

Guide to Mentoring

for mentors and
mentor parents

AFK Youth Mentoring 



Welcome to Athletes for Kids!

We are excited to work with you as a future mentor. We will match you with a special needs child to whom you can offer new experiences, guidance, support, and most importantly, friendship! In the process, you will also develop valuable life skills such as responsibility, leadership, and service to your community.

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 you and your buddy. Remember, our staff is just a phone call away. We're happy to answer questions or address concerns whenever you need help or guidance.

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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

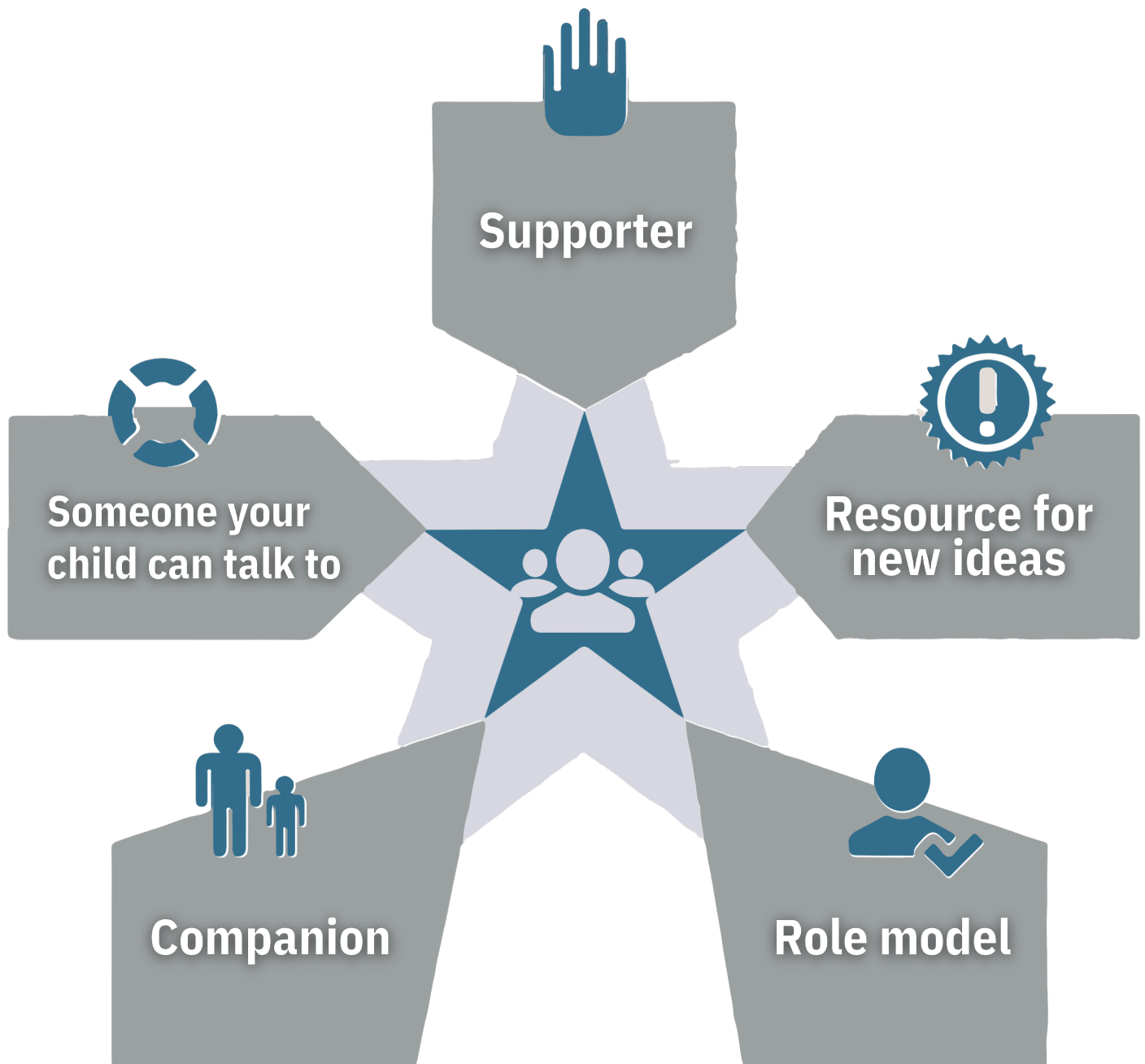
The particular ways that your buddy may benefit from the mentoring relationship will depend on his or her needs, strengths, and many other factors. Sometimes the benefits of mentoring aren't visible right away, but over time this relationship can help your buddy gain new skills and experiences that will 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 the child become more self-confident. By doing this, the mentor becomes part of a caring team that supports their buddy'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.

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, 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 future buddy's family before we begin the matching process. From the application through the interview and training, we study your personality, interests, and values so we can find you a buddy you would enjoy spending time with.

Likewise, we get to know your buddy and his/her family through their application, screening, and intake call. After each mentor training, we begin the quest to find a match for every athlete 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 family 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 athletes are matched within days of their training, while others wait months. There have been several occasions when athletes were never matched, but served the program in other ways.

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 mentors to set up regular meeting times with their buddy family. One-and-a-half hours per week usually works well.

We also encourage mentors to clearly communicate any scheduling changes to their buddy family. If you cannot make a scheduled meeting, we will ask that you make up for it as soon as practical.

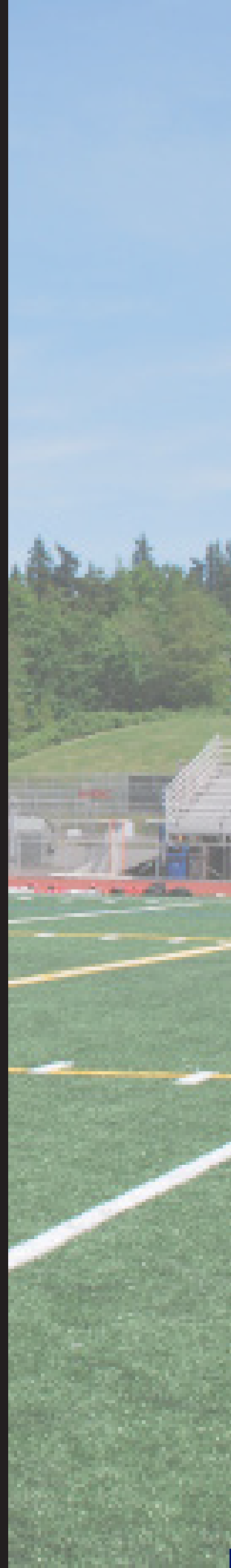
All matches are set up to last until you graduate from high school. Matches are expected to meet during the summer months on a consistent schedule.

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 the child's home, where he/she feels comfortable. Later, they may plan special activities outside of the home with the child's parent's permission. The focus of their time together is fun. Just having someone to talk to can help the child gain confidence and develop new interests.

Since our focus is not sports-related, but on one-to-one relationships, your buddy's attitude toward sports or athletic abilities will not be a factor in the 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 buddy's 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 you can find fun activities to do with your buddy.

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

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 encouraging and reliable supporters for their buddies. Additionally, our mentors are instructed to work closely with parents so that everyone is comfortable with the mentoring activities.

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 mentorship. We are delighted to report that our match failure rate is much less than average for a mentoring organization.



“My experience as a mentor changed me, it gave me a new perspective on serving others”
- AFK Mentor

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.

Each month you'll attend a meeting at or near your school with our staff and other mentors from your school. At the meeting, you'll receive support and training and have an opportunity to discuss your successes and frustrations in a nurturing atmosphere. You'll also report the hours you spend with your buddy each month.

Our Mentorship Coordinator will be monitoring hours and meeting attendance and will contact you to discuss any issues. He will also be in contact with your buddy's family regularly to get their perspective on the match's progress. We know that when small problems are addressed early on, crises can be averted.

Our Mentorship Coordinator is happy to act as your intermediary whenever you have a question or concern you can't or don't want to address with the parent/guardian. He will also be there to share the many successes of your work as a mentor.

What are my responsibilities?

The children in our program are some of the most vulnerable in the community, and as a mentor to one of them, you've taken on an adult-sized responsibility. You'll need consistency, enthusiasm, and persistence to be successful.

Mentorships that end within the first three months can do more harm than good for both the child and the mentor. We don't want this to happen, and we know you don't either. While you may keep many aspects of your relationship with the child in confidence, we want you to report any conversations about dangerous or illegal activity to both your buddy's parents and the program staff. We'll work with you on how to present the issue in question to the parents/guardians. We also want you to report any concerns about abuse or neglect to program staff.

You will be given training on safety specifics and confidentiality at your orientation workshop and during monthly meetings. Neither of these kinds of issues have been reported in our program, but we want you to be ready just in case.

How do matches end?

Most matches end after our mentors graduate from high school. AFK staff will ask you 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. If your match ends nine months or less before your graduation we will not match you again, but will offer you opportunities to serve the program in other ways.

Mentor FAQs

Getting a mentoring relationship started can sometimes be stressful for everyone. The mentor worries about breaking the ice, the buddy wonders what the experience will be like, and the parents of our buddies usually have a number of concerns about this new person in their child's life.

What about gifts and money? Who pays for outings?

As a rule, mentors are not encouraged to give gifts or spend money on activities. A mentor may purchase a small token or gift to acknowledge a special occasion such as a birthday or achievement, but shopping trips and regular gifts of items or cash are not allowed.

Most of the activities you plan together should be low-cost or free activities. Your buddy's parents should pay if you decide to do something that requires money, like a movie or zoo visit, etc. If you'd like to plan something special and you know the family is unable to provide funds, you can ask our Mentorship Coordinator for advice and suggestions for alternative activities.

What if my buddy's parents ask me to do something against the program's policies?

This has happened before. In that situation, you can ask the parent to contact our Mentorship Coordinator for clarification, who will explain our policies to the family.



“Being a mentor has made me realize how much of an impact a mentor and role model can have on a person.”

- AFK Mentor

What if the parent/guardian won't answer my phone calls?

Be persistent. Be sure to leave a message when you call. If you've left more than one voicemail and have received no response, try another form of communication. You can ask them if they prefer text or email in your introductory meeting. If so, attempt to reach them through these methods. Most parents/guardians check email regularly—more than once daily—and tell us it's their preferred communication mode.

Don't let more than a few days go by without trying again. If two weeks pass and you have received no response, call our Mentorship Coordinator. We do not want communication issues to linger beyond two weeks! If you have a recurring problem, let us know!

A Responsible Mentor

- Confirms meetings with buddy's parents
- Calls, texts, or emails his/her buddy's parents every week he/she can't meet
- Attempts to make up for missed meetings
- Follows up if he/she promises something
- Stays enthusiastic, knowing enthusiasm can overcome nearly all other obstacles
- Asks for help when he/she becomes frustrated, concerned, or has questions about program policy
- Acts like a role model in the presence of his/her buddy, at school, and in the community
- Thinks about safety
- Prepares his/her buddy for the goodbye before the mentorship ends

What if my buddy and I get stuck in the same routine?

For some of our children, being in a routine is a good thing. But if you're getting bored, your buddy probably is too. If that's the case, it's time to talk to your buddy.

Spend some of your next meeting brainstorming things you like to do together and things you might like to plan in the future. Talk to the parents/guardians about the list you came up with, and listen to their ideas.

Bring up your situation at your next mentor meeting, and listen to ideas from other mentors. Ideas for activities to do with your buddy are also posted on our website, so feel free to look through it for inspiration!



What if I feel like my match isn't working out?

Ideally, your concerns about your buddy 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 advocate for you. We also offer ongoing training for mentors, on topics such as problem-solving and communication skills.

It is important for you to attend your monthly mentor meetings for this reason, and to feel comfortable sharing your successes and concerns.

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 match are unsuccessful, AFK can match you again if a child 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 buddy is one of the most incredible and fulfilling things you will do in your high school career. AFK is committed to supporting you 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 and rewarding experience for you.

For parents of mentors: How you can help



Thank you for sharing your sons and daughters with us.

It is not only buddies who benefit from their involvement with AFK. Parents of graduated mentors report many positive changes in their teen resulting from their participation in AFK, including increased empathy, increased maturity and leadership, and an overall increase in happiness and well-being.

Our program will ask much from your son or daughter, but in return will offer experiences that will positively affect him or her for a lifetime. Every year it is a sincere pleasure to get to know them and experience the energy and passion of their youth. They are exemplary citizens and inspiring to us and to the families we work with.

Parents of our mentors are some of our best spokespeople. We've received many referrals for mentors and buddies from past and present parents. Please share our story with all who will listen, pass along our website, and keep those referrals coming! Thank you!

As a parent of a mentor, you may have questions about your role in the program. Please see the following lists of suggested dos and don'ts just for you.

- DO encourage your teen to meet regularly with his/her buddy, and to contact the buddy's family as soon as possible if they cannot meet.
- DO be positive about the relationship and ask how things are going, especially in the first month.
- DO listen to your teen and be supportive of his or her feelings. He or she may be nervous with his/her buddy at first and may go through periods of "testing" as the relationship develops. As a parent, you are a good resource if your teen has general questions about children. Be patient and encouraging. If your teen has trouble with the relationship, encourage him or her to talk to our Mentorship Coordinator immediately.
- DO pass along notice that you've received an AFK email. We will send you a copy of everything we send them. Our mentors do not look at their email inboxes as often as their parents do and sometimes miss important news as a result.
- DO encourage your teen to take on the responsibility of responding both to AFK staff and the buddy's family. The mentors who communicate directly with staff and families have the most successful mentorships.
- DO remind your son or daughter to report their monthly hours and to carry their buddy's emergency card during meetings.
- DO encourage match closure when your teen graduates. We know this is a very busy time, but the match needs a final meeting to provide closure for the buddy.



- DON'T worry if your son or daughter is not chosen for a match in the first round after training. About half of our mentors will be matched within six weeks of training, and after we've run through our waiting list we'll be recruiting more buddies. Sometimes it takes months before we find the right match for your son or daughter. We also 'rematch' some of our buddies, and those matches don't go into effect until the summer.
- DON'T hesitate to call our staff if you have concerns about your son or daughter's safety or a question regarding abuse or neglect.
- DON'T share your son or daughter's buddy's name with anyone. We need to honor our families' requests for confidentiality.
- DON'T forget to check out our website often for volunteer opportunities, upcoming events, or to make a financial contribution:

www.athletesforkids.org

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

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AFK Youth Mentoring