



***Christian Association of Youth Mentoring***



## **CAYM Best Practices of *Safe* and *Effective* Mentoring**

# CAYM Mentoring Best Practices

CAYM's mission is to establish and enhance safe, effective, and sustainable youth mentoring ministries in churches and communities. Our goal is to help mobilize the local Christian church to reach these young people within their church and community. The following *Best Practices* offer **standards** for your ministry that you need to put into practice and abide by as well as **recommendations** that your ministry should strongly consider. By following the best practices as outlined in this document, mentoring ministries will stay focused on their objective of providing safe and effective mentoring that is God honoring in its practice. Our CAYM mentoring programs are Christ-centered and Church-driven.

## 1. Spiritual Focus

### a. Christ-centered

- i. Your program seeks to honor our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ii. Your program has a prayer team praying for your mentoring matches.
- iii. Your program helps to equip and train your mentors in showing God's love to the kids and families through their words and actions.
- iv. Pray often for your church and community. Ask God to help connect you with young people and those needing mentors within your area.
- v. Pray that God would provide the volunteers, youth, and resources you need to run your mentoring program.
- vi. Pray that God will lead you to faithful and committed mentors and protect you from anyone who could cause harm to children, the ministry, and the church.
- vii. Follow God's prompting and prayerfully consider whom God wants you to match in a mentoring relationship.
- viii. Pray often for the mentoring matches. Pray for on-going wisdom with opportunities and issues that arise. Journal the prayers that God has answered regarding the mentoring matches.
- ix. Ask God to open doors for those that will support your mentoring ministry.
- x. Pray for God to open the hearts of youth, their families, and the community to the Gospel through the faithful example and words of mentors.

## 2. RECRUITMENT – Recruitment Plan

### a. Mentor Recruitment

- i. Be Honest. Programs should engage recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, and challenges of mentoring.
- ii. Be Clear. Your program must have a written statement outlining eligibility requirements and the screening process for mentors.
- iii. Focus on Relationships. Mentoring is all about relationships. Recruiting should model mentoring throughout the process. Trust is critical in both.

### b. Protégé Recruitment

- i. Be focused. Programs should recruit youth based on the youth's needs and the ability of your program to minister to those needs.
- ii. Create a written document. Programs should have a statement outlining requirements for protégés along with a parent information sheet giving program and parental guidelines.

### c. Recommendations

- i. Church-centered recruiting. Once your team is trained and in place, start recruiting mentors at your church. If you are a multi-church ministry recruit at other local churches as you make connections.
- ii. Make an extra effort to recruit men. Women tend to naturally move toward mentoring, Men are more difficult to engage in mentoring. Therefore a male-oriented recruiting strategy is recommended.
- iii. Mentors should be over 21 years old. Young adults make excellent mentors, particularly those who have not yet started their own family. Adults with grown children have gained understanding and are good mentors.
- iv. The prime target age for kids to be matched is between 8 – 12 years of age. Older teenagers will benefit from mentoring but are more complicated and often require great patience from the Mentor. Ministries should avoid matching younger children (under 8). Other programs would serve this age group better.
- v. When searching for adult mentors, a personal request is most effective once you have launched a church wide publicity campaign.
- vi. Make sure that your promotional campaign states that you are looking for “faithful and believing Christians” interested in mentoring. This will help focus your effort.

### **3. SCREENING**

#### **a. Mentor Screening**

- i. Mentor completes a written or online application.
- ii. Mentor agrees to a minimum one-year commitment for the mentoring relationship.
- iii. Mentor agrees to participate in face-to-face meetings with his protégé once a week for at least two hours over the course of the relationship. (This commitment can be modified to meet the needs of the protégés as well as fulfill the program’s goals.)
- iv. The interview team arranges at least one face-to-face meeting with the prospective mentor.
- v. The program conducts a home visit with the prospective mentor to observe the home environment and to confirm the approval for participation with the spouse for mentors that are married. The home visit is required if the protégé will be visiting the mentors home during the course of the match.
- vi. Mentor signs a volunteer agreement that explains expectations, commitment, program policies, and restrictions regarding contact with the protégé.
- vii. Follow-thru with four reference checks on the mentor – spouse/family, pastor/church leader, employer, and a friend.
- viii. If the potential mentor is married, ask the spouse if they support this decision.
- ix. The program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on any potential adult mentor, including sex offender and child abuse registries. Consider contacting the national and/or state criminal records database. This explained thoroughly at the CAYM training. State this on the application.
- x. The program has a rescreening process. At a minimum, background checks are conducted on volunteers every three years.
- xi. If the potential mentor has a criminal record, they can be allowed to mentor if the following conditions are met:
  - The crime did not involve victimization of a vulnerable person: child, youth, person with a disability, or senior citizen.

- They have had a minimum of three years of stability (spiritual, church involvement, employment, relationships, and location) after release.

**b. Protégé Screening**

- An intake interview must be conducted with every parent and protégé. It is highly recommended that the interview take place at the parent's home.
- You need to determine which youth need and would benefit from having a mentor.
- Parent/guardian must provide full informed consent for the child's participation and sign a release form allowing the child's involvement.
- Parent/guardian must sign a mentoring agreement that explains the expectations, commitment, program policies and restrictions.
- All youth must be willing participants of the mentoring program.
- Parent/guardian and protégé agree to a one-year minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship where the mentor and protégé meet face-to-face on a weekly basis for a minimum of two hours. (This commitment can be modified to meet the needs of the protégés as well as fulfill the program's goals.)

**c. Recommendations**

- Focus on screening good people "in" as opposed to screening people "out."

## **4. TRAINING**

**a. Mentor Training**

- The CAYM training program provides a minimum of three hours of pre-match, in-person training/ education.
- Mentor training includes the following topics:
  - Program's mission and vision.
  - Program overview - type and nature of mentoring along with program goals.
  - Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentor/protégé relationship.
  - Mentor's obligations and appropriate roles.
  - General program policy and procedures
  - Biblical basis for mentoring.
  - Child development needs.
  - Relationship development and maintenance.
  - Ethical issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship, including confidentiality and issues of reporting child abuse.
  - Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.
  - Sources of assistance available to support mentors including the supervision process provided by the ministry.
- The program will provide regularly scheduled mentor training/ educational sessions (in groups or individually), during the mentor/ protégé relationship.
- CAYM training encourages long-term mentor relationships. Mentors will be trained about the importance of keeping commitments. Trust and commitment are vital for strong mentoring matches. A young person feels rejected if mentors frequently cancel or reschedule meetings. This is harmful and may result in deeper self esteem issues for the child.

- v. The #1 success benchmark for the program is the “length of match”. The #1 indicator of a poorly run program is unexpected match closures.
- vi. We find that successful mentor/protégé relationships can last many years, even for a lifetime. Excellent training helps matches endure.

**b. Mentor Relationship Guidelines:**

- i. Mentor must schedule meetings with the knowledge and approval of the parent.
- ii. We encourage mentors to be patient concerning spiritual lessons with the protégé until they have established a strong trust relationship.
- iii. Mentors are not parents and should not give money to the child. If the family and/or child need financial assistance, mentors may provide this through the church anonymously.
- iv. Mentors should not spend one-on-one time with the single parent of the protégé if they are of the opposite sex. Meetings can be arranged at the church with a member of the mentor team present.
- v. Mentors should not have meetings with their protégé outside of public areas. Private meetings in either home (without another adult present) are not allowed.
- vi. Mentors are not allowed to have the child on an overnight event unless it is a (church/ministry authorized group activity) and they follow the rules established for the event. For an older teen, there may be opportunities to do things together that require a long drive and overnight. These are exceptions and would require the following:
  - Prior written approval of the parent and supervisor.
  - The parent and supervisor sign a release form allowing the mentor to take the child and authorize medical care if needed.
  - An approved third-party must be present.
- vii. Anyone transporting the protégé during a mentoring outing must have a valid drivers license and valid insurance.

**c. Recommendations**

- i. The CAYM mentor orientation addresses how to build a trusting relationship between the mentor and protégé. All mentor training programs should include the following:
  - How mentoring works – In order for positive change to occur, the mentor and protégé need to form a bond. If this bond is not formed, the mentor and protégé may disengage from the match before the relationship lasts long enough to have a positive impact on the youth (J.E. Rhodes). The bond is formed through developing trust. This means both mentor and protégé feel understood, liked, and respected.
  - Research shows that strong bonds depend on the ability to understand and respond empathetically to others experiences (J.E. Rhodes).
  - Bonds between mentors and protégés tend to deepen with time and consistency.
  - Longevity has been found to be critical to the development of high-quality mentoring relationships (DuBois & Karcher).
  - Research shows that matches that engaged in social activities and shared in the decision-making process around what they would do together tended to have closer relationships (DuBois & Karcher).
  - Participating in fun activities together is a key part of relationship building between the mentor and protégé.

- Research shows that any match that ends before the agreed time will have a negative impact on the youth. It is also shown that the impact of mentoring grows as the relationship matures over time (Rhodes).
- The best way to ensure that a relationship will run its natural course is to carefully screen, train, and support both mentor and protégé.
- Vulnerable youth are positively impacted and their lives are re-directed by having a one-on-one mentor who they can trust. The mentor is a friend, guide and hero to these young people.
- One of the keys for vulnerable youth to be resilient was that they learned to trust one adult outside their home.

## **5. MATCHING**

### **a. Making the match**

- i. The ministry team prayerfully considers its mission as well as the characteristics of the mentor and protégé (e.g., interests, proximity, availability, age, race, ethnicity, personality, and expressed preferences of mentor and protégé) when making matches.
- ii. The mentor supervisor arranges an initial meeting between the mentor, protégé, parent and mentor supervisor. All parties sign the mentoring agreement.
- iii. Only same-gender mentoring matches are allowed. (Exceptions can be made for ministries that match families with youth. In these incidences, no one-on-one activity is allowed between a mentor and protégé of the opposite gender.)
- iv. CAYM holds to the biblical teaching that sex is reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. All mentors should hold to that same principle. Protégés and their families are not required to hold to those principles. It is important for the ministry to inform them of the organization's Christian beliefs while at the same time unequivocally welcoming them into the program.

### **b. Recommendations**

- An important factor in developing a close mentoring relationship is the common interests shared by the mentor and protégé. Shared interest between the mentor and protégé can lead to a stronger and longer match.
- It is advisable, within a family that has multiple children who want a mentor, to begin with just one mentoring match. This will help establish stability and encourage the family to support the mentoring process rather than become overwhelmed by it.
- Some parents could benefit by having a mentor. CAYM has training for the parents of children being mentored. Parent mentoring provides positive support for the parent, which can help the child and family.

## **6. SUPERVISION and SUPPORT**

### **a. Supervising**

- Within the program, contacts are made with the mentor, parent/guardian, and protégé within the first forty-eight hours of the match. Contact is then made twice a month for the first three months, and once a month thereafter.

- Contacts are made with the protégé's referral agent and the mentor's pastor at the beginning of the match and for yearly updates.
- Documents and information about each mentor/protégé contact, including; date, length, and nature of contact and insures they are maintained and confidential.
- The ministry team and mentors should have access to ongoing training.
- Associate Membership with CAYM is recommended because it provides mentors and the ministry team with access to resources. This includes: expert advice from a CAYM "coach", professional updates, publications, webinars, referrals & networking, and up to date ideas. These resources help mentors and the leadership team negotiate challenges in the mentoring relationship, and other needs as they arise.
- The ministry team supervisor needs to conduct a match evaluation every six months for the first year, and then once a year thereafter. The yearly evaluation should include:
  1. Individual interviews with parent, youth, and mentor.
  2. A combined meeting with the youth and mentor to celebrate and review how everything is going.
  3. An emphasis on continuing the match (if deemed helpful) and making another year commitment.
- CAYM suggests that the team help facilitate one or more group activities per month for mentors and their protégés, and/or offers information about activities that mentors and protégés might wish to participate in together.
- Be sure to thank and recognize the mentor, protégé, parent, and church at the end of each match year. A certificate should be given to both the mentor and protégé. A formal setting such as an event or church service is encouraged.
- Mentor supervisors (facilitator/coaches) must have the ability to consistently contact the mentor and protégé's family by phone. Supervisors must have an advisor with counseling experience to help be a guide for challenging issues.

#### **b. Recommendations**

- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) should focus on developing relationships with the mentor and parent primarily. The coach should make supervisory contact with the child without developing a bond with the child.
- From the onset of the match, Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) should spend one-on-one time with the mentor to develop a relationship with them.
- Supervision can be challenging. Be consistent in your contact schedule with the mentor and family. Make sure the mentor is getting together with their protégé regularly. If communication lines are down for an extended time, there is a good chance that a problem exists.
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) should stress that research confirms that frequent and consistent contact between mentor and protégé is the key ingredient in the creation of a strong mentoring relationship. (DuBois & Karcher, 90).
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) are often buffers between the parent and mentor. Deal with problems and issues promptly. If the mentor, parent, or child cannot resolve issues, you will need to intervene. If you wait, things will likely get more complicated with less likelihood of being resolved. Remember, problems often provide opportunities for ministry.

- One of the biggest challenges in supervising is that mentors do not feel like they are making a difference. Pass on any encouragement you get from the parent or protégé to the mentor, as well as your own positive observations. Set goals with mentors so they can see progress. Have the protégés send a thank you card to their mentor once a year. Celebrate match anniversaries. Pray with the mentor when they are discouraged.
- In satisfied matches, mentors appeared to follow a “youth-driven” approach in which the mentor effectively identified the needs and interests of the youth and addressed them in such a way that the protégé would be receptive to help (DuBois & Karcher, 90).
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) can get overwhelmed. The team leader or another member should be in consistent contact with the supervisor to make sure that they are encouraged and positive.
- Supervisors (facilitator/coaches) can also connect with supervisors from other churches and ministries through the CAYM Associates.
- School-based programs should contain the goal of transitioning matches into community-based matches.
- As part of your case notes write out and remember mentoring success stories so that the mentor can be reminded of the progress made over time.
- Conduct program evaluations. It can really help the supervisor and mentor know how they are doing. People want to know how they are doing.

## 7. CLOSURE

- a. When a match is ending (or has ended prematurely) a process of closure is needed to provide the protégé, mentor, and parent an opportunity to review both the positives of the relationship, as well as the lessons learned from the struggles in order for all parties to get the full benefit of their commitment to the mentoring relationship.
- b. Programs must have a procedure to manage closures, including:
  - A closure meeting for mentor and protégé to review their time together. (When a mentor is ending a relationship, it is important for the child to know that it is not his/her fault.)
  - Contact with the parent to get their input on the match.
  - Written notification of match closure to the mentor, protégé, parent, church, and referral agent. Include a statement that if the mentor and protégé continue to meet, it will be outside the auspices of the ministry.
  - A process of deciding whether protégé and/or mentor will be rematched.
  - An evaluation process for each person to consider ways they can apply what has been learned to their lives.
- c. The closure process should include an exit interview with mentor, parent, and protégé.

Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

DuBois, David L. and Karcher, Michael J. (2005). *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

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