



## **Mentor Program**

*With God as our cornerstone, we foster healing, hope, and transformation to empower and promote resiliency in children, families, and communities.*

Welcome to The Vashti Center Mentor Program! We are so glad you're here.

A mentor is defined as "an experienced and trusted advisor." Our mentors at Vashti are this and more.

*"A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself." — Oprah Winfrey*

### **Why Should I be a Mentor?**

You get to be a part of making a difference in the life of a child. All children need to know that someone cares for them, and a mentor is a way to be that person.

### **Mentored Children are:**

46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs

27% less likely to begin using alcohol

52% less likely to skip school

37% less likely to skip a class

### **Who can be a mentor?**

A mentor is someone who is compassionate, caring, and patient. Our youth value adults who are reliable and consistent, especially those youth who have only experienced the opposite. Mentors are caring and accepting. They are someone our youth can count on.

## **How much time is involved in mentoring?**

Our goal is at least 1 hour a week or 4 and ½ hours a month.

Being a mentor does involve time and commitment. We can be flexible to work with your schedule; however, the children have more free time on the weekends.

We realize as time progresses you will develop lasting bonds with the kids and may want more time with them. As your relationship grows, off campus activities are allowed.

*“Show me a successful individual and I’ll show you someone who had real positive influences in his or her life. I don’t care what you do for a living—if you do it well I’m sure there was someone cheering you on or showing the way. A mentor.” — Denzel Washington*

## **What are the children like?**

Our residential program serves ages 11-19. They are very lovable youth who bond easily with caring adults. Each one is unique and special in his or her own way.

However, the children have many things in common:

- Some have experienced a form of abuse
- Some have been in several “out of home” placements
- Most of the children are in the custody of the State of Georgia
- All of them want to be back home with their “real” parents/guardians or, if they are old enough, independent and on their own

Other common traits and problems are low self-esteem, poor performance in school, few friends, poor peer interactions, and lack of good judgment and distrust of adults. However, many of our children are musically talented, athletic, have a flair for writing poetry and short stories, are artistically creative, or work well with animals.

At the end of the day, these are just kids. Kids who are in need of love and support from caring and compassionate adults. Our mentoring program is one way we can provide this type of care.

## **Being an Active Mentor**

Being active also means that when you are here you're fully engaged in the child. This means listening with your eyes, ears, paying attention to what is going on with the child both verbally and non-verbally. Be aware they may not do this in turn for you. It takes time to get some of the kids to trust again. You being genuinely interested in them can help with their healing process.

Understand you may have times with the child when they are hesitant to talk. Bring a backup plan or find an activity they enjoy and use that to connect.

Being active also means that a child may disclose something personal that either is happening or has happened in the past. Self-harm, abuse, or neglect, for example. NEVER promise to keep a secret with this kind of information. You may report this either to the chaplain or Cottage Supervisor, but you must report such conversations.

### **Expectations:**

Consistency is key. If you have scheduled a time to meet with your youth, follow through on that time. We understand that life happens and that circumstances can cause a change in your schedule. If this happens, alert us as soon as possible about the changes.

As much as we value consistency from our mentors, our youth are not always predictable. Mentors are assigned to youth who have demonstrated certain levels of behavior, which garners them certain privileges. When a youth's behavior has strayed, it may affect your meeting time or activity. We are doing all we can to encourage positive behaviors, but there may be times that our encouragement is not enough to keep our youth on track. Bad days will happen.

Care for our mentee. Listen to them. Be compassionate.

Respect your mentee. This includes cultural differences. Your mentee and family may hold different traditions and values. Be open-minded and understanding. Avoid sharing polarizing opinions on topics such as political views. Don't talk negatively about them or share their personal information with others. Respect personal space. Remember side-hugs are safe hugs. Set limits.

### **How can I earn my mentee's trust?**

- Be truthful and straightforward.

- Be honest and willing to share your story.
- Be loyal and dependable.
- Show beliefs through actions not just words.
- Be consistent and follow through.
- Don't lecture youth, but have empathy and share with them.

*If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive. – Brene Brown*

### **Are there any “DON'T's” with my mentee?**

- Don't share too much personal information.
- Don't ask personal questions about treatment or why they are at Vashti Center.
- Don't take photographs (always abide by HIPPA confidentiality).
- Don't make promises you cannot keep.
- Don't let your mentee use your cell phone.

### **Scheduling Your Visits:**

Schedule visits at least 24 hours in advance. Please select a weekly day/time for your visits. The Chaplain will make sure the child's Cottage Supervisor and HSP are aware of the schedule. Pre-scheduled visits cannot interfere with school, therapy appointments, or bedtime. Any change in your schedule must be approved in advance with the Cottage Supervisor.

Include mentee in activity planning, but feel free to object to unreasonable suggestions.

*“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — Maya Angelou*

### **Mentor Activities Guidelines:**

The mentor involves our children in wholesome enriching activities designed to transition the child from the unnatural institutional environment to normal community living experiences. Because of the severity of the behaviors that our children bring to the facility, it must be assured that the child can safely participate under a mentor's supervision in the community activity. The child and his/her mentor slowly and

gradually move from limited on facility activities to off facility visitations/ activities that may extend from 3-hour period or more. Every change in a child's level; must be approved by the Cottage Supervisor. The level of participation in the mentor program is directed by the child's program level. In unique cases, certain restrictions may be placed on the child's participation. The following program level guidelines are limitations for each child:

Entry/Bronze - No Mentor

Silver – Child can have on facility visits

Gold – Platinum -- Child can go on off campus visits

All gifts and activities must be approved in advance with the Cottage Supervisor or HSP.

At anytime during the visitation or off campus activity that the child is unable to cooperate with the direction of the mentor he/she is to be immediately returned to Vashti.

Call Cottage Supervisor or Chaplain if at any time you need guidance.

### **Mandated Reporting:**

Report any suspected abuse/neglect to the Chaplain or authorities within 24 hours.

Any person who has knowledge or suspects child abuse must report it. Even if you are just "concerned" you must report. You do not need "proof." The law speaks of reporting based on "available information" and a situation that "reasonably appears to have been abuse or neglect."

You must report suspected abuse or neglect, even if to the Chaplain or Cottage Supervisor.

### **Recording Visits:**

You must complete a Weekly Hours Submission Form after each visit.

### **What do I do if my mentee goes into crisis during a visit?**

- Alert staff
- Focus on positive behaviors
- Never physically intervene

- Discontinue the visit

**Termination:**

In the event that the mentor wishes to terminate the relationship with the mentee, he/she agrees to communicate with the Chaplain to ensure appropriate steps are taken in inform the mentee of this change. We ask for a week notices. This ensures a thoughtful transition is made.

If mentors violate any of the written policies or are found to have acted inappropriately with a mentee during a visit, Vashti Center reserves the right to terminate the mentor/mentee relationship.

**Mentor /Volunteer Checklist:**

- 1.** Application \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.** 3 References \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.** Drug Screen \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.** Background Check (Federal Background Check Fingerprint scan)(\$53 fee) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.** T.B. Test (Urgent Care) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6.** Drivers License \_\_\_\_\_
- 7.** Auto Insurance \_\_\_\_\_
- 8.** Church Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_
- 9.** Confidentiality Agreement \_\_\_\_\_
- 10.** Trained and Commissioned \_\_\_\_\_

