



Volunteer Mentorship Program Guidelines & Policies for Mentors

A program run by the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories (FFCNWT) in partnership with Home Base Yellowknife

Program Description

The Volunteer Mentorship Program (VMP) is for children and youth (maximum age 29 years old) who access services through the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories (FFCNWT) and partner organization Home Base YK (HBYK). Mentees are matched with caring adults from the community in a mentorship relationship.

Mentors are carefully matched with mentees based on factors such as shared interests, backgrounds, and goals. The FFCNWT wants to create a strong and supportive long-term relationship between the mentor and mentee. Depending on their interests and available opportunities, mentors and mentees will spend time together playing sports, doing arts and crafts, occasional tutoring, career exploration, or simply spending time together and having conversations. The mentor provides guidance, encouragement, and support to help the mentee overcome challenges and reach their goals.

Primary Expectations of Volunteers

To be a successful mentor, you must understand and accept the following expectations:

- **One-Year Commitment** – Being a consistent, reliable friend is more important than what you do with your mentee. It takes time to build trust and develop a friendship. That's why our mentors are expected to volunteer for at least one year. This commitment is supported by research. Studies consistently show that *mentoring matches lasting longer than one year are most likely to generate positive youth outcomes, while those lasting fewer than 12 months can actually be detrimental to the child.*
- **Communicate with Foster Family Coalition Staff** – Open and frequent communication with Foster Family Coalition staff is fundamental to the volunteer experience. You will have at least monthly contacts with staff during the first year of your match. These contacts will be made at least quarterly after the first year is completed. As a mentor, you are expected to respond to any inquiries from Foster Family Coalition staff and keep in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- **Be a Good Friend and Mentor** – Meet and communicate regularly with your mentee. Mentors are expected to make face-to-face contact with their mentee twice per month for at least three hours at a time, but preferably, mentors and mentees meet once a week for at least two hours at a time. It's important for you



to be a consistent and reliable friend to your Mentee. If you are out of town for a prolonged period, ensure the Volunteer Coordinator, your mentee, and your mentee's caregiver(s) are aware well ahead of time. By dedicating time to your mentee and showing them that you care, you will become an important figure in their life!

- **Be an Advocate for our Mentorship Program** – There are hundreds of children and youth in our community who would benefit from a mentor. Unfortunately, we don't have enough mentors for them. Perhaps you know others who might make good mentor. Encourage them to volunteer to make a difference in the life of a child or youth!

What will NOT be expected of a volunteer mentor:

- Provide basic necessities like food or money
- Organize elaborate or expensive activities
- Act as a substitute for a parent, guardian, or teacher
- Act as a teaching
- Take the child or youth to appointments
- Act as a babysitter for the child or youth or their siblings/friends
- Act as a therapist or social worker

Important Guidelines & Policies

Key Points:

1. Relationships have ups and downs.
2. Relationships take time to develop.
3. Relationships don't happen by chance.

Guidelines:

1. Be consistent, caring, and dependable so that your mentee can learn to trust you. Specifically, avoid breaking dates, cancelling plans, and making promises you can't keep.
2. Be an advocate for your mentee. Never stop reminding them that they matter.
3. Avoid discussing their personal and family background or circumstances in front of them.
4. Avoid telling your mentee they are high-risk. Sometimes, even calling them 'kids' or 'youth' is patronizing. Call them your 'mentee' or refer to them as a 'program participant'.
5. Be supportive of your mentee's caregiver. Do not pass judgments regarding any family situation. It is appropriate for a mentor to address misbehavior within the context of the mentoring relationship, but leave "caregiving" to the caregiver.



Every caregiver supports and disciplines their child in their own way. ***However, if you suspect there is abuse occurring***, talk to the Volunteer Coordinator about if and how you need to approach Child and Family Services. Child and Family Services can be reached directly during daytime hours (Monday – Friday 9 – 5pm) at 867-767-9122 and at all other hours at 867-445-1092.

6. Don't try to be a taxi service, probation officer, "child saver," or parent rehabilitator.
7. Mentors should expect to pay for match activities. However, activities do not need to be expensive. Furthermore, mentees and their caregivers are encouraged to contribute to activities as they are able. Please do not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Coordinator about activity costs – the FFCNWT will cover costs if possible. Consult the 'Mentor Resources' section (<https://www.ffcnwt.com/mentor-resources>) of the Foster Family Coalition website for free or low-cost activities.
8. Do not purchase gifts for your mentee unless it is their birthday, an important holiday, or other special occasion (for example, if they accomplished something big). Consult with Foster Family Coalition staff if your mentee needs clothing, food, school supplies, etc.
9. If you include other people in your match activities occasionally, ensure that you continue to plan match activities that are just you and your mentee. One on one time with your mentee is important for relationship building.
10. Let your mentee help to make decisions about match activities and outings.
11. Call your mentee before you pick them up and be sure to get caregiver approval for the day, time, and activity. Return your mentee home at the agreed upon time or contact the caregiver if you are delayed.
12. If your contact information changes for any reason, please notify the FFCNWT and your Mentee and their caregiver immediately.
13. Regular, ongoing contact with FFCNWT staff is a requirement of the program. Please, respond promptly to calls from the Volunteer Coordinator, and feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Policies:

1. Do not put your mentee in a situation that is embarrassing, uncomfortable, dangerous, or otherwise inappropriate for him/her.
2. Respect your mentee's personal boundaries. Refrain from tickling, wrestling, sitting on laps, backrubs, or touching games. Enforce your own personal boundaries in this regard as well around your mentee.
3. Alcoholic beverages should not be consumed by mentors before or during times they interact with their mentees.



4. Mentors are prohibited from giving prescription drugs to their mentees unless absolutely necessary, and prescribed to the mentee by a physician, and authorized by the mentee's legal guardian. A mentee's legal guardian must also give verbal consent to the mentor for the child to take non-prescription drugs.
5. Safe driving is extremely important – seat belts must be worn, and traffic laws must be always obeyed. Children 12 and under must sit in the back seat. For more information, check here: <https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/en/services/highways-ferries-and-winter-roads/child-car-seat-safety>. For mentees to ride in their mentors vehicle, mentors must provide a copy of their license and registration to the Volunteer Coordinator, and the mentor must receive their mentee's guardian's permission. Volunteers must show proof of auto insurance annually with \$2 million liability insurance.
6. Ensure your mentees caregiver is aware of the activities that have been planned during your time together with the mentee.
7. Physical or corporal punishment is prohibited.
8. Mentors are required to report any suspected child abuse to Child and Family Services. They can be reached directly during daytime hours (Monday to Friday 9 – 5 pm) at 867-767-9122 and at all other hours at 867-445-1092. Following any child abuse report, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.
9. Confidentiality is extremely important. All information that is shared with a mentor about their mentee or their mentee's family is strictly confidential. Similarly, any information shared with the mentee or mentee's legal guardian about the volunteer is also confidential.
10. Mentors who would like to invite their mentee into their home must complete a live home check and received written approval prior to inviting mentees into their home. Mentors can bring mentees to their home for activities such as having dinner, watching a movie, and playing games.
 - If welcoming a mentee into your home, at least one other person must be present – this can be another adult who has a vulnerable sector check on file at the FFNCWT, or a friend or sibling of your mentee.
11. As the mentor, you always remain responsible for the supervision and safety of your mentee during your match activities. Other adults that you invite to join your match activities with your mentee must have a vulnerable sector check completed and on file at the FFCNWT. They are considered a 'secondary volunteer'. These secondary volunteers may consist of your partner, your roommate(s), your family member(s), or your friend(s).
12. Firearms, weapons, and ammunition must be secured and not accessible to mentees. If you obtain a weapon after you have been matched, you must inform the Volunteer Coordinator and ensure it is always locked and inaccessible to your mentee.



13. Adult literature, videos, photographs, etc. must not be accessible to mentees.
14. Dating or romantic relationships between volunteers and mentee's caregivers are prohibited.
15. Never keep secrets or promote secret-keeping with your mentee. This is a way to keep them safe. You can have surprises, but there must be a clear timeline when the surprise will be presented (for example, if the child wants to give a surprise gift to their sibling, you can support them to keep it as a surprise for a week but ensure they know when they will be giving the gift to their sibling).
16. Overnight activities are prohibited between mentees and mentors.
17. Volunteers must complete the RCMP Vulnerable Sector Check every year.

Safety of the Mentee

Child safety is our top priority. All of our volunteers play an integral role in ensuring child safety. Mentors are responsible for modeling appropriate behaviors and closely supervising their mentees during all outings. Some important safety issues that may come to light during match meetings include: internet safety, bullying, neighborhood violence, medical conditions, interactions with strangers, and child abuse. Talk to the Volunteer Coordinator if something arises and you do not know how to handle it.

Communication and Updates

Mentors are responsible for filling out the check-in form after every match activity with their mentee. <https://forms.gle/pzeZwZWfwxuJwua59>

After the match is made, the FFC will support mentors and mentees by regularly contacting them with support, advice, training, and positive reinforcement. Our focus is to help all matches develop healthy, fun, and lasting relationships. In general, we want to encourage open and frequent communication. Mentors are expected to fill out a form after they spend time with their Mentee to update the Volunteer Coordinator on your activities. This does not need to be extremely detailed, but it is a requirement. We want to hear about the great things you are doing with your mentee! The form can be found here: <https://forms.gle/pzeZwZWfwxuJwua59>. If filling out an online survey is not possible for you on a regular basis, please connect with the Volunteer Coordinator about alternative ways to check in.

Mentors are required to respond to and keep in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator, even when the match is going well. Regular, ongoing contact with the FFC is a requirement of the program, and failure to maintain open communication with the FFC Volunteer Coordinator may result in match closure. This culture of support and communication is a key component of the volunteer experience.

In addition to filling out the check-in form, you can connect with the FFC through:

- Telephone or text;



- Face-to-face – Meeting or FFC event;
- Email.

Agency Website and Facebook Page – Your Connection to the Foster Family Coalition

FFCNWT maintains a special section on its website – “**Mentor Resources**” found under the ‘Volunteer’ tab - reserved for active volunteer mentors. This page provides mentors with mentoring ideas, informational resources, and other forms of assistance. You can find this page here: <https://www.fcnwt.com/mentor-resources>