

OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH BUILD MENTORING MODEL AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document provides an overview of the Mentoring Alliance program model, several requirements of participation, and answers to many of the most frequently asked questions about implementing a YouthBuild mentoring program.

YouthBuild National Mentoring Alliance Model at a Glance

- Funding from OJJDP to create 15-month mentoring relationships that span both the YouthBuild year and six months of post-graduation time
- Matches are one-to-one with service and group activities supplementing the match
- Mentees must be between 16 and 18 at the time of match
- Matches meet twice a month during the YB year, have weekly contact post-graduation
- Match activities are centered around youth Life Plans
- Mentors must be screened, trained, supervised
- Formal evaluation will examine program outcomes and impact

What is the YouthBuild mentoring model?

For the purposes of the YouthBuild Mentoring Alliance, mentoring is defined as “support and guidance, provided through a one-to-one relationship with a caring adult to assist a young person in achieving his or her own developmental goals.”

The goal of these one-to-one relationships is to improve and enhance the outcomes of YouthBuild participants—building on the personal growth and success they find in YouthBuild and helping them transition into the period after their formal YouthBuild participation ends. We hope that YouthBuild mentoring can help boost academic achievement, assist with career exploration, and strengthen connections between YouthBuild participants and their own families and communities. These supportive mentoring relationships should also have the impact of reducing juvenile crime, substance abuse, and recidivism overall for YouthBuild participants and graduates.

YouthBuild mentoring relationships generally last for 15 months, with a youth ideally receiving nine months of mentoring while enrolled in the formal YouthBuild program and six more months of mentoring after (with adjustments made to accommodate specific YouthBuild program cycles). Matches between mentors and mentees are made as soon in the program cycle as possible to maximize the amount of mentoring provided to each youth. After their participation in YouthBuild is over, matches transition into a post-graduation phase designed to ensure that youth have caring support as they continue their efforts to move forward in their lives.

YouthBuild mentoring can provide young people with...

- Emotional support
- Career support
- Internship opportunities
- Leadership development support
- Access to community resources
- Academic support
- Positive role models
- Greater chance for success and accomplishment

Core Principles of YouthBuild Mentoring

Other details of the YouthBuild mentoring model are explained throughout the rest of this chapter, but it is important to note that there are several core principles that all participating Mentoring Alliance sites must adhere to. All YouthBuild mentoring must be:

Elective — Participation in the YouthBuild mentoring model is elective. Young people must realize the potential value of a mentoring relationship and choose to be involved on their own.

Youth-Empowered — In the YouthBuild model, match activities are largely driven by each young person's Life Plan, the document that sets them on a course for long-term success. Each youth determines how the mentor can be most helpful as they work to achieve their goals. At the time of graduation, students can also nominate new mentors that will guide them during the transition. Within appropriate boundaries, youth are in the "driver's seat" as to where their relationship goes and what they take away from the experience.

Aligned — The YouthBuild mentoring model is aligned with the philosophy, vision, and core values of YouthBuild: love, respect, knowledge, opportunity, leadership, community. This model supports and promotes the idea that meaningful relationships between community members, such as a young person and mentor, are the foundation of a healthy and just society.

Integrated — The language of coaching and support and the concept of building social networks are already built into the activities, routines, and tasks of YouthBuild. This helps young people identify positive influences in their lives and provides them with opportunities to learn trust and build productive relationships. The Mentoring Alliance program model builds on this established culture by developing formal mentoring relationships that provide individualized support. YouthBuild staff, teachers and worksite supervisors, and mentors will coordinate their efforts to support the young person. The mentoring program does not happen in isolation, but rather is a fully integrated aspect of the overall YouthBuild services.



Community-Based — YouthBuild focuses on improving communities in order to create a greater, more just society. Reaching out to volunteers, caring adults, and potential mentors within the local community is consistent with YouthBuild’s approach to realizing a network of committed people for maximum learning and impact. YouthBuild matches also engage in service activities and other projects that strengthen their involvement in the community.

Which youth can participate?

Because of the specifics of the OJJDP funding for the Mentoring Alliance, youth participants must be between 16 and 18 years of age to be eligible to begin receiving mentoring services. Funds cannot be used to match youth who are older than 18, although local sites are encouraged to provide mentoring for *all* YouthBuild participants if they can find other funds to support matches for older participants.

In addition to the age requirements, youth must have completed their “mental toughness” or other “readiness training” and have given their permission to participate in the mentoring program (remember, YouthBuild mentoring is always elective). While all eligible youth are welcome to participate, those who will find the most success are those who are open to the experience and who are ready to engage adults in a meaningful way. Youth who are exhibiting disruptive, antisocial, or delinquent tendencies may not yet be ready to benefit from a mentoring relationship.

Who serves as mentors?

YouthBuild mentors will come from all walks of life in your community. Some will be directly recruited by your Mentoring Coordinator; others will be identified by youth during service projects and other activities in “mentor-rich environments.” Some may even be YouthBuild alumni who want to help another person find a similar path to a successful future.

All YouthBuild mentors must:

- Be able to pass the screening requirements for participation
- Participate in initial and ongoing trainings
- Commit to the full duration of the match (15 months) and the frequency of match meetings and contacts (minimum of 2 per month during the YouthBuild year, 4 per month post-graduation)
- Perform 2-4 service projects and engage in other group activities
- Participate in all post-match activities, including match supervision check-ins and any data collection related to program evaluation

In addition to these requirements, YouthBuild mentors should have a disposition that allows them to be supportive of the mentee without being judgmental. They must be willing to stick it out during the natural ups and downs of building a mentoring relationship. Adults who do not

put the youth's needs first, or who seem intent on "fixing" the youth rather than supporting them as they make choices and find their own way, may not be the best fit for the mentoring experience.

YouthBuild staff members are allowed to serve as *mentors* to youth, provided that the mentoring time happens outside of regular YouthBuild hours and services.

What is a "mentor-rich environment"?

In the course of their YouthBuild experience, young people are exposed to many adults through speakers, visitors, community service projects, workshop facilitators, community partners, and program events. Many of these might be candidates for mentors. Participating programs are asked to reframe these normal program activities as constituting a "mentor-rich environment." Staff members are asked to urge students to consider people they meet in these activities as potential mentors, and support students to pursue contact with them.

How and where does the mentoring take place?

YouthBuild mentoring matches are one-to-one matches between an adult community member and a YouthBuild participant. Matches meet for a **minimum of two (2) sessions per month while the mentee is enrolled in YouthBuild** (most commonly two 2-hour sessions for a total of four hours of meeting time per month). Ideally, this provides the youth with **nine months or more of mentoring** while participating in YouthBuild.

Once the youth transitions out of YouthBuild, the match continues to meet for a minimum of **four (4) sessions a month** (two of these can be phone contact) **for the required six months of post-YouthBuild time** (or longer if they wish to continue the relationship).

NOTE: The mentoring relationship is intended to last 15 months. YouthBuild program cycles vary in length. There are cycles that last 6 months, 8 months, 9 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months. The point is to structure the mentoring commitment so that it ideally lasts 15 months, for greater impact, starting near the beginning of the program cycle. So if a program cycle is 6 months, then the post-graduation part of mentoring would continue for 9 months.

Matches primarily meet away from the YouthBuild school and worksites, although YouthBuild facilities can certainly be used for group activities, trainings, and matching ceremonies. The point of YouthBuild mentoring is to get the young person out in the community building social networking competencies, acquiring professional and personal contacts, and further developing his or her skills.

What is meant by “social networking competency”?

Most young people do not come into a YouthBuild program knowing how to find, create, and maintain a positive support network. A key component of the YouthBuild Mentoring Alliance approach is to deliberately teach young people how to do this. It involves helping a young person feel they deserve supportive relationships, define healthy relationships, approach people they would like in their network, and nurture the relationships. This social networking skill has life-long value. It helps a young person identify and maintain a successful mentor relationship. Mentoring Coordinators will receive training and technical assistance in developing this competency. There is also a “Ready for Mentoring” guidebook for young people.

What do matches do together?

One of the most exciting aspects of the YouthBuild mentoring model is the wide variety of activities that supplement the mentee’s classroom and worksite experiences. These activities are always as youth-driven as possible, putting young people directly in charge of best utilizing the support of a mentor.

In general, YouthBuild mentoring activities fall into two broad categories:

- *Life Plan activities* — Each mentee will create a Life Plan a month or two into their program year (see Chapter 8 for details about Life Plans, including templates). These plans provide structure and focus for the match, although mentors should also recognize the importance of fun activities and simply “hanging out” in building trust with their mentees.
- *Service activities* — All YouthBuild matches will engage in service activities two-to-four times per year (quarterly is the preferred frequency). These can be done by individual matches, but programs may find a greater community impact by planning service projects that bring all mentors and mentees together. Programs are also encouraged to coordinate any service projects with relevant classroom content or other academic curriculum.

Other group activities and community outings can also be planned by the Mentoring Coordinator to supplement the mentoring relationships. Programs are also encouraged to involve mentors in activities provided by the YouthBuild site in general.

How is the program staffed?

While appropriate staffing of each program should be determined by the local site, each YouthBuild mentoring program should have a dedicated Mentoring Coordinator who is responsible for the administration of program activities, such as mentor recruitment and training, orientation of youth participants, arranging match activities, and monitoring matches over time.



Other YouthBuild staff, such as counselors, teachers, worksite supervisors, and others can assist with program tasks as needed. Remember, the mentoring program must be fully integrated into the YouthBuild site, not working in isolation. This is best accomplished by giving school and worksite staff members some role in the program's activities.

What data and reports are required by participating programs?

As part of the Mentoring Alliance, a YouthBuild program is required to keep records of and submit data reports to YouthBuild USA on a quarterly basis. Some data points will be included in quarterly WebStaQ reports, and others will be submitted via the OJJDP MIS, DCTAT. Data includes number of matches, mentors recruited, screened, and trained; mentor-rich activities and community service projects held. Changes in behavior and attitudes are measured by pre- and post-mentoring program assessments. Program attendance, retention, GED or diploma attainment, and recidivism will also be reported. Training and technical assistance is available for such data reporting.

There are three main reasons for this ongoing data collection. The first is that YouthBuild USA is required to submit a quarterly summary of data to OJJDP. Second, it will inform your program about progress and improvements needed. And third, as a collective learning community, we will use the aggregated and cumulative data to tell the story of how mentoring is working to the wider YouthBuild network, and to the wider world.

What do sites participating in the Mentoring Alliance commit to?

Sites participating in the Mentoring Alliance agree to:

- Hire or designate a Mentoring Coordinator to manage the mentoring work
- Commit to a minimum number of matches per year for 16-18 year old students
- Follow the operational requirements detailed in this manual
- Administer all data collection instruments at beginning of program, at graduation, and at end of match
- Participate in the Mentoring Alliance learning community (i.e., conference calls, online forums, webinars) to share successes, challenges, and lessons
- Collect relevant data and submit them to YouthBuild USA periodically

Refer to the program implementation timeline to see major tasks that must be completed prior to recruiting and matching mentors and mentees.



YouthBuild Mentoring Program Implementation at a Glance

- Mentoring Coordinator recruits mentors, ready for opening day of program
- Matches are made during the first few weeks of program, beginning with a public match commitment ceremony
- Pre-match assessments are given to mentees at beginning of match
- Life Plans are started during first month of program; regularly updated
- Matches meet for four contact hours per month (twice a month during the school year, weekly post-graduation)
- Mentor-rich activities begin early and continue throughout program
- Mentoring Coordinator receives ongoing coaching/support through YouthBuild USA
- Community service activities done 2-4 times a year
- Mentoring Coordinator continues to recruit new mentors and monitor and support existing matches
- Mentoring Coordinator keeps records, reports data to YouthBuild USA quarterly
- Occasional mentor acknowledgment or match celebration events
- Post-match assessments given just before graduation
- Match closure/celebration and/or new match ceremony at graduation time
- Mentor coordinator supports post-graduation matches for six months (post-graduation time may vary at sites with a shorter or longer YouthBuild program "year," but all matches should plan for a 15-month duration regardless of program cycle)
- Match closure or renewal of match takes place six months after graduation