

A Mentor Ministry After Camp Hope



What are the Benefits of a Mentor Ministry?

Youth who participate in a sustained Mentor Ministry reap a number of benefits including:

- **Educational Achievement:** Mentored youth experience positive academic returns. These young people tend to have better attendance, a greater likelihood of pursuing a higher education, and more positive attitudes towards school.
- **Health and Safety:** Mentoring helps prevent substance abuse and may reduce some negative risk behaviors among youth.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Youth participating in a mentoring relationship exhibit more positive social attitudes towards their parents and peers.¹

It is vital that we find significant ways for Faith Formation in our congregations today that look beyond staff, parents, and young adults. This is a ministry that must include every generation throughout the church.

How do we set up a Mentor Ministry?

The findings from childtrends.org show two things that are keys to providing quality mentoring that will last:

1. **Structure.** Having a time when mentors and mentees meet that is supervised and intentional is needed to keep both interested in maintaining the relationship. Therefore, planning specific times for everyone to come together on a regular basis is critical.
2. **Training.** Training before and after mentors are matched with a mentee can help build a successful mentoring relationship.²

The following sections provide you with a guide to building a structure and training for your Mentor Ministry. This is only a guide, however. You must discover how mentoring works best in your congregation. Remember that each congregation is different.

First, put together a **Mentor Ministry Team** to discuss, plan, and guide this ministry for your church. It is recommended that you have: a staff member; 2 Mentor Team Leaders to lead this ministry; 2-4 additional members to help pray and discern what this Mentor Ministry will look like. Some things to consider might be:

- Do we provide a mentor for each Confirmand? Do they continue through high school or do students get a new mentor after Confirmation?
- How do new members get a Mentor?
- Must mentors complete training every year?
- What is the time commitment?
- At what age does a student get a Mentor?
- How does a mentor get uninvited if they are not upholding expectations?

¹ <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/01/Recruiting-Mentors.pdf>

² <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2002/02/MentoringRB.pdf>

Structure for A Mentor Ministry

- **Be Relational.** At its core, a Mentor Ministry is about relationships. There are four ways in which the mentor and mentee will come together to foster this relationship.
 - **Church Programs.** In order to provide quality mentoring that will last, the church must provide times for everyone to come together for supervised conversations. These times should include some specific conversation starters to help these individuals get to know one another and foster deeper relationships as the program progresses. It is recommended to do this quarterly.
 - **Regular Structured Meetings.** Mentor and mentee agree to a pattern of meetings that works best for both. This may be once a month or once a quarter.
 - **Weekly Informal Conversations.** Mentor and mentee must have interaction on a weekly basis in order to stay connected. This may be an informal conversation at church, a coffee shop, or some other public location. (For more specifics, see the Mentor Training outline.)
 - **Unstructured Social Engagement.** This is an optional interaction where the mentor may wish to attend a sporting event or concert that the mentee is participating in. Showing interest in their passions is key in forging a deeper connection.
- **Be Proactive.** Mentors are expected to tend the relationship. They seek out their mentee at church each week. They set the meetings and guide the conversation.
- **Be a Safe Haven.** Before beginning a Mentor Ministry, you should have a Safe Haven policy in place for your congregation. This includes many things such as appropriate settings for the mentor and mentee to meet. Meeting in a public place is imperative as is open communication. Make sure that the parent(s) of the mentee are informed of the location and times of your regular meetings. Mentors that are successful also know their mentee's family. Safe Haven training for mentors is a vital part of your Mentor Training.
- **Be a AAA Adult**
 - **Authentic:** Everyone makes mistakes. Be an adult who has made some mistakes and can demonstrate growth from it. You don't need to wear your heart on your sleeve but don't pretend to know all the answers or that you have it all together. Be yourself and remember to listen more than you talk. Many times students will ask, "Have you ever..." Usually the student isn't looking for your advice; they are looking for permission to act out.
 - **Affirming:** Be a person who has a solid foundation in his or her faith. Faith is caught more than it is taught. By this we mean that it's not so much about what you do together but about who you are. If you are rooted in your own faith then affirming, encouraging, and challenging your mentee will come naturally. Your time together is not about solving problems but about being present with your mentee.
 - **Available:** Be attentive and model good listening through eye contact, nods and smiles.
- **Be resilient!** Relationships don't happen overnight. They take time. It's easy to get discouraged because you don't have physical evidence of progress. Just trust that God is working whenever two or more are gathered in His name!

Training for a Mentor Ministry



There are several resources available to help you structure your own training. Here are a few things to consider including in your Mentor Ministry Training. You will notice that many are similar to the Camp Hope training but with an expanded curriculum. Don't try to cover everything in just one training. Hold additional sessions for continued training throughout the mentoring process.

- **“Why Are Mentors Important?”**
 - 40 to 50 percent of kids who are connected to a youth group when they graduate high school will fail to stick with their faith in college.³
 - The following things can help combat this:
 - All church participation in ministry vs. age segregation.
 - Talking earlier and more frequently about college along with the changes and challenges this transition brings.
 - Focusing on what Christ did for us vs. the “dos” and “don’ts” of Christian living.⁴
 - A lasting relationship with adults from the church aids in quality Faith Formation past high school.⁵
 - Youth who participate in a mentoring relationship reap a number of benefits including:
 - **Educational Achievement:** Mentored youth experience positive academic returns. These young people tend to have better attendance, a greater likelihood of pursuing a higher education, and more positive attitudes towards school.
 - **Health and Safety:** Mentoring helps prevent substance abuse and may reduce some negative risk behaviors among youth.
 - **Social and Emotional Development:** Youth participating in a mentoring relationship exhibit more positive social attitudes towards their parents and peers.⁶
 - If we want to be successful in Faith Formation with our students, we must have committed adult mentors in their lives.

One-on-one **relationships** dedicated to **ingraining**, preserving, & enhancing a persons **journey** in life through **love**, **faith**, & encouragement.

You are the salt of the earth •



³ Barna Update, “Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years.” The Barna Group, 2006, September 16, 2006; George H. Gallup, Jr., The Gallup Poll, 2006; and Christian Smith with Patricial Snell, Souls in Transition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105, 108, 109, and 116. - See more at: <http://fulleryouthinstitute.org/articles/what-makes-faith-stick-during-college#sthash.4esNiZDg.dpuf>

⁴ <http://fulleryouthinstitute.org/articles/what-makes-faith-stick-during-college>

⁵ <http://stickyfaith.org/articles/natural-mentoring-for-real-impact>

⁶ <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/01/Recruiting-Mentors.pdf>

- **Qualifications of Mentors**

- Most adults do not feel qualified to be a mentor. Use the “Qualifications” and other resources in the Camp Hope Mentor Ministry resource to help shape what you are looking for in a mentor.
- Many feel that they are “too old” or “not hip enough” to work with young people. Reassure them that young people do not need another peer in their lives. What youth are longing for are significant older people in their lives that care about them. Mentors don’t need to be “hip”, just authentic about who they are.
- Emphasize that God has called them to be mentors. This is not something they are doing for the pastor or other leaders. It is holy work they are called to. Say, “We have seen this in you and feel confident that God calls you to this ministry.”

- **Expectations**

- What is it specifically that you want mentors to do each week, each month, each quarter, and each year. You might consider spelling this out with a **Mentor Covenant** similar to what was used with Camp Hope. Remember to make this fun. It should be a time of connecting with each other rather than another task to put on the calendar and “to do” list.



- **Safe Haven Training**

- This should be something you do for all of your adults who are “hands on” with children and youth. For more information and guidance on developing a Safe Haven policy and training, see your synod office website or visit: <http://gulfoastsynod.org/gulf-coast-resources/safe-haven-guidelines/>

- **Practice Listening**

- Ask the mentors, “What are some non-verbal signs that you are listening to your mentee?” These might include smiling, eye contact, nodding your head, keeping hands free from playing with objects, doing an activity together like shooting baskets or making bracelets.
- Remember that one of the greatest gifts to give is a listening ear. A good rule of thumb is if you are talking more than 50% of the time, you need to stop talking.
- The job of a mentor is to be present. Don’t give advice but help your mentee come to conclusions on their own. Ask them about their goals, their fears and the obstacles/challenges they face. When individuals draw their own conclusions, they take ownership of their actions and will follow through on commitments.

- **Practice Questioning Skills**

- Distinguish between open-ended and close-ended questions. Close-ended questions can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” where open-ended questions require more information. Get the group to list examples of both. A close-ended question might be, “Do you have friends at school?” while an open-ended question might be, “Who are your friends at school?”
- You may wish to have a list of open-ended questions on a card that you can hand out to mentors as a resource for them to utilize.

- **Practice the WHEAT Technique**

- This is a technique to help foster conversation.
 - **W**here are you from? Family history and ethnicity.
 - **H**obbies. What do you like to do? What sports do you play? What books do you like to read?
 - **E**vents. What happened at significant points in your life? What did you do this week? What happened at school?
 - **A**cquaintances. Who are your friends? Who do you both know at church? Do you have brothers or sisters?
 - **T**ravel. What are you doing over Christmas break? What was the last big trip your family took? Have you ever been out of the country?
 - You can print off cards from PeerMinistry.org to hand out.
<https://www.peerministry.org/?product=wheat-cards-free#tab-description>

- **Practice Informal Conversations** (These happen weekly)

- This can be a simple question such as, “What’s going on this week for you? Any tests or activities I can be praying about for you?” Follow up the next week by asking them how they did on their test, concert, game or competition. Connecting to their daily life is the goal.

- **Practice Formal Conversations** (These happen less frequently)

- The mentor and mentee need to decide how often they will meet. This may be monthly or quarterly depending on how often you have scheduled meetings at church and what their own schedules will allow.
- This is a more in depth conversation for the two to get to know each other better. You may want to ask the following:
 - Share “highs” and “lows” of your day or week.
 - Make a point of talking about what happened in church, chapel, Bible study.
 - Ask them how their family is doing or how are things going at home.
 - Ask, “How did you see God working today or this week?”
 - Share stories of how God has worked in your life.
 - Ask them what the greatest obstacle they are facing in the coming weeks is.
 - What concerns do they have about college? Where do they want to go? What do they want to study?

- **Addressing Critical Issues**

- Train mentors about what to do if a student is dealing with depression, suicide, drugs or alcohol, and other high-risk behaviors. There are several resources on how to deal with issues such as these and specific steps to take.
- Help mentors know that they are not expected to be a counselor or therapist. When issues such as these arise, they are to help the student get to a professional who can provide the appropriate assistance. A mentor’s job is to listen and to help the mentee get through the crisis.
- The best course of action when an issue like this is brought up is to be a listening ear and a non-anxious presence. Students will say things to shock you or to see if you will be judgmental. Without endorsing or condemning any behavior, a mentor can still be a listening ear. Simply being present will build trust as you move forward in your relationship.