



BEST Kids, Inc.

Volunteer Handbook

Krislyn Mossman, Executive Director

Dana Staley, Program Director

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Mission Statement

BEST Kids is a nonprofit mentoring organization that empowers youth in foster care to build better futures, one child at a time.

BEST Kids Mentoring Program is guided by the belief that all children are talented. Through our one-on-one volunteer mentoring, our extensive training, staff support and our experiential-learning-based peer group, we encourage our youth to discover and develop their unique skills and abilities. Beginning with children as young as six and continuing, as needed, until adulthood, BEST Kids Mentoring Program works to enable youth to develop a positive sense of self, to acquire teamwork and group social skills, and to become productive members of society.

Vision Statement

BEST Kids is the gold standard mentoring organization, providing every child in foster care with at least one stable and long-lasting relationship with a positive adult to support kids' life challenges, transitions, and to act as a bridge for achieving their dreams.

Our Values

Fun - We provide and strive to maintain a fun environment.

Care, Compassion, Love - We welcome, value and accept kids as they are.

Relationships - We create meaningful and impactful mentor / mentee relationships through quality time.

Support - We are committed to provide unconditional support to mentees as they grow and pursue their individual passions and dreams.

Teamwork - We maintain an atmosphere where all stakeholders contribute to and are accountable for our success and stability, and we build and nurture relationships through an appreciation for volunteers and staff.

History

BEST Kids, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides mentoring to foster care children in the District of Columbia's Child Welfare System. One of the strongest single protective factors a child can have is a close relationship with a caring adult who serves as a mentor and role model. Despite this, long term, consistent, one-on-one mentoring is almost non-existent for foster care children. We are the first pilot program in the District of Columbia to provide volunteer mentors dedicated to mentoring children in foster care. Operating under the first ever Volunteer Mentor Partnership (VMP) Grant, along with the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency, BEST Kids mentoring program is able to provide volunteer mentors for children as young as six and continue, as needed, until they reach the age of twenty-one years old. BEST Kids asks mentors to commit to at least one year of mentoring and to perform, on average, 10 hours a month of face-to-face contact.

BEST Kids started in 2001 by Todd Leibbrand, who served as a Volunteer Advocate and a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for over ten years to two boys in foster care in the District of Columbia. Todd saw the tremendous need for a positive adult role model in the boys' lives and wanted to help other boys and girls in the same way. Todd now serves on the Board of Directors and many professionals and child advocates who have deep experience in working with and reaching this population still assist with the development of the program.



BEST Kids Staff



Krislyn Mossman- Executive Director

Krislyn joined BEST Kids as Executive Director in 2013. She received her master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from the University of San Diego and her bachelor's degree in Family Life Services from Point Loma Nazarene University. Krislyn has devoted her career to nonprofit service including experience working with mentoring programs and working with foster youth.

To contact: krislyn@bestkids.org, 202-397-2999



Dana Staley- Program Director

Dana moved to Washington DC from Boston in September 2016 and joined the BEST Kids team as Program Director. An AmeriCorps alumnus, Dana has a background in youth work and program development. She has worked with a variety of nonprofits that focus on family homelessness, youth development, and volunteerism. Dana's passion is to ensure that every youth has the opportunity to be a kid and the right to a healthy, successful life. She earned a bachelor's degree in Communications in 2010.

To contact: dana@bestkids.org, 202-397-3272 ext. 101



Kathleen Kelly- Assistant Program Director

Kathleen Kelly moved to DC from Philadelphia in the summer of 2013 to join BEST Kids. She received her BS in Ethics, History, and Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon University, and MSEd in Education, Culture, and Society from the University of Pennsylvania. Kathleen has worked with youth in schools, after-school programs, summer camps, and tutoring programs since college.

To contact: kathleen@bestkids.org, 202-397-3272 ext. 104



Andy Miller- Mentor Support and Training Specialist

Andy Miller joined the BEST Kids team in March 2015. He holds Bachelor's Degrees in Youth Ministries and General Music, and a Master's Degree in Urban Studies, all from Eastern University. Andy serves as Pastor to Children and Youth at Mosaic Church DC, and has served youth professionally in sacred and secular contexts since 2004 in various capacities. Along with being a volunteer mentor, Andy and his wife, Julie, are proud foster parents in DC's Child and Family Services Agency and hope to make their home a welcoming place for any child that needs one. To contact: andy@bestkids.org, 202-397-3272 ext. 105



Walter MacDougall- Mentoring Support Specialist

Walter joined the BEST Kids team in January 2016. He graduated from Northeastern University in May of 2015 with a BS in Psychology and a minor in Social Entrepreneurship. Walter has a strong passion for mentoring, stemming from his previous work at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay and from being a former mentor himself. In his free time, he enjoys a wide variety of TV shows, movies and outdoor adventures.

To contact: walter@bestkids.org, 202-397-3272 ext. 109



Jennifer Dysart- Admissions Specialist

Jennifer returned to BEST Kids in July 2015 as the Admissions Specialist after previously holding an internship in which she managed recruitment practices. She is a proud graduate of Grinnell College, where she studied Political Science and Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies. Jennifer worked with youth during her time as a Service Coordinator for her local elementary schools. In this role, she volunteered as a teaching assistant and acted as a mentor in a one-on-one mentorship. To contact: jennifer@bestkids.org, 202-397-3272 ext. 103



Daniel Silbert- Recruitment Coordinator

Danny joined BEST Kids as Recruitment Coordinator in January of 2015. He is a proud graduate of the University of Maryland and is a native New Jerseyan. Danny graduated with a BA in Government & Politics in May of 2013, and spent his first post-graduate year serving as a Program Director for a community development organization in Nicaragua. His passion for youth development stems from his childhood as a long-time camper, and his experiences working with children in Nicaragua. To contact: daniel@bestkids.org, 202-397-3272 ext. 102



Zack Jamison- Peer Group Team Leader, Team Extreme

Zack joined the Best Kids team in May 2016. Zack holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Master's Degree in Special Education from the University of Virginia. After spending several years as a classroom teacher, Zack currently serves as the Manager of Curriculum and Instruction for the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy. To contact: zachary@bestkids.org



Maya Pendleton- Peer Group Coordinator, Strivers

Maya joined BEST Kids in January of 2016 as a Peer Group Coordinator. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Government and minored in African American Studies and Women's and Gender Studies at Georgetown University. Maya has worked with a number of organizations that seek to provide mentorship and support to youth and enjoys helping youth reach their potential and goals. She also enjoys hiking, running, yoga, and reading. To contact: maya@bestkids.org



Erin Martin- Peer Group Coordinator, Thundercats

Erin L. Martin moved from California in October of 2015 where she received a Masters of Public Policy from Pepperdine University. Erin joined BEST Kids in June as the Peer Group Coordinator for Team Thundercats. However, she is no stranger to DC. Erin graduated cum laude from Howard University in 2010 where she culminated her passion to advocated for effective policies designed to enhance the life trajectory of marginalized youth. To contact: erin@bestkids.org



BEST Kids Advisory Board

These advisory board members are here for you to help you with any and all problems or concerns you may encounter during your mentoring relationship with your mentee. Contact your Mentoring Support Specialist in order to get in touch with an Advisory Board member who is best suited to aid you with your needs.



Marilyn Benoit, M.D.

Marilyn B. Benoit, M.D. is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and the past president of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). Dr. Benoit is a graduate of the Georgetown University Medical School and completed her Child Psychiatry Fellowship at the Georgetown University Medical Center, where she is a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry. She earned a graduate degree in Health Services, Management and Policy at The George Washington University.



Chris Cox, Ph.D. - Outcomes and Evaluations Team Leader

Dr. Cox is a psychologist in the Department of Cognitive Neurology at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and an assistant professor in the Department of Neurology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Cox has extensive experience in neuropsychological and neuropsychiatric research. She performs yearly assessments of the cognitive and emotional status of children between the ages of two and-a-half through eighteen.



Diane Daum, M.D. - Advisor

Dr. Daum is a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at The George Washington University's School of Medicine and a teacher at the Baltimore-Washington Institute for Psychoanalysis. She is the former head of the psychiatric consult service to pediatrics at Tulane University and now has a full time clinical practice in Rockville, MD.



Carol Gross

Carol Gross is a graduate of the University of Penn (undergraduate) and George Washington University graduate school with degrees in Child Development, Elementary Education and Special Education. In addition, she has worked for a research neurologist for almost 40 years; and has served in a variety of roles in many different cities including working in Montgomery County Public Schools for 15 years. Carol also maintained a private practice of tutoring and diagnosing children who were having difficulty learning. Mrs. Gross has worked tirelessly with BEST Kids over the years to advocate for educational services on behalf of mentees and to provide educational assessments.



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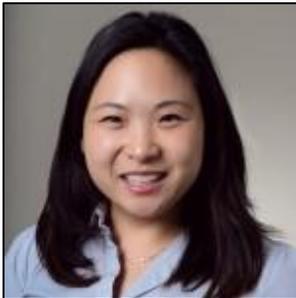
Richard Gross, M.D. - Professional Oversight

Dr. Gross is a clinical professor of psychiatry at The George Washington University's School of Medicine and a lecturer in child psychiatry at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. He is a former president of both the Washington Psychiatry Society and the Washington Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.



Martine Solages, M.D.

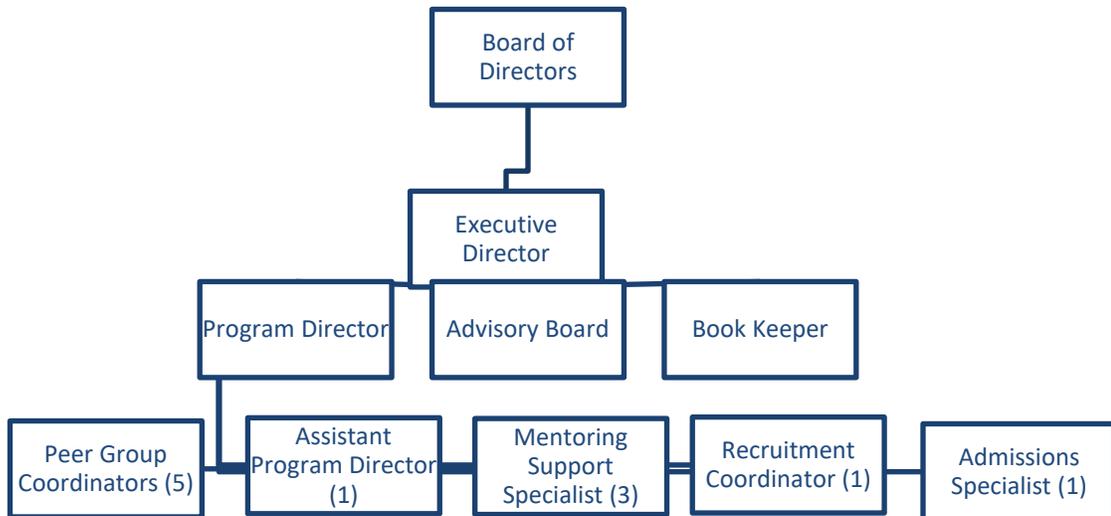
Dr. Solages is a child psychiatrist and pediatrician in academic practice. She earned her bachelor's degree from Harvard College and her medical degree from the Yale School of Medicine. She provides psychiatric consultation to medically hospitalized children in the Washington, D.C. metro area. Dr. Solages' professional interests also include reducing healthcare disparities and increasing access to mental health services in primary care and community settings.



Kristy Lee Park

Dr. Park is an Assistant Professor at George Mason University with a focus in Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS), function-based interventions, and Applied Behavior Analysis. She is currently working with families with Autism to teach socially relevant goals, collaborating with school districts to provide professional development in the application of behavior management principles, and working with the state of Virginia to merge initiatives such as Response to Intervention and SWPBS.

Organizational Chart





Volunteer Mentor Description

Updated January 2017

Mentor Role

- Take the lead in supporting a young person through an ongoing, one-to-one relationship
- Serve as a positive role model and trusted adult
- Build the relationship by planning and participating in activities together
- Strive for mutual respect
- Build self-esteem and motivation
- Help set goals and work toward accomplishing them

Time Commitment

- Make a one-year mentoring commitment with a goal to continue past 12 months
- Spend a minimum of ten hours per month with your assigned mentee in a one-on-one capacity
- Communicate with your mentee weekly
- Attend the mandatory initial 2-hour training session, online training on Mentoring Central, and additional ongoing training sessions
- Attend at least 9 out of the 12 monthly Peer Groups
- Participate in optional mentor support groups, mentor recognition events, and mentor community events (e.g. mentor happy hours)

Participation Requirements

- At least 21 years old
- Reside in the DC metro area
- Have access to an automobile, auto insurance, and a good driving record
- Interested in working with young people
- Willing to adhere to all application and screening processes, program policies and procedures
- Complete all background checks and clearances
- Dependable and consistent in meeting the time commitments
- Communicate regularly with program staff, submit activity information, and take constructive feedback regarding mentoring activities
- Have a clean criminal history and do not use illicit drugs
- Use alcohol and controlled substances responsibly
- Not be currently in treatment for substance abuse and have a non-addictive period of at least five years, and/ or in treatment for a mental disorder or hospitalized for such in the past three years
- Encouraging, supportive, willing listener
- Patient and flexible towards changing schedules
- Tolerant and respectful of individual differences



New Mentor Clearance Timeline

Clearance	Description	Complete
Pre-Clearance Process	BEST Kids will review your online application and then conduct an in-person interview. The clearance process officially starts after we make a decision following the phone interview and reference checks.	
Week 1		
Child Protective Register (CPR) Form(s) Notarized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CPR forms should be completed prior to the in-person interview, so a BEST Kids representative can notarize them. -Forms must be completed for DC, as well as any other state(s) you have lived in for the past 5 years. 	
Health Clearance and TB Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please schedule an appointment with your health services provider to get a checkup and TB test (*note: TB test results are read in-person 3 days after the test; please keep in mind for scheduling purposes). - BEST Kids will provide a general health form to have your doctor sign. We also ask that your doctor fax your TB test results directly to us, or that you scan evidence of the results. The health form alone will not suffice. 	
Week 2		
Fingerprints	To be completed at your local police department or a private agency of your choice—this MUST be a federal background check. Please review the “Fingerprint Directions” form for further information regarding pricing, processing times, and procedures.	
Week 3		
Mandated Reporter Training	You can find the training here: http://dc.mandatedreporter.org/ . This online course takes approximately 45 minutes to complete despite the website’s 2-hour estimate. Send BEST Kids a copy of your certificate upon completion.	
Official Driving Record	Driving records can be acquired through the DMV website for the state in which you hold a license. The report should cover your driver history for the past 3 years. Please submit report to BEST Kids.	
Driver’s License & Auto Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please submit a copy of your driver’s license and auto insurance to BEST Kids. - Ride share members may submit proof of membership in lieu of a personal auto insurance policy. 	
Week 4- Week 6		
Wrap Up New Mentor Training & Mentor Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -During Week 4 -Week 6, BEST Kids will receive your CPR results back in the mail. Please use the follow 3 weeks to complete any outstanding clearance requirements. - This time may also be used for you to attend one of our mandatory Mentor Training Sessions (2-hrs on a weeknight- a BK rep will send you a formal invitation). - After attending on-site training, you will be enrolled in our 3-hour online course. 	



Requirements and Responsibilities for Mentors

The following requirements and responsibilities will help you to understand your role as a mentor as it relates to your mentee, BEST Kids, the child's parent/guardian, and the social worker assigned to your child by the District of Columbia's Child & Family Service Agency (CFSA).

The Mentoring Commitment

1. **You must commit to mentor for at least one-year.** If the commitment becomes impossible, please allow 60 days + for BEST Kids to find a replacement mentor *before* you exit the program. Please share your knowledge of the child's interests and needs to help BEST Kids make a successful match.
2. **Meet with your mentee at least 10 (ten) hours each month, and maintain weekly contact.** If you cannot meet a particular week, call your mentee and let him/her know. If you are going to be out of town, send him/her a postcard or letter.
3. **It is a requirement to attend at least 9 out of 12 peer groups per year of mentoring.** It is your responsibility to bring your mentee to BEST Kids' Peer Group programs every 2nd Saturday each month. If you cannot attend a Peer Group, please notify your Mentoring Support Specialist with the reason.
4. At 10 months into your commitment, BEST Kids connect with you to see if you would like to mentor beyond your 1-year commitment. If yes, your commitment will be renewed for an additional 6 months and continue on a 6-month basis moving forward.
5. When the time comes after a minimum of a year commitment that you decide you can no longer be mentor, you are required to attend a closure meeting for you and your mentee.
6. **Ensure the majority of the hours each month are one-on-one hours between you and your mentee.** Often, if other children are on an outing, the focus is among the children themselves and not the mentor/child relationship.
7. Know your mentee's short- and long-term goals. Solicit ideas from your mentee so he/she feels his/her ideas and wishes are being heard and acted upon. Discuss age appropriate goals with your Mentoring Support Specialist and BEST Kids' mental health professionals. Ensure that your mentee's guardian is aware of the goals your mentee establishes.
8. If you feel your mentee's basic needs are not being met (such as food, clothing, medical and dental care, recreation, and education), immediately inform BEST Kids. Sometimes we can help identify resources, other times we need to report this information to CFSA for the well-being of the child.
9. On average, do not spend more than three hours a month tutoring or going over homework with your mentee. While education is clearly important, we are not a tutoring program.
10. **Keep all appointments with your mentee and arrive on time for those appointments.** If you must break an appointment, please notify him/her as far in advance as possible, and explain the reason for canceling. Remember, your mentee has had disappointments in life; inconsistency and unreliability on your part could foster distrust. Insist that your mentee reciprocate in this area; this will help him/her develop a sense of responsibility.
11. We believe in order to establish a supportive culture for our mentors, it is important to develop fellowship and a sharing of common problems among mentors. In turn, BEST Kids hopes to kindle the professional development of each of our mentors. We encourage your active participation in Ongoing Mentor Trainings and Mentor Happy Hours.



Reporting

1. Innovative Mentoring Software (IMS) is BEST Kids' online reporting system where mentors report the progress, health, and quality of the mentoring relationship. Upon match, BEST Kids will assign each mentor a login and password, as well as instructions on how to report mentoring sessions. Report on IMS shortly after each outing, phone conversation, email or other communication with your mentee. **All forms of communication and interaction must be reported.**
2. If you have any questions, or if you feel uncomfortable about something in your match, immediately inform your Mentoring Support Specialist. The Mentoring Support Specialists can be reached at the main office at (202) 397-3272. You will also be given their email and cell phone number.
3. It is your responsibility to inform BEST Kids of any changes in your telephone number or address, or that of your mentee's that you are aware of.
4. You should maintain at least monthly contact with your Mentoring Support Specialist.

Reporting Suspicions of Neglect or Abuse to CFSA

1. Mandated Reporter: As a Mandated Reporter, you are required to immediately report to CFSA suspected child abuse and neglect. You must call the CFSA hotline (202) 671-7233 and report any incident suspect of abuse or neglect. If you do not want to call CFSA, you must ensure that your Mentoring Support Specialist calls on your behalf within 12 hours. If you cannot reach your Mentoring Support Specialist within 12-hours, YOU MUST make the report and then inform BEST Kids.
2. Unusual Incident Report: Incidents that are not immediate signs of abuse or neglect are reported to BEST Kids immediately. A Mentoring Support Specialist will submit a report to CFSA for further investigation. You must inform your Mentoring Support Specialist within 24 hours.
3. If you learn your mentee missed school more than three times, was disciplined in school, is involved in Juvenile Court, or causes you any significant concern, please note it in your monthly report and alert BEST KIDS immediately.



Mentor Monthly Calendar Highlights

Every Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend Peer Group with mentee (Second Saturday)• Schedule weekly contact with mentee and reach average of 10 hours• Monthly check in via email or phone with the Mentoring Support Specialist• IMS Mentor Portal reports of mentoring sessions finalized by the end of the month
Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal setting check-in with Mentoring Support Specialist
Month 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Match meeting• Initial short and long-term goal setting for mentee and/or mentoring relationship
Month 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentor Survey
Month 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal setting check in with Mentoring Support Specialist• First Mentor-Youth Survey evaluation
Month 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 month renewal conversation<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conversation with Mentoring Support Specialist on whether you will continue to mentor after your one year minimum commitment
1 Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Mentor-Youth Survey evaluation• Closure meeting if discontinuing after one year



Policies & Procedures Agreement

The following **policies** will help you to understand your role as a mentor as it relates to your mentee, BEST Kids, the child's parent/guardian, and the social worker assigned to your child by the District of Columbia's Child & Family Service Agency (CFSA).

Consistently Low Mentor Hours

Your 10 hour a month commitment is monumental in fostering a healthy relationship with your mentee. In the best interest of the child, BEST Kids may rematch your mentee with another mentor if you cannot uphold those hours.

BEST Kids will make every attempt to support you as follows:

1. If your Mentoring Support Specialist notices that your hours drop considerably (i.e.: 10 hours one month to 3 hours the next month or started off low at 5 hours), he/she will contact you to assess the situation and offer support. Your Mentoring Support Specialist is here 100% to support you in developing and supporting this relationship. The goal is to increase your hours to 10 by the next month.
2. If by the next month your hours have not increased significantly and there is no unique circumstance inhibiting the development of the relationship, you will be given a 30-day period to increase your hours. If your hours have not been increased and/or there is no improvement your match will be assessed and your mentee will be re-matched with another mentor. We cannot let a child have an inactive relationship for over 60 days. It is unfair to the child and not what our program promotes.

Failure to Report in Innovative Mentoring Software

As part of your commitment, you must report all communication with your mentee in Innovative Mentoring Software (IMS). BEST Kids must report monthly to CFSA and our Board of Directors. We are reporting on your inputs. Continued failure to comply can result in your mentee being re-matched with another mentor. BEST Kids will make every attempt to support you as follows:

1. If you have not reported by the due date, your Mentoring Support Specialist will give a friendly reminder email or phone call. To avoid this, please input all communication with your mentee into Innovative Mentoring Software immediately.
2. If failure to report is a monthly occurrence your match will be assessed and your mentee may be re-matched with another mentor. Please understand we cannot properly report on our program without these reports. The organization can become at-risk if we do not comply with the funder's reporting requirements. We understand forgetting/being late may occur once or twice by accident, but ongoing incidents will not be tolerated.

Mentor Inaccessibility

As part of your commitment, you agree to communicate effectively and regularly with your Mentoring Support Specialist. This is to ensure you are supported and the Mentoring Support Specialist is aware of all aspects of the relationships. If there is consistent ineffective communication, your match will be assessed and your mentee may be re-matched with another mentor. BEST Kids will make every attempt to support you as follows:

1. Your Mentoring Support Specialist will make every effort to communicate effectively with you and respect your preferred modes of communication.
2. If you are inaccessible for a month with no explanation, your Mentoring Support Specialist will give you 2 weeks to get back to them with a reason. If not, your match will be assessed and your mentee may be re-matched with another mentor. Please let your Mentoring Support Specialist know about any circumstances that would inhibit you from communicating (travel with no/limited access to email, etc.).



Peer Group Behavior

As a mentor, you are responsible for your mentee's engagement at Peer Group events. Make sure to keep an eye on your mentee at all times and are aware of their whereabouts. Peer Group staff will facilitate the event and do all they can to engage every mentee by providing structure and hands on activities. However, Peer Groups generally have around 20 people in attendance, so it may be difficult for staff at times to engage each youth individually. Therefore, it is your responsibility to keep your mentee engaged and behaving constructively. Do NOT use your cell phone during Peer Group, as this shows you are not engaged and will result in your mentee not engaging. Being on your phone and not paying attention to your mentee also takes away from mentoring time.

Information Sharing

In order for BEST Kids to obtain feedback on how the mentor relationship is progressing, BEST Kids will periodically administer a mentor questionnaire to your mentee. BEST Kids may share this information, in compliance with federal and state confidentiality laws, with current and prospective funding sources, CFSA, the current or prospective caregiver of your mentee, the Court, and/or BEST Kids' staff. By signing this form, you are providing your consent to BEST Kids to obtain information from your mentee, his/her caregiver, family, or CFSA on their perception of your relationship with your mentee.

Confidentiality

It is the strict policy of BEST Kids, CFSA, and federal law requires us to keep completely confidential all information regarding the identity of the mentees and their biological and care-giving families. If any organization or agency requests information about your mentee, or asks you to participate in a planning meeting, review session, or court hearing, check with BEST Kids before making a commitment. Only with CFSA or Court Approval will BEST Kids share confidential information with any organization or agency.

Mentee & Mentor Visits, Travel, and Gifts

It is strictly prohibited to take your mentee to your house. This is both for your protection and the protection of BEST Kids mentees.

DO NOT take your mentee out of town, or have him/her stay overnight with you. It is important not to confuse the role of a mentor with that of a foster parent. Written approval must be obtained from CFSA and BEST Kids before taking a child on a trip of more than *50 miles* from the District of Columbia or more than *25 miles* from the child's place of residence outside of the District of Columbia. If your relationship has been closed out, you still need BEST Kid's permission to take a child on a trip.

There is a \$25 limit on how much a mentor can spend on a mentee per month. DO NOT lavish money or gifts on your mentee. Your investment in your mentee is one of time and sincere friendship aimed at character building. Exchanging *small* gifts on special occasions (birthdays, holidays, etc.) is appropriate.

Administering Medication

Mentors and Peer Group staff are prohibited from administering any medication to a child, including allergy medicine, over-the-counter drugs, prescriptions, Advil, or any other medication.

Use of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, and Firearms

Any violation of this policy will result in the immediate suspension and/or termination of the mentoring relationship. In addition, violations of this policy may result in notification being given to legal authorities that may result in arrest or legal action, and may be punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.



No participant of the BEST Kids will possess or consume beer, wine, or other alcoholic beverages while actively engaged or prior to actively engaging in mentoring, nor shall any participant endorse the use of alcohol. Mentors and mentees may go to a location where minors are allowed and alcohol is served provided that the mentor and youth do not consume any alcohol.

No participant of the BEST Kids will manufacture, possess, distribute, or use any illegal substance while engaged in mentoring or otherwise.

The intent of BEST Kids is to create a smoke- and tobacco-free environment. To that end, smoking and the use of all tobacco products is prohibited on the premises of BEST Kids and those involved with the program must refrain from the use of such products while engaged in mentoring. The use of tobacco products includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, snuff, or other matters or substances that contains tobacco.

Possession or use of firearms, firecrackers, explosives, toxic or dangerous chemicals, or other lethal weapons, equipment, or material while participating in mentoring activities is strictly prohibited.

Unacceptable Behavior

A number of behaviors are regarded as unacceptable to BEST Kids values and program standards and are prohibited while participants are engaged in mentoring activities:

- Physical contact, such as inappropriate touching, patting, tickling, pinching, punching, wrestling, and physical assault
- Physical, verbal, visual, or behavioral mannerisms or conduct that denigrates, shows hostility, or aversion toward any individual
- Demeaning or exploitive behavior of either a sexual or nonsexual nature, including threats of such behavior
- Display of demeaning, suggestive, or pornographic material
- Known sexual abuse or neglect of a child
- Denigration, public or private, of any mentee parent/guardian or family member
- Denigration, public or private, of political or religious institutions or their leaders
- Intentional violation of any local, state, or federal law
- Drinking while driving under the influence of alcohol
- Possession of illegal substances

Any unacceptable behavior, as specified but not limited to the above, will result in a warning and/or disciplinary action including suspension or termination from participation in the mentoring program.

Social Media

Mentors may-

- Post on BEST Kids' Facebook, Twitter, MeetUp, and event pages
- Respond to any messages or communication that your mentee initiates via social media, and continue an ethical dialogue, ensuring that all ethical commitments and duty of care are upheld that you are comfortable with.
- Accept 'friend' requests from youth and mentors if you feel comfortable doing so

Ethical and Duty of Care Procedures



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- Most social media sites offer a ‘restricted profile’ option which allows certain ‘friends’ to only see a limited amount of information. This should be used when you are ‘friends’ with your mentee and should be checked thoroughly to ensure that you are aware of exactly which information can be viewed by your mentee
- Keep a record of all communication with youth via Facebook or other social media sites, and add to individual files as per other forms of communication through the IMS Mentor Portal
- Do not post anything even remotely personal on youth’s ‘walls’, to protect their privacy. You may send your mentee private messages in order to communicate with them via social media.
- It is strongly recommended that you do not post any information about yourself on the internet which may be embarrassing, inappropriate, compromising or offensive, no matter who can view it. This includes your use of language, your posting of (or tagging of) photographs and your recounting of stories and experiences. Remember that if you are friends with your mentee, they may see these posts.
- If, when viewing an internet site, you become aware of a situation in which a youth is potentially in danger, then it is vital that you report it straight away. Depending on the situation, you may report it to your Mentoring Support Specialist or directly to CFSA by making a hotline call.
- Teach your mentee some general tips on how to be safe using social media:
 - Set strong privacy settings
 - Do not give out personal information on online networks
 - Do not publicly post information that tells others where to find you
 - Be kind and show respect for other people and their ideas
 - Avoid meeting anyone in person that you’ve “met” online

Questions and Complaints

In the event of any questions or complaints relating to CFSA or BEST Kids, its staff or volunteers, please call the Program Director at 202-397-3272 x 101. If you have a complaint about the Program Director, you may reach the Executive Director of BEST Kids at (202) 397-2999.

Clearance Requirements

Maintain the required CFSA clearance requirements. A Mentoring Support Specialist will be in touch annually in order to keep the necessary clearances up to date.



FAQ

In order to ensure that your mentoring relationship is a success, please read the below questions and answers that you may run into with your mentee. If you have any other questions, reach out to BEST Kids or your Mentoring Support Specialist at 202-397-3272.

1. My mentee does not want to go to Peer Group.

- You are setting a precedent by getting your mentee excited about Peer Group and showing excitement yourself. Persistence and encouragement are crucial! Make sure the caregiver knows that every 2nd Saturday there is a Peer Group targeted specifically for your mentee's age group. This way, the caregiver can help prepare your mentee at home for Peer Groups. Talking about the activity in advance, as well as supporting and encouraging your mentee at the activity are crucial.
- If you want to know what the upcoming Peer Groups are, you can email the Peer Group Coordinators to see what is in store for the next few months.

2. My mentee is not home when I arrive at his/her house for our scheduled outing.

- You can potentially prevent this from happening by confirming days in advance, and then the night before.
- Give a good faith effort and try any phone numbers for the caregiver or mentee that you might have.
- If you have no luck, report it in IMS and let your Mentoring Support Specialist know so he/she can help brainstorm a plan. Don't get discouraged- there are creative solutions that we can help with!

3. My mentee's caregiver changed his/her number and/or never returns my calls.

- Let your Mentoring Support Specialist know. They can try to call themselves, contact the social worker for a new phone number, or stop by the mentees home to check in on things. Remember to report your attempted communication in IMS!

4. I will be away on vacation or on a work trip for more than a week.

- Let your mentee know so they understand why you will be out of touch for a while. Try your best to send a postcard or email just to say 'hi'. Part of your role as a mentor isn't just to spend face time with your mentee; it's also letting them know you're available even when you're far away.
- Let your Mentoring Support Specialist know immediately so he/she can try to get your mentee to Peer Group if you will be away for that.

5. I want to bring my mentee to my girlfriend/boyfriends house so they can meet and hang out. The caregiver said this is ok. Can I go?

- Per BEST Kids policy and safety of all parties, you are not allowed to bring a mentee to anyone's home except the mentees or one of their family members that has been approved by BEST Kids and the caregiver.

6. During an outing, my mentee started talking about things I wasn't sure how to respond to, including sex, drug use, bullying, race, etc.

- Although such topics can be difficult to talk about, they are a part of everyday life for many of the youth BEST Kids serves. It's a good sign if your mentee wants to talk to you about things they are wrestling with. As the mentor, your role is to create a safe space for your mentee to share, process, and learn the best way to respond to hard issues. Keep an honest and transparent conversation



going, but do not overshare yourself. For instance, if a youth asks you a question about if you drank before you were 21, you can be honest, but share limited details. Then turn the conversation over to them, asking questions such as “why do you think the legal drinking age is 21?” or, “what are your thoughts about drinking in high school?” This gives the youth an opportunity to process in a healthy and safe way with a trusted adult.

- If the conversation steers to a place where you are not comfortable, you can always tell that to your mentee in gentle and respectful way. Creating personal boundaries is extremely healthy in any relationship.
- Remember: always maintain a judgement-free attitude with your mentee. If you need support, do not hesitate to call your Mentoring Support Specialist to talk through things.

7. **Every time I see my mentee, they want to go out to lunch, see a movie, or do something that costs a lot of money. How to I strategize in doing more low-cost or free activities during our mentoring hours?**

- Talk to your mentee about trying new activities that you know are inexpensive or free, such as going to a Smithsonian museum or a community event. If they push about doing an activity that costs a lot of money, you can explain how things can be expensive and you want to make sure you’re being responsible with your funds. You can use this time as a life-skills coaching moment, but make sure not to lecture!
- BEST Kids asks each mentor not to spend more than \$25 a month in outings. We provide a weekly BEST Kids email filled with free or low-cost activities in the DC Metro area that are age-appropriate for your mentee. There are also plenty of events on MeetUp that are posted periodically and are paid for by BEST Kids. If you ever have an idea of an outing, please let your MSS know so we can look into it!
- Be creative in your outings. If you notice your mentee really enjoys food, see if they’d be interested in cooking together at their home. If your mentee wants to get their nails done, get a few fun nail polish colors to paint them yourselves. Utilize your Mentoring Support Specialist for more ideas on creative, low-cost outings.

8. **I always have to initiate the conversation with my mentee. Should I be concerned that my mentee doesn’t reach out first?**

- First thing to note is that this is not abnormal- in most cases, the mentor is typically pursuing the mentee. That does not mean the mentee is not interested in the relationship. On the contrary, sometimes youth need to feel pursued so that they can understand they are wanted, loved, and cared for. If the mentoring relationship is a little uncomfortable for you, it’s helpful to recognize that it’s probably uncomfortable for your mentee too. Social skills are still developing during adolescence, so use the opportunity to model appropriate behavior. Remember: it’s okay to be quiet in your relationship as well. Sometimes the best friendships are the ones where we can be quiet when we need to, and know we are safe doing so.