

**Policy and Procedure for Volunteer/Mentors**

**Program Overview**

This policy outlines the standards and procedures for individuals over the age of 21 who volunteer as mentors to juvenile offenders. The goal of the mentorship program is to provide positive role models, emotional support, and guidance to help juvenile offenders make better decisions, engage in pro-social behavior, and ultimately reintegrate successfully into society. Volunteers will be expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct and safety to ensure the wellbeing of the youth involved and the integrity of the program.

**Policy Statement**

Commitment to safety and well-being of the juveniles are paramount. All volunteer/mentors must adhere to the guidelines set forth in this document to create a safe, supportive, and positive environment for youth participants.

1. Eligibility and Background Check

 - Volunteers must be over the age of 21.

 - All potential mentors will undergo a comprehensive background check, including criminal history, child abuse registry check, and other relevant checks as required by local law and program standards.

 - Mentors must not have any history of violent offenses (including family), abuse (physical/sexual), or crimes involving minors. A history of non-violent misdemeanors may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

 - Mentors must provide references and complete an interview process to assess their suitability for the program.

3. Program Mission

 - Volunteers will work to build trust and positive relationships with juvenile offenders to encourage healthy decision-making, personal growth, and community involvement.

 - Mentors should seek to inspire mentees to overcome challenges, learn life skills, and pursue positive goals.

**Procedures**

1. Application and Selection Process

 - Step 1: Volunteers submit an application form including personal details, professional experience, and reasons for wanting to mentor.

 - Step 2: A program coordinator conducts an initial interview to assess the volunteer's motivation, experience, and capacity for working with youth.

 - Step 3: Volunteers undergo required background checks (criminal, child abuse, etc.).

 - Step 4: Upon successful background checks, references are contacted.

 - Step 5: The volunteer undergoes an orientation session that covers program objectives, mentoring best practices, and understanding the dynamics of working with juvenile offenders.

2. Training and Orientation

 - Mandatory Orientation: All mentors must attend a full-day orientation that covers:

 - The juvenile justice system and its processes.

 - Ethical guidelines, including maintaining professional boundaries.

 - Conflict resolution and managing difficult behaviors.

 - The dynamics of trauma and its impact on juvenile offenders.

 - Mentoring techniques and effective communication skills.

 - Ongoing Training: Mentors will be required to attend annual refresher training that may cover emerging best practices, legal changes, or new therapeutic techniques.

3. Mentoring Relationship Structure

 - Initial Meetings: Mentors and mentees are introduced through a structured process led by a program coordinator to ensure a safe, neutral, and non-threatening environment.

 - Frequency of Meetings: Mentors must meet with their mentee at least once a week for a minimum of one hour. Meetings should take place in a public, safe, and supervised environment (e.g., community centers, libraries).

 - Duration: The mentorship relationship is expected to last at least 6 months or in compliance with the amount of time required by court or Supervision Officer assigning the case. The assigned mentor and mentee involvement must not extend past the designated timeframes. Any extended involvement beyond the designated timeframe will not be approved by Juvenile Court, and will be deemed as inappropriate.

 - Goals: Mentors and mentees should collaboratively set goals for the mentorship, including academic goals, behavioral goals, and personal development targets. These goals will be reviewed regularly.

4. Supervision and Support

 - All approved and assigned mentors will have access to program coordinators for support and guidance.

 - Regular Check-ins: Mentors are required to submit monthly reports to the program coordinator detailing their meetings with the mentee, progress made, and any concerns. These reports help track the mentee’s development and ensure proper documentation.

 - Mentor Support: A dedicated support network will be available to mentors for coaching, addressing challenges, or troubleshooting difficult situations.

5. Ethical Standards and Boundaries

 - Mentors must maintain professional boundaries at all times. Personal relationships that blur the lines between mentor and mentee (e.g., socializing outside of program-sanctioned activities) are not allowed.

 - Confidentiality: Mentors must respect the confidentiality of information shared by their mentees. However, any information indicating risk of harm to the mentee or others (such as abuse or suicidal ideation) must be reported immediately to the program coordinator and, if necessary, to law enforcement.

 - Respect for Autonomy: Mentors should respect the autonomy of the mentee and provide support, rather than making decisions for them. The mentor’s role is to offer guidance, not to act as an authority figure.

6. Termination of the Mentorship

 - Either the mentor or mentee may request to end the mentorship at any time. A meeting with the program coordinator will be held to assess the situation and determine the best course of action.

 - If a mentor is found to be in violation of program policies (e.g., inappropriate conduct, neglecting responsibilities, or unethical behavior), they may be removed from the program immediately after an investigation.

7. Mandatory Reporting

 - Mentors are mandated reporters, meaning they must report any suspicion or disclosure of abuse, neglect, or other harmful behaviors involving the mentee or others to the appropriate authorities.

 - Failure to comply with mandatory reporting laws may result in termination from the program and potential legal consequences.

**Code of Conduct for Volunteers/Mentors**

- Respect and Integrity: Treat all juveniles with respect and dignity. Set a positive example through words and actions.

- Confidentiality: Honor the confidentiality of all personal and sensitive information shared during mentoring sessions, except where disclosure is required by law.

- Non-Discrimination: Volunteers/Mentors will not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic background.

- Zero Tolerance for Abuse: Any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or verbal abuse is strictly prohibited, and may result in criminal charges being filed.

- Professionalism: Maintain appropriate boundaries with mentees, including not engaging in any personal or financial transactions with them.

Program Evaluation and Feedback

- Feedback: Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback on their mentoring experience, training, and any suggestions for program improvements. Feedback sessions will be scheduled twice a year.

- Mentee Progress: The progress of each mentee will be assessed quarterly by the program coordinator, with input from mentors. This evaluation will include achievement of personal and academic goals, as well as behavioral changes.

- Program Review: The program will be reviewed annually to ensure that policies, procedures, and training are up-to-date and effective in meeting the goals of the program.

Acknowledgment and Agreement

By participating as a volunteer/mentor, individuals agree to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in this document. All volunteers must sign an acknowledgment form indicating that they have read, understood, and agreed to the terms of the volunteer/mentorship program with Peach County Juvenile Court.

Signature of Volunteer:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This policy and procedure document will serve as a guide to ensure that both mentors and mentees engage in a constructive, respectful, and safe mentoring relationship. It is intended to promote positive change, protect all individuals involved, and provide opportunities for growth and development.