



NATIVE MENTORING

Media Toolkit

MENTORING FACT SHEET

MENTORING TO BUILD BRIGHT FUTURES

Mentoring has been part of our Native communities' systems for generations. Becoming a mentor is one of the most important things you can do to improve the lives of young people in your community. While it can be challenging at times, seeing the positive results of even just a year of regular mentorship can be an extremely gratifying experience.

Youth benefit from mentoring relationships whether it is with an elder or with someone closer in age to themselves.^{2,4,6,7} Mentors don't have to have lived "perfect" lives or be flawless. Those who have gotten through difficulties can often pull from their own life experience to inspire and teach. If you would be willing to spend time with youth to help them build a brighter future, then consider becoming a mentor. Continue reading to understand the risk factors our youth face and the impact you could have.

OUR YOUTH AT RISK

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth are at a greater risk compared to their non-Native peers in many areas, such as risk of depression and abuse of alcohol and drugs.^{1,12,13} They are also less likely to graduate from high school or go on to college. This likely contributes to higher unemployment rates and greater poverty as they advance into adulthood.² Mentoring relationships can work directly against these risk factors and increase the odds of success for our youth, whether it is abstaining from the abuse of drugs and alcohol, or graduating high school.^{5,7,2,3,4,6,8,9,11,15}

One of the greatest defenses from these factors, especially as it relates to educational achievements, is to volunteer your time as a mentor. Research indicates that the majority of Native youth feel it is important to keep up with their culture² and as a fellow member of the community, could be used as a lens with which to focus the mentoring relationship. Helping youth while enabling them to retain their cultural identity can be a powerful way to ensure the community at large never loses touch with where it's from. When implementing mentoring programs for Native youth, it is important to involve caregivers, provide ample opportunities for training, and engage mentors, mentees, and relevant community members in meaningful experiences.



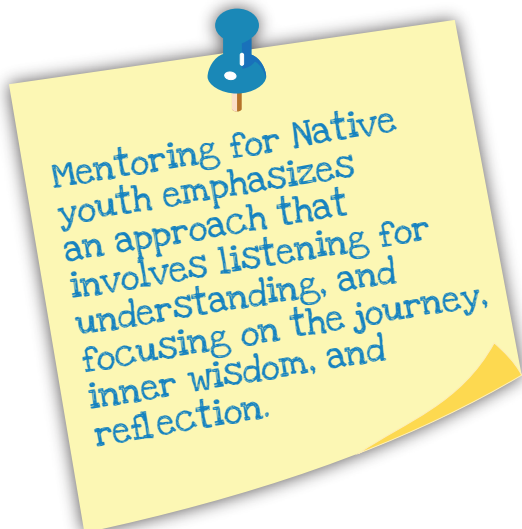
THE IMPACT OF A MENTOR

Having a mentor helps youth to maintain greater resilience. It acts as protection against the difficulties and hardships they face by providing them with the resources and the guidance they need to not only get through these trials but even become better for having done so. Mentoring helps them to mature, find their place in the community, and become healthy adults who are themselves able to help others and contribute to the community.^{3,4,11,14,16}

BECOME A MENTOR

Mentoring is a relationship. This relationship is built in the same way that other relationships are built: by spending time together, talking, and engaging in positive activities together. This may take the form of playing games, helping with homework, creating arts and crafts, or engaging in sports or outdoor activities. AI/AN youth have even indicated that engaging in subsistence activities (e.g. hunting, fishing, trapping, picking berries, etc.), dance, outdoor walks, and other traditional activities, in addition to learning language are things they would like to regularly participate in.^{5, 17}

If any of these activities and making a lasting positive impact on the life of a young person interest you, then mentoring is for you. Head down to your local Boys & Girls Club and inquire about being a mentor today!



Mentoring for Native youth emphasizes an approach that involves listening for understanding, and focusing on the journey, inner wisdom, and reflection.

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