

How to Be an Effective Mentor

Mentoring is effective when mentors invest their time, talents, and care to create a genuine friendship with a youth. A mentor can help create a community of support by offering advice, stability during crisis, and referrals to community resources. Youth will benefit from involvement with a positive adult role model who honors their ideas, values, and choices as they transition to independence.

EFFECTIVE MENTORS:

- Maintain a steady presence in their Friend's life through good times and bad
- Respect their Friend's viewpoint, values, and need for self-mastery
- Have fun in the relationship – play, laugh, and genuinely appreciate each other
- Help inform and provide resources that allow Friends to make their own decisions
- Rely on the support and assistance from the mentor team and the program

LESS EFFECTIVE MENTORS:

- Do not meet with their Friends regularly
- Try to “fix” their Friend by emphasizing change more than developing friendship
- Get offended and take their Friend's attitude, behaviors, or choices personally
- Have unrealistic expectations for their Friend's behavior or skills
- Use an authoritative tone or require specific behavior

“Mentors who focus first on building trust and becoming a friend to their youth tend to be more effective than those who try to change or reform the mentee. Adults whose attention is concentrated on reforming youth are often frustrated by their lack of receptivity... These mentors fail precisely because they are too focused on their own agenda. Volunteers who take the time to develop real relationships with youth are much more likely to promote the changes that other volunteers only pursue.” - Cynthia L. Sipe, Contemporary Issues in Mentoring