

You can help!

Could you share your job experiences with a visit to your worksite or in a group discussion? Do you have access to other opportunities to learn, to have fun? Or maybe you would like to help with the donation of a special need item, or give a financial donation.

Applications:

[Mentoring for Children of Prisoners](#)

What you have to offer:

You bring a wide range of life experiences to your mentoring relationship. As a result, you can be a wonderful source of advice and information. Regardless of your background, the greatest gift you have to offer a young person is your genuine interest in their life and your willingness to listen attentively to them.

As a mentor you offer a young person the consistent opportunity to talk with you and share their wants, needs and expectations. And you, in turn, can help them find ways to fulfill those wants and needs.

You may be worried that you won't know how to help a child or that you may make a mistake, but it can be easier than you think to make a difference in a young person's life. Things that may seem straightforward to you and I are often mysterious to young people.

You are in the unique position to offer a young person what they ask for. When asked, most young people say they want a mentor to help in three key areas: advice, access and advocacy.

Advice

From time to time, your mentee may need a second opinion or a different perspective — you can provide that. When offering advice, however, it is important to remember that while the roles of a mentor and parents or guardians may occasionally overlap, these are two distinct roles. You are there to provide the child with another caring adult who helps them think through problems. Your job is not to supersede parents or guardians.

Access

One of the most valuable things you can do is to help connect your mentee with people, opportunities, and information that are otherwise out of reach. That's what access is all about — helping your mentee find and get involved in new situations or find new resources. If for example, you are involved in an e-mentoring program, you can open up the vast resources of the internet to your mentee.

Advocacy

You can be an advocate for your mentee — in other words, work on their behalf to get them the recognition they deserve or the resources they need to resolve issues or problems. You will have to create opportunities to get to know your mentee as a person. The more you learn about your mentee, the stronger an advocate you can be. For instance, maybe you discover that your mentee has a real talent for art. You could advocate having your mentee accepted into a special art program at school or help them enter their artwork in a contest.

Each mentoring relationship will develop its own personality based on the needs of the individual youth 10-18. Despite the variations that will exist from mentee to mentee, it will be obvious to your young friend that they are being offered a friendship with a caring adult. They will see you have a sincere interest to be involved with them. They will receive your respect and empathy, share in your ability to see solutions and opportunities, and learn to recognize that healthy relationships are flexible and open and come with a long enough commitment to make a difference.

As you continue a mentoring assignment, you will come to find that the advantages you and your mentee offer each other are truly too numerous to count