relationship.
- v. Pray often for the mentoring matches. Pray for on going wisdom with problems and issues that might arise. Remember the prayers that God has answered regarding the mentoring matches.
- vi. Pray for God to open the hearts of youth, their families, and the community to the Gospel through the faithful example and words of mentors.

2. RECRUITMENT

a. Mentor Recruitment must be:

- i. Honest: Program should engage in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, and challenges of mentoring in the program.
- ii. Clear: Program must have a written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.
- iii. Relationship oriented: Mentoring, as with all ministry, is all about relationships. Recruiting should model mentoring throughout the recruitment process. As with mentoring, trust is the key for mentors to be able to make a commitment to the protégé and mentoring program.

b. Protégé Recruitment must be

- i. Focused: Programs should recruit youth based on the youth's needs and the ability of the ministry to minister to those needs.
- ii. Program should have a written statement outlining eligibility requirements for protégés along with a parent information sheet giving program and parental guidelines.

c. Recommendations

- i. Church centered recruiting: Start recruiting mentors at your church. If you are a multi-church ministry recruit at other local churches as you make connections.
- ii. Make an extra effort to recruit men: Women tend to naturally move toward mentoring, Men are harder to convince. Therefore a male-oriented recruiting strategy is recommended.

- iii. We strongly recommend matching mentors over 21 years old. Most mentors come from two groups: pre-kids (those who don't have children) and post-kids (those whose kids are either older or out of the home).
- iv. The prime target age for kids to be matched is between 8 – 12 years of age. Teenagers can also benefit from mentoring. Ministries should be extra cautious matching younger children.
- v. Personal, one-on-one recruitment is very effective in churches when supported by church wide publicity about mentoring.
- vi. Limiting your recruiting to Christian venues reduces the screening time. It also reduces the need to reject recruits because they are not believers.

3. SCREENING

a. Mentor Screening

- i. Mentor completes an application
- ii. Mentor agrees to a one-year commitment for the mentoring relationship.
- iii. Mentor agrees to participate in face-to-face meetings with his protégé that average one time per week for at least two hours over the course of the year.
- iv. Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with the mentor – it is strongly recommended that it take place in the mentor's home.
- v. Program conducts four reference checks on the mentor – spouse/family, pastor/church leader, employer, and a friend.
- vi. If potential mentor is married, make sure the spouse is on board with the commitment.
- vii. Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on adult mentor, including sex offender and child abuse registries and it is recommended that you do a national criminal records database over a state criminal records database. (Subsidized national background checks are available through SafetyNet at www.Mentoring.org)
- viii. If potential mentor has a criminal record, they can be allowed to mentor if the following conditions are met:
 - 1. If the crime did not involve victimization of a vulnerable person: child, youth, person with a disability, or senior citizen.
 - 2. They have had a minimum of three years of stability (spiritual, church involvement, employment, relationships, and location) after release.

b. Protégé Screening

- i. An intake interview must be conducted with every parent and protégé, preferably done at the parent's home.
- ii. Parent(s) /guardian(s) must provide full informed consent for the child's participation and sign a release form allowing the child's involvement.
- iii. All youth must be willing participants of the mentoring program.
- iv. Parent(s) /guardian(s) and protégé agree to a one year minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship where the mentor and protégé meet face-to-face on a weekly basis for a minimum of two hours per meeting. (This commitment can be modified to meet the needs of the protégés as well as fulfill the program's goals.)

c. Recommendations

- i. Focus on screening the right people "in" as opposed to screening people "out."
- ii. School-based programs should contain the goal of transitioning matches into community-based matches.

4. TRAINING

a. Mentor Training

- i. Program provides a minimum of three hours of pre-match, in person training.
- ii. Mentor training includes the following topics, at a minimum: a) Programs mission and vision; b) Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentor/protégé relationship; c) Mentor's obligations and appropriate roles; d) Biblical basis for mentoring; e) Child development needs; f) Relationship development and maintenance; g) Ethical issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship, including confidentiality and issues of reporting child abuse; h) Effective closure of the mentoring relationship; and i) Sources of assistance available to support mentors including the supervision process provide by the ministry.
- iii. Programs should provide regularly scheduled post-match training sessions either in groups or individually.
- iv. Trainers should emphasize the need for long-term relationships because the best results happen over the long haul. They should also stress the danger to the child when mentors fail to keep their commitments. Mentors who frequently cancel or reschedule meetings can give the youth the impression that they are being rejected. (The #1 success benchmark is the length of match. The #1 indicator of a poorly run program is unexpected match closures.)

b. Mentor Relationship Guidelines:

- i. Mentor must schedule meetings with the knowledge and approval of the parent.
- ii. We encourage mentors to not focus on spiritual things with the protégé until they have established a trust relationship. This takes at least 6 months.
- iii. Mentors are not allowed to give money to the families they are mentoring because this changes the nature of the relationship in that they take over a parental responsibility. Mentors can provide for the child and family by giving through the church.
- iv. Mentors should not spend 1 on 1 time with the parent of the protégé if they are of the opposite sex.
- v. Mentors should not enter the home of the protégé unless there is a third party present (parent and protégé).
- vi. Mentors are not allowed to have the child on an overnight event (it is recommended that they also not visit the mentors home) for at least six months, and then only when the following conditions are met:
 1. An approved third-party must be present. (Programs must be extra careful with all overnight trips, but unmarried mentors can face extra scrutiny from the community. It is advisable that programs go beyond the third-party rule so that parents and community can have confidence in the ministry.)
 2. Prior approval of the parent and supervisor is received.
 3. The parent and supervisor sign a release form allowing the mentor to take the child and authorize medical care if needed.
- vii. Anyone transporting the protégé during a mentoring outing must have a valid drivers license and valid insurance.

c. Recommendations

- i. The CAYM mentor orientation addresses how to build a trust relationship between the mentor and protégé. If you choose to use your own or another training program, the following information should be included:

1. How mentoring works – In order for positive change to occur, the mentor and protégé need to form an emotional bond. If the emotional bond is not formed, the mentor and protégé may disengage from the match before the relationship lasts long enough to have a positive impact on the youth (Rhodes, 36). The emotional bond is formed through developing trust. This means both mentor and protégé feel understood, liked, and respected.
2. Research shows that strong bonds depend on the ability to understand and respond empathetically to others experiences (Rhodes, 37).
3. Bonds between mentors and protégés tend to deepen with time and consistency.
4. Longevity has been found to be critical to the development of high-quality mentoring relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 104).
5. Research shows that matches that engaged in social activities and shared in the decision-making process around what they would do together tended to have closer relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 124).
6. Participating in fun activities together is a key part of relationship building between the mentor and protégé.
7. Research shows that any match that ends before the agreed time will have a negative impact on the youth. It is also shown that the impact of mentoring grows as the relationship matures over time (Rhodes, 60).
8. The best way to ensure that a relationship will run its natural course is to carefully screen, train, and support both mentor and protégé.
9. One of the keys for at-risk youth to be resilient was that they had one adult outside their family that cared about them.

5. MATCHING

a. Matchmaking

- i. Program prayerfully considers its mission as well as the characteristics of the mentor and protégé (e.g., interests, proximity, availability, age, race, ethnicity, personality, and expressed preferences of mentor and protégé) when making matches.
- ii. Program arranges an initial meeting between the mentor, protégé, parent and match supervisor where a mentoring agreement is signed by all parties.
- iii. Only same sex matches are allowed. (Exceptions can be made for ministries that match families with youth. But even in those matches, no one-on-one activity is allowed between a mentor and protégé of the opposite sex.)
- iv. As a Christian ministry, we do not match gays or lesbians for two reasons:
 1. According to the Bible, engaging in homosexuality is a sin.
 2. We do not match heterosexual mentors with children of the opposite sex because of possible attraction (as well as the need for same-sex role models), therefore we do not match homosexuals with children of the same sex.
- v. Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial meeting of the mentor and protégé.

a. Recommendations

- An important factor in developing a close mentoring relationship is the common interests shared by the mentor and protégé. The more their interests align, the more likely they will have a long relationship.

- It may be advisable in a family that has multiple children who want a mentor to start by matching one of the children to give the match a couple of months to make sure that the family allows for match stability before matching the other children.
- Parents of children may also need and want a mentor. These matches can provide great support for the parent, child and the entire family.

2. SUPERVISION and SUPPORT

a. Supervising

- Program contacts mentor, parent/guardian, and protégé at a minimum frequency of once within the first forty-eight hours of the match, twice a month for the first three months of the match, and once a month thereafter.
- Program contacts the protégé's referral agent and pastor of the mentor at the beginning of the match and for a minimum of yearly updates.
- Program documents information about each mentor/protégé contact, including, at a minimum, date, length, and nature of contact.
- Program provides mentors with access to at least two types of resources (e.g. expert advice from program staff or others; publications; Web-based resources; experienced mentors; available social service referrals) to help mentors negotiate challenges in the mentoring relationship as they arise.
- Program conducts match evaluations at six months, year-end, and yearly thereafter. The yearly evaluation should include:
 1. Interviews with parent, youth, and mentor.
 2. Meeting between youth and mentor to celebrate and review match.
 3. An emphasis on continuing the match (if that is deemed helpful) and making another year commitment. (The terms of the agreement can be adjusted after the first year.)
- Program hosts one or more group activities per month for mentors and their protégés, and/or offers information about activities that mentors and protégés might wish to participate in together.
- Program should thank and recognize mentor, protégé, parent, and church at the end of each match year. A certificate should be given to both the mentor and protégé. (It is advised that this be done in a formal setting such as an event or church service.)

b. Recommendations

- Mentor supervisors (facilitator/coaches) must have the ability to consistently contact the mentor and protégé's family by phone. (We have found that people with a sales type background or attitude do very well). These supervisors must have an advisor with counseling experience to be able to guide supervisors with challenging issues.
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) must focus on developing relationships with the mentor and parent primarily. While the coach should make supervisory contact with the child, a close bond could be an obstacle to the mentor/protégé relationship.
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) should spend some 1 on 1 time with the mentor to develop a relationship with them from the very beginning of the match.
- Supervision can be challenging and tedious. Be consistent in your contact schedule with the mentor and family. Make sure the mentor is getting together

with their protégé regularly. If communication lines are down for an extended time, there is a good chance that a problem exists.

- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) should stress that research confirms that frequent and consistent contact between mentor and protégé is a key ingredient in the creation of strong mentoring relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 90).
- Supervisors are often buffers between the parent and mentor. Deal with problems and issues promptly. If the mentor, parent, or child cannot resolve issues, you will need to intervene. If you wait, things will likely get more complicated with less likelihood of being resolved. Remember, problems often provide opportunities for ministry.
- One of the biggest challenges in supervising is that mentors do not feel like they are making a difference. Pass on any encouragement you get from the parent or protégé to the mentor, as well as your own observations. Set goals with mentors so they can see progress. Have the protégés send a thank you card to their mentor once a year. Celebrate match anniversaries. Pray with the mentor when they are discouraged.
- In satisfied matches, mentors appeared to follow a “youth-driven” approach in which the mentor effectively identified the needs and interests of the youth and addressed them in such a way that the protégé would be receptive to help (DuBois & Karcher, 90).
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) can get overwhelmed. The team leader or another member should be in consistent contact with the supervisor to make sure that they are following up on the matches in a positive way.
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) can also connect with supervisors from other churches and ministries through CAYM.
- Write out and remember mentoring success stories so that the mentor can be reminded of the progress made over time.
- Conduct program evaluations. It can really help the supervisor and mentor know how they are doing. People want to know how they are doing.

3. CLOSURE

- a. When a match is ending (or has ended prematurely) a process of closure is needed to provide the protégé, mentor, and parent an opportunity to review both the positives of the relationship, as well as the lessons learned from the struggles in order for all parties to get the full benefit of their commitment to the mentoring relationship.
- b. Programs must have a procedure to manage closures, including:
 - A closure meeting for mentor and protégé to review their time together. (When a mentor is ending a relationship, it is important for the child to know that it is not his/her fault.)
 - Contact with the parent to get their input on the match.
 - Written notification of match closure to the mentor, protégé, parent, church, and referral agent that includes a statement that if the mentor and protégé continue to meet, it will be outside the auspices of the ministry.
 - A process of deciding whether protégé and/or mentor will be rematched.
 - An evaluation process for each person to consider ways they can apply what has been learned to their lives.
- c. The closure process should include an exit interview with mentor, parent, and protégé.

Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

DuBois, David L. and Karcher, Michael J. (2005). *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.