

# Mentorship Program Policies and Procedures



Updated 1/24/22

# Table of Contents

Mission Statement	3
Overview of Program and Requirements	3
Youth Eligibility Requirements	3
Mentor Eligibility Requirements	4
Role of a Mentor	5
Mentor/Mentee Relationship	6
Youth Guidelines and Code of Conduct	8
THRU Project Programs	9
Steps to Effective Mentoring	11
Community Resources	12

## THRU Project Mission Statement

To help foster youth overcome the challenges of growing up in the foster care system by providing guidance, support, and advocacy in order to prepare them for life after foster care.

## Program Overview

The purpose of the THRU Project mentoring program is to provide a trusted adult (mentor) to a youth in the foster care system, or a youth who has left the foster care system. The role of the mentor is to give guidance and support to help facilitate a life of stable independence for their mentee.



## Youth Eligibility Requirements

- All youth eligible for THRU Project services must be currently in the foster care system, or a young adult that has transitioned out of the system. THRU Project accepts youth who were adopted, placed with family, or placed back with their biological parents.
- THRU Project will serve youth starting at the age of 14. Young adults must access services with THRU Project before their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- All young adults must be interested in having a mentor and choose for themselves to participate in THRU Project. Youth will need to keep in contact with their mentors on a weekly basis and meet with their mentor face-to-face at least once a month. If the youth is showing no interest, and not keeping up with their mentor, THRU Project will dismiss the young adult from the program. The young adult can reapply at a later date, when they are ready to participate actively in the program.
- This is a voluntary program; therefore THRU Project staff reserve the right to dismiss any young adult as they see fit.
- All mentees must follow the Youth Guidelines and Code of Conduct (see page 11).

## Mentor Eligibility Requirements

- **Age** - THRU Project requires all mentors to be over the age of 24.
- **Training** - Mentors are required to attend training prior to being matched with their mentee. This training will go over the guidelines, their role, and what to expect when working with their mentee. There will be additional training for mentors offered both virtually and in-person throughout the year. It is recommended that mentors attend as many of these opportunities as possible.
- **Commitment** - THRU Project asks each mentor to commit to at least one year of service in order to provide consistency to the mentee. Mentors and mentees may choose to stay in touch even after one or both parties are no longer active with THRU Project.
- **Paperwork** - Each mentor is required to fill out the THRU Project Mentor Application and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Non-DFPS background check before being matched with their mentee.
- **Contact** - THRU Project requires each mentor to maintain contact with their mentee. This includes monthly face-to-face meetings and checking in with the youth via phone, text, email, or social media at least two to three times per month.
  - Mentors are asked to meet their mentee in public places, and at a place that is comfortable for both parties.
  - Mentors can meet with their mentee more often than the minimum requirement if both parties agree.
  - Mentees are held to the same contact requirements as their mentors. It is recommended that mentors take the lead and demonstrate initiative when building a relationship with their mentee.
- **Regular Feedback** – THRU Project will send out quarterly surveys to mentors and mentees during the year. Survey data allows staff to check on the status of the match, track outcomes, and update contact information.
- **Attendance** - Throughout the year, THRU Project will hold events for mentors and mentees. While it is not mandatory for mentors and mentees to attend, participation is highly encouraged. These events will focus on life skills, continuing education for mentors, and provide opportunities for the mentor and mentee to continue to strengthen their relationship.



## Role of a Mentor

The role of a mentor is to provide support and guidance in a youth's life to help them achieve independence and self-sufficiency. Examples include:

- **Academic Support** - Encouraging the youth to stay in school, evaluating college/vocational training options, reviewing PAL education benefits, and guiding them to other educational resources.
- **Role Model** - THRU Project asks each mentor to be a positive influence in the mentee's life. By allowing the youth to see and experience your actions, values, and reactions to daily life, you are helping your mentee see possibilities and strive for broader horizons that they may not see in their current environment.
- **Attention** - Many mentees do not receive positive attention from adults in their lives. Mentors are asked to fill that need with dependable, sincere, and consistent attention and concern.
- **Accountability** - The mentors' commitment to a scheduled meeting, appointment, etc., made to their mentee is paramount. Likewise, mentors should hold their mentee accountable when a scheduled meeting is to take place. For example, if a mentee is late, or does not show up to a scheduled meeting, you should let them know that you did not appreciate the tardiness or broken commitment. Consistent accountability will set a good example for the mentee. It will demonstrate that the mentor is taking the relationship seriously, build trust and create mutual expectations.
- **Listening** - Is a big role a mentor can play in a mentee's life. Many mentees do not have anyone who will listen to them and offer positive feedback. Mentors need to listen to their mentees about any fears, dreams, and concerns they may have. Mentors cannot be judgmental or reverse the role where the mentee is listening to the mentor. THRU Project asks for every mentor to be there for each mentee. It is okay for mentors to share their own experiences, but THRU Project asks for mentors to not push their values onto a mentee.
- **Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect** - Mentors may see or hear evidence of abuse or neglect. When this occurs, the abuse or neglect must be reported to the proper authorities:

**By Phone: 1-800-252-5400**

**Online:** [www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact\\_Us/report\\_abuse.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_Us/report_abuse.asp)

- Mentors must report any evidence of their mentee's self-harming behaviors, or the expressed desire to hurt others, to the proper authorities.
- Mentors are encouraged to reach out to THRU Project staff to assess any situation involving suspected abuse or neglect.

## **What Mentors Are Not**

Mentors are not required to be their mentee's therapist, parents, ATMs, or anything that makes the mentor feel uncomfortable. It can be a fine line, but mentors need to remember their primary purpose is to give each mentee a trusted and reliable adult to help them through the process of living independently. If at any time mentors do not feel comfortable with any request from their mentee, mentors can always contact THRU Project staff to discuss their concerns.

Please familiarize yourself with our Youth Guidelines & Code of Conduct.

## **Mentor/Mentee Relationship**

There are typically three stages to the mentor and mentee relationship:

- Developing Rapport & Trust
- Setting and Reaching Goals
- Bringing Closure to the Relationship

### **Developing Rapport & Trust**

In the beginning, it is primarily the mentor's job to initiate the relationship and keep it going. It takes two for a relationship to move forward, but you are one of many adults who have come and gone in the life of this youth. For this reason, they may not be receptive in the beginning. During this period, mentors can expect missed appointments, unreturned calls, unreasonable requests, angry or sullen behavior, attempts to use you for transportation/gifts/money and lots of excuses.

If you continue to pursue the relationship, and remain consistent in your efforts, it will most likely pay off. It's important to remind the youth that your conversations are confidential between you, the youth, and their social worker. If you are concerned for the youth's safety, let them know you need to let someone else know in order to seek protection for the youth.

### **Setting and Reaching Goals**

In this phase, the youth is generally more committed and more involved in planning activities and in sharing information with their mentor. This is the time to work on getting to know them and setting short and long-term goals. No goals are too small. For example, if you know your mentee is not a morning person, and likes to sleep until noon, try helping them get an earlier start to their day. This small change will help them be more prepared for work or school.

As the relationship grows closer, the youth will see you as an important and reliable part of their life. Realize that there may be times when old behaviors appear. This usually indicates a time of stress. Ask what's going on in the youth's life and demonstrate genuine concern.

Finally, always remember to **PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE!** This will make your mentee feel special and create momentum to accomplish more of their goals.

## **Relationship Closure**

Hopefully, this milestone marks a bittersweet time when the youth has progressed to a more independent way of life. You may stay in contact with your youth, but he/she is actively proceeding in a positive direction toward a fulfilling life. Use the time remaining to recall the youth's progress, his/her strengths, and the obstacles they've already overcome. You should discuss their plans for the future, how they plan to accomplish them, and your faith that they can achieve their goals. If possible, agree on how and when you will stay in touch, and follow through with that commitment.

### ***Sometimes ... things just aren't working.***

Sometimes a youth never moves on from the "Testing Phase." Some have been so jaded from past experiences that they are unable to move forward. Other times, the match just doesn't fit. As a mentor in this situation, you may feel burdened by the relationship, and angry that there is no progress. This is the time to involve your youth's social worker and a THRU Project employee. We will work with you and your mentee to find an agreeable solution.

## **Thank You!**

Thank you for your work as a mentor. You are not only supporting your mentee, you are helping to bridge the gap between foster care and adulthood and making our community stronger, healthier and more resilient!





## Youth Guidelines and Code of Conduct

### WELCOME to the THRU Project!

We want to make sure that you understand, and are comfortable with, the expectations of having a Mentor from THRU Project.

**MENTORS ARE: Positive role models, friends, sympathizers, advisors, self-esteem builders, sounding boards, and advocates.**

- The primary role of your Mentor is to be a dependable, consistent friend and to empower you to make positive decisions. Your Mentor will work with you and THRU Project staff to ensure you gain access to all of the benefits and resources for which you are eligible. Mentors are friends, but will be focused on your priorities: *employment, training, education, and housing*.
- Although you are encouraged to spend free time with your Mentor to get to know each other better, please remember that your Mentor is not able to purchase items for you, fund even emergency needs, drive you to appointments, etc. What they will do is work with you and THRU Project staff to find solutions for your living needs.
- The relationship with your mentor is an important one. As with any new relationship, it takes time to build trust. Regular contact by phone, email, social networking, or text messages will help you to build a stronger relationship.
- THRU Project asks for a one-year commitment from both you and your mentor. Having a trusted, consistent presence in your life will be beneficial as you make plans to live independently. Once you have achieved independence, we ask that you consider returning to THRU Project as a volunteer Mentor. Your first-hand experience can serve as a valuable example to other youth preparing to transition out of the foster care system.
- THRU Project will not tolerate any youth being disrespectful, discriminatory, physically inappropriate, violent, using vulgar language, or breaking any boundaries (living with a Mentor or asking for substantial or ongoing monetary gifts). This can lead to immediate termination from the program.
- If you have any concerns regarding the relationship with your Mentor, or have any questions, please contact Alyssa Bafidis at THRU Project. Alyssa can be reached at 210-852-0552 or [alyssa@thruproject.org](mailto:alyssa@thruproject.org). You are part of a community of support; there are people and resources available to help you succeed.



## **THRU Project Programs**

### **Cell Phone Program**

THRU Project's cell phone program removes the barrier of communication, which dramatically improves not only mental health and wellness but overall success outcomes of our foster youth. Every THRU Project youth is eligible to receive a free cell phone and service plan after three months of being in our program.

- Each youth will receive a smartphone, with unlimited talk, text, and data. The requirements to keep the phone activated are:
  - Be actively participating in the THRU Project program.
  - Must be working or going to school and provide proof for work or school. THRU Project staff may ask every 3 months to provide this proof to maintain phone lines active.
  - Maintain contact with your THRU Project mentor.
  - Youth will be required to complete monthly cell phone surveys sent either by text or email.
  - Any breaks or damages to the phone will be paid in full by the youth in possession.

If any youth is interested in the cell phone program or have questions, please contact the THRU Project staff at 210-852-0220 or email us at [info@thruproject.org](mailto:info@thruproject.org).

### **Bus Pass Program**

Being able to break down the transportation barrier for our youth is a crucial aspect in helping them achieve success through employment or higher education. To combat this barrier, every youth in Thru Project is eligible to receive a renewable 6-month VIA bus pass for free.

- Each youth will be responsible for picking up their bus pass at the VIA metro located at 1021 San Pedro, San Antonio, Texas, 78212
- Any youth who fails to follow VIA's code of conduct will be revoked of their VIA bus pass. You can read on the VIA code of conduct at <https://www.viainfo.net/how-to-ride/>.
- If interested in receiving a bus pass or have questions, please contact Alyssa Bafidis at THRU Project 234.517.8260 [alyssa@thruproject.org](mailto:alyssa@thruproject.org).

### **Life Skills Events**

- THRU Project hosts Life Skills events for THRU Project mentees to participate in every quarter. At these events we will have guest speakers from the community that teach valuable life skills for our mentees.
- The THRU Project can provide transportation to the events.
- We recommend mentors to accompany their mentees to the events.
- Life Skills topics range from Budgeting, Financial Literacy, Career, Healthy Relationships, Mental Health, and more!

## **Housing**

THRU Project currently offers two types of housing programs; one for young adults who are still under the care of DFPS and one for young adults who have aged out of the foster care system.

### **Supervised Independent Living (SIL)**

This program is for 18–21-year-olds who are still in the care of DFPS. It provides a furnished apartment setting, case management, and services to help the young adult achieve independence once they leave care. The combination of support, and their own initiative and determination, enables them to experience independent living. Young adults learn life skills and garner the resources to live successfully on their own.

This is a state-funded program in which DFPS covers the cost of the youth's rent and provides a monthly stipend for utilities and groceries. Case management services are not funded by the state.

### **Next Step Housing**

Young adults who are between the ages of 18 and 25, and who are no longer in the care of DFPS, may qualify for Next Step Housing. Applicants must demonstrate a willingness to follow the rules which include attending school or working and providing proof of a growing savings account each month. This is not a state-funded program. THRU Project covers the cost of the young adult's rent, furnishings, and case management.

## **Steps to Effective Mentoring**

*Adapted from Bridges Out of Poverty*

**POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT:** There needs to be sufficient time and a positive environment to encourage honest, open discussion.

**DEVELOPING CHARACTER:** Meaningful mental, social, physical, and spiritual, issues of impact will be part of the process. Youth are not lacking the values that develop good character. Like all of us, however, they might sometimes need help in translating those values into real action. Everyone experiences times when an inner conflict occurs because our actions and values are at odds.

**INDEPENDENCE:** The boundaries between mentor and friend should be well established. Talk with your friend about the time, energy, contributions you are willing to make.

**LIMITED RESPONSIBILITY:** Be responsible to them, not for them. Friends will need the latitude to choose their own course and make their own mistakes. Care for your Friend through these ups and downs.

**SHARED MISTAKES:** Share your failures, as well as your successes.

**PLANNED OBJECTIVES:** Set goals together.

**INSPECTION:** Monitor, review, critique, and discuss potential actions. Don't just expect performance without evaluation. The true value of mentoring is in its interactive nature. Listen, share, process, and be open to learning while teaching.

**“TOUGH” LOVE:** Know when to intervene and when to let go.

**SMALL SUCCESSES:** Accomplish huge goals one step at a time. Mentoring is time intensive, and the results are not always obvious.

**DIRECTION:** Be careful of your tone of voice – speak to your Friend as you would to an adult companion. Make “I statements” when sharing and ask questions regarding consequences. There is usually more than one way to accomplish something.

**RISK:** It is better to offer possible solutions than to give direct advice. Leading your Friend in a discussion of options and potential consequences is an optimal strategy. Allow your Friend to „own“ their problems, your advice may not always work.

**MUTUAL PROTECTION:** Maintaining some privacy is part of a healthy relationship.

**COMMUNICATION:** Listening is the best way to gather information about the needs of your Friend. A certain balance should be established so that both parties share and respond.

**EXTENDED COMMITMENT:** Relationship longevity is the key to successful mentoring.

**LIFE TRANSITION:** Mentoring can give the mentor a new sense of direction and energy.

**FUN/LAUGHTER:** Humor enhances relationships. It is a shared response. Enjoy!

## Community Resources

### Education:

#### **Restore Education**

4205 San Pedro Ave, San Antonio TX 78212  
210-432-6123

#### **Each One Teach One**

815 El Monte Blvd, San Antonio TX 78201  
210-320-1287

#### **San Antonio College**

1819 N Main Ave, San Antonio TX 78212  
210-486-0000

#### **Northwest Vista College**

3535 N Ellison Dr., San Antonio TX 78251  
210-486-0000

#### **Palo Alto College**

1400 W Villaret Blvd, San Antonio TX 78224  
210-486-0000

#### **St. Philip's College**

1801 Martin Luther King Dr, San Antonio TX 78203  
210-486-0000

#### **Northeast Lakeview College**

1201 Kitty Hawk Rd, Universal City TX 78148  
210-486-0000

#### **University of Texas - San Antonio**

1 UTSA Circle, San Antonio TX 78249  
210-458-4011

#### **Texas A&M University - San Antonio**

One University Way, San Antonio TX 78224  
210-784-1000

#### **Wayland Baptist University - San Antonio**

8300 Pat Booker Rd, Live Oak TX 78233  
210-826-7595

#### **Texas Workforce Solutions, VRS**

5309 Wurzbach, San Antonio TX 78238  
210-224-4357

**Gary Job Corp**

2800 TX-21, San Marcos TX 78667  
512-396-6652

**BCFS**

4346 Northwest Loop 410, San Antonio TX 78229  
210-733-7932

**NXT Level**

1226 NW 18th St., San Antonio TX 78207  
210-207-1723

**Employment/Training Services:****Goodwill Good Careers Academy**

703 Dolorosa, San Antonio TX 78207  
210-271-8888

**Texas Workforce Solutions**

Multiple locations around San Antonio

**BCFS**

4346 Northwest Loop 410, San Antonio TX 78229  
210-733-7932

**Project Quest**

800 Quintana Rd, San Antonio TX 78211  
210-630-4690

**NXT Level**

1226 NW 18th St., San Antonio TX 78207  
210-207-1723

**Community Resources:****BCFS**

4346 Northwest Loop 410, San Antonio TX 78229  
210-733-7932

**NXT Level**

1226 NW 18th St., San Antonio TX 78207  
210-207-1723

**Healthy Futures**

2300 W Commerce St, San Antonio TX 78207  
210-223-4589

**San Antonio Threads**

10446 Sentinel St, San Antonio TX 78217  
210-600-3989

**Dress for Success**

600 N Frio St, San Antonio TX 78207  
210-737-1515

**SAMMinistries**

1919 NW Loop 410, San Antonio TX 78213  
210-340-0302

**Resiliency Through Healing**

4346 Northwest Loop 410, San Antonio TX 78229  
210-283-5110

**Center for Healthcare Services**

Multiple Locations

**Transportation:****VIA Metropolitan Transit**

Multiple locations and bus stops around the city of San Antonio

Every young adult who enters the THRU Project program will be eligible to receive a monthly bus pass to get around the city.

Thru Project will continue to update and provide more resources as they become available. Mentees have access to our online resource page at [www.thruproject.org](http://www.thruproject.org), and a case manager will assist any youth or young adult in need.