

Mentoring Overview

LSS coordinates mentoring services in partnership with 11 Sioux Falls area public school districts. The mission of LSS Mentoring Services: empower youth to succeed by establishing trusting relationships with adult volunteers.

Volunteers have served as mentors to students in the Sioux Falls School District since the early 1990's. In 1995, the Sioux Empire United Way partnered with the Sioux Falls School District to cultivate relationships with local businesses and organize formal mentor training. In 2001, the Sioux Empire United Way invited LSS to join the partnership in order to strengthen the mentor screening process, develop a training curriculum, provide additional mentor support and promote the program within the community.

In 2009, LSS expanded the mentor program to all public school districts in Lincoln and Minnehaha counties. Today, over sixty public elementary, middle and high schools in the Sioux Falls area participate in the LSS mentor program.

In 2012, LSS Mentoring Services worked in partnership with the Sioux Empire United Way to bring USucceed, a mentoring program for high school students that provides support from the school and case management from LSS. USucceed allows matches to meet in or out of school. USucceed mentors and students commit to meeting together until the student's graduation. This helps ensure a stable presence and support throughout the student's high school career.

And in 2015, LSS Mentoring Services added Better Together to its programming. Better Together matches adult volunteers with Sioux Falls area senior citizens (ages 65+) in an effort for them to remain in their homes. The goal of the program is to decrease loneliness in this population by matching older adults with volunteers for the purpose of socialization and companionship.

What is mentoring?

In its simplest form, mentoring guarantees a young person that there is someone in their community that cares about them. You are committing to do this by meeting with one student for approximately one hour per week.

You have probably had a mentor at one time in your life. Teachers, grandparents, neighbors, coaches, or family friends may have taken a special interest in your life to help you navigate the future. A mentor provides people with support, counsel, friendship, and positive reinforcement.

In the past, mentoring relationships developed spontaneously when adults and children interacted on a daily basis. As the pace of life quickens, these informal relationships between adults and children are becoming scarce. Many families are geographically and/or emotionally separated from relatives. Families face various economic, social, and cultural

obstacles. At the same time, young people confront complex issues like substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, school violence, depression, and suicide.

Children succeed when they know the community cares about them. Across the country, mentoring programs are replicating these once spontaneous relationships by connecting caring adults in the community with children in need of positive adult role models. Mentoring has been linked to many positive behaviors in children including increased self-esteem, improved academic skills and school attendance, a heightened sense of citizenship, and increased self-confidence.

Types of Mentoring

You may hear the term mentor in many different contexts. There are different types of mentoring programs working to help children succeed. At LSS, we work in partnership with 11 area school districts to provide school-based mentoring services. This means that all of the mentor-student meetings take place on school grounds during the school day (more specific guidelines will be addressed later in the manual). The benefits of a school-based mentoring model include that it costs less than other forms of mentoring, attracts a variety of volunteers in the community (from college students to retirees), and allows local businesses, community organizations, churches and colleges to form meaningful partnerships with area schools.

The LSS USucceed program is a combination of a school-based and community-based mentoring program. Matches in USucceed can either meet at school or in the community.

There may be other mentoring-type programs your student is involved with. Please know that students are matched with just one mentor through the LSS program. If your student mentions another mentor, please feel free to ask them more about it or call LSS to find out more about various mentoring programs in the community.