Mentoring Handbook
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The mission of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County is to enhance the potential of students, promote excellence in teaching, and inspire innovation in education, guided by strategic philanthropy.

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County (Education Foundation) was established in 1988 as a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization. The Education Foundation annually serves nearly 44,000 students and 5,000 instructional staff and support personnel in 53 public schools.

We believe students can achieve their fullest potential and become critical thinkers and lifelong learners, purposeful in life pursuits, equipped with resilience to adapt and tackle fluid and complex challenges, and qualified, prepared, and motivated to succeed in college, career, and life.

For more information about the Education Foundation of Sarasota County and its programs, please visit our website https://edfoundationsrq.org/

The goal of the Mentoring Program is to empower young adults in our community to make positive life choices that maximize their fullest potential by supporting them while they complete high school and achieve a credential, certificate, or diploma beyond high school.
Congratulations! You have chosen to become a mentor for the Education Foundation of Sarasota County. You are now part of a group of individuals who are looking to make a lasting impact on the lives of young adults in our community.

This booklet is a resource designed to offer practical information as well as tools to develop and strengthen successful mentoring relationships between mentors and young adults. We are incredibly grateful for your partnership and support as we work alongside our young adults as they plan and pursue their chosen path beyond high school leading to a credential, degree or diploma, culminating in securing a satisfying career.

We hope you will use this handbook with great success. Please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance in any way, such as answering questions, offering suggestions, or getting information to you. Our role is to partner with you and your mentee. Together, we can support your mentee so that they can achieve the life of their dreams.

THE ROLE OF A MENTOR

A mentor with the Education Foundation of Sarasota County’s Mentoring Program is a caring, responsible, adult volunteer who serves as a trusted friend and guide to a student from one of Sarasota County’s high schools. They help to ensure that the student develops important academic and life skills. Mentors introduce new opportunities and a wide array of resources so that students can make positive life choices. Mentors help high school students, to stay in school and graduate with a plan for pursuing education beyond high school. Mentors support a student’s pathway beyond high school to college graduation or certification.
Essential Mentor Functions/Responsibilities to Mentee:

- Be able to commit to spending at least one year in a relationship with a mentee, with the preference of staying with their student through their degree or certification beyond high school.
- Spend at least two to three hours a month meeting with their mentee.
- Communicate with their mentee at least bi-weekly—in-person, by telephone, virtually or email—to keep in touch about what is going on in their lives and how they are proceeding with their short-term and long-term goals.
- Be respectful of the mentees time, opinions, and decision-making.
- Serve as a positive role model by modeling desirable behaviors—e.g., patience, tolerance, and reflective listening. Empowering them to resolve current issues and to develop coping strategies for the future.
- Provide a model for a healthy, trusting relationship through clear communication and appropriate boundaries.
- Acknowledge their mentee’s strengths, talents and gifts and encourage them to find ways to use them.
- Be an active listener and offer support and encouragement when appropriate.
- Help their mentee develop short-term and long-term goals for completing high school, transitioning to college, completing college, or a certificate program.

Every Volunteer Mentor should:

- Check-in with the program staff every four to six weeks.
- Attend on-going trainings when needed or requested by program staff.
- Complete evaluation surveys as requested by staff.
- Recognize their role as a mandated reporter (see Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect Policy)
- Report issues that prevent their mentee from reaching a short-term or long-term goal.
- Be patient and understanding. The mentoring relationship is a process that takes work and time.

Every Volunteer Mentor should not:

- Transport high school students
- Post about and/or photos of your students on social media platforms
QUALIFICATIONS

All volunteers must:
- Be 21 years of age.
- Have earned a high school diploma and obtained a college degree or certification beyond high school.
- Submit mentoring application, two forms of reference, a copy of a photo ID, and complete a background check scheduled by the Education Foundation of Sarasota County.
- Successfully complete a screening interview for a mentor position with an Education Foundation of Sarasota County staff member.
- Exhibit a genuine concern for high school/college-aged students.
- Reside in the Sarasota County area for at least a portion of the year.
- Be willing to adhere to all Education Foundation of Sarasota County Mentoring Program policies.
- Not be a user of illicit drugs.
- Not use alcohol or controlled substances in an excessive or inappropriate manner.

Matching Policy

The following guidelines will be used when creating a mentor/mentee match:
- Preferences of the mentor, mentee, and/or parent/guardian
- Common interests
- Geographic proximity
- Compatible personalities

Matches must be male adult to male student or female adult to female student. In special circumstances, as determined by the program coordinator, exceptions may be made. However, male mentors will not be matched with female students.

Active Listening and Effective Questioning

One of the most critical skills a mentor needs is the ability to actively listen and focus on our students. This means putting away distractions, like cell phones. Take a few breaths before the interaction.
Active listening skills are both verbal (paraphrasing and reflecting what our mentees tell us) and non-verbal (nodding, making eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, limited fidgeting).

A mentor must exhibit empathy (not the same as sympathy). Empathy requires taking the perspective of the person you are listening to, identifying their feelings, reserving judgment, reflecting on your understanding in your own words.

Empathy is often paired with normalizing: the ability to help people understand that their feelings and reactions are common and typical.

Practice active listening, empathic responses, and normalizing statements. Paraphrase what you hear in your own words; use a feeling word to demonstrate that you understand emotionally as well as intellectually; reduce I statements; know the difference between empathy, encouragement and deflecting.

**Asking effective questions is key to communicating and building relationships with your mentees.**

*Use open-ended questions* that invite sharing, elicit full responses, are specific and clear.

*Avoid closed-ended questions* that have yes or no answers unless you simply need to gather facts quickly.

- How are you feeling about your first math class?  
  NOT: Did you go to your math class today?

*Avoid why questions*. They may lead to defensiveness. Try re-phrasing to get the same information.

- What led up to the decision to copy from your friend’s paper?  
  Not: Why would you copy your friend’s paper?
Avoid “have you” questions. They may send a message that you are judging or that you have the right answer, and your mentee does not. They are also close-ended and do not yield much information.

What have you tried so far to raise your grade?
Not: Have you gone to the tutor for help yet?

Empathy and normalizing can be paired. Here are some examples:

Failing a test is really upsetting for most students. What you have said tells me that you are really feeling badly.

People experiencing high levels of stress sometimes make decisions they would not otherwise. It is understandable that you made a poor choice while you were upset.

Realizing that you do not have enough money to pay your rent is really stressful. Feeling really anxious right now is understandable.

Tips for Practicing Empathy and Normalizing:
- Use “I” statements sparingly, keep the focus on the mentee.
- Use feeling words to describe what you believe the mentee is experiencing.
- Try to see the situation from the mentee’s point of view.
- Effective questioning involves asking relevant, specific, open-ended questions. Effective questioning allows you as a mentor to be an investigator, to understand the situation from your mentee’s perspective. Plus, effective questions help you problem-solve effectively.

Examples of moving from general to effective questions:
What were your latest exam scores in math and English?
Not: How are your classes going?

Tell me about the best and most challenging experiences of your week.
Not: How are you doing?

What strategy did you use to resolve the fight with your roommate and what was the outcome?
Not: Is the fight you had with your roommate any better?
Use one question to get an assessment of more than one situation, “what are two things that went great this week and two that did not?”

Sometimes, a close-ended question is needed to understand a fact (Did you go to class today?) Then follow up with an effective question (Great, tell me how you did on your group project?)

Do not jump from assessment questions to problem-solving (Avoid “have you tried...” at this step of assessment and understanding)

**Navigating Difficult Topics**

Our students often have stressors in their lives outside of school: finances, housing, health, family relationships are all sources of stress that often impact their life choices and progress meeting their goals.

Sometimes, empathy is the best you can offer.

Use effective questions to broach difficult topics, like:

- Who are your biggest supporters right now?
- What are you most proud of in your academics this week?
- What ways are you handling stress right now?
- If you could change one thing related to your family life right now, what would it be?

**Documenting Mentee Progress**

Mentors are required to document all meetings with their mentees through the Innovative Mentoring Portal. You will receive an email with directions on how to access the portal.

Your notes should include a brief summary of your meeting. The summary should focus on goal progress, next steps, and the date and time of your next meeting. Here is an example of a progress note:
Reviewed the goals from previous meeting – (1) choose classes for second semester based on program requirements, (2) speak with professor to request a one-week extension on her history project. Both goals were met. New goals - (1) she will speak with her boss to have her work hours reduced to not more than 20, (2) She will complete her school project to meet the new deadline. Seemed reluctant to share when asked about food and housing security. Will follow-up next session on March 1 at 2:00pm.

As a reminder, creating SMART goals, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound, will help your mentee achieve their desired outcomes. You do not have to document every communication with your mentee. It is not necessary to use the portal to record a quick text or email check-in. The main purpose is to track your mentees short-term goals and to make note of any struggles so that we can follow up and support your work.

Confidentiality Policy

It is the policy of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County Mentoring Program to protect the confidentiality of its participants and their families. With the exception of the limitations listed below, program staff will only share information about mentors, mentees, and their families with other Education Foundation of Sarasota County professional staff and the Board of Directors. Further, all prospective mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians will be informed of the scope and limitations of confidentiality by program staff. Additionally, mentors are required to keep information about their mentee and his/her family confidential.

In order for Education Foundation of Sarasota County to provide a responsible and professional service to participants, it is necessary to ask mentors, mentees, parents/guardians, and other outside sources to divulge extensive personal information about the prospective participants and their families, including:

- Information gained from mentors and mentees, written or otherwise, about themselves and/or their families, in application to and during program participation
- Participants’ names and images gained from participants themselves, program meetings, training sessions, and other events
- Information gained about participants from outside sources including confidential references, school staff, employers
Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

It is the policy of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County Mentoring Program that all staff, mentors, and other representatives of the program must report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect of agency clients or program participants immediately. All such suspected reports must be made to appropriate state and/or local authorities. Program staff must follow the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect procedure.

Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or another person responsible for the child’s welfare is a mandatory reporter. § 39.201(1)(a), Florida Statutes.

The reporting hotline is staffed 24 hours a day.

1-800-962-2873

Mentors should contact the Education Foundation staff if a report is made to the hotline.

https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/report-online.shtml

Closure Policy

It is the policy of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County Mentoring Program that all mentors and mentees must participate in closure procedures when their match ends. Closure is defined as the ending of a formal match relationship regardless of the circumstances of the match ending or whether they intend to have future contact informally beyond the match duration.

Closure can occur for any number of reasons including: the contracted match duration has ended, one or both participants do not want to continue the match, there are changes in life circumstances of either the mentor or mentee, or an individual no longer meets the requirements for program participation. Hence, the match may end at the discretion of the mentor, mentee, parent/guardian, and/or
It is the policy of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County Mentoring Program that evaluation will be a key component in measuring the success of its mentoring program and for making continuous improvements in the effectiveness and delivery of mentoring services. Evaluation data will be collected once a year for mentees in the program, including the following general measures: youth self-esteem, academic performance, peer and parent relationships, moods, alcohol, and substance use. Education Foundation of Sarasota County Mentoring Program staff will be responsible for evaluation efforts.

program coordinator. It is left to the discretion of the program coordinator whether an individual will be reassigned to another match in the future based upon past participation performance and current goals and needs of the program.

Evaluation Policy
MENTOR & MENTEE AGREEMENT

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County (the “EFSC”) connects current high school students and recent high school graduates with volunteer mentors. These mentors provide support, encouragement, and guidance to graduates as they transition into college or technical training, and ultimately, into successful careers.

Mentors understand that their role is to help mentees grow, develop, and reach their academic and career goals. Mentors respect the autonomy of their mentees and agree to help them make informed decisions.

By signing below, each Mentor and Mentee agrees:

1. To respect the boundaries between them and maintain the confidentiality of any private information shared by them.
2. That this is a voluntary relationship that requires a commitment to communicate regularly, to share relevant information openly and honestly and to work as partners to set goals and solve problems.
3. That I have read, understand and agree to abide by the EFSC Mentoring Guidelines.
4. That I am not obligated to participate in the Mentoring Program and that I may terminate my participation at any time for any reason.
5. That I grant to the EFSC all rights to all photographic images, videos and audio recordings of me made by the EFSC. Images, video and/or audio recordings could be used for press releases, social media or other media related purposes.
6. To respect the boundaries between them and maintain the confidentiality of any private information shared by them.
7. That this is a voluntary relationship that requires a commitment to communicate regularly, to share relevant information openly and honestly and to work as partners to set goals and solve problems.
8. That I am not obligated to participate in the Mentoring Program and that I may terminate my participation at any time for any reason.
9. That I agree to release and hold harmless the EFSC and its agents from any and all claims or losses resulting from my participation in the Mentoring Program. Mentors agree to a level 2 background check.

I HAVE CARFULLY READ, UNDERSTAND AND VOLUNTARILY SIGN THIS DOCUMENT.

Mentor Signature  Date

Mentee Signature  Date
HELPFUL TIPS AND TOOLS FOR REFERENCE

Designed specifically for high school teen mentors, this handbook provides detailed, user-friendly information that will help the mentor throughout the program. Schools, with training and support, should have all the tools they need to implement a successful mentoring program.
https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9780778581314

Career Development Needs of First-Generation Students, Marietta, 2016
https://www.naceweb.org/career-development/special-populations/career-development-needs-of-first-generation-students/

Center for Fostering Success, Western Michigan University

Solving Problems with SODAS © 2005, Father Flanagan’s Boys' Home
When faced with a problem, kids need a way to work through it to find a workable, appropriate solution. The SODAS method provides structure to the process of solving problems and gives kids a new way to approach situations where they might have acted hastily or inappropriately in the past.

Mentor - a national organization dedicated to driving equity through quality mentoring relationships for young people.
https://www.mentoring.org/

The Opportunity Myth, What Students Can Show Us About How School is Letting Them Down – And How to Fix It, 2018
https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/

Sarasota Students Can Learn To Overcome Obstacles and Succeed by Holly Gray
https://www.heraldtribune.com/opinion/20191022/gray-sarasota-county-students-can-learn-to-overcome-obstacles-and-succeed
State University System of Florida
https://www.flbog.edu/universities/

A matrix of the Florida State University System

Moving Up Without Losing Your Way by Jennifer M. Morton
This book is about the dilemmas faced by disadvantaged college students seeking upward mobility and what educators and mentors can do to help these students.

Academics is only one aspect of educating the whole person. If students are experiencing insecurities, it might be helpful to share the image below and ask them areas they may be struggling with.
SODAS ACTIVITY

SODAS is an acronym for Situation, Options, Disadvantages, and Solution. The SODAS method provides structure to the process of solving problems. It gives students a new way to approach situations where they may have acted hastily or inappropriately in the past.

The SODAS method:
1. Identify the problem Situation.
2. Consider the Options for the situation.
3. List the Disadvantages and Advantages of each option.
4. Choose a Solution and follow through.

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RESEARCH SHOWS THAT MENTORING WORKS

64 percent of students with a mentor develop more positive attitudes about school. Young adults who establish a long-term supportive relationship with an adult increase their self-esteem and sense of hope.

Mentoring can benefit you as much or more than it benefits your mentee. Mentoring is a two-way street where both participants give and take, learn and grow; and enhance their professional skills.

The benefits to being a mentor include:

- Support and foster the next generation, leaving their legacy.
- Contribute to the mentors own personal and professional growth.
- Ignite a spark.
- Professional distinction as someone who can serve as an example and role model for others.
- Enhancement of coaching, leadership, management, and recruiting skills.
- Provides intrinsic satisfaction by helping young adults develop to their potential.

Our mentors help their mentees:

- Develop a positive attitude toward school and academic achievement.
- Develop study and time management skills.
- Have an enhanced awareness of and increased sense of hope about future education options beyond high school.
- Learn to connect their hobbies and interests to potential career pathways and education beyond high school.
- Learn how to plan and execute their pathway beyond high school and select a career/field of interest.
- Persist through their pathway beyond high school while gaining cultural capital and financial literacy.
- Become engaged with campus community and services.

If you know someone who you feel would be an effective mentor, please share this information with them. They can learn more about the program and apply online at https://edfoundationsrq.org/