



What is mentoring, and why is it important?

1. What is mentoring?

Mentoring is the presence of a caring individual who provides a young person with support, advice, friendship, reinforcement and constructive role modelling over time.

Mentoring can take many different forms. Some may be more familiar with more formal mentoring programs, such as the variety of programs organized by the Big Brothers Big Sisters societies. Mentoring can also take many other forms, like coaching, youth groups, scout leaders, and more.

2. Why is mentoring important? What are the benefits?

Mentoring is widely recognized as providing a positive contribution to strong and safe communities. Mentoring programs help families offer a solid base for their children's healthy development.

The strong relationships between mentors and youth are shown to improve academic performance, behaviour, and attitudes toward school. Mentoring helps improve peer and family relationships, and it helps Alberta's youth develop the confidence, self-esteem and social skills they need to be productive members of society.

3. How else does mentoring contribute to safe communities?

Having constructive role models helps children and youth make good choices. They are less likely to get involved with alcohol (27%) and drugs (46%), less likely to get involved with violence and crime, and more likely to stay in school.

Getting involved

4. What can Albertans do to support mentoring?

Albertans can learn more about mentoring and volunteer as mentors in their communities. They can also provide support to agencies that deliver mentoring services across the province.

Visit www.albertamentors.ca to find out what you can do to support mentoring in Alberta.

5. Is there currently a need for volunteer mentors in Alberta?

Mentors are urgently needed in communities all across the province, especially in rural areas. There are many more children and youth waiting for mentors than there are mentors available.

6. Do I have what it takes to be a volunteer mentor?

Absolutely! You don't need to have superhuman qualities to be a mentor, just human ones. Mentoring offers you the power to transform lives and make a positive difference. There are many flexible mentoring program options available to fit your schedule and lifestyle, if you want to get involved.

Volunteering to spend time with a child can be extremely rewarding for you as well – you'll learn first-hand how rewarding it feels to transform someone's life, for the better.

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership

7. What is the Alberta Mentoring Partnership? What is its purpose?

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) is a team of 29 organizations, including 10 Alberta government ministries, three government-funded organizations, 16 community agencies and a youth representative.

AMP's vision is that every child or youth at risk who needs a mentor has access to a mentor.

The partnership will help provide successful co-ordination, collaboration and implementation of strategies to create more mentoring opportunities for Alberta's children and youth.

8. How much funding is government providing for the partnership?

The Alberta government, through 10 partner ministries, is contributing \$3.7 million over three years toward AMP, including \$1.2 million from the Safe Communities Initiative.

9. How will AMP, and the funding, increase mentoring opportunities for children and youth?

The partnership will use the funding to implement a number of strategies to increase mentoring opportunities for youth. These strategies include an awareness and recruitment campaign; improving training and resources for mentors; reducing the barriers to becoming a mentor; and establishing mentoring programs specifically for children and youth at risk.

The funding will also support the further development of resources to be used by mentoring agencies, schools, and the government.

10. What has AMP done to achieve its goals?

September 15, 2009, marks the launch of a campaign to raise awareness about mentoring in Alberta, and to encourage Albertans to volunteer in their communities. AMP is also currently supporting mentoring pilot projects aimed at at-risk children and youth, including Aboriginal youth, immigrant youth, and youth in government care.

More information about AMP and the partnership's activities is available at www.albertamentors.ca, where you will also find resources for mentoring agencies to help them in the work they do every day.

11. What difference will this program mean to local charities that run mentoring programs?

The partnership is working to provide additional supports for local agencies that already provide mentoring programs. These include improved training materials for mentors, access to a databank to support program delivery, and strategies to reduce the barriers volunteers face when becoming mentors.

The partnership will also strengthen the mentoring network across the province, and it will help organizations work together to create more opportunities for mentorship to occur.

12. How will AMP help schools provide mentoring programs to students?

AMP's work will serve as a foundation to further support the continuing efforts of community partners, volunteers and school authorities to promote the benefits of mentoring children and youth.

13. Who is involved in the partnership?

The leadership team is co-chaired by Alberta Children and Youth Services, Alberta Education, and Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton & Area, and it includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Alberta Aboriginal Relations;
- Alberta Advanced Education and Technology;
- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development;
- Alberta Children and Youth Services (including regional Child and Family Services Authorities);
- Alberta Education;
- Alberta Employment and Immigration;
- Alberta Health and Wellness;
- Alberta Justice and Attorney General;
- Alberta Seniors and Community Supports;
- Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security;
- Alberta Health Services;
- Alberta's Promise Secretariat;
- Alberta Safe Communities Secretariat;
- Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families;
- Ben Calf Robe Society;
- Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society;
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area;
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada;
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton & Area;
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary;
- Catholic Social Services;
- Central and Northern Network for Child Health;
- Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta;
- Kainai Children's Services Corporation;
- Southern Alberta Child & Youth Health Network;
- United Way Calgary;
- United Way of the Alberta Capital Region;
- Wood's Homes;
- Youth and Volunteer Centre of Red Deer; and
- A youth member.