

YOUTH MENTORING

The Southwest Key Youth Mentoring Program serves as a continuum of care that provides mentors for system involved youth between the ages of ten (10) and seventeen (17) years. The goal of the program is to establish and support mentoring relationships that have a long-lasting, positive impact on each participating youth. Ultimately, this program aspires to: reduce juvenile delinquency, criminal activity and gang participation, improve academic performance and reduce drop-out rates for program participants. Youth are matched with mentors from throughout the community for a minimum of one year.

Mentor Recruitment & Training

Southwest Key Programs works with community partners to recruit a culturally diverse population of committed mentors. Our organization utilizes our extensive community network to recruit mentors from within the youth's surrounding community reaching out to extended family, neighbors, teachers, coaches, religious and community leaders and employers.

Mentors are required to make a commitment to their mentee and the Youth Mentor Program for a minimum of one year. Mentors serve as role models for youth, providing mentees with support, encouragement and pro-social lifestyle development opportunities. They act as a resource and confidant to youth when personal, job and education problems occur and may coordinate meetings and discussions with parents, guardians and other family members with the assistance of Southwest Key staff. Mentors also provide transportation for mentees to and from mentoring activities, as needed.

All volunteer mentors are required to undergo thorough screening including a written or online application, in-person interviews, and extensive reference and criminal background checks. Upon successful recruitment, each mentor receives training. Mandatory quarterly training will reiterate and expand on initial trainings. Monthly informal brown bag lunches are coordinated to provide a venue for mentors to exchange ideas, for peer support and for staff to provide technical assistance.

Program Enrollment

Southwest Key Programs accepts referrals for youth for mentoring services from the probation department. Mentees and their parents are required to participate in Mentee/Parent orientation to introduce and orient them to the Mentoring Program as well as discuss commitment of both the mentor and mentee.

Match Process

The success of mentoring relationships is supported through a careful screening and matching process of the mentor and youth. The match process will include the completion of an extensive questionnaire, and interview, and background and reference check of the mentor. The mentee will also be required to complete a questionnaire to help us identify particular preferences in a mentor to assist in making a match that is the best fit for both mentor and mentee.

Every effort will be made to match the mentee with a mentor who matches the young person's ethnicity or culture of choice. When this is not possible, youth and mentor matching may be based on shared personal history and background, skills, personality and areas of interest such as sports, cultural arts, or education and other specific preferences.

Mentor/Mentee Retention

The support of the mentor/mentee relationship is critical if the relationship is going to be maintained for a minimum of one year. To that end, multiple and sustained forms of support is provided to both the mentor and mentee. Regularly scheduled and spontaneous phone calls and face to face meetings are encouraged to help maintain and retain mentor and mentees.

Mentoring Activities

Youth meet with mentors in a community setting once a week for four hours per month, depending upon the scheduled mentoring activity.

Types of activities undertaken during these structured visits vary and are determined by the mentor, youth and family. The nature of the mentoring session is to provide general support to the youth as well as encourage and promote positive social behavior, provide constructive feedback and support positive youth development. Types of mentoring activities may include:

- Social activities (lunch, movies, community events, etc)
- Academic and learning activities (museums, school events, etc)
- Cultural and artistic activities (plays, community cultural events and celebrations, etc)
- Sporting and recreational events (sports games, exercise activities, parks, hike and bike trails, etc)

Southwest Key also maintains a monthly calendar of free or low cost activities in the community which might be of interest to our mentor and mentees. These calendars are provided to the mentors and mentees in hard copy or can be accessed through the Southwest Key Youth Mentor website which is updated frequently and features additional resources to the mentors and mentee.

To learn more about Southwest Key's Youth Mentoring program, please contact
Courtney Seals at 512.650.2100 x 136 or at cseals@swkey.org.

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