

The Village Project Mentor Program



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Purpose

Under the Direction of the Court Executive, the Programs Manager is responsible for the administration of The Village Project Mentor Program. The Village Project staff will administer the mentor program in a manner that provides for effective implementation of these policies and programs without regard for the race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, ancestry, national origin, or any other non-merit factor of either mentors or mentees. It is the purpose of this policy to establish procedures to be followed by The Village Project staff and Volunteer Mentors approved for participation in the program.

Scope

This policy defines the scope of mentor rights, responsibilities and liabilities; location and contents of mentor/mentee records; and general procedures to be followed while conducting Volunteer Mentor activities. This policy applies to all approved Volunteer Mentors.

Cross References

Utah Code § 67-20-3

Utah State Court Policy 230, Employment Categories

Policy and Procedure

1. Definition of Volunteer Mentor

1.1. A “Volunteer Mentor” is an individual who has successfully completed application requirements and has been approved by the Mentor Coordinator to donate mentor service without pay or other compensation within the guidelines of The Village Project Mentor Program. A “Volunteer Mentor” serves as an adult friend and positive role model for an adolescent (aged 10-17) involved in the Third District Juvenile Court.

1.2. A Volunteer Mentor is considered an employee of the courts for the purposes of:

1.2.1. Workers’ compensation benefits for any injuries sustained by the volunteer while performing assigned service;

1.2.2. Liability protection and indemnification normally offered to salaried employees.

2. Required Qualifications for Volunteer Mentors

2.1. Volunteer Mentors must be at least 21 years of age.

2.2. Volunteer mentors will complete a mentor application form, indicating their agreement to do the following:

2.2.1. Spend a minimum of one to three hours per week for at least 6 months in the community with an assigned mentee;

2.2.2. Complete all requisite training and orientation sessions as outlined in section 2.5.

2.2.3. Keep confidential all legal and educational information, to which he or she may have access;

2.2.4. Abide by the rules and regulations of the mentor program and related agencies (Courts, school districts, child agencies, etc.);

- 2.2.5. Release the Utah State Courts from liability claims attributable to his or her participation in the mentor program.
- 2.3.** Volunteer Mentors will consent to a criminal record check.
- 2.3.1. Once approved to become a volunteer mentor, criminal background record checks will be repeated at the Mentor Coordinator's discretion and no less than annually.
- 2.3.2. Completion of a thorough criminal record check may require prospective volunteer mentors to be fingerprinted and provide a copy of a current valid driver's license, social security card, and/or other personal identification.
- 2.3.3. A screening committee consisting of but not limited to a court probation representative(s), the Juvenile Programs Manager and a representative from The Village Project may review potential mentors on a case-by-case basis. The screening committee will review previous criminal and traffic offenses. Potential mentors previously convicted of a felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against a person or family, or an offense of public indecency, or a violation involving a state/federally controlled substance, and which has not been expunged, may be asked to submit a brief statement describing the circumstances surrounding the offense(s). This statement will be reviewed by the screening committee to determine whether the volunteer will be allowed to participate in the mentor program. Initial decisions of the screening committee may be appealed in writing to the Mentor Coordinator.
- 2.4.** Former and prospective mentors may reapply.
- 2.4.1 A former mentor may reapply for the program at any time, unless the mentor was terminated from the program, in which case the former mentor may reapply after 3 years have passed.
- 2.4.2 A potential mentor whose application has been denied may reapply for the program after 3 years have passed.
- 2.5.** Volunteer mentors will complete an interview with a Village Project representative.
- 2.5.1. Completion of a thorough interview may require prospective mentors to provide additional information from, but not limited to:
- 2.5.1.1. Therapist/Counselors past or present;
 - 2.5.1.2. Psychologists past or present;
 - 2.5.1.3. Psychiatrists past or present;

2.5.1.4. Physicians past or present

2.5.1.5. The U.S. Military;

2.5.1.6. Employers past or present

2.5.2. Additional information from therapists, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists or physicians will require the prospective mentor to complete a Release of Confidentiality.

2.6. Volunteers will attend:

2.6.1. Interview and introduction meeting;

2.6.2. An orientation/training session on the Juvenile Court System

2.6.3. A briefing on the child you will mentor; and

2.6.4. A minimum two additional approved training courses, including the State of Utah's driver's training, during the first six months of being a mentor. The trainings are intended to provide personal development for the mentor.

3. Conflicts of Interest

3.1. A conflict of interest exists when a prospective mentor has an outside interest, responsibility, or relationship that conflicts with the Village Project Program.

3.2. All employees of the Courts, Juvenile Detention, Juvenile Justice Services, the Division of Child and Family Services, the Office of Guardian ad Litem, and other organizations that have access to juvenile court records and may be in a position to influence the mentees outcome in court may not participate as individual volunteer mentors.

3.3. A volunteer mentor who has a prior relationship with the mentee outside of the Village Project may not mentor that mentee.

3.4. If there is a possible conflict due to the mentor's employment, relationship with youth involved in the program, or involvement in other related programs, the mentor shall notify the Mentor Coordinator immediately. After reviewing the circumstances involving the conflict, the Mentor Coordinator shall do the following:

3.4.1. Consult with legal counsel and the Trial Court Executive regarding the potential conflict, and

3.4.2. Obtain more information about the potential conflict from the mentee.

4. **3.5** If the Mentor Coordinator determines that a conflict of interest exists, the Coordinator shall notify the prospective or volunteer mentor immediately. If there is a conflict of interest, the mentor's application shall be denied. If the mentor has already been accepted to the Program, the mentor shall be reassigned, unless the conflict of interest cannot be resolved, in which case the mentor shall be removed from the mentorship. **Limitations on Mentoring Activities**

4.1. Mentoring activities are to be limited to the following settings:

4.1.1. The school where the mentee is attending, for extracurricular activities, but only with the mentee's parent's permission.

4.1.1.1. All school visits must be cleared through the Mentor Coordinator before they take place.

4.1.1.2. While on the school grounds, the mentor must follow the policy for activities in the schools as outlined in sections 7.0

4.1.2. Court-sponsored activities attended by other mentors and their mentees;

4.1.3. Other activities that may include, but are not limited to sporting events, performing arts, recreational activities, etc. These activities must:

4.1.3.1. Be pre-approved by the student's parent/guardian;

4.1.3.2. Occur in Salt Lake County or adjoining counties;

4.1.3.3. Have transportation provided by the mentor providing a valid Utah driver's license and current automobile insurance;

4.1.3.4. Occur in a single day.

4.1.3.5. Under no circumstances is a volunteer allowed to take a mentee to the residence of the mentor or the mentor's family or friends.

4.1.3.6. Volunteer mentors will not become friends with or communicate with mentees on any social media platform including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and Snapchat.

4.2. Volunteer Mentors will complete a release of liability form signed by the mentor, mentee's parent or guardian and a representative of The Village Project prior to transporting mentees in private vehicles or state motor vehicles outside of the designated limitations outlined in section 3.1.

5. Mentoring Activities in the Schools

- 5.1. Mentors are allowed in their mentees' schools only after regular school hours.
 - 5.1.1. Unless the mentee's parents give permission, a volunteer mentor is not allowed to attend extracurricular activities involving his or her mentee.

- 5.2. Mentors will:
 - 5.2.1. Contact the Mentor Coordinator before they go to the school for any reason.
 - 5.2.2. Carry a photo identification whenever they go to a mentee's school.
 - 5.2.3. Present their photo identification to school personnel upon request.
 - 5.2.4. Follow any check in/check out procedures requested by the school to which they are assigned.
 - 5.2.5. Be supportive of school expectations of the assigned student.
 - 5.2.6. Wear clothing that is neat, clean, modest and that does not distract from a positive learning environment.

- 5.3. Mentors will **not**:
 - 5.3.1. Enter their mentees school during regular school hours.
 - 5.3.2. Remove the student from school premises during regular school hours (see section 3.1);
 - 5.3.3. Engage in criticism of school personnel.
 - 5.3.4.

6. Confidentiality and Volunteer Mentor Access to Educational and Legal Records

- 6.1. Volunteer mentors will have access to the legal and social files (not hard copies) of mentees under the following conditions:
 - 6.1.1. As ordered by the court, Village Project staff and other authorized court and school personnel may review probation reports, the case history, psychological evaluation diagnoses, recommendations from

Observation & Assessment, and educational records related to the juvenile with the volunteer mentor .

6.1.2. Volunteer mentors may not release information concerning mentees' educational, legal and social history.

6.1.2.1. Volunteer Mentors **shall not** discuss or share any information with any person not approved by the Village Project Mentor Program or the Court. It is of the utmost importance to keep the mentees' records and information confidential.

6.2. Volunteer mentors will not release, discuss or share confidential information regarding programs in which assigned mentees participate.

6.3. A volunteer mentor who is found to have inappropriately disclosed information obtained in the performance of his or her volunteer activities will be immediately terminated from participation in the Village Project Program.

7. Record Keeping

7.1. Volunteer mentors shall keep monthly logs of each contact and activity they have with their mentees. These logs shall include what they did together and the length of each activity.

7.1.1. Volunteer mentors shall submit the monthly reports including the activity logs during the first week of each month by email to the Mentor Coordinator. Monthly logs shall be considered probation reports.

7.1.2.

7.2. The Village Project Mentor Program Mentor Coordinator will maintain files on all volunteer mentors and their mentees.

7.2.1. Files, including monthly logs, will be kept as confidential records in a secured location, and will be used only for purposes directly connected to the mentor program or related court activities.

7.3. Once a mentee has been terminated from the Village Project, the mentor must submit all records on the mentee to the Village Project Coordinator.

7.3.1. A follow up interview will be scheduled to give the mentor an opportunity to give feedback to the Mentor Coordinator, and return all mentee related records.

8. Suspension or Termination from the Village Project

8.1. A volunteer mentor may be suspended or terminated from participation in the mentor program at any time at the discretion of the Mentor Coordinator or Programs Manager.

8.2. Causes for suspension and/or terminated of a Volunteer Mentor may include, but are not limited to:

- 8.2.1. Suspicion of sexual impropriety involving a minor;
- 8.2.2. The use of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances immediately prior to or during mentoring activities;
- 8.2.3. Insubordination or repeated failure to abide by program guidelines and procedures;
- 8.2.4. Repeated unexcused absences from scheduled mentoring activities;
- 8.2.5. Contact with an assigned mentee outside approved locations/activities;
- 8.2.6. Arrest for a felony or misdemeanor offense;
- 8.2.7. Conviction of a felony or misdemeanor offenses;
- 8.2.8. Misusing the influence of the mentoring position or association with the Courts for personal or improper reasons;
- 8.2.9. Inappropriately disclosing confidential information as outlined in section 5.0.
- 8.2.10. Inability to perform the assigned duties of a Volunteer Mentor with reasonable competence;
- 8.2.11. Having a conflict of interest with the Village Project Program; or
- 8.2.12. Any other conduct deemed inappropriate or inconsistent with Court standards.

8.3. The Mentor Coordinator will provide written notice of suspension or termination to the volunteer mentor

- 8.3.1. The notice shall explain the reasons for and the duration of any suspension and/or termination.
- 8.3.2. The Mentor Coordinator shall immediately notify the mentee's school of the mentor's status.
- 8.3.3. The Mentor Coordinator shall immediately notify the mentee's parents and/or guardians of the mentor's status.

- 8.4.** If a volunteer mentor requests voluntary termination from the mentor program, a Village Project representative will review the request with the volunteer.

9. Court Volunteer Policies

- 9.1.** Volunteer mentors may attend court hearings unless otherwise ordered by the court. Mentors attending court hearings will consider the serious nature of the proceedings and will dress appropriately.

- 9.2.** Volunteer mentors will adhere to the Code of Personal Conduct. Mentors will:

9.2.1. Not tamper with court records, discriminate, give legal advice or refuse to comply with a court order;

9.2.2. Not use their position to secure personal gain or favor;

9.2.3. Not engage in dishonest, criminal or fraudulent acts;

9.2.4. Not engage in discriminatory or harassing behavior; and

9.2.5. Exercise reasonable diligence to avoid any conflict of interest or appearance thereof.

- 9.3.** Volunteer mentors will comply with the provisions of the Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace Act.

9.3.1. Volunteer mentors shall not unlawfully manufacture, dispense, possess, use, or distribute any controlled substance, medication or alcohol.

9.3.2. Volunteer mentors shall not use tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, or any illegal substances in the presence of the youth.

9.3.3. Volunteer mentors shall not dispense any medication, including over-the-counter medication, to their mentees.

9.3.4. If a volunteer mentor is referred to a court of law governing alcohol and drugs the mentor will report the referral to the Mentor Coordinator within 48 hours.

9.3.5. The Court may test a volunteer mentor for illegal drugs, medication, or alcohol upon reasonable suspicion that the volunteer has violated this policy.

- 9.4.** In compliance with the Smoke Free Workplace and Utah Indoor Clean Air Act, volunteers will not smoke in court facilities.

10. News Media Inquiry

- 10.1. All requests from news media personnel (e.g., radio, print or television) for information regarding Village Project operations, staff, mentors, or mentees will be referred to the Mentor Coordinator or the Program Manager.

The Mission of the Utah Juvenile Court's staff is to effectively supervise youth under court jurisdiction, provide quality services for the positive development of children and families, and maintain accurate records.

Our Vision: A safe home and safe community for all.

Guiding Principles & Values

The principles that guide the Juvenile Court and its policies and practices are as important as its vision and mission.

- We strive to work in the best interest of the child, while fostering public trust and individualizing justice.
- We consistently use best practices for delinquency and dependency cases.
- We make intervention decisions based on evidence-based practices.
- We apply the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice to achieve a just resolution of cases.
- We actively involve victims and engage families throughout the court process.
- We collaborate with community partners in matters that impact children and families.
- We have commitment to be the best Juvenile Court in the Country.