

What is Peer Mentoring?

Peer mentoring is based on the fact that youth often seek out their peers when they are experiencing some frustration, worry or concern. Children and adolescents want to help each other, yet they often do not know how or what to do. Peer Mentors are trained and supervised to provide any or all of the following:

- Listening and understanding
- Friendship and support
- Decision making assistance
- Tutoring and academic help
- Educational, career and health information
- Role modeling for younger children
- Understanding and celebrating diversity
- Problem-solving assistance
- Healthy relationships and friendship skills
- Building resiliency
- Healthy boundaries
- Positive self-image
- Referral to professionals

What Peer Mentoring Is Not:

Peer mentors do not make decisions for others. They may suggest options or alternatives, identify consequences, or share experiences, but they do not give advice or tell others what to do. Peer mentors do not provide therapy or treatment. They are neither replacements for professional service providers, nor are they alone in their journey.

Standards for Success:

While peer programs may be quite different from each other, there are common program standards that must be in place for a peer program to be effective. The following components will be a part of the Stepping Stones Mentoring Program:

1. The program will be led and supervised by adults trained and experienced in supporting children and adolescents. The Stepping Stones Program will be facilitated by staff from the Family School Liaison Program within Horizon School Division.
2. The program will include structured training sessions for Peer Mentors, based on the needs of the youth and the goals and objectives of the Stepping Stones Mentorship Program. The training will be interactive and experiential with coaching and feedback.
3. The training will encourage enjoyment, involvement, and self-management. The Peer Mentors along with the adult facilitators will be involved in the distribution of program information and services.
4. Care and concern will be used in selecting Peer Mentors and Mentees to ensure an appropriate and effective match is made. The mentors must represent commitment, dependability, positive modelling and respect.
5. The training program and the specific roles peer helpers take on must have the support of teachers, administrators, parents and relevant community agencies.
6. The Peer Mentors will have on-going supervision and continuing opportunities for learning through the adult facilitators and community agencies. This supervisory relationship will allow for monitoring, dealing with confidentiality, and making referrals to professionals when necessary.

Why Become a Peer Mentor?

Peer based programs have increased dramatically over the last 25 years. Peer programs now exist in elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, agencies, corporations and senior's organizations. A mentor can have a very powerful impact on a child's life that may last a lifetime.

By implementing a peer mentoring program in our area, we are increasing opportunities to support children in our community. Through this program, participants will gain an increased awareness of services offered in the community. The mentors will also receive training and experience that may be beneficial on their resume or post-secondary applications. Finally, peer mentoring creates opportunities for children and youth to become aware of the diversity among the community and better understand the issues faced by children and youth.

What Are the Benefits of Peer Mentoring?

Peer mentoring assists children and adolescents to feel capable, understood, and responsible. Peer mentoring teaches young people decision-making skills to help combat negative peer pressure and provides children and adolescents with communication skills to understand others and be understood. In addition, peer mentoring enables youth to learn action skills to prevent substance abuse, enhance self-esteem, reduce loneliness, promote health, and support academic and personal achievement.

Peer mentoring also contributes to the climate of care and respect needed by educational institutions and community organizations to reduce violence, vandalism, truancy and school dropouts. By establishing a peer program, schools and community organizations teach children and adolescents how to help, not hurt, others.

How the Stepping Stones Mentorship Program Works:

As we know establishing a relationship with a mentor can improve the life of a child, and contribute to their well being. Mentoring represents friendship, trust, responsibility, and concern for the protection and well being of children. When someone commits to engage in the Stepping Stones Program, there are a few important details to be aware of. The following outlines some of these details:

- Dependability is key in ensuring a successful program. The goal is to commit to one year as a mentor. The program will run twice throughout the course of the school year for ten weeks (once in the fall and once in the spring). The mentor will be paired with a different mentee for the two different sessions.
- Mentors will be selected from grades 10-12 and paired with elementary children.
- The mentors will need to commit to a full day training session, as well as refresher sessions for up to a half hour each week.
- Consent will be required from both parents/caregivers and the mentor or mentee.
- The program will run from 3:30-5:00 one day a week for the mentees and 3:30-5:30 for the mentors for ten weeks. Transportation will be the responsibility of the parents/caregivers.

The 10 week program will provide opportunities for mentors to engage in 1:1 time and activities with their mentees. The adult facilitators will organize the weekly activities that will address various themes through fun and interactive projects and activities. Some of the themes covered throughout the program will provide children and adolescents with the skills to help them reach their potential. The program will focus on life skills, empathy, safety, healthy lifestyles, team building, friendship skills and personal resources.

How Do I Become Part of the Stepping Stones Program?

If you would like to participate in the Stepping Stones Mentorship Program, you will need to complete an application form and submit it to the Family School Liaison Counsellor at your school. Once this application is received the FSLC will contact you to conduct a short interview to ensure there is a match. At this time, you will also be given a contract and consent forms to complete with parents/caregivers.



For More Information:

The Stepping Stones Mentorship Program is available in a number of schools within Horizon School Division. For more information on this program, please contact the Family School Liaison Counsellor at your child's school or you can contact the Clinical Team Leader for the Family School Liaison Program Daelynn Takasaki at (403)634-9767. To find the FSLC at your child's school, please visit our website at www.horizon.ab.ca.



**Peer Mentoring -
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**Information for Children,
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