



**Richland County School District One
Volunteer Services
Mentor Training**

Purpose of the Richland One Volunteer Program

1. To establish nurturing one-on-one relationships between students and adults in order to enhance self-concept, decrease discipline referrals, reduce absenteeism and to motivate students to improve academic performance
2. To build a constituency for public education and child advocacy

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What makes a mentoring relationship successful?

Mentors who take the time to develop a trusting relationship tend to do the following:

- Involve youth in deciding how the pair will spend their time together.
- Make a commitment to being consistent and dependable, a steady influence in the youth's life.
- Recognize that the relationship may be one-sided for some time, expect silence and unresponsiveness in the beginning, and take responsibility for keeping the relationship alive.
- Pay attention to the student's need for "fun", not only as a key to relationship building, but a chance for the student to have experiences not otherwise available.
- Respect the youth's viewpoint.
- Seek and utilize the help and advice of program staff.

Why it is important to mentor.

An eight-year, nations study by Public/Private Ventures revealed that children in well-managed mentoring programs:

- were less likely to use drugs and alcohol;
- were less likely to hit someone;
- improved school attendance and performance, and attitudes toward completing school work;
- improved peer and family relationships

Benefits for Children who have a Mentor

- Children develop emotional, social and academic skills so they are prepared to deal with the challenges of life and become productive members of society.
- Intergenerational communication is improved.
- In the process of bonding with a trusted adult, children begin learning to seek and use adult relationships for their benefit.

Mentoring Roles

- As a companion/friend, a mentor is sincere and provides a caring and unconditional friendship.
- As a social supporter/guide, a mentor provides encouragement as the child embarks on new experiences.
- As a positive role model, a mentor demonstrates exemplary behavior and offers values that will increase chances for future success and happiness.
- As a challenger, a mentor encourages the child to maximize his/her potential and to increase achievement.
- As a teacher/tutor, a mentor provides learning opportunities and offers his/her experience as a knowledge base.

Common problems in Mentoring Roles

- Dealing with "testing" behaviors
- Recognizing the limitations of the role
- Frustration with family situations

If any of these problems arise and you are not sure how to handle it, get help. Ask your school or program coordinator; they are there to help you.

Communicating with Young People

- Young people are uncomfortable with silence; the mentor may have to take the lead.
- Young people dislike being put on the spot.
- Use adult language. Do not try to use slang.
- To elicit richer responses, avoid questions that can be answered with 'yes' or 'no'.
- Do not make judgments.
- Focus on developing a relationship first and getting specific information later.

Matching the Volunteer and the Student

Once the volunteers have completed their application, cleared the SLED check and attended orientation, they are **READY** to meet their students.

Volunteers and students can be matched on the basis of:

- Similar interests, such as sports or career
- Specific needs of the student, i.e., needs positive male role model
- Demographic characteristics, such as background, gender, race, life, experience, expressed preferences or geographic proximity

Matching is more of an art than a science. Whether you match by interest, goals or demographics, some relationships will work and some may not. In fact, experience has shown that some of the most unlikely pairings have worked well. Regardless of gender, race or socio-economic status, we know that **love matters most**.

Since this is an intensely personal experience for both parties, relationships that don't "take" are not failures. In the event a match is unsuccessful, volunteers and students may be matched with other partners.

Initial meeting at school

The initial meeting is the first meeting between the volunteers and students. This meeting takes place in a positive, supportive environment.

Matching Activities

1. When the volunteer/student pairs are matched during the initial meeting, it is common for a fun activity to take place, which can reduce the tension involved in meeting for the first time. Allow enough time for the meeting to be a fun and spontaneous experience. Use your creativity! Here are some examples:

- Bring paper and magic markers to the first meeting. Sometimes a student would rather draw pictures of a favorite toy than tell you about it. Ask questions about the picture once it is finished.
- Play a word game with the student. You think of a sentence, have the student repeat the sentence and then add an item, e.g., "I am going on a trip and I am going to take my favorite _____."

Model an answer to give your student an idea of how to proceed.

- Try to find out the student's interests. Ask open-ended questions, e.g., "Tell me the TV programs you like or about your favorite sports."

- Have the student complete the following sentences on a piece of paper:
 1. My school...
 2. My dreams...
 3. People talk about my...
 4. I am happiest when...
 5. A good friend is...
 6. Sometimes people...
 7. I hope...
 8. My family...
 9. My pet...
 10. My goal...

Tips for volunteers

- Talk to the teacher before the first session.
- Gain the student's trust.
- Be yourself.
- Never make a promise that you can't follow through or practice.
- Do not talk about the student's home life, unless the student initiates the conversation.
- If the student has other problems, refer the student to the school's psychologists, guidance counselors, etc.
- Be a careful listener.
- Try not to interrupt the student when he/she is talking.
- Call the school beforehand if you are going to miss a session.
- You are a role model; dress and act appropriately.
- Seek help or ask for a change if there is an unhappy situation.
- Do not criticize the school.
- Be patient.
- Let the student make decisions about your work together.
- Praise honest efforts made by the student.

Policies and Procedures

- All volunteers are expected to act in ways that encourage the student to grow positively and to display responsible behavior.
- While you may not expose your student to situations that involve sexual behavior, alcohol or drug use, you may certainly discuss these issues.
- All communications are to be kept strictly confidential.
- Keep your promises to your student.
- Encourage your student to keep his or her promises to you.
- Do not give your student gifts.
- If you plan to take your student anywhere, you must get a permission slip signed by the student's parent and provide a copy of your drivers license and insurance.

What is district's commitment to the program?

The Richland One Office of Extended Day Programs and Strategic Partnerships will provide:

- A detailed manual/handbook.
- Regular orientation sessions.
- Liability coverage for all mentors who complete an application, clear background checks and attend an orientation.
- State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) background checks on volunteers as well as the DSS Child Abuse Registry Checks and South Carolina Sex Offenders Registry checks on all volunteers.
- Broad-based recruitment and publicity for the program.
- Newsletter for volunteers.
- Group activities for volunteers and students.
- A method for evaluating the program.
- Recognition for volunteers.

Program Requirements

Volunteers must pass a criminal background check and attend a training session before they can be assigned a student. Volunteers also must have a commitment to work with children.

Evaluation/ Final assessment

Evaluation is always a part of a good volunteer program. The district coordinator will send evaluation forms to each volunteer. School coordinators also receive forms to be completed by school staff. Evaluation should not be seen as criticism, but as a way to make the program better.

Dismissals and Departures

Voluntary Departure

There may be circumstances that will require either a volunteer or the student to leave the program. If one of the pair must terminate the involvement, it is recommended that another individual be chosen and matched. If the student is moving to another school in Richland One, the volunteer may wish to follow the student. If that is the case, please contact the district volunteer coordinator. If the student is moving to a school out of the district and the volunteer still would like to follow the student, the district coordinator will make the arrangements. In any case, priority should be on sustaining the relationship, if possible.

Involuntary Dismissal

If at any time a parent, student, volunteer or school staff person should feel uncomfortable about a volunteer relationship, a conference should be held between the volunteer and the principal, assistant principal or volunteer liaison. At that time, reasons for considering termination should be discussed. After the meeting, a written recommendation should be filed with the district's volunteer coordinator. The written report should cite the details of the meeting and the reasons for the recommendation. If termination is deemed necessary, a letter will be sent from the Richland One Volunteer Coordinator notifying the volunteer of the decision.

Reasons a volunteer can be terminated (Richland One is not limited to the below mentioned reasons for termination of a volunteer):

- a. Breach of confidentiality concerning student or other privileged information.
- b. Unlawful conduct or breach of Richland One or school site rules and regulations.
- c. Physical or emotional stress which incapacitates the volunteer.
- d. Inability to cooperate and work effectively with site staff and students.
- e. Activities that threaten the order or security of the site or the safety of the volunteer.
- f. Erratic or unreliable attendance or behavior.
- g. Unsatisfactory service.
- h. Sexual misconduct.
- i. Providing falsified information on the application.
- j. Establishing inappropriate relationships with youth served.
- h. Criminal charges or conviction of any crimes are made against volunteer.



**Richland School District One
Parent Permission Letter
Volunteer/Mentor Program**

Dear Parent:

Your child has been chosen to participate in the Mentor Program through the Volunteer Program. In the program, your child will be matched with an adult volunteer/mentor who will meet him/her on the school grounds. The volunteer will act as a tutor in subjects selected by your child's teachers, as well as act as an adult role model and source of friendship and encouragement. The activities between your child and the mentor will be closely monitored and structured by the School Site Volunteer Coordinator. The school feels that your child will greatly benefit from having another positive adult role model in his/her life and hopes that the relationship will lead to increased academic performance, self-esteem, and emotional development.

The mentors who have volunteered for our program have been thoroughly screened and investigated by Richland School District One. We respect your role as a parent and will provide every opportunity for you to meet with the mentor and be involved in the development of their relationship.

As your child goes through the program, their teachers will monitor academic performance. All information gathered about the effect of the relationship on your child's school performance is strictly for the purposes of evaluating the program and will be kept confidential.

Please note that our mentor program is school-based only. Our resources only allow for school-based meetings between student and mentor. Please do not ask the mentor to meet your child outside of school. **We cannot assume responsibility for any outside contact.**

We feel that these caring adult volunteers will be making an excellent contribution to the quality of education in our school. If you would like for your child to participate in the program, talk about it with him/her. If your child is comfortable with the idea of having a mentor, we must have your permission by signing below. The Site Coordinator will soon be in contact with you about your child's new mentor.

Thank you for your time. We hope this program will be of great benefit to everyone involved.

I give my permission for my child _____, to participate in the mentoring program on school grounds. I understand the nature and rules of the school's mentoring efforts and reserve the right to withdraw from the program at any time.

Parent Signature _____ Date _____



<https://forms.office.com/r/7s6ahnbN0p>

<https://apps.raptortech.com/Apply/NTcyOmVuLVVT>