

Welcome!

Dear New Mentor,

Thank you for choosing to volunteer as a mentor with LSS! Because of your commitment, a child has the opportunity to make a new friend who will help them to better cope with life's challenges. As you get started in the program, I invite you to take mentoring as an opportunity to help a child grow – and grow yourself.

Mentoring has been part of LSS since 2001 and throughout that time, we have been blessed to work with thousands of Sioux Falls area residents to provide mentoring services to students who are in need of a caring adult. Thank you for joining us in this important work and doing your part to show kids in our community that they matter.

Sincerely,

Betty Oldenkamp
President/CEO, LSS

About LSS

Our Mission: Inspired by God's love, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota cares for, supports and strengthens individuals, families and communities.

Our Vision: Lutheran Social Services will be the premier agency serving families in their homes or communities.

Our Values: Lutheran Social Services is a social ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As such, we believe that God's love compels us to serve and to value all people. Our core values are grounded by our faith in God—they guide our hands and feet, our hearts and words as we serve our neighbors as God intended. Our core values guide our work with the people we serve and those who serve them.

Compassionate

We will be empathetic in our interactions with others and non-judgmental in the delivery of our services.

Appreciative

We will acknowledge the quality, significance and magnitude of the contributions of our clients and employees and seek to develop their capacity.

Respectful

We will engage in collaborative and professional relationships with our clients, partnership organizations, and each other.

Ethical

We will demonstrate our commitment to quality services and high standards in acts, words and deeds.

Strategic

We will anticipate and respond strategically to service trends and our communities' needs.

LSS Service Overview

Every year thousands of people of all ages, races, faiths and economic situations come to LSS for help. It is in these troubling and tumultuous times, that faith, hope and conviction are needed the most. We are all anxious about the future; so much seems beyond our control. At LSS, we have the incredible blessing of witnessing the power of possibility each and every time that we touch the life of someone in need. Possibility-a life changing power because someone believed in them, saw within them what they could not see on their own, inspired them with hope, and had the conviction to stick with them.

The work of LSS and the possibility that it brings to the world would not happen without the prayers and gifts that so many bring to our ministry.

LSS continues to be **committed to the power of possibility**. We hope that you share our conviction that faith and hope will abound and that our ministry will continue to reach those in need, helping individuals and families experience **growth**, begin to **thrive, belong** to something bigger, and **succeed** in their personal goals.

Our service areas include:

- Youth Residential Services
- Independent Living Services
- Childcare & Education Services
- Center for Financial Resources
- Counseling Services
- Center for New Americans
- Adoption and Pregnancy Counseling
- Foster Care
- Disaster Response
- Mentoring Services

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.

What Mentors Do

At LSS, we pride ourselves on being a quality mentoring program. We follow guidelines and practices set forth by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. LSS expects volunteers to make the same commitment to quality mentoring that we do as a program.

It is common to hear a mentor described as a coach, advocate, guide, role model or friend. Here are examples of the various roles mentors have.

Role Modeling

Role modeling is a natural component of mentoring. Mentors can point out, demonstrate, and explain their own actions and values in an effort to help students identify options. Increased exposure to possibilities allows kids to see more or different opportunities than they may see in their present environment.

Remember that relationships take time to develop and for communication to flow both ways. Do not give up if it seems like you are the one always doing the talking. Keep at it by role modeling your continued interest in the child. Successful mentors have patience when the relationship moves slowly, and are willing to learn about things that are important to their student.

Attention and Concern

Due to a variety of circumstances, many students do not receive enough attention from the adults in their lives. Mentors can fill these empty spaces with dependable, sincere, and consistent attention and concern.

The most successful mentors show up with their genuine selves and enjoy being a small part of a child's life. Mentors can help children make decisions and see them become the best they can be. Research shows that changes are really noticed when meeting with the student for an extended period of time (more than nine months). Mentors who make a commitment for the long haul are in a better position to make a difference.

Even without having had the same life experiences, mentors can empathize with feelings and personal problems. There is a line between expressing concern and feeling pity for the student.

Accountability

Students are told to expect to meet with their mentor one hour per week at school. This commitment is essential to uphold in order to establish accountability with your student. This consistent accountability sets a good example for students to see and emulate, cements trust between mentor and student, and creates mutual expectations that can be met.

Mentors can build accountability in their student. Mentoring does not work if you come with the attitude that your own ways are better or that the student needs to be “rescued.” Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship will win the trust of their student.

Listening

Mentors often help simply by listening, asking questions, and giving students an opportunity to explore their own thoughts. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to share what they are thinking about and what is going on in their life.

Hopefully, students will talk about their fears, dreams, and concerns. Successful mentors balance a respect for the real and serious problems faced by their student with optimism for finding equally realistic solutions. Mentors are able to make sense of a mixture of issues and point out sensible alternatives.

Encouragement

Mentors can have significant influence on students by keeping them in school and getting them involved in community and school activities, and directing them to other positive choices. If a student does not want to do homework or study for a test or get a job, they will not react well to that being forced upon them by their mentor. A mentor's role is more to encourage positive behavior, not to make choices for the student or demand that they do something a mentor feels is in their best interest.

Mentors Are Not

While it is true that mentors will listen, support, nurture, and advise, mentors are not parents, professional counselors, tutors or social workers. A mentor's sustained caring, interest and acceptance may give students a stronger sense of self-confidence, which they can apply to other relationships and experiences. Mentoring, however, is not a panacea for all the problems and deficiencies faced by students and their families. There are some barriers that mentoring one hour per week cannot overcome. The essence of mentoring is the power of human relationship.

Need for Mentoring

Right now, one in six young people ages 16-24 are disconnected from work and school. The 2014 National Gallup Student Survey shows that 47% of youth in the US say they lack hope, and 36% say they are not thriving.

MENTOR released a report that includes the first-ever nationally representative survey of young people on the topic of mentoring. Titled *The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring*, the report found that there is a powerful mentoring effect demonstrated by the experiences of young people in this nationally representative survey. It is linked to improved academic, social and economic prospects, and strengthens our communities and our nation. This same report found that one in three young people across the country will grow up without a mentor.

You very well may be in training today thanks to hearing about the program from a current mentor. Our mentors are our best advocates and we hope each mentor is so compelled by their experience that they find at least one additional person to recruit to the cause. Each year there are over 300 mentors who retire from the program that we need to replace. On top of that, there are 500 additional volunteers needed to clear the waiting list of students who need or want a mentor.

Mentoring Outcomes

In the *Mentoring Effect* report, it was found that young people who were at-risk for not completing high school but who had a mentor reported higher educational aspirations and matriculation into post-secondary education, as well as greater engagement in positive activities. They were:

- 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor.
- 81% more likely to report participating regularly in sports or extracurricular activities.
- More than twice as likely to say they held a leadership position in a club or sports team.
- 78% more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities.
- Nearly nine in ten respondents who had a mentor said they are now interested in becoming mentors.

Youth with mentors are less likely to begin using illegal drugs, drink alcohol, skip school, hit someone or lie to a parent.

LSS mentors report that the student they work with has shown improved academic performance, better school attendance and most importantly, a higher self-esteem. Mentors also overwhelmingly report that they have learned something new by being a mentor and their lives have been changed by this experience.

Keep in mind that it takes time for these outcomes to develop and surface. As one mentor often says, this is a marathon, not a sprint. If you commit to being a quality mentor and commit to the long haul, you will gradually see changes in the student that you work with.

How Mentors Help

Many mentors may feel unsure about the impact they are having. While it is difficult to measure, there are a few universal things mentors do that make the student feel the benefits of having an extra person by their side.

Mentors can play a significant role in developing a child's self-esteem. In broad terms they show them that the community cares. There are also some smaller things you can do to help your student grow their confidence.

- Celebrate every success, no matter how small.
- Model your own healthy self-esteem.
- Help him/her understand that there are many ways in which he/she is successful.
- Teach your student that he/she can turn failure into success by trying again.
- Encourage your student each time you are together.
- Identify and acknowledge your student's strengths.

Set an Example

Ask your student for his/her input on what you will do together. The goal is to provide experiences that the student's usual environment does not provide. The more "real world" exposure a mentor can provide a student, the more that student will learn. Students will gain new perspectives on lifestyles that may differ from what they experience at home and their own potential.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the way people feel about themselves. Self-esteem develops in infancy and is shaped by the feedback children receive from parents and other significant people in their lives. Some people believe that self-esteem is the single most important element in children's lives. It affects everything they do. Over 90% of mentors report they notice an increase in their students' self-esteem each year.

Children with high self-esteem:

Are physically healthier
Are more motivated to learn
Get along better with others

Children with positive self-esteem are more willing to:

Tap into their creativity and risk expressing it
Approach life with energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity
Stretch to reach their full potential

Positive self-esteem facilitates:

Self-confidence

Self-direction Responsibility

Goal Setting

After building rapport and trust, mentors might consider identifying and working towards short-term goals. It is important that the mentor have the resources necessary to help the student achieve his/her goal. If mentors have questions about this, please call LSS. With time, students will view their mentors as important parts of their lives and as a sounding board for advice.

Start by outlining goals for the relationship and the year ahead. Take the time to help students identify the goal(s) they want to accomplish, view it realistically, break it down into small steps, and explore ways of reaching it.

- Mentor pairs can draw up a “contract” for their relationship, outlining each person’s personal, social, and educational goals for the year.
- Each month the pairs can assess their progress and pitfalls, charting the results, and reaffirming (or reassessing) the value of the goals.
- For each measure of accomplishment, mentors and students can reward each other with a certificate of achievement, a small gift, or a special treat.

Students’ goals must be their own, not goals that others have set for them. Unless it is their idea, they won’t embrace the goal and the chances of reaching it are diminished. It doesn’t matter how outrageous these goals may seem at first. What is important is that the goals belong to the student. Once they are set, mentors can show students how to break down more complex goals into small, achievable steps.

For example, a student who decides that she wants to live in a mansion one day can learn how a good education will lead to job opportunities in which she could earn enough money to live in a mansion. The mentor pair could explore careers and the education required for these career choices. In this way, a goal that may seem unrealizable can be transformed into smaller, realistic goals; the student still feels they are theirs. Mentors can use every goal set by the student as an opportunity for the student to learn new things.

Developing Life Skills

As a mentor, you can work with children to accomplish specific goals, such as improving academics and social skills. You can help students acquire and practice broader life skills, such as decision-making, planning, and positive coping skills.

Many youth have little experience interacting with people unlike themselves, or may feel uncomfortable when exposed to unfamiliar people or situations. Mentors can help by modeling behaviors and language skills that will help them assimilate. When exposing youth to a broader view of the world, mentors should always be respectful. Mentors must never promote their own values as superior. Rather, the mentor’s role is to introduce the

youth to behaviors and attitudes needed to interact successfully at school, work, and in society.

Problem Solving

Whether large or small, problems can seem insurmountable for some students. It is important to treat each problem presented as the student perceives it. Dismissing even the seemingly insignificant problem may be interpreted by the student as you dismissing them as a person. The mentor's role when problems arise is to help solve them. Giving advice, while it may seem helpful, often goes unheeded. For many of the same reasons that goals ought to be the brainchild of the student, solutions ought to be, as well. Problems are more likely to be solved when the student helps develop the solution. The difference between giving advice and working together to find a solution is significant. Involved problem solving can tap into the student's ability to reach his or her fullest potential.

Giving Advice Can Be Appropriate

While developing a solution together is the right course of action when tackling a problem, there may be times when giving advice is appropriate. If you are an expert in a particular field, the student may benefit from your knowledge and advice. If the student is "stuck" after going through the problem-solving process, go ahead and give advice on how to proceed.

If you ever have a question on if the advice you gave was accurate, please call LSS. Chances are you are not the first mentor to encounter that situation. If you do not have any immediate advice for your student, it is fine to say let me think about that this week and I will get back to you next time.

Genuine advice can be helpful when students truly want to hear what a mentor has learned from experience. The trick is to recognize when the advice will be accepted. Mentors may find these types of questions useful in clarifying the student's issue.

Ask the student:

- What do you really want in this situation?
- What is important about this outcome to you?
- What are all the ways you can go about getting what you want?
- Who/what can you use as resources to get what you want?
- Who do you know that has already achieved this, and how did they do it?
- Is this possible to achieve?
- Can it be initiated and sustained by you?
- Is this consistent with who you are?
- Considering the effort involved and the possible consequences, is it worth it?

How to Elicit Values, Needs, and Wants

Here are a few more questions that can help the student express how they feel about what may result from the actions they are considering:

- What is important about achieving this particular outcome?
- How will you know that you have achieved it?
- If you get what you want, what will this do for you?

Mentor, LSS, Student, School and Parent Responsibilities

In order to ensure everyone is on the same page with expectations, the responsibilities of various parties involved in the mentoring relationship are listed below. Please note the responsibilities and contact LSS immediately if you feel they are not being lived up to.

Every Mentor

- Be a positive role model to the student.
- Report any suspected neglect or child abuse to a school official or LSS the same day.

Everyday Heroes Mentors

- Commit to one year of participation.
- Meet with the student at school for one hour per week throughout the school year.
- Contact the school if unable to make a scheduled meeting.
- Contact the school before scheduled meeting to be sure student is in attendance.
- Individual schools may request other responsibilities which will be communicated by the School Counselor.

USucceed Mentors

Please note that USucceed Mentors need to attend an individual meeting in addition to New Mentor Training.

- Commit to meeting with the student until high school graduation.
- Meet with the student four hours per month.
- Stay in regular communication with your student through phone, email or text to schedule meetings.
- Meet with LSS staff at least twice a year to monitor relationship progress.

While the mentor responsibilities are most important for this training, please note the responsibilities of others that will play a part in your mentoring relationship.

LSS Responsibilities

- Recruit, screen and train all mentors.
- Maintain all mentor records.
- Serve as liaison between mentors and schools.
- Provide follow up training and support for all mentors.
- Send monthly e-newsletter and other important program information to all mentors.

Student Responsibilities

- Be honest and give mentors a chance to know them.
- Be respectful of their mentor.
- Do things that both mentor and student enjoy.

- Do not make unreasonable request of your mentor.
- Alert mentor to any schedule changes (within reason).

School Counselor Responsibilities

- In cooperation with school staff, identify students that can benefit from a mentor and obtain parent permission for that child to participate in the program.
- After a mentor has completed training, contact the mentor with matching information and when the mentor should expect to start. This generally takes at least two weeks and sometimes longer depending on the time of year.
- Coordinate the first meeting of the student and mentor. Orient the mentor to the school and let them know about specific building policies.
- Provide ongoing support as necessary.

Parent Responsibilities

- Review the written program description.
- Sign a consent form permitting the child to participate in the program.

Program Policies

Location – Check-In – Missed Meetings – Gifts – Early Exit – Abuse Reporting – Confidentiality

Policies and Guidelines – Everyday Heroes Mentoring

Specific policies for USucceed will be covered in a separate orientation.

Location

School-based mentoring activities take place **on school grounds only**. Specific areas of the building may be used (i.e. gym, library, etc.) pending availability and approval. Ideally, mentors should try to meet where at least one other adult is present. When meeting in smaller classrooms or offices, doors should remain open at all times. **Off-site activities are not a sanctioned component of the Everyday Hero Mentor Program – no exceptions!**

Check-in

Mentors should sign-in at the school's main office or counselor's office before meeting the student. A name badge will be provided by the program and must be worn while mentoring.

Missed Meetings

If unable to make a scheduled meeting, mentors should notify the school counselor (in advance). At some schools, it may be more appropriate to communicate a missed meeting with a teacher or secretary. The meeting may be rescheduled for another time that week.

Gifts

Mentors are NOT expected to give gifts to students. If a mentor feels compelled to give something for a special occasion, please keep it small and **check with the school and/or LSS before giving**. Some mentors may want to bring in lunch for the student. That is acceptable on occasion – it is not recommended to bring lunch every week.

Unanticipated Ending

Mentors commit to meeting with a student one hour per week for one school year (two semesters). However, mentors are encouraged to follow their same student from year to year. Research confirms that short matches that terminate early (three months or less) can have a potentially negative impact on youth. Students may actually regress in several key risk areas as a result of a failed mentoring relationship. Should circumstances arise that prevent a mentor from fulfilling the obligation, the mentor must notify LSS as soon as possible. The mentor should arrange for a final meeting with the student to bring the relationship to a successful close.

Abuse Reporting

School personnel and LSS staff are required by law to report any alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to the Department of Social Services, Office of Child Protection. Mentors should report anything their student tells them

that sounds like alleged or suspected abuse or neglect to a LSS or school official, who in turn files the referral to authorities. It is important to report the day you become aware of it.

Confidentiality Statement

Mentor programs foster a sense of trust. The mentoring relationship should be a safe place for students to explore and discuss issues that affect them. Students deserve respect and privacy. Mentors should not share private information about the student or the student's family. However, confidentiality is not the same as secrecy. If a student reveals a severe situation (abusive, neglectful, illegal, or life-threatening) the mentor must report this information to school personnel or LSS.

Developing Trust

Successful mentoring relationships are built upon a foundation of trust. Few individuals enter a new relationship without reservations, and students may be especially shy or fearful. Keep in mind – they are kids! You should not have the same expectations as you would with an adult. Mentors should be patient and recognize that trust may take weeks, and in some cases, months to build.

Establishing communication and developing a relationship can often be a difficult process. Learning to trust, especially for youth who have been let down before, requires time. Students cannot be expected to trust or communicate freely with their mentors simply because they have been paired together.

The key to creating effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers of different ages. Volunteers come to mentoring programs because they want to help youth. Without establishing trust, mentors may experience difficulty supporting the youth with whom they interact.

The most critical factor in determining whether matches develop into satisfying and effective relationships is the approach of the mentor. Mentors who follow a gradual path in trust-building find that the types of support they can offer broaden considerably once trust has been established. The gradual establishment of trust also increases the likelihood that the support will be accepted.

The Test

When students are slow to trust their mentor, they often display low expectations of adult behavior. They may come to the relationship expecting inconsistency and a lack of commitment. The mentor's trustworthiness and commitment may be tested, particularly if students have experienced disappointment. During the testing period, mentors can expect:

Student forgetting meeting with you
Unreasonable requests
Indifference
Periods of silence
Student appearing uninterested or wanting to be with their friends

The test can come and go throughout your relationship with your student and oftentimes have nothing to do with you. Remember, the issue is not whether the student likes you. Students are protecting themselves from disappointment. From their perspective, having no relationship at all seems better than trusting and subsequently losing someone. Mentors should realize that predictability breeds trust. With that in mind, strive to be consistent and accountable by:

- Being on time for meetings.

- Following through on promises, no matter how insignificant.
- Following up with any issues previously discussed.

Effective Trust Building Practices for Mentors

Be a “friend” rather than a teacher or parent; define the role of “supporting the youth” in a variety of ways.

Commit to consistency, dependability, and to maintaining a steady presence in the student’s life.

Understand that the relationship may seem fairly one-sided—that you are doing all the work—but take responsibility for keeping the relationship alive.

Involve the student in deciding how to spend time together. Successful mentors take the time to learn about the student’s interests and provide options for how to spend their time, rather than planning everything without input from the student.

Pay attention to kids’ need for fun. Having fun together is a key part of building relationships, and it also provides youth with valuable opportunities that might be otherwise unavailable.

Seeking and utilizing the help and advice of LSS staff. Successful mentors recognize that they don’t have all the answers and they value the support and guidance that program staff can provide.

Discuss confidentiality early in the relationship and provide reassurance that the sensitive things you discuss will not be shared with family, friends, coworkers, etc. If there is a threat of physical harm to the student or to others, the mentor must break confidentiality to seek protection for the person in danger.

Avoid Practices That Can Sabotage Trust

Avoid practices such as these, which are less likely to build and maintain trust.

- Not being your genuine self when mentoring.
- Approaching the relationship with narrow, specific goals aimed at changing behavior.
- Failing to meet on a regular and consistent basis.
- The attempt to instill a set of values that may be different from or inconsistent with those the youth is exposed to at home.
- Attempting to transform or reform the student by setting tasks and adopting a parental or authoritative role in their interactions. For youth, the value of a mentor is often in having a supportive adult who is not a parent or teacher.
- Emphasizing behavior changes over developing mutual trust and respect.
- Attempting to force youth to change.

Setting Boundaries

As the relationship progresses, there will be times when students ask questions or make requests that might make you feel uncomfortable. The best way to handle this is to set boundaries and expectations. First of all, realize that it is alright to say no to your student. If you have questions about boundaries, check with LSS.

Early in the relationship, talk about things that can and cannot be done or said. Keep in mind that most children need clear boundaries and renewed expectations throughout the relationship. The boundaries of the mentor relationship will be different for everyone. For the relationship to be successful, mentors must be willing to share some parts of their lives with students. Talking about childhood, family, or work are wonderful ways to build trust, but be sure to watch your students reaction when talking about yourself. Make a decision to set boundaries if there are personal aspects of life that you are uncomfortable sharing.

Mentors should also be aware of physical boundaries. Never initiate or request physical contact with your student. Oftentimes students are so excited and run down the hall and latch on to their mentors. While this contact can be unavoidable, please remind your student that is not appropriate at school.

When it comes to setting boundaries, clear communication is essential. Set boundaries on giving your phone number, work information and especially on social media.

While using Facebook is a great way for you to talk about your own personal mentoring experience, keep in mind that it is NEVER allowed to post a photo of your mentee or give any other personal information about your mentee on your social media sites. From time to time, LSS will post stories about matches. This is only done when a permission form is signed by a parent and they have specifically allowed the interview/photo to take place.

Tips on Setting Boundaries

During your first sessions, discuss the nature of the mentor relationship. Students should be familiar with the program policies, but this discussion will allow you to reinforce them. Explain that according to the rules of the program, you may only meet with them at school.

Ask your student what his/her expectations and goals are for the relationship. Why do they want to have a mentor? Share your own expectations. These discussions can help you both identify goals for the relationship.

If a student asks you to break the policies of the program, remind them of your initial conversation and redirect the request. For example, if she asks you to take her to a baseball game, simply remind her that the rules do not allow this activity. Refer to your initial conversation and suggest another activity that is permissible. You may research baseball in the school library or on the computer.

Communication

When young people are allowed to express their feelings, particularly their negative feelings it offers them a safety valve. Like the safety valve on a boiler, communicating their feelings in a positive outlet can prevent them from exploding. If a student is systematically taught to keep feelings bottled up, he or she cannot get them out of his or her system, which can contribute to inappropriate behavior.

Young people cannot hold back negative feelings without holding back positive feelings as well. If children are not allowed to express negative feelings, they can grow up to be adults who are unable to express their negative feelings. Bottom line, mentors should give students the freedom to express all of their feelings.

Active Listening

One of the oldest and best ways to foster a sense of trust is to listen. Most individuals are capable of listening, but active listening is a bit harder. It requires you be in the moment, that there is nothing more important than the person who is speaking. Students are more likely to trust someone who really listens and makes them feel important.

- Give your undivided attention.
- If your student is a child much smaller than you, sit when you talk, so you are at about the same level.
- Make eye contact.
- Be aware of your body language.
- Pay attention to your student's facial expressions, gestures, and body language.
- Read between the lines for your student's feelings. Learn to say, "How did that make you feel?"
- Ask open-ended questions. Don't ask, "How was school today?" Instead ask, "What did you do in school today?" Then, as appropriate, ask follow-up questions that are not threatening.
- Paraphrase—restate in your own words—what you think your student has said. When paraphrasing is accurate, your student will feel understood. If it is off the mark, it invites her or him to clarify and also reminds you to listen more closely.
- Put yourself in your student's shoes and try to understand the world from his or her perspective.
- Put aside preconceived ideas and refrain from passing judgment.
- Give your student the same respect that you desire for yourself when you are talking to someone.

When mentors use these techniques, students hear their own feelings coming back to them and will feel they are better understood. A dramatic change may not take place in your student simply as a result of active listening. It is, however, a powerful way to keep lines of communication open.

Communication Traps to Avoid

In any conversation, there are guaranteed ways to stifle communication. Mentors should avoid this type of behavior during conversations with students.

- Telling your student that the way he or she feels is wrong, as in the statement, “It’s silly to feel that way.” Dismissing their feelings could be taken as you dismissing them as a person.
- Not looking at your student when he/she is speaking to you. Put your phone away!
- Sitting slouched over, looking distracted, or other body language that signals disinterest.
- While your student is speaking, thinking about what you’re going to say in reply. Being judgmental and challenging by asking questions that put your student on the spot: “Why didn’t you do better on that test?” “Why did you say that to her?” “How could you possibly think that?”
- Interrupting your student or finishing his or her sentences.

Maintaining the Mentor Relationship

Once mentors find their role and get to know their student, it is important to still keep things fun and fresh. Keep in mind that you will need to rely on your own persistence and grit at times. Once again, the matches that stay together the longest are those that experience the most benefits.

If a mentor gets burnt out, but can see the student is benefitting from the relationship, that is when it is most important to stay the course. Mentors who have a “next man up” mentality and think their student will just get another mentor have the potential to do additional harm. Instead of someone else just slipping in and taking the place as the new mentor, students will tend to focus on the loss rather than embrace their new mentor. There are far more youth on waiting lists to receive a mentor than volunteers signing up for the program. We don’t want someone to volunteer “for a little while” because this can actually be detrimental to a youth’s self-esteem if the relationship lasts for less than three months.

First and foremost, keep in mind that LSS is available to help with any questions you may have. We can offer suggested activities and ways to keep things fun. In addition, here are some tips to help ensure you are in it for the long haul:

- Listen and offer friendship, guidance and encouragement to youth.
- Desire to be involved and help youth, respect for youth and their cultures and backgrounds.
- Have empathy and authenticity.
- Compatible personalities, interests and expectations.
- Flexibility, openness and ability to see solutions and opportunities and help youth see them as well.

Sometimes students are the ones who want to end the mentor relationship. This happens during transitions to a new school (elementary to middle school or middle to high school) or if the student feels they have “outgrown” having a mentor. Below are a few things that students expect from their mentor:

- Be real, legitimate and truthful.
- Show up when you say you will and be on time.
- Do activities that interest youth.
- Tell the youth up front if you don’t plan to follow them to the next grade level.
- Meet regularly not periodically.
- Have flexibility to youth’s changing needs.
- Be conscious of and sensitive to your authority in the relationship.
- Maintain confidentiality.

LSS will be calling each new mentor throughout the first year of mentoring to find out how things are going. We will continue to check in with all mentors periodically. At any time you may reach out to LSS staff by emailing or calling, and we are happy to walk along side you in getting over difficulties or make suggestions for a positive, continued relationship.

If Things Are Not Working

Not every mentor match is one made in heaven. There are times when things just don't work out, and your relationship may not progress. If this happens, contact LSS. We can give you ideas and help talk through some issues. If needed, we will help you determine whether or not to continue the relationship. It is important to get different perspectives on this before giving up.

- The match between mentor and student may not be right.
- Some students have been so disappointed by earlier experiences they are unable to risk involvement in a relationship.
- Some students will get stuck in the "testing" stage.
- Some students may drop out of the program.
- The mentor may feel burdened by the relationship and feel angry or annoyed by the student's behavior or words.

Don't give up if you are feeling anything listed above. Sometimes the most difficult kids on the surface are the ones who need mentors the most. If the program is not what you expect, please contact LSS before making a decision to quit. If a match is truly one that is not working, we will suggest you go to a different school or be matched with a different student.

About Your Student

Taboo Topics – Socio-Economic – Poverty – New Americans – Children of Prisoners – Youth in Foster Care

Sensitive issues may come up when mentoring. It is important to treat each issue in a respectful way. If at any time your student brings a conversation you are not comfortable discussing, call LSS. In the moment, it is fine to tell your student you need to think about the answer and will get back to them at your next meeting. You can also suggest their question might be better answered by their parent, teacher or counselor.

Delicate Topics

Delicate topics should be discussed only when initiated by the student. These topics can be difficult and strongly affect the relationship. Confidentiality takes on greater importance with these topics. Issues include poor choices related to behavior (being disruptive in class, running in the hall, etc), self-image, peer pressure, school performance and general insecurities about their life.

Issues of Concern

Issues of concern may have lifelong implications for the student. The mentor needs to report them to LSS and we will relay the message when needed. These issues do not necessarily require direct intervention. Because these issues may be part of ongoing situations and conditions that students face, mentors should not pass judgment on the youth. Such issues include depression, anxiety, fighting at school or home, bullying and harassment.

Crises Requiring Immediate Intervention

Crises can be brought up that require direct and immediate intervention. Some of these issues, like child abuse and neglect, are mandated by law to be reported; others may require a referral or a direct intervention by LSS or the school. These include abusive relationships, suicidal behavior, substance abuse or serious delinquency.

Diversity

One of the most critical training needs for mentors is help in dealing with diversity. Some mentors talk about “culture shock” when they first meet their student. This is often due to a lack of familiarity (or perhaps understanding of) the student’s world. It is normal to feel a certain amount of apprehension about meeting someone new. Add to that a significant difference in age, socioeconomic status, and/or racial and ethnic background, and it’s easy to see why this is such an important issue for mentors.

Mentors may be matched with youth whose backgrounds and lifestyles are very different from your own. Culture is more than race or ethnicity. It encompasses values, lifestyle, and social norms, including communication styles, mannerisms, ways of dressing, family structure, traditions, orientation to time, and response to authority. These differences may be associated with age, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. It is important

to accept and embrace this difference rather than attempt to change it or worse yet, misunderstand your student.

A way to work around this is to talk to your student about his or her background, about what life is like at school or home or with his or her friends. As you begin to learn and understand more about your student, you will be less likely to make assumptions.

Socioeconomic Diversity and Poverty

Many mentor-student pairs may come from very different socioeconomic backgrounds. The mentor may have grown up on a farm, while the student has never been outside of the city. The mentor may own a house, while the student may not know anyone who owns a house. A student's family may move frequently, perhaps every few months. A student may have to share a very small apartment with many people. Most mentors report that many things he or she took for granted are not necessarily common to all.

Poverty is relative. It occurs in all races and countries. Generational poverty is when two or more generations have experienced poverty. With this, being in poverty is the norm and what kids know as their reality. Situational poverty is caused by circumstance such as illness, divorce or the death of someone close. People living in situational poverty work to get back to "normal" and often have an attitude of pride and refusal to accept assistance.

Many people living in poverty get their primary information from other people and do not always take the time to research what might be best for them. They also look for quick fixes to solve any problems – without taking time to learn of the lasting implications of their choice.

Although it has gotten better in the past few years, schools tend to operate from a middle class norm. For example, homework is given with the expectation that the student will have a place to do it, the necessary supplies, and help from an adult. These expectations can put children of poverty at a further disadvantage and cause them to feel more alienated from peers and school.

As a child....if I am concerned about where my next meal is coming from or if I will be safe at home tonight... is my priority that math worksheet in front of me and am I able to focus on it?

If your student talks about a lack of resources or an inability to do something because they are lacking something, mentors can introduce this student to potential help or alert LSS and/or the school of issues and we might find a way to help. Sioux Falls is a resource rich community and help is available to students. Do not expect students or their parents to know what may be obvious to you. It is best to not judge the family's situation or behavior. Rather, strive for understanding.

New Americans (Refugees or Immigrants)

New Americans may face unique challenges including stress related to previous trauma, discrimination, poverty, and separation from family members. If at any time you have

questions about this, please contact LSS and we will consult with the Center for New Americans staff.

Incarcerated Parents

Children of incarcerated parents may struggle with issues of trust and social stigma. Often times, these children believe that no one trusts them because of their parent's criminal history and have trust issues themselves due to their unstable family situation. They may also feel embarrassed about their parent's incarceration. Keep in mind that criminal activity, police presence and family members in jail may be the norm in your students home life.

Foster Care

Youth in foster care face an array of challenges like placement changes and moves. A recent study found that relationships with mentors provided foster youth with emotional support, better planning and problem-solving skills and a higher self worth.

Kinship is a term used in social services that encompasses care takers other than biological, adoptive or foster parents. There are many students who may live with grandparents or other extended family members. Oftentimes a mentor's definition of family may be quite different from that of a mentee's family. Keep in mind blended families and extended family living together is typical.

Again, LSS offers Foster Care Services and has a staff of experts available to rely on for support and answers.

Below are some helpful hints in working with youth who might be in a special population reference above.

- Nurture feelings of safety, inclusion and belonging. Remember that many have experienced constant instability and nothing is consistent – everything is temporary.
- Support and encourage cultural, religious, and family values while helping youth adapt to cultural norms.
- Foster youth prefer mentors who display patience, persistence, genuine affection, authenticity, respect for the youth's past, as well as shared characteristics such as interests and communication style. Also important are flexibility to their changing needs, consistency, accountability, letting them have a voice in the relationship, clear expectations about the relationship length, and regular contact.
- Remember to rely on help from LSS for any concerning behaviors or when you feel stuck.

Again, long-term, positive mentoring relationships develop through demonstrating positive relationship behaviors such as authenticity, empathy, collaboration and companionship.

Building trust as we discussed previously is one of the best ways to develop a positive relationship and one excellent way to show students what trust is by consistently following through with plans and showing up every week.

Youth Culture

Many of the characteristics of adolescence are normal developmental traits and don't vary significantly from one generation to the next. Rebellion, for example, is a common trait of adolescents, although it may be expressed differently from generation to generation.

Take the time to remember what it was like to be your student's age, and see if you can answer the following questions:

When you were in your student's grade—

- What was a typical day like?
- What was really important to you at the time?
- What was your father/mother like? Did you get along? Were you close?
- Think of your friends. Were friendships always easy or were they sometimes hard?
- In general, did you feel as though adults typically understood you well?

It is also important to remember that some things do change dramatically and result in very different contexts and experiences from one generation to the next. Where you grew up and what you were exposed to play a role. There may be significantly more alcohol and drug abuse today. Crime and violence have increased. Ever-evolving technology has changed the way youth interact and view the world. Single parent and having both parents work outside of the home are more common. Yet, despite these challenges, the impact of mentoring is universally compelling. No, you won't fix significant societal problems, but you do give students hope for a better future and offer a different perspective on life.

Stages of Development

Every stage in a child's life brings different opportunities and challenges. While mentors are not expected to be experts in the different developmental stages, it is helpful to understand the different characteristics and abilities at different ages. For instance, speaking about career fields will look different to an elementary school student than to a high school student. You will use different language and the information that you share will also change depending on the age and cognitive level of the student.

Each youth, no matter the stage, require the opportunity to become independent and the chance to experience success in what they attempt to do. It is also important for them to give and receive attention. As children grow and learn, their personalities may change. Specifically, as youth enter their pre-teen and teen years, you may notice emotional changes. A child who was once easy-going and happy may become moody. This stage of life requires patience and understanding as youth develop.

Finally, remember that all youth grow and develop at their own pace. Certain characteristics are common to each youth at each age level, however, all youth may not reach these milestones at the same time. While we give tips for different age groups, these are generalized and your mentee may be ahead or behind their group. Consider each child's

needs, interests and uniqueness and be sure to adjust your expectations and goals accordingly for your mentee. As a mentor, your goal is to provide support and guidance for your mentee as they grow. Most importantly, each stage brings new and exciting changes.

Best Practices

Remember that you are the adult. Imagine what your student must be thinking and feeling. In general, young people of all ages, but particularly teens, believe they are not respected by adults and worry about whether a mentor will like them. They are coming to you for help and may already feel insecure and embarrassed about the problems in their lives. It is your responsibility to take the initiative and make the student more comfortable in the relationship.

Remember to be yourself. Sometimes with the best of intentions mentors try too hard to relate to young people, be the best mentor or imitate what other mentors are doing. Keep in mind that every match is unique and if you're not doing what the match next to you is, that is ok. . Students can see through this and may find it difficult to trust people who are not true to themselves.

You may learn a lot about another culture, lifestyle, or age group—but you will never be from that group. Don't over-identify with your student. Your student realizes you will never know exactly what she or he is feeling or experiencing. Your student may actually feel invalidated by your insistence that you "truly know where he or she is coming from."

Ask Questions and LISTEN

Students need someone to ask about their week—what went well and what didn't. Think about how good it feels when someone asks how you are doing and is genuinely interested in your response. Students need someone to recognize their accomplishments and cheer them on when they are struggling. Students also need somebody to ask bigger questions, "What do you want to do after high school?" and "What's your plan to get there?" Be prepared to help answer those questions (or contact LSS and we can give you some tips).

Have Fun

Mentoring relationships are most successful when they incorporate fun. Mentors and students should play and laugh together. Sometimes this is the outlet a student needs to regain a positive attitude and make it through the rest of the week.

Saying Good-Bye

Coming to the end of any relationship, even a healthy one, is difficult. It can bring up many emotions, including guilt, fear of change, sadness, feelings of abandonment, or anger. There are many different reasons for ending a mentor relationship. If your mentoring relationship is ending permanently, it is important to call LSS.

Ending Before One Year

If you need to end the match before the one year requirement, please follow the steps below:

- Notify LSS and the school as soon as possible.
- Set a specific date for your last meeting.
- Communicate to the student that the relationship is ending and the reason why. This should be done in person. If that is not possible, a letter or card to your student is acceptable as a last resort. Do not rely on someone else to deliver this news for you.
- Talk about your thoughts and feelings. Encourage your student to do the same. Be positive and supportive.
- Help your student understand that it's not their fault and that the relationship is not ending because they did something wrong.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep (i.e., that you will always keep in touch or that they will get another mentor).

Saying Good-Bye for Summer

Everyday Hero mentors will not have any personal contact with your student over the summer months. Each year, it is important to follow steps to ensure both you and your student feel proud of the year you had and leave school feeling excited for more fun the following year! At the end of the school year, mentors may wish to follow these steps:

Reflect

Think about how the experience: what has happened, what you observed, what issues you faced, and what events occurred during your time together.

Decide

Decide if you will continue mentoring next school year. Most mentors do this by simply asking their student if they want them to return the following year. If you are unsure about your ability to continue or if the student is unsure what school they will be attending, be prepared to make contingent plans. Do not make promises that you cannot keep, as this is more damaging than simply bringing the relationship to a close.

Discuss

Three weeks to a month before the end of the school year talk to your student about how many meetings you have left. Share your thoughts and feelings and encourage your student

to do the same. Remind your student about all the fun things you have done together and everything you have accomplished.

Celebrate

Plan a special activity for your last day together. Ask for your student's input in the weeks before. Play a special game or work on a project together that reflects on the last year. Some ideas include:

- Take a picture of you and your student and put it in a frame for your student to keep.
- Write a letter of congratulation and encouragement to your student. Share with them how much you have enjoyed the past year. Tell the student about his/her positive qualities (creativity, sense of humor, hard work, perseverance, etc.). Let him/her know how those qualities and strengths will help throughout his/her life.
- Put together a scrapbook of your relationship together. Draw pictures to represent each of the things you have done together.
- Read a children's story that discusses how difficult it is to say goodbye.
- Encourage your student to draw a picture or write a paragraph about mentoring.

Keep in Touch

If you want to keep in touch, please keep in mind the program does not allow personal contact with a student outside of school. LSS insists that outside of school contact only be done through a structured program. Remember – once a mentee, always a mentee. Here are some simple ideas to help matches stay in touch:

- Give your student stamped and addressed envelopes. Ask them to write a paragraph or draw a picture and mail it. Postcards are a good option for younger children. Mentors may also mail letters to keep in touch.
- Exchange email addresses (if your student has access). Ask them to send you updates about what they are doing. You may want to set boundaries on the frequency and amount of email to be exchanged.
- If you want to see your student more often, consider joining a community-based mentor program so that you can meet with him/her outside of school. If your student is entering high school, consider USucceed.
- Although Facebook is a popular way to keep in touch, it is important for mentors to maintain clear boundaries for communication. These sites can undermine those boundaries and should be avoided as a means for communication.
- **Mentors must notify LSS or the school of their intentions to keep in touch over the summer.**

Keep In Touch With LSS

Training is just the beginning...

We encourage all mentors to stay up-to-date with the news related to LSS Mentoring Services. There are several easy ways to do this.

- **Mentoring Matters** is the mentor program's monthly e-newsletter. Please make sure you watch for this in your e-mail inbox. We will use the email address you provided on your application. It is important to keep us updated on any changes in your email address, phone number or mailing address. School personnel changes from year to year, so we need to be able to pass along your contact information and want it to be the most accurate. LSS strives to not send constant communication. We only share your contact information with the school counselor that you are working with.
- LSS Mentoring Services is also active on **Facebook** and **Twitter** (facebook.com/LSSMentor or twitter.com/LSSMentor). If you have an account on either, please like our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter. While you are on the web, visit **www.LssSD.org** to find additional program news and information. You can also subscribe to our blog under the "About Us" section of the LSS website.
- **Checking In:** LSS will be in touch throughout this first year to see how things are going. Please watch for our email and phone calls.

If at any time, you have a question, please never hesitate to **contact us**.

LSS Mentoring Services
621 East Presentation Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57104
Phone: 605-221-2403 Fax: 605-221-2404 Email: Mentoring@LssSD.org

Matching Process

School Counselors are responsible for matching you with a student. **If you have not been matched within three weeks of completing training (when school is in session), please contact the Mentoring Services staff.** Sometimes there can be a delay in matching as schools are working to obtain parental permission.

Additional Training Opportunities

Each month, LSS offers topic-based support training opportunities. These are one-hour sessions on topics that may come up while mentoring. Watch our monthly e-newsletter for training dates and times. Please visit the "Mentor Resources" tab on our website for online trainings.