

Guide to Mentoring

for parents/guardians

AFK Youth Mentoring 



Welcome to Athletes for Kids!

We are excited to work with you and your child. We will match your child with a caring, dedicated mentor who can offer him or her new experiences, guidance, support, and most importantly, friendship!

This guide will help you learn about mentoring, how our program works, and the important role that you play in making the experience a successful one for your child. Remember, our staff is just a phone call away. We're happy to answer questions or address concerns whenever you need help or guidance.

What's in this guide

What is Mentoring All About?	3
Why does My Child Need a Mentor?	5
About AFK Youth Mentoring	6
About the Mentoring Process	7
What Kind of Support is Available to Me?	10
What if the Match isn't Working Out?	11
Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines	12
Staff Directory	20

What is mentoring all about?

What is a Mentor?

A mentor is a caring and responsible community member who takes time to be a friend to a young person. A mentor listens, supports, and guides their mentee consistently over a specified time, usually at least one year.

Our mentoring program is unique because each of our mentors is a high school athlete. They volunteer time to the program while maintaining rigorous scholastic and sports schedules. A mentor develops a trusting relationship with a mentee—whom we call a “buddy”—to help him or her succeed at home, at school, and in the community. By developing this positive relationship, a mentor can:

- Help their buddy develop a sense of competence
- Help him or her with social skills
- Nurture his or her self-confidence and positive self-esteem
- Introduce their buddy to new ideas, activities, and opportunities within the parameters set by you, the parent/guardian

The particular ways that your child may benefit from the mentoring relationship will depend on his or her needs, strengths, and many other factors. Sometimes the benefits of mentoring aren't visible right away, but over time this relationship can help your child gain new skills and experiences that will last a lifetime.

Mentors are not meant to take the role of a parent/guardian, teacher, or coach. A mentor is not a disciplinarian or decision-maker for a child. A mentor's main role is to spend time doing positive and fun activities that help your child become more self-confident. By doing this, the mentor becomes part of a caring team that supports your child's wellbeing and development.



“My buddy has taught me a lot: how to be kinder, more patient, and open to new ideas. I’ve also gotten to see, first hand the impact of our friendship in our lives” - AFK Mentor

A mentor is a...



A mentor is not a...

Babysitter, tutor, social worker, parent, nag, source of money, or disciplinarian.

Why does My Child Need a Mentor?

All children need the support of caring community members to be successful, not only within their families but at school and in their communities. Growing up isn't easy, and for those with special needs, it can be especially difficult. Sometimes parents don't have all the answers, and sometimes children need someone from outside the family with whom to share their thoughts.

Having a variety of people positively involved in a child's life provides him or her with new opportunities and experiences that will help him/her grow and gain self-confidence. You may be able to think of adults — a teacher, a coach, a youth leader — who helped you out when you were a child, encouraging you through rough spots along your road to adulthood, or just showing you a new way to look at your world. Although this may not have been a formal mentoring relationship, this person was a mentor for you.

A mentor can give your child someone else to talk to — a safe, concerned, and responsible confidant who can help sort out a problem or just listen and be supportive. A mentor can even be someone to just have fun with when the world feels overwhelming.

The children we serve



AFK Youth Mentoring serves children in the 1st-12th grades who have special needs. To be considered for the program the child must be referred by a school professional or a healthcare/psychiatric specialist, and/or have a recognized disability or IEP. The child's family must live within our chapter school boundaries* or a reasonable driving distance from an available mentor.

Many of our children have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum, some have physical or developmental disabilities, and others have had an adverse childhood experience. We have children in the program with Down Syndrome, Tourette's, ADHD, and more. All of them want to be kids, to play and laugh, and to just hang out with a friend, and all have so much to offer you.

*Our current chapter schools are listed on our website at: www.athletesforkids.org

About AFK Youth Mentoring

Who We Are

Athletes for Kids began in 2001 when a young boy in Sammamish, WA with a difficult medical condition was being teased, bullied, and ostracized by his peers because of it. The boy's mother and father believed that if their son could have one supportive relationship, outside of family, it could turn the boy's life around.

The parents were introduced to a local star athlete, Simi Reynolds, from nearby Skyline High School in Sammamish, who agreed to spend time with their son each week as a mentor. That relationship became so life-changing for their son that Simi agreed to recruit a group of fellow athletes at Skyline to mentor other children with medical conditions, disabilities, and special needs of all kinds.

In 2002, Athletes for Kids was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) and established the first mentor chapter, made up of 6 athletes from Skyline High School. Since that time, the AFK Youth Mentoring program has expanded and currently has 11 active mentor groups made up of athletes from Eastside high schools.

We currently serve children and families in Bellevue, Fall City, Issaquah, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Newcastle, Redmond, Renton, Sammamish, Snoqualmie, and Woodinville. To our knowledge, we are still the only mentorship program in the country that matches high school athletes with younger children who have disabilities in such a close, supportive relationship.



“Being an AFK mentor gave me a new perspective on serving others and how you can much such an impact on someone's life.”
- Mentor



“Athletes for kids was the light of hope that brought my son out of the isolation that resulted from his disability”
- Buddy Parent



“Before I started Athletes for Kids, I was not very good at being social with other kids. But, with you, I am getting much better at socializing with people”
- Buddy

Our Staff

AFK is staffed by an Executive Director, a Mentorship Coordinator, a Marketing and Data Coordinator, an IT Specialist, a Controller, and an Assistant Controller. These professionals are available to support mentors and buddies, to answer your questions, to offer advice, and to make sure the program runs safely, smoothly, and effectively.



About the Mentoring Process

How are matches made?

We spend a lot of time getting to know you and your child's future mentor before we begin the matching process. From the application through the screening and intake call, we get to know your child and family so we can find your child a mentor whom he or she would enjoy spending time with.

Likewise, we get to know your child's mentor through the application, interview, and training. We strive to find a match for every buddy we accept into the program. We consider many different criteria: personalities, geographic proximity, common interests, and common values are always weighed.

Sometimes buddy families will have specific criteria (e.g. cultural similarities) or other special requests that we'll consider. Usually, we offer families the opportunity to choose between two or three suitable candidates. The next steps of the process can take a few days to a few months and are designed to offer you and the mentor time to make sure we have made the right match (see our Steps to Matching document at the end of this guide). Some of our children are matched within a few weeks of applying, while others may wait months.

Where and when does mentoring take place?

Once matched, mentors strive to spend four to eight hours a month with their buddy, usually at the child's home. We encourage families to set up regular meeting times with their mentor. One-and-a-half hours per week usually works well.

We encourage mentors to clearly communicate any scheduling changes. If your mentor does not contact you or your child for more than two weeks (without prior notice), please contact our Mentorship Coordinator immediately. During the athlete's sports season, we ask for patience. Remember, mentors are volunteers, juggling academics, sports, family, friends, and their commitment to your child.

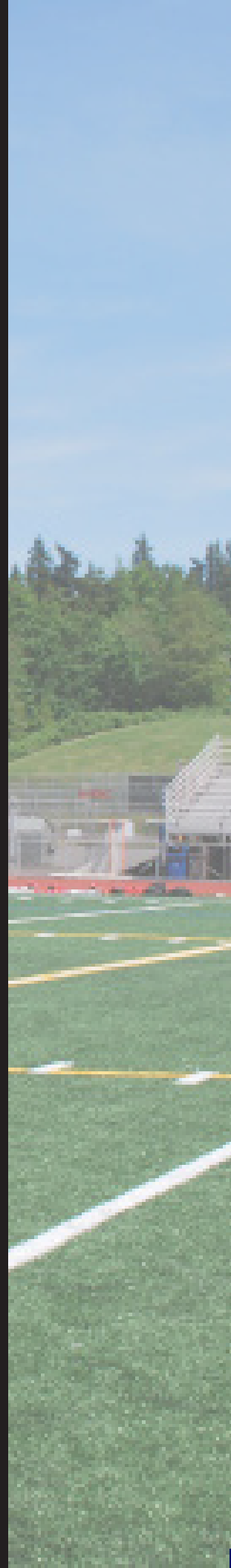
All matches are set up to last until the mentor graduates from high school. Matches are expected to meet during the summer months on a consistent schedule.

What do matches do when they meet?

Mentors and their buddies begin by just getting to know one another, learning about each other's interests, likes, and dislikes, and talking about when they will meet and what they want to do when they get together.

We encourage these first few meetings to take place at your home, where your child feels comfortable. Later, they may plan special activities outside of the home with your permission. The focus of their time together is fun. Just having someone to talk to can help your child gain confidence and develop new interests.

Since our focus is not sports-related, but on one-to-one relationships, your child's attitude toward sports or athletic abilities will not be a factor in his/her mentorship.





We encourage mentors to find low-cost or free activities, such as hiking or cycling, going to a park, or visiting the public library. Occasionally, your family may pay for a special outing such as a trip to the zoo or an appropriate movie, etc. Our website also offers a mentor resources page, where mentors can find fun activities to do with their buddies.

After the two have developed a bond, the mentor may suggest activities to expose your child to new experiences. AFK and community volunteer groups strive to provide monthly events where mentors can bring their buddies. You might invite the mentor to your child's activities or take your child to watch the mentor's sports events. Regardless of specific activities, AFK mentors are encouraged to take a relationship-centered approach to working with your child.

Research indicates that the magic of mentoring comes from the closeness of this bond, not simply from doing certain activities. Accordingly, AFK mentors are trained to emphasize being an encouraging and reliable supporter for your child. Some parents worry that a mentor might subvert the parents' role and have concerns about their child saying things to the mentor that are not expressed at home. Our mentors are instructed to work closely with parents so that everyone is comfortable with the mentoring activities.

While they may keep some aspects of their relationship with the child in confidence, they are required to report any conversations about dangerous or illegal activity to both parents and program staff. They are also required to report any concerns about abuse or neglect to program staff. So while your child receives a supportive confidant in his/her mentor, you, as the parent, are also getting another caring team member who will work with you to help your child thrive.

What kind of support is available to me?

It takes some time for a mentor and buddy to bond and it's not unusual for the relationship to struggle at times. AFK offers you ongoing support during the time of your child's mentorship. We are delighted to report that our match failure rate is much less than average for a mentoring organization.



Much of that can be attributed to the dedication of our mentors and the program's commitment to providing ongoing training and support for every mentor. Research shows that monitored matches are more successful and meet more often than unsupervised matches.

Our Mentorship Coordinator will be in contact with you regularly to get your perspective on the match's progress. We know that when small problems are addressed early on, crises can be averted.

Our Executive Director and Mentorship Coordinator are happy to speak with you and provide assistance whenever you have a question or concern you don't want to address with the mentor.

How do matches end?

Most matches end after our mentors graduate. AFK staff will ask your child's mentor to set up a final meeting that provides closure and positive feelings for all involved. We highly encourage mentors and buddies to maintain contact even after the mentor leaves for college.

Matches can end prematurely for a variety of reasons: a family moves away, a mentor's life circumstances change, and even the reality that sometimes a match just doesn't "click." This happens rarely in our program. However, when it does, we like to facilitate a closing meeting. When your child's match ends, you may request a rematch with a new mentor if you are still eligible to participate in the program.

What if the match isn't working out?

Ideally, any concerns about your child's mentor will have been addressed during the initial matching meeting. But sometimes, unexpected issues crop up in new mentoring relationships as boundaries are set and personalities emerge. It is not uncommon for mentoring relationships to have a slightly bumpy start.

AFK offers a structured process for working through relationship difficulties. Most issues are easily resolved by having the Mentorship Coordinator speak with the mentor. We also offer ongoing training for mentors, on topics such as problem-solving and communication skills.

Children in new mentoring relationships often need time to warm up to the idea. After all, a mentor is a different kind of relationship than they have had before, and children can initially be uncomfortable or shy around older people they do not know. We encourage you to give the relationship time to develop and to contact the Executive Director or Mentorship Coordinator if you have concerns.

If all attempts to resolve issues in your child's match are unsuccessful, AFK can match your child again if a mentor is available. This is a rare occurrence (less than 5 percent of all matches) and one that we try to avoid.

Research indicates that keeping a mentoring relationship going for at least one year is most likely to benefit the child, and closing a match too early can have some negative consequences.* These consequences affect both the buddy and the mentor. This is why we encourage all participants to be patient and honest and do their best to work through any problems as their mentoring relationships develop.

*Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth by Dr. Jean Rhodes, available [HERE](#).

In closing

We hope that having a mentor helps your child gain confidence, life skills, and a lasting friendship. AFK is committed to supporting you and your child from match-up through match closing. We look forward to working with you, and we appreciate your support and involvement.

Welcome to the AFK family! It should be a fun experience for you and your child.

Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTORS, BUDDIES, AND BUDDY FAMILIES

Mentor Eligibility Requirements

- Be at least a sophomore at one of our chapter high schools, participating in a high school sports team or a competitive sport as an individual.
- Agree to commit to the program until high school graduation.
- Be willing to spend a minimum of six hours a month with the buddy (average 1.5 hours per week).
- Be willing to communicate with the buddy weekly.
- Be willing to offer time to at least two special activities or AFK events per year.
- Complete the screening process: Apply to become a mentor, submit the criminal background check form, complete an interview with our staff, and submit character references.
- Agree to attend an initial orientation and training workshop before being considered for a match.
- Agree to attend brief monthly training meetings at or near your school. These are required meetings.
- Be willing to communicate regularly with the Executive Director and submit monthly meeting and activity information. Be willing to answer all requests for information promptly (within 48 hours if possible).
- Be willing to adhere to all AFK policies and procedures and have a parent or guardian sign the Parental Consent Form for Mentors.
- Have reliable transportation to the buddy's home.
- Always carry the buddy's emergency contacts card when meeting outside of the buddy's home.
- Have a clean criminal history. Have never been accused, arrested, charged, or convicted of child abuse or molestation. Must not be a convicted felon.
- Not use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substances.
- Not have falsified information during the course of the screening process.

If transporting the buddy by car:

- Have a valid driver's license, auto insurance, and a good driving record (no major citations). Driver's license number and auto insurance policy information must be on file with AFK.
- Have a transportation waiver signed by the buddy's parent on file with AFK.
- When the buddy is in the car, follow all traffic laws including seatbelt laws.

Buddy and Buddy Family Eligibility Requirements

- Reside within a reasonable driving distance of one of our chapter high schools or one of our mentors.
- Child is in the 1st through 11th grades, has a referral from a school professional, healthcare provider, or other specialist, and/or has a recognized disability or IEP.
- Demonstrate a desire to participate in the program and be willing to abide by all of AFK's policies and procedures.
- Understands that a nine-month commitment benefits both the child and mentor. Anything less is adverse for the child.
- Be willing to communicate with the mentor weekly.
- Complete all pertinent forms in a timely manner (criminal background check form, parental consent form, and buddy bio)
- Complete an intake call with the Mentorship Coordinator.
- Be willing to communicate regularly with the Executive Director or Mentorship Coordinator. Any requests for information must be answered promptly (within 48 hours if possible).
- Commit to consistent meetings until the mentor graduates from high school.
- Be willing to communicate any changes of address, phone number, email, etc. in a timely manner.
- Pay our annual mentorship fee. We ask all buddy families for a nominal mentorship fee of \$240/year, payable monthly, quarterly, or annually, which helps to offset the initial cost of arranging the mentorship. In addition to the cost of making the match, AFK spends approximately \$1,200 to maintain and support each mentorship per year. (Full and partial scholarships are available upon request for low-income households.)

Overnight Visits/Home-Along Restrictions

Overnight visits of any kind are prohibited. This includes family vacations and long visits. Mentors cannot offer bathroom dressing help and are instructed to never be in a home alone with a child. Maintain an open-door policy.

Confidentiality & Mandatory Reporting Policy

It is the policy of AFK Youth Mentoring to protect the confidentiality of its participants and their families. With the exception of the limitations listed below, program staff will only share information about mentors, buddies, and their families with other AFK professional staff and the Board of Directors. All prospective mentors, buddies, and parents/guardians will be informed of the scope and limitations of confidentiality by program staff.

Additionally, mentors are required and trained to keep information about their buddy and his/her family confidential. Records are considered the property of AFK, not AFK employees, and are not available to mentors, buddies, or parents/guardians.

Limits of Confidentiality

Information from mentor and buddy records may be shared with individuals or organizations as specified below under the following conditions:

- Information about program participants may be collected and shared with other participants, individuals, or organizations only upon receipt of signed “release” forms from mentors, buddies, or parents/guardians.
- Identifying information (including names, photographs, videos, etc.) of AFK participants may be used in publications or promotional materials only upon written consent of the mentor and buddy’s parents/guardians.
- Information may only be provided to law enforcement officials or courts according to a valid and enforceable subpoena.
- Information may be provided to legal counsel in the event of litigation or potential litigation involving the organization. Such information is considered privileged information, and its confidentiality is protected by law.
- If program staff receive information at any point in the match process that a mentor is using illegal substances, has a criminal history of any kind, or is inappropriately using alcohol or other controlled substances, the information will be shared with the buddy parents and they will have the option to reject the prospective mentor or close the existing match.

When a mentor or buddy is considered as a match candidate, information is shared between the prospective match parties. Each party shall have the right to refuse the proposed match based on the information provided to them. The information to be shared may include:

- **Mentors:** age, sex, race, religion, interests, hobbies, sport, living situation, siblings, and reasons for applying to the program.
- **Buddies:** age, sex, race, religion, interests, hobbies, family situation, siblings, living situation, a summary of the client intake information, and expectations for program participation.

Mandatory Abuse Reporting

It is the policy of AFK that all staff must report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect of program clients or program participants immediately. All such suspected reports must be made to appropriate state and/or local authorities. Program staff must follow the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect procedure.

All employees, volunteers, and mentors of AFK are required to undergo training as to what constitutes child abuse and neglect, what the state statutes are, and how to properly report such cases.

The event of a report of child abuse or neglect filed against anyone in the program will be overseen by the Executive Director. Contact with program youth will be restricted or constrained and/or the person in question suspended from employment or program participation per the decision of the Executive Director and Board of Directors until such investigation is concluded.

Violations of Confidentiality

A known violation of the organization's policy on confidentiality by a program participant may result in a written warning or disciplinary action such as suspension or termination from the program.

Transportation Policy

It is the policy of AFK to allow mentors to transport buddies in the mentor's private vehicle if all consent forms are signed and on file and the mentor agrees to follow all items of the transportation policy listed below:

- AFK has the signed consent from the buddy's parent/guardian approving the transportation of their child in the mentor's car.
- AFK has the signed consent from the mentor's parent/guardian to transport the buddy in the mentor's car.
- Mentors transporting buddies must use a reliable, insured vehicle. All mentors transporting buddies must possess a valid driver's license and present proof of auto insurance; a record of insurance will be maintained in the mentor's file and will be updated on an annual basis.
- All mentors transporting buddies will undergo a driving record check and have a good driving record (no major citations).
- Mentors transporting their buddies must obey all traffic laws, and use seatbelts at all times.
- Mentors transporting buddies must avoid taking medication or using any other substances that might impair their ability to drive.
- If an accident occurs while the mentor is driving their buddy, it must be reported to the Executive Director promptly.
- The mentor must carry a copy of the buddy's emergency contact information in the transporting vehicle or on their person at all times in case of emergency.

Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, and Firearms Policy

Mentors are expected to be positive role models and are therefore held to a very high standard of behavior in their schools and community. Mentors and buddies are prohibited from using, possessing, transmitting, or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol or possessing firearms while engaged in the mentoring relationship. Any suspected violations should be reported to the Executive Director.

Tobacco: AFK intends to create a smoke- and tobacco-free environment. To that end, smoking and the use of all tobacco products is prohibited and participants in 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 substances that contain tobacco.

Weapons, Firearms, and Other Dangerous Materials: The 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.

Alcohol: A mentor should not attend or remain at an event where it is known that alcohol, or an illegal or prohibited substance is being consumed by a minor. The mentor is expected to remove himself/herself from the situation. Any violations of this policy will result in immediate consequences and/or suspension/termination of the mentoring relationship. In addition, violations of this policy may result in a notification being given to legal authorities that may result in arrest or legal action and may be punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.

Unacceptable Behavior Policy

It is the policy of AFK that unacceptable behaviors on the part of mentors or buddies while participating in the program will not be tolerated. This policy is in addition to behavioral requirements stipulated in other policies or procedures, and is in no way intended to replace or take precedence over other policies or procedures including but not limited to the following: Confidentiality Policy, Transportation Policy, Overnight Visits/Home-Along Policy, Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting Policy, Use of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, and Firearms Policy.

Certain behaviors are regarded as incompatible with AFK goals, values, and program standards and therefore are considered unacceptable and prohibited while participants are engaged in mentoring activities:

- Unwelcome physical contact, such as inappropriate touching, patting, pinching, punching, and physical assault
- Unwelcome 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
- Taking part in disrespectful, demeaning actions or speech
- Intentional violation of any local, state, or federal law
- Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Possession of illegal substances

Any behavior that results in the suspension of the mentor from school should be reported to the Executive Director immediately. If a mentor is matched with a child at the time of the suspension, the mentor must notify the child's parents. At that time, it will be the decision of the parents whether to end the mentorship or continue.

If a mentor is not yet matched with a child at the time of the suspension, the mentor can be suspended or dismissed from the program. 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 AFK program.

Closure Policy

AFK's policy is that all mentors and buddies must participate in closure procedures when their match ends. Closure is defined as the ending of a formal match relationship regardless of the circumstances of the match ending or whether participants intend to have future contact informally beyond the match duration.

Closure can occur for any number of reasons, including the ending of the contracted match duration; one or both participants do not want to continue with the match; changes of circumstances in either or both of the mentor and buddy's lives; the mentor graduates; or an individual no longer meets the requirements for program participation. Hence, the match may end at the discretion of the mentor, buddy, parent/guardian, and/or Executive Director.

It is left to the discretion of the Executive Director whether an individual will be reassigned to another match in the future based on past participation performance and current goals and needs of the program.

Future contact will be at the mutual and informal agreement of the mentor, buddy, and parents/guardians. If future contact is agreed upon, Athletes for Kids will not be responsible for monitoring and supporting the relationship after the match has formally ended.

Steps to Matching

Mentors Recruited

- Applications submitted
- Mentors submit background check form
- Consent forms are signed by parents
- Criminal background check completed
- Candidates interviewed
- Selected mentors are notified and invited to training
- Mentors attend training workshop
- Mentor attends mentor meetings
- Mentorship Coordinator notifies mentor of potential match and sends email with contacts and disabilities/interests info
- Mentor contacts buddy's parents and sets up initial meeting with them away from their home, without the buddy present

Parents Inquire

- Buddy application submitted
- Welcome packet emailed with forms and program information
- Consent and background check forms are signed by parents
- Criminal Background checks run on all adults living in buddy's household
- Staff screens by phone
- Mentorship Coordinator sends 1-4 mentor bios to the family
- Parents choose mentor to meet with and send selection to Mentorship Coordinator

Buddy's parents and mentor meet

Mentor notifies Mentorship Coordinator that he/she wishes to continue within 48 hours of the initial meeting. Mentorship Coordinator notifies mentor to set up meeting with the buddy at the buddy's home. Mentor contacts family.

Parents notify Mentorship Coordinator that they want to continue within 48 hours of meeting mentor.

Mentor and buddy meet

Mentor notifies Mentorship Coordinator that he/she wishes to continue within 48 hours of the mentor/buddy meeting. Mentorship Coordinator notifies mentor that match is finalized, defines transportation status (does mentor have parent's consent to drive buddy?) and instructs mentor to contact parents to set up regular meeting schedule.

Parents notify Mentorship Coordinator that they wish to finalize match within 48 hours of mentor/buddy meeting. Parents send in transportation waiver if desired. Annual mentorship fee is paid, or scholarship is requested.

Match Complete

Mentor begins regular meetings with buddy

Staff Directory

Marni Kurtz

Executive Director

marni@athletesforkids.org

Nick Riley

Mentorship Coordinator

nick@athletesforkids.org

Sarah Lawrence

Marketing and Data Coordinator

sarah@athletesforkids.org

Agni Bhatt

IT Business Analyst

agni@athletesforkids.org

Thom Stuart

Controller

thom@athletesforkids.org

Stephanie Scott

Controller Assistant

stephanie@athletesforkids.org



AFK Youth Mentoring