



# Yellowknife Volunteer Mentorship Program Guidelines & Policies for Mentors

A program run by the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories (FFCNWT) in partnership with Home Base Yellowknife

[www.ffcnwt.com](http://www.ffcnwt.com)

[www.homebaseyk.com](http://www.homebaseyk.com)

## Primary Expectations of Volunteers

To be a successful Mentor, you must understand and accept the following expectations:

- **One-Year Commitment** – Being a consistent, reliable friend is more important than what you do with your Mentee. It takes time to build trust and develop a friendship. That's why all of our Mentors are expected to volunteer for at least one year. This commitment is supported by research. Studies consistently show that **mentoring matches lasting longer than one year are most likely to generate positive youth outcomes, while those lasting fewer than 12 months can actually be more detrimental to the child than not having a mentor at all.**
- **Communicate with Foster Family Coalition Staff** – Open and frequent communication with Foster Family Coalition staff is fundamental to the volunteer experience. You will have at least monthly contacts with staff during the first year of your match. These contacts will be made at least quarterly after the first year is completed. As a Mentor, you are expected to respond to any inquiries from Foster Family Coalition staff and keep in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- **Meet & Communicate Regularly with your Mentee** – Mentors are expected to make face-to-face contact with their Mentee twice per month for three to five hours at a time. Many matches meet more often depending on availability. Again, it's important for you to be a consistent and reliable friend to your Mentee. If you are out of town for a prolonged period of time, ensure the Volunteer Coordinator, your Mentee, and your Mentees caregiver are aware well ahead of time.
- **Be a Good Friend & Mentor** – By dedicating time to your Mentee and showing them that you care, you will become an important figure in their life!
- **Be an Advocate for our Mentorship Program** – There are hundreds of children and youth in our community who need a Mentor. Unfortunately, we don't have enough Mentors for them. Perhaps you know others who might make good Mentor. Encourage them to volunteer to make a difference in the life of a child or youth!

What will NOT be expected from you as a volunteer mentor:

- Provide basic necessities like food or money



- Organize elaborate or expensive activities
- Act as a substitute for a parent, guardian or teacher
- Act as a tutor
- Take the child or youth to appointments
- Act as a babysitter for the child or youth or their siblings/friends
- Act as a therapist or social worker

## Important Guidelines & Policies

### *Key Points:*

1. Relationships have ups and downs.
2. Relationships take time to develop.
3. Relationships don't happen by chance.

### *Guidelines:*

1. Be consistent, caring, and dependable so that your Mentee can learn to trust you. Specifically, avoid breaking dates or making promises you can't keep.
2. Be an advocate for your Mentee. Assure them that they matter.
3. Avoid discussing their personal and family background or circumstances in front of them.
4. Be supportive of your Mentee's parental figure. Do not pass judgments regarding any family situation. It is appropriate for a Mentor to address misbehavior within the context of the mentoring relationship, but leave "parenting" to the parent. Every parent supports and disciplines their child in their own way. If you suspect there is abuse occurring, talk to the Volunteer Coordinator about if and how you need to approach Child and Family Services. Child and Family Services can be reached directly during daytime hours (Monday – Friday 9 – 5pm) at 867-767-9122 and at all other hours at 867-445-1092.
5. Don't try to be a taxi service, probation officer, "child saver," or parent rehabilitator.
6. In most cases, Mentors should expect to pay for match activities. However, activities do not need to be expensive. Furthermore, Mentees and their parental figures are encouraged to contribute to activities as they are able. Consult the 'Mentor Resources' section (<https://www.fcnwt.com/mentor-resources>) of the Foster Family Coalition website for free or low-cost activities.
7. Do not purchase gifts for your Mentee unless it is their birthday, an important holiday, or other special occasion (for example, if they accomplished something big). Consult with Foster Family Coalition staff if your Mentee needs clothing, food, school supplies, etc.
8. Mentors are prohibited from bringing their Mentee to their homes **(tbd)**.
9. As a strong suggestion, do not include any outside person(s) on outings with your Mentee – at least for the first 90 days of the relationship. It takes time for the two of you to develop a trusting friendship.



10. Let your Mentee help to make decisions about match activities and outings.
11. Call your Mentee before you pick them up, and be sure to get parental approval for the day, time, and activity. Return your Mentee home at the agreed upon time, or call the parent if you are delayed.
12. If your contact information changes for any reason, please notify the FFCNWT and your Mentee and their parental figure immediately.
13. Regular, ongoing contact with FFCNWT staff is a requirement of the program. Please, respond promptly to calls from the Volunteer Coordinator, and feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

***Policies:***

1. Do not put your Mentee in a situation that is embarrassing, uncomfortable, dangerous, or otherwise inappropriate for him/her.
2. Respect your Mentee's personal boundaries. Refrain from tickling, wrestling, sitting on laps, backrubs, or touching games.
3. Alcoholic beverages should not be consumed by Mentors before or during times they interact with their Mentees.
4. Mentors are prohibited from giving prescription drugs to their Mentees unless absolutely necessary, prescribed to the Mentee by a physician, and authorized by the Mentee's legal guardian. A Mentee's legal guardian must also give verbal consent to the Mentor for the child to take non-prescription drugs.
5. Safe driving is extremely important – seat belts must be worn, and traffic laws must be obeyed at all times. Children 12 and under must sit in the back seat. For more information, check here: <https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/en/services/highways-ferries-and-winter-roads/child-car-seat-safety>. For mentees to ride in their Mentors vehicle, mentors must provide a copy of their license and registration to the Volunteer Coordinator, and the Mentor must receive their Mentee's guardian's permission. Volunteers must show proof of auto insurance annually with \$2 million liability insurance.
6. Physical or corporal punishment is prohibited.
7. Mentors are required to report any suspected child abuse to Child and Family Services. They can be reached directly during daytime hours (Monday to Friday 9 – 5 pm) at 867-767-9122 and at all other hours at 867-445-1092. Following any child abuse report, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.
8. Confidentiality is extremely important. All information that is shared with a Mentor about their Mentee or their Mentee's family is strictly confidential. Similarly, any information shared with the Mentee or Mentee's legal guardian about the volunteer is also confidential.
9. Firearms, weapons, and ammunition must be secured and not accessible to Mentees. If you obtain a weapon after you have been matched, you must inform the Volunteer Coordinator and ensure it is always locked and inaccessible to your Mentee.



10. Adult literature, videos, photographs, etc. must not be accessible to Mentees.
11. Dating or romantic relationships between volunteers and Mentee's guardians are prohibited.
12. Overnight activities are strictly prohibited between Mentees and Mentors.
13. Obtain written permission from the Mentee's guardian and Volunteer Coordinator prior to any travel with your Mentee.
14. Volunteers must complete the RCMP Vulnerable Sector Check every year.
15. Volunteers must obtain a child protection records check through the Department of Health and Social Services at the beginning of their volunteering experience (**tbd**).

### Safety of the Mentee

Child safety is our top priority. All of our volunteers play an integral role in ensuring child safety. Mentors are responsible for modeling appropriate behaviors and closely supervising their Mentees during all outings. Some important safety issues that may come to light during match meetings include: Internet safety, bullying, neighborhood violence, medical conditions, interactions with strangers, and child abuse. Talk to the Volunteer Coordinator if something arises and you do not know how to handle it.

### Communication and Updates

After the match is made, the FFC will support Mentors and Mentees by regularly contacting them with support, advice, training, and positive reinforcement. Our focus is to help all matches develop healthy, fun, and lasting relationships. In general, we want to encourage open and frequent communication. Mentors are expected to fill out a form after they spend time with their Mentee to update the Volunteer Coordinator on your activities. This does not need to be extremely detailed, but it is a requirement. We want to hear about the great things you are doing with your Mentee! The form can be found here: <https://forms.gle/pzeZwZWfwxuJwua59>. If filling out an online survey is not possible for you on a regular basis, please connect with the Volunteer Coordinator about alternative ways to check in.

Mentors are required to respond to and keep in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator, even when the match is going well. Regular, ongoing contact with the FFC is a requirement of the program, and failure to maintain open communication with the FFC Volunteer Coordinator may result in match closure. This culture of support and communication is a key component of the volunteer experience.

In addition to filling out the Google Form (<https://forms.gle/pzeZwZWfwxuJwua59>), you can connect with the FFC through:

- Telephone or text;
- Face-to-face – Meeting or FFC event;



- E-mail.

### **Agency Website and Facebook Page – Your Connection to the Foster Family Coalition**

FFCNWT maintains a special section on its website – “**Mentor Resources**” found under the ‘Volunteer’ tab - reserved for active volunteer mentors. This page provides mentors with mentoring ideas, informational resources, and other forms of assistance. You can find this page here: <https://www.ffcnwt.com/mentor-resources>