

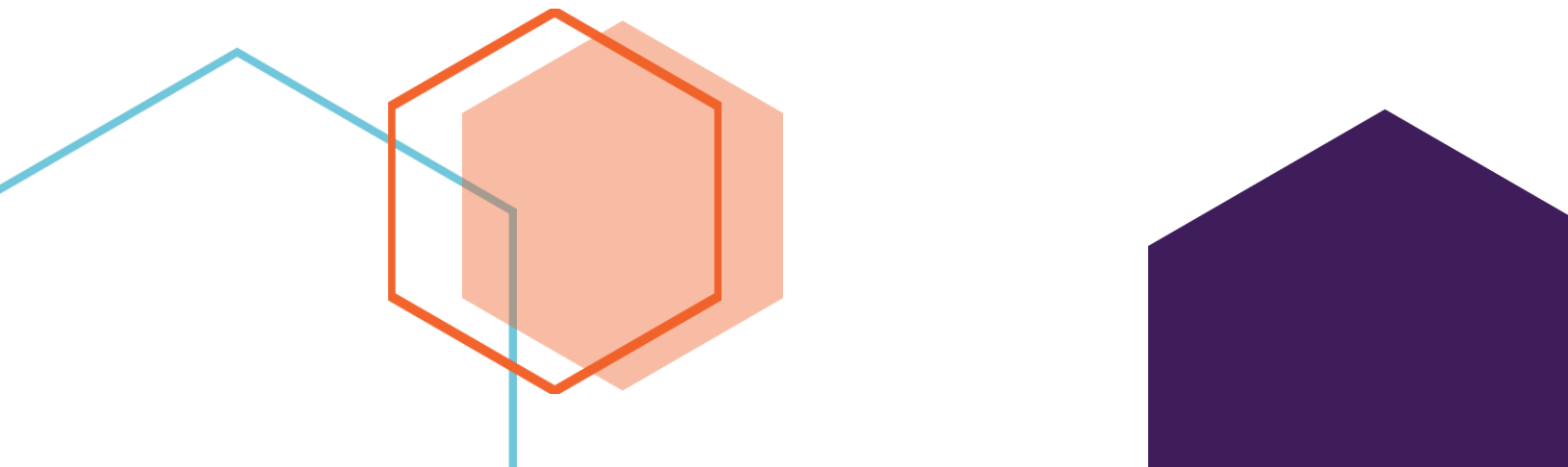


# Texas Juvenile Justice Department



April, 2023

## Volunteer Handbook





## Important TJJD Contact Information

### **24-Hour Abuse Reporting Hotline**

Hotline answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to be called regarding criminal behavior, such as abuse, neglect, or any other illegal activity.

**(866) 477-8354**

### **Independent Ombudsman for TJJD**

Established to investigate, evaluate, and secure the rights of the children committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD).

**(855) 468-7330**

### **TJJD Central Office**

Texas Juvenile Justice Department

P.O. Box 12757

Austin, TX 78711

**(512) 490-7130**

**info@tjjd.texas.gov**

### **Facility Community Relations Coordinator**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_@tjjd.texas.gov

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Facility Superintendent**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_@tjjd.texas.gov

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Facility Assistant Superintendent**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Important TJJD Contact Information</b> .....                 | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Welcome!</b> .....   | <b>3</b>  |
| TJJD Mission, Core Values, & Vision .....                       | 3         |
| Mission .....   | 3         |
| Core Values .....   | 3         |
| Vision .....  | 3         |
| <b>Navigating the Texas Juvenile Justice System</b> .....       | <b>4</b>  |
| The Youth in TJJD Care .....                                    | <b>8</b>  |
| Youth Rights .....  | 8         |
| Adverse Childhood Experiences .....                             | 9         |
| Trauma-Informed Corrections .....                               | 10        |
| <b>TJJD Volunteer Services</b> .....                            | <b>12</b> |
| The Role of TJJD Volunteers .....                               | 12        |
| Service Opportunities .....                                     | 12        |
| <b>Indemnification/Representation</b> .....                     | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Program Assessments/Complaints</b> .....                     | <b>13</b> |
| <b>TJJD Facility Daily Schedules</b> .....                      | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Visiting TJJD Facilities: Rules &amp; Expectations</b> ..... | <b>16</b> |
| Contraband and Prohibited Items .....                           | 16        |
| Property and Vehicle Searches .....                             | 17        |
| Volunteer Safety .....  | 17        |
| Dress Code .....  | 18        |
| Rules of Conduct .....  | 19        |
| Confidentiality .....   | 21        |
| <b>Critical Reporting Information</b> .....                     | <b>22</b> |
| Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) .....                        | 22        |
| Suicide Prevention .....  | 26        |
| Youth Confessions of Child Abuse .....                          | 28        |
| Sexual Harassment and Discrimination .....                      | 28        |
| <b>Become a Skilled Volunteer</b> .....                         | <b>29</b> |
| Essential Knowledge .....                                       | 29        |
| Building Effective Relationships .....                          | 29        |
| Problem Solving .....   | 33        |
| Youth Manipulation .....  | 34        |
| <b>Useful Definitions</b> .....                                 | <b>36</b> |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>Function-Specific Volunteers</b>                             |           |
| <b>Spiritual Care Providers</b> .....                           | <b>41</b> |
| Code of Ethics .....  | 41        |
| Scheduling Programs & Activities .....                          | 42        |
| Limits to Proselytizing .....                                   | 43        |
| Leading Programs & Activities .....                             | 43        |
| Helping Skills for Spiritual Care Providers .....               | 44        |
| <b>Mentors</b> .....  | <b>46</b> |
| Do Mentors Really Make a Difference? .....                      | 46        |
| What's the Commitment? .....                                    | 46        |
| The Mentoring Relationship Cycle .....                          | 46        |
| Effective Mentor Strategies .....                               | 48        |
| Successful Mentor Attitudes & Styles .....                      | 49        |
| Mentor Absences .....   | 54        |
| Closing a Mentoring Relationships .....                         | 55        |



## Welcome!

We want to thank you for taking such an active and essential role in serving the youth in our care and our Texas communities.

We at TJJD believe that with the help of volunteers like you, we can enhance and change the lives of these young people. We can provide meaningful activities and model behaviors that foster educational, social, emotional, and spiritual growth.

This handbook contains all the information you'll need to understand your role and effectively perform the work you'll be doing. Everything included is key to your serving the youth and aligning with TJJD practices and goals. You'll find helpful details, such as a listing of the youths' rights and expectations for their behavior, as well as tips on how to solve problems and build effective relationships with your mentees.

**Thank you for joining us in this important task of helping young people find a brighter future and keeping Texas communities safer. We appreciate your dedication and value your time.**

## TJJD Mission, Core Values, & Vision

### Mission

Transforming young lives and creating safer communities.

### Core Values

**Justice.** We do the right thing, in all things, with all people.

**Safety.** We commit to a culture that protects youth, employees, and the public.

**Integrity.** We build trust through transparency and ethical behavior.

**Partnership.** We achieve best results through collaboration with counties, stakeholders, youth, and their families.

**Innovation.** We proactively create opportunities to improve the juvenile justice system.

### Vision

An effective and integrated juvenile justice system that:

1. Advances public safety through rehabilitation.
2. Embraces a one-system approach that includes the significant voice of county probation offices and allows for local control.
3. Equitably affords youth access to services matching their needs to enhance opportunities for a satisfying and productive life.
4. Employs a stabilized and engaged workforce fully empowered to be agents of change.
5. Operates safe and therapeutic environments with positive peer cultures emphasizing mutual accountability.
6. Is a model system with innovative, data-driven, and successful programming.



## Navigating the Texas Juvenile Justice System

Often, people think of the juvenile system as a penal system like that for adults, but for youth. While there are similarities between the two, there are critical differences. The adult system focuses on public safety and punishment for criminal conduct, while the juvenile system stresses rehabilitation. It also holds youth accountable for their actions and serves public safety. However, even when it is necessary to detain youth, the setting is not punitive but rather is protective and designed to guide them toward better behavior and treat their underlying needs for addiction resolution, mental health care, therapy, and education.

TJJD staff and our team of volunteers are not here to judge, blame, or punish youth. We are here to partner with youth and their families.

Being sent to TJJD is serious. Only about one out of every 100 youth who get in trouble with the law in Texas each year go to TJJD – youth who are chronic offenders or have committed the most severe offenses. While TJJD is serious, our youth are not in the adult correctional system. Texas law and a Juvenile Court judge provided for them to get a chance to reform. Each youth's journey through TJJD is different because it is based on their specific needs. To help you understand the big picture this section explains typical movement through the TJJD system.

### Referral to Juvenile Court and Possible Dispositions

A youth who engages in delinquent conduct or commits conduct in need of supervision (called a CINS violation) can be referred to juvenile court, where their case can be dismissed or adjudicated. The judge can require them to attend a program serving youth, perform community service, or sentence them to detention.

If the county decides to charge the youth with delinquent conduct, the youth is afforded the same legal rights as an adult charged with a crime. In certain circumstances, such as when a youth commits a very serious offense, the county can request to have a youth certified as an adult, and if granted, the youth's case is moved to the adult justice system.

For youths “adjudicated” for delinquent conduct in the juvenile system, there are several possible disposition outcomes:

- The youth may be placed on probation
- The youth may be sent to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department with an indeterminate sentence (only felony offenses)
- The youth may be sent to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department with a determinate sentence (only certain felony offenses).
- A youth who is placed on probation (and not sent to TJJD) must be discharged from the probation by the time they turn 18.
- A youth sent to TJJD with an indeterminate sentence must be discharged by the time they turn 19.
- A youth sent to TJJD with a determinate sentence may be transferred to adult prison, if they are at least 16, depending on their behavior and progress in TJJD programs.

### The Juvenile Justice System's Backbone: County Probation Departments and Courts

TJJD works in partnership with local juvenile boards and juvenile probation departments to support and enhance juvenile probation services in Texas by providing funding, oversight, technical assistance, and training; establishing and enforcing standards; collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information; and facilitating communications between state and local entities. The counties provide services to the vast majority of justice-involved youth, starting with diversion programs for low-level offenses up through more serious offenses requiring detention.

TJJD manages state-operated secure facilities and halfway houses to provide treatment services to those youth who have been adjudicated for felony-level offenses and committed to the state's care by Juvenile Court Judges. Many of these youth may require specialized treatment that the counties are not equipped to provide.



## The Progressive Sanctions and Interventions Model

Each youth, depending on their offense and history, plus a few other factors, has a unique journey through the juvenile justice system. In general, the progressive sanctions and interventions model is designed to start with the least amount of intervention or sanctions possible, progressively getting more serious and intensive as necessary to help youth learn to become productive, law-abiding citizens. The goal is to help these young people reform and avoid entering the adult prison system.

On the spectrum of services, law enforcement and county juvenile probation departments, under the guidance of TJJD, serve vital front-line roles. TJJD serves as a critical last attempt to reach the youth committed to state-level care. Many youths committed to TJJD have already failed at a county-level intervention or have committed serious offenses such as capital murder, armed robbery, or aggravated sexual assault and were sent directly to the agency's care.

### 1. Juvenile Court

A juvenile court judge made the decision to send a youth to TJJD. Most youths who are sent to TJJD are given an indeterminate sentence, which means they are not given a specific number of months or years they will be in TJJD.

Some courts send youth to TJJD with specific sentences. These are called determinate sentences because the court determined a time that must be served. Determinate sentences can be for up to 40 years.

### 2. Orientation & Assessment

Youth start out at TJJD at an orientation and assessment unit, where staff work with youth to figure out their strengths and needs so that they know the best way to help. The youth's medical, emotional, educational, and psychological needs are evaluated. TJJD will also determine the youth's risk of breaking the law and committing serious offenses.

### 3. High-Security Facilities

Most youth go to one of TJJD's secure facilities for most of their time in TJJD. Some youth go to private, contracted facilities. Others go to medium-security facilities or halfway houses. Youth are placed according to their treatment needs and as close to home as possible. At high-security settings, youth will have the chance to earn privileges and participate in skill-building groups. If a youth's treatment needs change, they may be transferred to a different facility.

### 4. Low & Medium-Security Facilities

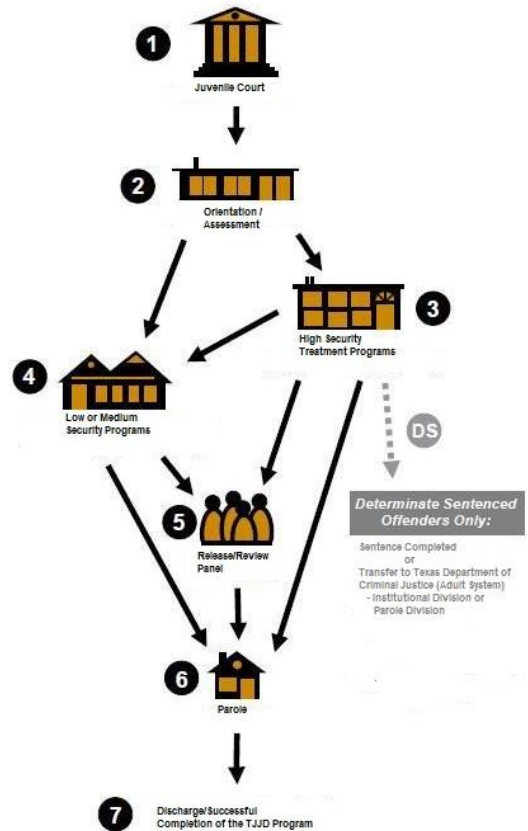
TJJD operates several halfway houses and contracts with other organizations to provide low to medium-security facilities. These facilities provide youth a chance to make a gradual transition back into the community. For many youths, transitioning home through a medium-security facility is also part of the overall treatment program after completion of the minimum length of stay.

### 5. Release Review Panel

If a youth has been at TJJD for an assigned minimum length of stay and has not already been released on parole, their case is assigned to a release review panel. This panel meets 30 days before the end of a youth's minimum length of stay and determines whether a youth should be released, taking into account their treatment progress and behavior. The youth's treatment team will decide if they go home or to a halfway house. If the panel decides a youth needs more treatment, it can extend their stay in TJJD.

The panel welcomes input from parents, family friends, and advocates regarding changes and improvements they have seen in the youth. You may submit information to:

Release Review Panel  
 P.O. Box 12757 Austin, Texas 78711  
 Email: [release.review@tjjd.texas.gov](mailto:release.review@tjjd.texas.gov)





### **Information Used by the Release Review Panel**

- The Panel may review any information about the youth's rehabilitation.
- Caregivers, the youth, victims of the youth, or any advocate the youth chooses may send information in writing to the Panel.
- Caregivers, the youth, victims of the youth, or advocate may make a written request for personal communication with the Panel.
- The Panel may interview the youth or anyone else about their treatment. Youth can refuse to speak to the Panel and it will not be held against them.
- The Panel may consider rule violations youth committed only if they were proven in a Level I or Level II hearing.

*Note: The Panel also looks at the youth's Positive Behavioral Support Systems (PBSS) and/or Reading Improvement Program (RIP) in school. If youth don't meet these educational participation requirements, the law does not allow the youth to be released.*

### **Reconsideration of Release Review Panel Decision**

If the youth disagrees with the decision of the Release Review Panel, they can request a reconsideration. The youth, a caregiver, advocate, victim of the youth, a TJJJ employee, an employee of a TJJJ contractor, or a TJJJ volunteer may submit a request for reconsideration of the Panel's decision.

The request for reconsideration must be submitted in writing within 15 days after receiving notification of the decision. Youth and caregivers can get help from any TJJJ staff member or advocate to write a request for reconsideration.

If the Release Review Panel decides to release the youth from a secure facility, a facility administrator (usually the superintendent) or contract care staff may ask the Release Review Panel to reconsider the youth's release or discharge. But they can only do this if new information comes to light or if the youth is accused of a new major rule violation.

## **6. Parole**

Once youth have finished their minimum length of stay and progressed through treatment, they will qualify for release on parole, a halfway house or other less restrictive community-based programming. Almost all Texas Juvenile Justice Department youth go home on parole. This is when they get to apply everything they've learned. TJJJ wants every youth to go home with a new outlook on life; and the skills to be healthy, productive, and successful citizens.

## **7. Discharge | Successful Completion of the TJJJ Program**

It is TJJJ's hope that youth will leave the agency with a fresh outlook and a sound plan for future success. A youth's chances for success depends on them seeking a good education, having career goals, applying what they learn in treatment, and following through with their plans. Even after a youth leaves, TJJJ educational liaisons can help them apply to college or trade school and for financial aid.

## **Minimum Length of Stay**

### **Determinate Sentenced Offenders**

Youth who are committed to TJJJ with determinate (or specific) sentences by the courts will ultimately transfer to the adult system – the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) – if they are unable to complete their sentences before they turn 19. Depending on progress in treatment, they may be able to serve the TDCJ portion of their sentences (if any) on adult parole rather than in prison. Only a judge, not TJJJ, can send a youth to prison.

### **Indeterminate Sentenced Offenders**

Youth sent to TJJJ without a determinate sentence set by the court, are committed to TJJJ until no later than their 19th birthday and TJJJ will determine their minimum length of stay – the minimum time they must spend in a TJJJ facility. TJJJ has a formula to determine a youth's minimum length of stay based on the severity of their committing offense and other risks the youth might pose. This section explains how TJJJ determines the minimum length of stay.

Note: If the youth was committed with a determinate sentence, this section does not apply to them.



### **Assessment Rating**

The first part of determining the minimum length of stay is figuring out the youth's severity rating – High, Moderate, or Low. This is based on the youth's committing offense.

The second part of determining the minimum length of stay is figuring out the assessment rating – High, Medium, or Low. This is based on the youth's risk to the community as shown by certain objective factors, including prior offense(s) and referral history.

TJJD considers these factors to determine the minimum length of stay.

### **Finishing the Program**

What youth must do to get released from a secure facility if they are not a sentenced offender:

- Finish their minimum length of stay (9 – 24 months).
- Have no major rule violations 30 days before their exit interview with their Special Services Committee (SSC) or during the release approval process.
- Participate in, or have completed, any specialized treatment program they were assigned.
- Be on the highest stage in their rehabilitation (usually youth empowerment status – YES stage), which shows the youth is:
  - Participate in school and workforce programs
  - Participate in skills development groups
  - Show positive skills learned at TJJD
  - Have finished a community re-integration plan showing they understand their risk and protective factors
  - Keep developing skills to reduce their risk factors and increase protective factors
  - Have goals and a plan to achieve them
  - Know what will get in the way of their success and have a plan to deal with those things.
- Participate in any required rehabilitation programming which may include:
  - A reading improvement program or positive behavioral intervention and supports system
  - Completion of at least 12 hours of a gang intervention program, if required by court.

*Note: If a youth's treatment team or the administrator decides the youth isn't ready for release because the youth hasn't finished the program, the case goes to the TJJD Release Review Panel.*

### **Summary**

Only a juvenile court can send a youth to TJJD. Sometimes the judge gives a youth a set sentence, called a determinate commitment because the judge has determined the exact amount of time a youth must spend in TJJD and/or adult prison. Most of the time, the judge sends youth to TJJD without saying exactly how long he or she must spend, called an indeterminate commitment.

You might ask, "Why would a judge not say how long a youth has to be in TJJD?" This is the biggest difference between TJJD and the adult system. Remember, TJJD is about accountability, treatment, and therapy, not punishment. Because each youth's therapy experience is different, some youth need more time and others need less time.

In TJJD, youth come and participate in their treatment until they are done. So, instead of receiving set sentences, most youth have minimum lengths of stay – the least amount of time you know for sure he or she will have to be in TJJD. This is usually about 9 to 24 months depending on their offense and some other factors. The goal is that a youth finishes their treatment within that timeframe.

To ensure TJJD doesn't keep a child longer than needed, each youth who has finished his or her minimum time, but hasn't been released, has his or her case reviewed by a group called the Release Review Panel. This group looks at all information about the youth and decides if TJJD is allowed to keep the youth past the minimum time.

The only time a judge gives a youth a set sentence (the determinate commitment) is when they have committed a very serious offense such as murder, sexual assault, armed robbery, and some other offenses. Most of the time, these set sentences last past the time a youth can stay in TJJD, which is until they turn 19. Then, they are transferred to the adult system to finish their sentences (either on parole or in prison).





## The Youth in TJJD Care

### Youth Rights

Just because a youth has been committed to the care of TJJD, it does not mean they lose all their rights. At TJJD, youth have basic rights. There are some limits to their rights, but only as a last resort. TJJD can limit youth rights to make sure everyone is safe and to make sure they are getting the best treatment. If you think TJJD has violated a youth's rights or a youth has been treated unfairly, you can take action to fix it by contacting the Independent Ombudsman at (855) 468-7330.

### **ALL youth have the:**

**Right to Equal Treatment.** Youth have the right to be free from discrimination.

**Right of Free Speech and Expression.** Youth can express themselves if it isn't disruptive or unsafe.

**Right of Religious Freedom.** Youth and their caregivers (if youth are under 18) can decide whether or not the youth may participate in religious activities of their choice.

**Right to Personal Possessions.** Youth can keep and use personal possessions that are safe and don't disrupt programs or promote bad behavior.

**Right to Receive Visitors.** Youth can receive visitors, including private in-person communication with caregivers.

**Right of Access to Mail and Telephone.** Youth can freely send and receive letters in the mail except if they are a security risk. Youth will have access to phones as much as possible.

**Right to Earnings and Monetary Gifts.** Youth have the right to their money. TJJD may limit the amount of cash youth can have on hand but can't take it from their trust fund without the youth's permission.

**Right to Protection from Physical and Psychological Harm.** Youth have the right to be protected from harm and to get healthy food, clothing, and shelter.

**Right to Medical and Dental Care.** Youth will receive basic and necessary medical and dental care, both routine and emergency.

**Right of Access to Attorneys.** Youth can talk with their attorney in private.

**Right to Be Informed.** TJJD will tell youth about all policies, procedures, and rules affecting them at TJJD.

**Right to Accuracy and Fairness.** Decisions about youth will be fair and correct.

**Right to Confidentiality of Records.** Youth have the right to confidentiality of their records. Records will not be released except to those authorized by law.

**Right to File Grievances and Appeal Decisions.** Youth have the right to have their complaints resolved quickly and fairly.



## Adverse Childhood Experiences

One tool that helps our agency understand our youths' backgrounds and experiences is called Adverse Childhood Experiences—or ACEs. ACEs involve tracking ten of the most pervasive and significant negative experiences of childhood.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that ACEs have a tremendous impact on future violence, victimization and perpetration, and lifelong health and opportunity. People with just one of these factors have a 200% to 500% increased chance of attempting suicide. At four ACEs, the chances of a suicide attempt go up to 2400% higher and at seven ACEs to a staggering 5100% higher than those with no ACEs.

### There are 10 total ACEs:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Violence in the home
- Incarcerated family members
- Family substance abuse
- Family mental illness
- Divorced or separated parents

The number of ACEs a person has experience is a key predictor of life outcomes. A person with four or more typically has major health issues and severe behavioral problems. Almost all TJJD youth have experienced childhood trauma, and TJJD statistics suggest that about half of TJJD boys and more than 80 percent of TJJD girls have four or more ACEs, compared with about 13% of the general public that has experienced that many ACEs, according to the CDC.

As daunting as these that figures are, they present an exciting opportunity to help these youth begin to build a bridge from trauma to recovery. We can provide them with the opportunity to lead fuller, more productive lives for themselves and their families.

These types of traumatic experiences in childhood are rarely isolated, but rather are pervasive. When a child grows up in such an environment, it often affects brain development. The portion of the brain that controls problem solving, judgment, impulse control, empathy, and appropriate social and sexual behavior does not develop at the same rate as other youth. This means that the part of the brain that contains survival instincts, emotions, and the fight, flight, or freeze response is in control more often than it is in other kids. The central point is that because of these issues, our youth often have a "hair-trigger fear response." This means that they often react to triggers and stressors that we may not even notice through quickly escalating responses because their "survival brain" is taking over.

### ***If you would like to learn more:***

- The CDC's website  
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/>
- Aces Too High  
<https://acestoohigh.com/>
- To understand your own ACE score as well as your resiliency factors that help you with any ACEs, visit <https://acesconnection.com/blog/got-your-ace-resilience-scores>



## TJJD Youth ACE Scores

The typical youth at TJJD has experienced significant childhood trauma. This consistent set of threats and stress they have lived through can hamper brain development, setting it to believe they are under almost constant threat.

That means that it is likely that they don't react to stress or think through decisions in the same ways as other teens, which probably led to many of the reasons they came to us. Our goal must be to create an environment where we can help them to learn how to make decisions, manage their emotions and reactions to stress, and learn to take responsibility for their lives and decisions—in other words, to correct.

This goal leads us to trauma-informed corrections. The model requires creating an atmosphere where youth can feel safe and begin to build appropriate trusting connections and set appropriate boundaries with others—something likely lacking in their pasts. This environment allows us to correct behavior in a way that best enables progress and learning and to empower youth to regulate their reactions to stress and emotions and build decision-making skills.

## Trauma-Informed Corrections

Trauma-informed corrections is based on our understanding of the youth in our care and their backgrounds. The purpose of our system is to help youth to do better. Helping them to increase their chances of success also makes our communities safer. In developing and refining trauma-informed corrections, we use science and evidence to find ways to reach the youth.

A central goal of the juvenile justice system is correcting behavior. In determining the methods to be used in the model, correcting behavior is at their core. We must also seek to understand the youth in our care and what approaches are most likely to reach them. Only this way, can we hope to help them better understand themselves and support them in correcting behavior that is socially inappropriate or dangerous to the community

The model requires creating an atmosphere where youth can feel safe and begin to build trusting connections and set appropriate boundaries with others—something likely lacking in their pasts. This environment allows us to correct behavior, enabling progress and empowering youth to regulate their emotions and reactions to stress and build decision-making skills.

Trauma-informed corrections includes four main components: building the foundations of **safety** and **empowering** youth in an environment that includes **connecting** with them and **correcting** their inappropriate behavior.

## Basic Safety

It is critical that we have the safest environment possible, for both youth and staff. Safety is also the first step toward trauma-informed corrections and central to its practice. When a youth comes to TJJD, not only is the transition frightening but it is likely that the youth's previous environment did not feel safe either. Many have been living in a survival mode, constantly seeking safety and security without consistent success. Therefore, our first task with any youth is to foster a sense of "felt safety," which means it is not good enough for us to judge them as safe; they also must feel that way.

Safety is based in trust. In a dangerous or scary situation, we usually need to trust others to help keep us safe. When the others have power over us, we can only feel safe if we believe in them and know that they are capable and want to protect us.

It is also important that we stay safe by ensuring that youth who are actively violent are removed from the situation for the safety of others and that safety plans are carefully crafted and consistently followed.

Additionally, trauma-informed corrections teaches a wide variety of de-escalation tools and tools to avoid escalation in the first place. The four levels of engagement serve not just to teach regulation and prosocial behaviors and responses, but also to keep everyone safer. Better safety is achieved with greater tools to catch behavior when it is low and intervene before it escalates combined with methods to de-escalate higher-level behavior.



## Interaction

How we interact with youth is central to their time in our care and provides the best opportunity for them to be prepared to return to their communities.

- **Connecting.** Connecting builds trust and grows felt safety.
- **Trust.** Trusting relationships are important to all of us. Many youths have not had them.
- **Connection.** That first positive connection to another person can be life changing. We can connect with them and teach them how to have boundaries.
- **Lighthearted engagement.** An environment based in positive engagement is one where perceived threats are lower.
- **Meeting needs.** Giving youth a voice and seeking to learn and meet their needs builds trust and connection and helps them feel safer.
- **Correcting.** Correcting behavior is our primary goal. It is more effective with trust and connection.
- **Proactive correction.** We correct behavior proactively when we teach social skills and when we offer them a level of power by providing choices, compromises, and a role in the decision-making processes.
- **Responsive correction.** We correct behavior responsively when the youth's behavior becomes challenging and we need to engage in an immediate and direct response.
- **Behavior focused.** Responses must be leveled at the behavior, not the youth.
- **Catching it low.** With connection comes an ability to see when a youth is about to "flip their lid." If we "catch it low" and intervene in the right way, everyone is safer, and the youth learns more from the experience.
- **Empowering.** Empowering youth gives them some control so that they can practice regulation and decision making
- **Meet needs.** We empower youth when we make sure to meet their physical, sensory, and activity needs.
- **Predictability.** Keeping predictable schedules and managing transitions through communication helps them to regulate.
- **Help them learn decision-making.** Youth need to have some agency or power over themselves and to learn how to make good decisions. Give them opportunities to weigh in on activities or flexible schedule items.
- **Teach communication and compromise.** Allow youth to ask for a compromise, where possible.
- **Co-regulate.** Help the youth learn different ways to regulate their reactions to emotions and stress by doing the exercises along with them.
- **Don't demand compliance for the sake of compliance.** Demanding compliance when it is not needed for safety takes away from trust and can cause power struggles that can lead to dangerous situations.



## TJJD Volunteer Services

### The Role of TJJD Volunteers

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department believes that, through volunteers, the community can enhance the lives of youth by providing meaningful activities and resources that promote pro-social, educational, emotional, and spiritual growth, and healthy family relationships; thus, expanding services provided by staff.

The mission of the TJJD Volunteer Services Program is to maximize community resources and use volunteers to provide opportunities that enable youth to become responsible and productive citizens.

TJJD will recruit and partner with volunteers and volunteer groups who:

- come from culturally and socio-economically diverse backgrounds and geographic areas of the state
- have a positive and continuing influence on the behaviors of youth, which promotes public safety and reduces recidivism
- share experiences and strengths, provide direction and guidance in assisting youth to meet their goals and treatment needs, employment opportunities, abstinence from drugs and alcohol, and reconnection with family and community
- will join TJJD in building a statewide network of volunteers who can provide services to youth, helping them become responsible and productive members of their communities
- will help promote community awareness and involvement while benefiting departments in need of additional resources and assistance

Placement, or facility assignment of volunteers is based on the needs of the agency, needs of the youth population, space availability, existing program schedules, and the proposed volunteer activity. Volunteers must not interfere with the responsibilities of TJJD.

### Service Opportunities

The Texas Department of Juvenile Justice has enjoyed a long history of volunteer participation. Program areas in which a volunteer can participate include, but are not limited to:

#### *Spiritual Care Services, Classes, and Programs*

The spiritual care volunteer program extends services to youth of all faiths and provides reasonable and equitable opportunities to pursue religious beliefs and participate in religious activities and programs that don't endanger the safe, secure, and orderly operation of the agency.

#### *Mentors*

Mentoring is a one-to-one (same gender) relationship that focuses on the rehabilitative needs of the mentored youth, fosters caring and support, encourages personal development, assists in personal visioning, and develops active community partnerships. A husband-and-wife team may mentor individual youth if both are present.

Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings a youth together with an experienced volunteer who offers them guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the youth. A mentor is not a parent, therapist, parole officer or a cool peer.

**Faith-Based Mentoring** is based on religious and spiritual principles. Personal spiritual growth is treated as a core element in the overall development and moral guidance of the youth. Faith-based mentoring includes the spiritual element by viewing it as the foundation upon which to build positive change.

**Sponsorship Mentoring** is based on AA/NA principles and provides guidance and emotional support as youth go through addiction recovery and achieve sobriety. The assignment is conditional on the youth consistently demonstrating a desire to remain clean and sponsorship mentors must meet an additional requirement of being 4 years sober.



**Parole Division**

The Parole Division is responsible for the supervision of youth released from TJJD on parole or mandatory supervision. Its mission is to promote public safety and positive change through effective supervision, programs, and services.

**Reentry**

Volunteers serving in reentry aid youth in their return to the community by aiding youth in navigating barriers and pursuing employment and education and other resources.

**Tutors**

Tutors work closely with students of all levels, improving academic performance in all subject areas, helping them understand key concepts, and guiding them to become independent learners.

**Internship Programs**

TJJD offers students a professional learning experience that provides meaningful, practical work related to their field of study or career interest.

**Indemnification/Representation**

If a volunteer is sued as a result of performing services as a volunteer/intern, the State of Texas will not indemnify the volunteer and will not provide a defense for such litigation.

**Program Assessments/Complaints**

Volunteers should report complaints or concerns directly to the volunteer authority. If the issue cannot be resolved at the facility level, contact Volunteer Services or the appropriate divisional authority such as the Parole Division for parole volunteer program concerns.

Volunteers may provide input or submit suggestions regarding the volunteer program and/or their experience as a volunteer. Volunteers may request a Volunteer Program Assessment/Suggestion form from their volunteer coordinator. The form should be submitted to Volunteer Services.



## TJJD Facility Daily Schedules

### Secure Facilities

#### Treatment.

The agency's treatment program encourages a partnership between youth, families, and communities. Experienced, trained, and licensed staff provide treatment that is youth-centered and evidence-based. The program considers the individual needs and strengths of each youth. Every staff member is committed to the youth's treatment program.

The TJJD program assesses individual youth risk factors (the negative parts of their lives) and protective factors (positive parts of their lives), which are used as the foundation to design individual treatment plans so that youth can learn to reduce their risk factors and increase their protective factors. This intense thinking skills training will help youth reform and decrease recidivism.

Treatment programs are customized for each youth and can include group therapy, individual counseling sessions, and time spent working on lessons related to their treatment. Their progress is evaluated every 30 days.

In these programs, youth receive treatment services from specially trained or licensed staff that is more intense and possibly longer than the general treatment program.

#### Group Activities.

Time spent in the dorm in the common room or surrounding grounds includes group activities. We support our kids through a variety of group sessions and engaging activities. Activities range from fun games that teach good sportsmanship and teamwork to more structured activities, or discussions that explore issues related to dorm life and teach life skills.

#### Leisure Skills-Building Groups

These are held on weekends and evenings and are offered by staff, volunteers or professionals with an interest and training in the chosen topic: money management, guitar lessons, painting, sculpting, etc. These groups provide the youth additional opportunities.

#### Education Opportunities at TJJD

The Texas Education Code, Chapter 30.106 states "Because learning and behavior are inextricably linked, and learning and improved behavior correlate with decreased recidivism rates, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department shall not only fulfill the department's duties under state and federal law to provide general and special educational services to students in department educational programs but also shall implement a comprehensive plan to improve the reading skills and behavior of those students."

Thus, reading improvement and positive behavioral supports are required and share a common consequence for non-participation.

During orientation, youth take tests to help TJJD figure out where they are in school and if they should be in special education. Available course offerings depend on the youth's age, grade, treatment progress, and risk to safety and security. All TJJD youth are enrolled in classes and the agency tries to ensure if a youth does not speak English they can still participate in all programs.

#### Certificate of High School Equivalency | CHSE

Passing a CHSE (Certificate of High School Equivalency) test shows youth have obtained high school level knowledge. The CHSE tests youth knowledge in the following four areas: Mathematical Reasoning, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning through Language Arts. While at TJJD, youth can take CHSE preparation classes. Once youth have their CHSE, they will continue their education by finishing high school diploma, getting an industry certification, or taking college or vocational classes.

#### High School Diploma

TJJD helps youth earn their high school diploma. The classes youth take at TJJD earn them credits that count toward their graduation plans and can qualify them for a full Texas-certified high school diploma.

### Daily Schedules

CAMPUSES FOLLOW A 14-HOUR ACTIVITY DAY THAT ENCOMPASSES SCHOOL HOURS, MEALS, AND RECREATION TIME.



### **TJJD's Accelerated Learning Program**

TJJD schools are year-round, accelerated learning programs, which means youth can earn credit faster than they would in a public school and catch up on their credits. Youth still learn the same things students their age are learning at most schools in Texas, but they learn the information more quickly.

### **Educational Incentive | Athletics**

Youth who do well in school and treatment can play sports at TJJD. If a youth meets the requirements to do off-campus activities, they might even play in games away from their facility. The Giddings and Gainesville State Schools are part of the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) league for football, basketball, and track.

### **Positive Behavioral Supports | PBS**

The goal of PBS is to provide youth with tools, strategies, and self-regulation techniques that will help them achieve social-emotional and academic success. Teachers at TJJD use trauma-informed education practices to help them feel supported, welcomed, and ready to learn. PBS affects youth release, and it is important for everyone to understand how.

Whenever a youth's appointed time comes due for the Release Review Panel, the school principal reviews the youth's behavioral information. If the youth's behavior warranted excessive removal to "redirect" programs, then they may not be eligible for release. The school principal will contribute to decisions about the youth's release based on the student's behavior at school.

### **TJJD's Reading Program**

One significant difference between TJJD schools and other schools in Texas is the law requires all TJJD students to receive extra support in reading. Every teacher at TJJD incorporates at least 20 minutes of content area reading into their classes, which means that youth will receive more than 60 minutes of reading instruction every day.

Examples of reading activities youth may be asked to do include debating topics raised in informational texts, learning new vocabulary words, and demonstrating comprehension through paraphrasing and summarizing reading passages.

### **TJJD Halfway House & Parole Programs**

The TJJD halfway houses and parole programs play a significant role in the agency's correctional treatment programs and continuum of care. These programs are designed to:

- Increase accountability for youths returned to the community
- Include community service activities
- Enhance public, private, state, and local services for the young people and their families.

### **Work**

Collaboration with workforce development programs has increased opportunities for TJJD youth. TJJD works with local Workforce Development Boards to access employment for at-risk youth and to find educational and training opportunities under Title II of the Workforce Development Act. TJJD also relies on local workforce centers for employment assistance through the Texas Workforce Commission.

### **Education**

Educational opportunities in the local communities are also increasing for parolees. The parole officer and educational liaisons are instrumental in helping develop realistic educational goals for parolees, and in assisting youths who still must meet mandatory attendance laws for basic education in the public school system. To make the return to the public school easier, parole officers work closely with Communities in Schools and other programs. Many parolees have the desire and ability to enroll in community colleges or technical schools. Parole staff encourage and assist the young people in these efforts. Parole officers work with the educational liaisons and the TJJD trust fund staff to provide financial educational/vocational assistance to youth who apply and are qualified to receive these funds.

### **Paroled Youth**

Youth on parole are required to have face-to-face visits with their parole officer a certain number of times per month, determined by the youth's progress and length of time on parole. Some youth report once each week; some report once every other week; and some report monthly. These face-to-face visits may take place at the youth's school, job, community service site, or at a TJJD office.





## Visiting TJJD Facilities: Rules & Expectations

### Contraband and Prohibited Items

Contraband is defined as any item not permitted in the secured perimeter of a unit or in some cases, at any TJJD facility. It is also any item brought into, or taken out of a facility, or in the possession of a youth, visitor or employee as defined in the Texas Penal Code, Section 38.11, or prohibited by the rules and regulations of TJJD.

Chapter 38 of the Texas Penal Code was amended to add Section 38.114, making it an offense to provide contraband to an offender in a correctional facility. Anyone who provides contraband to an offender commits a Class C misdemeanor. Providing certain types of contraband to an offender may be punishable as a felony offense. TJJD has a zero tolerance policy toward contraband at its facilities.

- Contraband includes paper money or coins in the excess of \$25, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigarette lighters, matches or any tobacco products, controlled substances or unauthorized medications, cell phones and any component of a cell phone, pager, or similar personal electronic communication devices, firearms, pocket knives, explosives, escape implements, or dangerous weapons; or correspondence to or from a youth, documents, legal materials and sensitive information not received through authorized channels.
- Volunteers may be permitted to bring into the facility or possess: a pair of eyeglasses/sunglasses, a clear purse or bag, feminine hygiene products, a small notepad, unopened beverages in clear plastic (up to 32 oz.), as well as items related to the performance of their service, such as binders, workbooks, folders, books and pens and pencils. Additional items or materials may be brought in with the approval of administration.
- All items or materials the volunteer will be using during their program/service must be approved and coordinated with the appropriate volunteer authority before entry into the facility.
- Volunteers shall not remove any item from the facility without prior approval. Volunteers shall not take out of any institution a letter, message (written or verbal), or any article or item for an offender.
- Everyone entering a TJJD facility is subject to search. This includes the search of the vehicle, personal belongings, or person, and can include a physical search.
- Firearms, or other instruments designed/used as a dangerous weapon or having explosive substance, are not allowed on TJJD property. The exception is for those persons licensed to carry a handgun under Chapter 411, Subchapter H of the Texas Government Code to possess a handgun on TJJD property if the un-loaded gun and secured gun and ammunition is in the locked trunk of a locked vehicle, or locked compartment if the vehicle lacks a trunk, prior to entering TJJD property.
- Volunteers shall report the possession or trading of contraband between youth, youth and staff, and youth and other volunteers.
- Under NO circumstances will volunteers engage in trading or trafficking with youth.
- Volunteers are prohibited from possessing, selling to, buying from, or delivering to ANY offender ANY article or commodity of ANY description except through authorized channels.
- Youth spend a lot of time thinking of ways to get contraband. It is important that you are part of the solution to controlling contraband and not part of the problem.



## Property and Vehicle Searches

All volunteers, their vehicles, and property are subject to search upon entering TJJD property.

### During a search, volunteers shall:

- Remove their jacket, smock, cap/hat, belt, footwear, and any other type of outer apparel. After these items have been removed, the searching officer shall physically search each item and set the items aside, or use the parcel scanner to search the items if one is available;
- Remove all items from their pockets. The searching officer shall examine the contents along with all other items in the individual's possession and then set them aside;
- Be searched using a contraband detection device, such as a handheld or walk-through metal detector; and
- Lift their feet so the bottom of each foot can be visually inspected or scanned by the searching officer.
- If a volunteer objects to any portion of a search, the searching officer shall discontinue the search and immediately contact a supervisor.
- Any item deemed inappropriate or has the potential to jeopardize the security of the institution shall be confiscated. All seized items classified as contraband of a criminal nature will be immediately turned over to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

## Vehicle Search

- All vehicles on TJJD property are subject to search.
- All individuals shall ensure all vehicle doors, windows, and trunks are secured and locked. The beds of trucks shall be free of garden tools, clothes, or anything that could be used as a weapon or aid in an escape. All tools in the bed of the truck shall be secured.
- Intoxicating beverages or other contraband items shall *not* be left in any vehicle parked on TJJD property.
- Tobacco products shall be stored in a locked compartment of a locked vehicle.

## Volunteer Safety

### Emergency Situations and Safety

Volunteers are a valuable asset to the TJJD mission. Your safety is important to the agency.

*Most common accidents* - Slips, trips and falls are one of the most common sources of injury. Always pay attention to the surface you are walking on and wear low-heeled footwear that is comfortable and in good condition.

*Unsafe Conditions* - Volunteers should learn to recognize unsafe conditions such as frayed electrical wiring, trip hazards, slippery floors, etc., and report them immediately. Unsafe actions such as leaning back in chairs, improper lifting, or not observing warning signs should be identified and discouraged.

*Blood and Body Fluids Precautions* - Because of the potential hazard of illness you are asked to please refrain from assisting in any situation which may lead to contact with blood and/or body fluids. Please notify staff in case of emergency.

*Fire* - Fire escape plans are posted in all areas of the facility. Locate them and become familiar with the escape route(s) and emergency phone numbers.

- In the event of fire, remove yourself and others from the areas and follow posted escape routes.
- Pull the fire alarm nearest the emergency, if one is available.
- Call the emergency phone number.
- Follow staff directions.



## Exposure to Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray

On occasion the use of chemical agents is necessary to contain or take control of emergency situations. Staff are trained to handle emergency situations. If you are exposed to chemical agents during an emergency, you should follow the following decontamination procedures.

- OC is a natural substance made from the oil and resins of peppers. The effects of OC will usually subside in 45 minutes; however, the following procedures will help minimize the effect.
- Exit the affected area, face into the wind or a fan, breath normally, and try to relax.
- Don't rub eyes or skin. This will force the substance into soft tissue and prolong the effects.
- Flush eyes and exposed skin with large amounts of cool water.
- Remove and discard contact lenses, if applicable.
- Blow your nose if it is irritated.
- Use a wet paper towel, followed by a dry one, and pat the exposed area to lift the resin. Change the paper towel frequently and avoid rubbing the towel over the exposed area as this will only smear the resin to other areas.
- Don't use lotions, salves, or creams on the affected area because this will trap the resin against the skin.
- Don't use commercial eyewashes to flush the eyes. This may cause an adverse chemical reaction with the OC.
- Use soap and shampoo that don't have an oil base to wash the affected area. Start from the head and wash down.
- Once washed, use a cool towel or ice pack on exposed areas to reduce inflammation.
- Avoid direct sunlight and stay in a cool place. An air-conditioned room is ideal.
- If major symptoms persist, seek medical attention.

## Dress Code

Volunteers shall dress in a manner that is appropriate for the volunteer assignment and does not detract from the safety and security of staff, youth and the public. Volunteers shall adhere to established grooming standards. Any attire which is revealing in nature, and conveys messages of a derogatory or offensive nature through language, logos or symbols is prohibited. This includes signs or symbols of apparent membership in a Gang as evidenced by tattoos or other signs or symbols of membership.

### Items that will not be allowed:

- any attire, to include slits in skirts, shorter than three (3) inches above the middle of the knee while standing.
- sweat suits and wind suits unless they are appropriate for the activity being conducted
- any attire that exposes midriff or shoulders or any portion of an undergarment
- slacks and pants worn below the waist
- any attire that is considered to be see-through, low-cut in the front or back or tightfitting
- flip-flops or shower shoes (any sandal with the top portion consisting only of a strap that divides the toes)



## Rules of Conduct

Volunteers are subject to sanctions for failure to abide by the TJJD rules and regulations or failure to perform responsibilities in accordance with the assignment description or expectations.

Being a volunteer is a privilege. Breaking the rules can end that privilege. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself if the activity is within the mission of your duty as a volunteer. If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact Volunteer Services.

- 1) Volunteers shall be respectful of the needs and requirements of each department on the facility.
- 2) Volunteer activities shall be consistent with sound correctional practices for security and orderly operations. It is important to remember that security always takes precedence. Volunteers should exercise patience when delayed due to security activities. Please remember these procedures are for you, the staff and the youth's safety. When you are in the facility you should remain in the area designated for the program/activity. If you must leave the designated area let a staff member know where you are going and the purpose.
- 3) Respect the authority of staff, if you have a disagreement with a staff member discuss this in private not in front of youth. Be mindful that youth are always observing your actions. Additionally, you may speak to a unit/departmental authority for clarity.
- 4) Volunteers shall not form a non-professional, personal or emotional relationship with youth, and should respect boundaries.
- 5) Volunteers shall not mail any items of correspondence for youth. This includes, but is not limited to, correspondence between youth, family members, victims, friends, or enemies.
- 6) Don't take anything from a youth or take anything away from a facility without prior permission from the facility Superintendent.
- 7) Volunteers shall not carry/pass messages from youth to youth; the youth's family; their victims or their victim's family in written or verbal form. This includes making or accepting personal calls for or from a youth family member(s). Volunteers are not allowed to receive telephone calls from youth.
- 8) No volunteer shall contact the victim of a youth, including a family member who may be the victim. The youth may state that he wants to reconcile with or make it up to the victim. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify staff if the youth has made such a request, but the volunteer is not to act on the youth's request.
- 9) Volunteers are required to acknowledge on their application if a family member, friend, victim, or enemy is assigned to a TJJD facility. Volunteers are responsible for reporting immediately to their assigned Community Relations Coordinator when a family member, friend, victim, or enemy becomes incarcerated after the volunteer begins their service.
- 10) Volunteers are not allowed to serve on a facility where a family member, friend, enemy, or victim is assigned. If, once you arrive on the facility, you discover a family member, friend, enemy, or victim is assigned to that facility, or is later moved to that facility, you must report it in writing immediately to the Community Relations Coordinator, the facility Superintendent, or the Assistant Superintendent.
- 11) Volunteers shall immediately report an injury to the nearest staff member.
- 12) Volunteers shall not be permitted to perform any activity involving the actual receipt or handling of money (either cash or readily negotiable documents such as checks, money orders, or stamps) while performing volunteer services for TJJD.
- 13) Volunteers shall not accept any personal gifts from youth or give personal gifts to youth.
- 14) If a youth states they need a religious text such as a Bible, Torah, Quran or other religious text encourage the youth to contact the facility Community Relations Coordinator, don't give an youth anything without prior approval. If you wish to donate religious texts to the agency you may contact the facility Community Relations Coordinator.



- 15) Access to telephone service on a facility will be limited to emergency use only.
- 16) Volunteers, and their family members, shall not give money to a youth or place money in a youth's Trust Fund Account or purchase items for youth without written approval from the facility Superintendent.
- 17) Volunteers may not visit a youth during regular facility visitation for families.
- 18) Volunteers shall not allow a releasee to visit or reside at their personal place of residence, nor on their personal property. [Exception: Group meetings or events such as AA group meetings, religious study groups, and religious fellowships.]
- 19) Never give out your home address or phone number.
- 20) Volunteers shall not have releasees visit in their home. [Exception: Group meetings or events such as AA group meetings, religious study groups, and religious fellowships.]
- 21) Volunteers shall report immediately to the appropriate authority any information revealed by a youth that is criminal in nature or could impact public/facility safety.

**Notes:**

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## Confidentiality

All approved volunteers shall agree in writing by signing the Volunteer Training/Orientation form to abide by agency policies relating to security and confidentiality of all records and information, both written and verbal, which pertains to employees, youth, and releasees. A volunteer may have access to confidential information on an as needed basis and as approved by the appropriate department and applicable facility administrator or their designee.

Failure of the volunteer to maintain confidentiality as stated may incur a penalty for disclosure of such information, i.e., criminal prosecution or civil suit.

Confidentiality does not apply to communications by youth involving:

- confessions or allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- an imminent escape; or
- intent to harm self or others.

The requirement to report alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation applies without exception to a volunteer whose personal communications may otherwise be considered privileged.

## Youth Files (RE: GAP.380.9901; GAP.380.9909; GAP.380.9911)

Records and information concerning youth are confidential and may not be disclosed except as allowed by law. The youth's file, in its entirety, is a legal document marked "confidential" and kept in a secure location. Access to information in the youth's file is restricted in accordance with the Texas Open Records Act (Texas Public Information Act, Tex. Gov't. Code Ann. §§ 552.001- 552.353 (Vernon's 1994).

**Volunteers must not share any information about a TJJD youth with anyone outside of TJJD. Absolutely no one. If you do, you will be violating state law This is a legal issue, which is why ALL Open Records Requests are handled by authorized personnel.**

The Texas Open Records Act designates some information to be specifically public, yet prohibits the release of certain types of information, which requires a written request. All Open Records Requests are handled only by authorized personnel.

Furthermore, the Federal Confidentiality Law restricts the release of information regarding youth participating in TJJD's chemical dependency and substance abuse programs, including screening, assessment, diagnosis, treatment or referral of

chemical dependency or substance abuse. Only TJJD staff, such as the case manager, clinical professionals, etc., involved with the youth's participation in the program, have a NEED to know this information.

Key persons, such as judges, probations officers, professional staff or consultants of the juvenile court – and even parents/legal guardians may NOT have access to this information unless the youth has signed the LS-023, Youth's Consent for Disclosures Upon Initial Assessment. It doesn't matter about the youth's age. Youth under the age of 18 have the authority to decide whether and to whom this type of information can be released.

If you are ever asked anything about a youth, ALWAYS refer the person asking to the youth's case manager. Never give any information about a TJJD youth.

No employee, agent, consultant, volunteer, or other Texas Juvenile Justice Department person may release or divulge confidential information about TJJD youth except as required or permitted by law. This also includes the federal law just discussed regarding the chemical dependency and substance abuse information about a youth.

Identifying pictures, appearances, films, or reports are not used without written consent of a youth and, if under age 18, of his or her parents, guardian, or managing conservator. Volunteers are never permitted to bring a camera into a TJJD facility or take photographs of youths.

Only initials or a case number may be used when referring to a youth. TJJD volunteers, consultants and others permitted access to confidential information or records shall sign a confidentiality agreement, agreeing to not disclose or divulge confidential information or records unless required or permitted to do so by law through the Texas Open Records Act.



## Critical Reporting Information

### Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

PREA training is required annually for all volunteers. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to maintain this training requirement. Failure to do so will impact your volunteer status. You may contact the Community Relations Coordinator or the appropriate volunteer authority on the facility you serve to determine if it is time to retrain. You may request a training schedule from Volunteer Services.

When it comes to staff/volunteer misconduct, it is not acceptable to remain silent about it. We need to be aware of the warning signs and report suspected misconduct immediately. We also need to be professional and provide effective supervision of youth.

The chapter includes an overview of the law, as well as TJJD policy and practices related to sexual misconduct, prevention, and intervention. PREA became federal law in September 2003, and it is designed to ensure correctional facilities establish policies and practices to protect those who are incarcerated from sexual violence by staff or other youth in the facility.

Members of the public and government officials are often unaware of the epidemic nature of the issue. Thanks to PREA, there is increased visibility of the issue and accountability for government facilities, private facilities, and every individual who works in corrections.

***It is vital that we understand what sexual misconduct is, how to report it, and more importantly, how to prevent it.***

The Prison Rape Elimination Act was created to eliminate sexual violence within corrections. PREA mandates apply to all TJJD institutions, community-based corrections, and contract facilities. TJJD volunteers are also subject to this law. Among other things, PREA establishes a zero tolerance standard for the incidence of sexual violence in corrections in the United States and increases the accountability of officials who fail to detect, prevent, reduce, and punish sexual violence. It was also established to protect the Eighth

Amendment rights of federal, state, and local prisoners, or in our case, the youth. Sexual abuse of persons in custody is cruel and unusual punishment—a violation of our nation's Bill of Rights.

This law protects both male and female youth. It is about basic human rights and human dignity.

### TJJD's Zero Tolerance Policy

The TJJD has a zero tolerance policy on any form of sexual misbehavior and has implemented numerous safeguards to ensure the safety of both youth and staff. Among these actions are:

- establishing a twenty-four hour hotline, the Incident Reporting Center (IRC),
- providing trauma-informed care and cognitive therapy to youth,
- changing the buildings to improve safety,
- increasing the ratio of staff-to-youth supervision,
- establishing a centralized Office of Inspector General (OIG) to conduct investigations,
- creating a Special Prosecution Unit to ensure consistency in enforcing TJJD's zero-tolerance policy concerning sexual abuse, and
- implementing safe-housing assessments to make appropriate residential placements.

All sexual misconduct is prohibited, and in some instances, will lead to criminal prosecution. All allegations of sexual misconduct will be investigated. The Department of Justice defines sexual misconduct as "any behavior or act of a sexual nature directed toward an inmate by an employee, volunteer, official visitor or agency representative."

### Texas Law

Senate Bill 894 was passed during the 76th Legislature. This legislation amended Texas Penal Code, Section 39.04 Violations of the Civil Rights of a Person in Custody; Improper Sexual Activity with a Person in Custody. This amendment made it a criminal offense for employees of correctional facilities, including contract employees, to have sexual intercourse or sexual contact with persons in custody.

Texas Penal Code, Section 22.011 defines sexual contact as "any touching of the anus, breast, or any part of the genitals of another person with intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any person."



Any TJJD employee who engages in sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a youth in our custody is not only committing sexual misconduct, he or she is breaking the law. Violation of this law is punishable by state jail time and/or a fine. The perpetrator may also have to register as a sex offender.

### **Mandates in Texas Law**

- Establishment of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in TJJD for the purpose of investigating crimes.
- Establishment of the Office of Independent Ombudsman for the purpose of investigating, evaluating, and securing the rights of the TJJD youth.
- Confidential youth, staff, and volunteer access to a toll-free number for the purpose of reporting information related to the abuse, neglect or exploitation of TJJD youth.
- Reporting procedures, including staff designated at the facility and Central Office to handle reports of sexual abuse.
- Includes several codes making it illegal to expose oneself or have sexual contact with any child under the age of 17. Remember, it doesn't matter how old the youth is when they are incarcerated. There is no "age of consent" in TJJD. All sexual contact between staff and the youth is strictly prohibited by law.
- Youth will NOT face any consequences for staff-on-youth sexual contact.

### **Reporting Alleged Sexual Misconduct**

All reported allegations will be investigated.

Staff may not retaliate against youth or other staff/volunteers for reporting abuse.

In addition to reporting within TJJD, you may also report to the appropriate law enforcement agency, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), or the Office of the Ombudsman.

Our policy, which has a provision for reporting abuse within TJJD, follows the law. However, if you are ever in doubt about what to do, contact the Community Relations Coordinator, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, or the Chief Local Administrator immediately.

### **Youth Reporting Procedures**

Youth may report alleged sexual misconduct a variety of ways:

- Calling the abuse hotline (866-477-8354)
- Filing a grievance
- Reporting to staff, volunteers, or contractors
- Reporting to law enforcement
- Family complaint

### **TJJD Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors Reporting Procedures**

There are additional requirements for how reports by staff are handled by the Chief Local Administrator. Below are the steps for you to follow:

- Immediately notify the OIG - IRC via the abuse hotline (866-477-8354) and obtain a tracking number.
- Submit a written report with tracking number to the Chief Local Administrator. You must provide the following information:
  - Identity of persons involved
  - Location and time of relevant events
  - Identity of others who may provide further information
- Submit report as soon as you notify the IRC, but no later than the end of your current shift.

**IT IS THE LAW.  
IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.**

**You must report all suspected incidents of abuse, neglect and exploitation immediately.**

*There are no consequences for reporting alleged misconduct. TJJD cannot retaliate against a staff or volunteer for reporting alleged abuse, neglect and exploitation of a youth.*





## **TJJD Investigations**

If a report presents an immediate risk of physical or sexual abuse that could result in the death or serious harm to the youth, the initial response by an OIG investigator will take place within 24 hours after the OIG is notified of the report.

Otherwise, within two working days of receiving the notice of the allegation, the OIG Supervisor over the Incident Reporting Center (or designee) will review the incident and refer the case for investigation and resolution. TJJD staff must protect the area of the alleged assault until the proper authorities arrive to process the scene. It is important that anything that may be considered evidence during the investigation remain undisturbed.

The assigned investigator will begin collecting evidence, including (but not limited to):

- Witness statements
- Physical evidence
- Photographs
- Security videos

It should be noted that anyone who is accused in a criminal investigation has the right to remain silent. All others are expected to cooperate with the investigation.

The investigator will make a finding of “confirmed” or “not confirmed” based on a preponderance of the evidence which will be detailed in a written report. The report is submitted to the Supervisor within 30 calendar days of assignment, unless there is justification for the delay as outlined in policy.

Upon review and approval by the appropriate OIG Supervisor, the investigation is closed and the report is forwarded to the Chief Local Administrator (CLA) within 3 workdays. A report may also be provided to law enforcement for purposes of investigation or prosecution.

The CLA will ensure that the youth, the family and the accused are notified of the results of the investigation. The CLA takes the necessary actions based on findings in the report to rectify the situation and prevent similar situations from taking place in the future.

Staff and volunteers have a right to file a grievance to challenge disciplinary actions resulting from an official investigation. Generally, grievances are resolved within 21 days. However, if the case was handled as a criminal investigation, the findings are “non-grievable.” Parents, guardians, youth and the CLA also may appeal the findings to the Executive Director.

## **Victim Services**

Medical services and counseling will be provided by specially trained personnel, which may include non-TJJD personnel such as a counselor from a Rape Crisis Center or a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. Such special services must be provided as soon as possible.

As per TJJD policy, victims of any type of sexual assault will:

- Receive a mental health assessment
- Receive a medical assessment—may include a forensic medical exam as determined by trained medical personnel
- Be provided protective housing, as needed
- Be provided emergency counseling, as needed

The youth should be referred immediately for these services through the infirmary, the hospital or other approved entities. If a youth requests additional medical or psychological services, immediately refer the youth to the infirmary and notify your supervisor.

## **Handling Disclosures from Youth**

As a volunteer, a youth may disclose to you that he/she has been sexually assaulted either by staff or another youth. You are required to immediately report the allegation. In addition, the way you conduct yourself after a youth has made such a disclosure is very important.

Volunteers are not expected to provide counseling; specially trained mental health professionals should counsel sexual assault victims. However, you may be the first person the youth confides in, and if you don't respond appropriately, you can emotionally harm the youth.



**Here are some tips on how to respond:**

- Ensure that he/she understands the limits of confidentiality (that you must report the allegation), but that information will only be shared with others on a need-to-know basis.
- Be sensitive, supportive, and affirming.
- Don't question them about whether they fought back, screamed, gave in, or why they didn't report it sooner. Remember that they are a victim.
- Ask the youth if they are hurt, bleeding, etc. If the assault just happened, get them medical attention right away. In addition to addressing their health needs, an exam can be performed to collect evidence.
- Listen carefully and validate the youth's feelings.
- Don't dismiss, downplay, or cast doubt.
- Don't bombard the youth with questions to satisfy your curiosity. Questions will come as part of the investigation.
- Suspend judgments about the youth based on your own beliefs (ex., she brought it on herself, he's gay anyway).
- Express concern for his/her safety and take seriously any reported threats of intimidation or violence. Immediately contact the supervisor if steps need to be taken to protect the youth from other youth or from a staff person.
- If a youth makes a threat of self-harm, immediately contact the supervisor on duty and take appropriate steps to ensure the youth's safety.
- Document the youth's report, but don't ask the youth to repeat things over and over.

Officially report the allegation by calling the Incident Reporting Center (IRC) with the TJJD Office of Inspector General. You will get a tracking number. Submit a written report to the Chief Local Administrator (CLA) with the tracking number.



## Suicide Prevention

A volunteer's interaction with TJJD youth is limited and you may not know what "normal and abnormal" behavior is for each youth. Staff, particularly dorm staff, have a much better understanding of what is "normal" and what is "abnormal" for the youth. If you believe a youth is acting abnormally or differently than usual, ask the staff questions.

- Two BIG "DON'Ts"
  - DON'T assume the youth is manipulating or just trying to get attention by claiming to be suicidal.
  - DON'T say anything that may discourage a youth from admitting that they want to hurt themselves.
- Never jump to conclusions and label youth. It is too easy to blame and label youth as manipulators.
- NEVER try to call their bluff by saying "If she was going to kill herself, she'd have done it by now. She just wants attention." That is a gamble you cannot afford to lose.

The point is to keep the youth safe, not discourage them from getting help. Any inconvenience experienced by staff when a youth is placed on suicide alert is far better than the pain and horror of experiencing the death of a youth.

Open communication will make it easier for you to ask the youth, "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"

### Risk Factors for Youth in a Facility

Signs and symptoms in a youth at risk in a facility are not that uncommon. It is important for you to apply what you already know about suicide and suicide prevention; use all that knowledge in helping our youth at risk.

We know that suicide risk increases in correctional environments when compared to living in the free world or even in residential treatment centers.

#### **What is so different about being in a facility?**

- Schedules-told when to eat, sleep, go to bathroom etc.
- Confined to room overnight.
- Correctional environment – bare walls, loud talking and movement, echoes, etc.
- Forced to deal with a lot of strangers with a lot of power.
- Feelings of hopelessness; and "no way out".
- Less freedom of movement, expression etc.
- Forced to go to school and deal with issues they could avoid on the outside.
- Poor coping and social skills and loss of traditional ways of coping.
- Personal and family issues, including separation from family, friends, girlfriends and boyfriends, gang members or other associates with whom they had fun.
- Most have used drugs or alcohol to develop coping skills with peers or family.

#### **All of us have these common responsibilities:**

- To help identify a youth with suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors
- To keep them safe until they receive help

#### **Non-verbal cues that may be communicated by youth with intent to harm themselves.**

- History of prior attempts or family attempts at suicide. (This requires getting to know your youth)
- When a youth's behavior changes noticeably from quiet to loud, loud to very quiet, aggressive to passive or vice-versa, something is going on.
- Sometimes a suicidal person has come to a resolution about their dilemma. A period of calm and peace is present as they have decided to end their life.
- Changes in behavior after speaking with their family, visiting with their families or other significant events.
- A youth discontinuing psychotropic medications or "cheeking" them may be important non-verbal communication.

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### **Always be alert!**

*The youth we serve live in an environment conducive to suicidal ideation and attempts.*

*Most youth just want the HURT to stop. During the crises, they don't think about suicide as death or being permanent; they don't have the ability to think clearly about other options.*

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- Youth hoards checked medications prescribed for him/her or others.
- Giving away things that have had value, monetary or sentimental, to the youth, such as photos, letters, anything of significance or importance to the youth.
- Changes in behavior from what has been usual for them, such as losing interest in school or making phone calls home.
- Passive, withdrawn, or not socially involved as they were in the past or more irritable and aggressive than in the past.

**Risk Factors Becoming Motivators**

Most individuals in a suicidal crisis really don't want to die. They want the pain, the loneliness, the hopelessness or the anger to go away; they don't see any other way than dying. Factors that indicate a youth might be motivated to attempt suicide are called Motivators. Motivators contribute to the youth's belief, "Things are bad and not likely to get better."

This is where you come in. Staff and volunteers who work closely with youth on the front lines will see the red flags before anyone else.

**What are you required to do if a youth tells me he is having suicidal thoughts?**

- Keep the youth in your direct line of sight to ensure his safety.
- Talk to the youth and try to engage them in conversation.
- Immediately let staff know of the situation. It's not enough to just "keep an eye" on the youth yourself without notifying the staff. Why is that not enough? There is no documentation of the observation, no accountability, no assurance of the youth's safety, no suicide screening or MHP involvement, etc. A trained designated staff will conduct the suicide risk screening within one hour after notification.

**Notes:**

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### **Youth Confessions of Child Abuse**

According to the Texas Family Code, TJJD supervisors are required to report youth confessions of child abuse. If a TJJD youth tells a volunteer that he has abused or neglected a child sometime in the past before they were sent to TJJD, then the volunteer must report it. The volunteer doesn't have to find if the confession of abuse is real or untrue – the volunteer just must report it.

Again, a TJJD volunteer who has cause to believe, based on information provided by a youth, that the youth is responsible for abusing or neglecting a child sometime in the past when the youth was not in a TJJD operated facility or contract care program, must report that information, within 48 hours after the volunteer first receives it, to the Community Relations Coordinator and youth's caseworker.

### **Sexual Harassment and Discrimination**

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department has established procedures to provide a safe, professional, and pleasant work environment for staff and volunteers as well. Intimidating, offensive, or harassing sexual conduct interferes with our work and our services to the youth and the public. All inappropriate sexual conduct is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. This rule applies to employees, volunteers, contractors, delivery persons, vendors, and any other person having contact or doing business with TJJD.

TJJD employees and volunteers are expected to treat youth fairly and report any unfair treatment of youth that they witness.

### **Procedures for Reporting**

Any employee or volunteer who feels that they have been subject to inappropriate sexual conduct must report it immediately. Any employee or volunteer who observes or learns about inappropriate sexual conduct directed toward another employee or volunteer must report it immediately. This includes conduct by an individual who is not a TJJD employee, volunteers, contract personnel, consultants, vendors, and service and delivery persons.

Immediately report any inappropriate sexual conduct to your immediate supervisor, the Community Relations Coordinator, or the facility Superintendent. If one of the persons listed is alleged to have engaged in the behavior, report such conduct to one of the other listed persons.



## Become a Skilled Volunteer

### Essential Knowledge

- Don't undermine staff. If your group gets interrupted for court, sit patiently and wait for the staff to perform their duties.
- Don't make plans with youth before coordinating the plans with the Community Resource Coordinator. This will increase your effectiveness by not having to change plans if something you propose is not in accordance with regulations or policies.
- If a youth asks you to do something which you consider "borderline," say that you will check to see if it is all right. Then ask the appropriate official.
- Don't expect overnight miracles. When things have been going wrong for years and years with a person, these things cannot be corrected in a few weeks or months. The positive effects of your relationship with the youth may not have a decisive effect until long after you've stopped working with them.
- You may not receive thanks or any show of gratitude from the youth. They may feel it but may not know how to express it and may actually feel embarrassed by it. You may never hear "thank you" but your effort will be, in the long run, appreciated.
- There may be a time when a youth, overwhelmed by troubles, will confront you with hostility. At such times, don't force conversation and above all, don't respond in a hostile, sarcastic, or anxious manner. Don't act shocked. Retain your composure and delay, interrupt, or terminate the contact if you feel it is necessary.
- You cannot take the burden of the other person's problems on yourself. They are the youth's problems, not yours.

### Building Effective Relationships

Few components of an inter-generational program are as vital to its success as building strong personal relationships. But like any other relationship, successful relationships don't just happen, so it's worth some effort on your part to make sure things go as smoothly as they can!

### The Importance of Modeling Behaviors

Remember, you'll be a role model for our youth. Youth will internalize and copy your actions, so it's important that you take your own actions seriously. Positive behaviors you can model include:

- Be consistent and reliable in your behavior
- Don't use profanity
- Always keep your word: Do what you say you're going to do in a timely fashion
- Be friendly and polite
- Be helpful
- Be respectful

### Cultural Sensitivity

Youth may well have a different racial or socioeconomic background than yours. They will be younger than you, and will probably not have attained your level of education and life experience. It's very important, though, that you be conscious of any preconceived notions you have about youth based on these things and avoid letting any prejudices you have color your relationship. Every youth is an individual, with individual strengths and individual faults. Don't let preconceived ideas about race/culture/class act as a barrier to your relationship!

At the same time, you will want to be aware of cultural and social issues that may have an impact on your relationship. Your awareness of and respect for the individual cultural traditions of each youth will go far toward strengthening the bond between you.

And remember: Relationships are not a "one-way street." By labeling the youth - in any way - you run the risk of overlooking everything he or she has to offer the relationship.



## Building Trust

Respecting the cultural beliefs of our youth is only one of many steps you can take toward gaining their trust. They may be wary at first and may have trouble believing you'll be there when they need you. No matter the youth's background, they are unlikely to trust you automatically--you'll need to earn their trust. Here are some tips that will help you:

- First and foremost, give youth time to trust you. Trust doesn't happen overnight, it builds over time. It's something you have to earn.
- Never make a promise unless you've thought it through first and are prepared to carry it out.
- Be sensitive to the daily concerns of the youth. Their daily life may include issues of survival that require more energy than the relationship.
- Be patient and help youth through the storm and stress of adolescence!
- Be consistent. Reliability fosters respect and gives youth a safe environment in which to let down their guard.
- Encourage and praise youth. They can never have too much positive reinforcement!
- Don't be afraid to express your opinion. Feedback, both positive and constructively critical, helps give youth direction and motivation to continue reaching for their goals.
- Respect the right of every youth to make their own choices, even when you disagree with those choices.
- Be sensitive to youth's feelings. Think before you speak and take responsibility for your own feelings and actions before you project them onto others.

Trust, like communication, is a two-way street. You must trust the youth, and show this trust to them, to foster a productive relationship.

## Communication Skills

The most important thing you'll contribute to our youth, besides helping youth reach their goals, is a trusting relationship. And communication is the key. But believe it or not, no one is a born communicator. Good communication takes time and practice!

Here are some of the keys to good communication:

- **Active listening:** Probably the most important of these. Active listening means listening with your head, not just your ears. It's the ability to focus on and feel what you're being told.
- **Assertiveness:** This means expressing your feelings effectively and appropriately and setting boundaries where necessary. Some people are uncomfortable being assertive, but rest assured, it's a skill you can learn like any other!
- **Empathy:** This is simply understanding how the other person feels without being judgmental. Don't confuse empathy with sympathy, which means feeling sorry for or feeling pity for someone who's in a worse situation than you are.
- **Open-mindedness:** It's important to be as non-judgmental as possible and accept that every youth has a right to hold their own beliefs (personal, political, religious, or any other) even if you disagree.
- **Self-awareness:** Recognize and accept your own limitations. It's important to identify your feelings and their source and accept responsibility for your feelings and actions.
- **Support:** It's important to offer moral support, acceptance, and encouragement despite personal disapproval over the decisions youth have made.
- **Trust:** This involves demonstrating your feelings and views to another and being open to her reactions. This means taking risks, making yourself vulnerable, and accepting the fact that sometimes your trust may be abused. Scary, isn't it! The pay-off, however is better communication for everybody.



## Active Listening

As mentioned, active listening is key to effective communication.

Whenever two people communicate, there are three components to whatever communication occurs: the "sender," the "receiver," and the message. So, for example, if you tell the youth "I'll meet you at the library at four o'clock," you're the sender, the youth is the receiver, and the message is "see you at the library at four." But what if the youth wasn't paying attention? They may show up at the wrong time, or the wrong place, or not at all. Even if you were in the same room when you made arrangements, the message was not received.

It's important that you become a good "receiver" for the messages youth are trying to send! This includes paying attention to the feelings and emotions behind what youth are saying. If you routinely "tune out" youth, trust will be eroded and you may not meet the needs of the youth.

This is where active listening comes in. An active or attentive listener:

- Hears what the person says
- Identifies and labels the feelings a speaker experiences
- Listens for undercurrent feelings not explicitly expressed by the speaker. Undercurrent feelings give you excellent insight into what's really going on inside your protégé and into attitudes and behavior that may have lasted a lifetime
- Recognizes personal values and personal history revealed in conversation. This can include the kind of family a person grew up in, what's important to the person, what the person's view of the world is, how this person treats other people, how this person treats themself.

### The Components of Active Listening:

The process of active listening also includes response, body language, and empathy.

- **Responding:** To demonstrate interest and gain understanding, it's important for a listener to respond to a speaker verbally and non-verbally.

Some verbal response techniques include:

- **Paraphrases:** Restatements of the speaker's feeling or meaning in your own words. Paraphrases help you guard against miscommunication and allow the speaker to clarify her own feelings.
 

"So the security guard accused you of stealing the shirt, and called you a liar when you said it was paid for."
- **Feeling reflections:** Statements that focus on the emotions or feelings you observe in the speaker. Feeling reflections show the speaker that you are listening and validating her emotions.
 

"You were angry when the guard accused you of stealing the shirt."
- **Clarifications:** Questions or comments you make to elicit more information from the speaker and to double-check your and the speaker's understanding of the problem.
 

"And you say this happened yesterday."
- **Neutral statements:** Brief verbal responses that show the speaker that you are following the conversation.
 

"I see. Go on."
- **Summaries:** Organizing statements that capture the speaker's emotions and concerns concisely. A summary helps integrate the information you've heard, leads to new directions in conversation, and helps wrap up a listening session.
 

"If I understand you, you feel this situation is unfair and your first reaction was to get angry."





- **Body language:** Another component of active listening and effective responding is non-verbal; the posture you have during a conversation clues the speaker in to how interested you are in the conversation.

Remember to:

- **Look the person in the eye** - Good eye contact shows you that are paying attention and take the conversation seriously. Watching the speaker also lets you read the speaker's body language, which may say a lot about how they feel. However, in some cultures, steady eye contact is not considered polite. Be sensitive to these cultural differences.
  - **Use natural posture** - Sit up in your chair with your legs crossed or together or stand up with your feet about a shoulder's width apart in a relaxed stance. If you slouch, rest your head on your hands, shift positions a lot, or cross your arms on your chest, you signal boredom, fatigue, or restlessness.
  - **Sit in a helping position** - If you sit across from a person with a table in between, you may put yourself in an "oppositional" stance. Sit at an angle and lean slightly towards (but don't crowd out!).
- **Empathy:** As mentioned earlier, empathy means understanding how the other person feels without being judgmental. Empathy is often confused with sympathy, which means feeling sorry for or feeling pity for someone who's in a worse situation than you are. Youth do not want to be pitied, but they do want to feel like you understand.
    - **Concentrate** on what the youth says
    - **Listen** for the underlying feelings and values in the speaker's tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and in the content of what's being said
    - **Reflect** the youth's feelings and values back to them
    - **Summarize** important issues and feelings you've heard

### Communication Pitfalls – What NOT to do:

The rationale of good listening is to encourage communication and understanding, and to pave the way for future sharing. Yet some common reactions or styles of relating can leave your youth feeling uncomfortable, which shuts down communication. Some common pitfalls include the following:

- Interrupting a person while they are talking
- Arguing or constantly opposing the other person's point of view
- Blaming your feelings on someone else
- Passing judgment on a person's actions
- Demanding that someone do something or behave in a certain way
- Not recognizing a person's right to their own opinions
- Giving advice instead of working together to find alternatives
- Jumping to conclusions
- Pressuring someone to disclose information about themselves before they're ready

Some of these are common styles of communication to fall into; you've probably used some of them yourself on occasion. But think how frustrated you would be if you wanted a good listener and ended up with an inconsiderate talker!

### What do you do when things don't work out?

The fact is, despite everyone's best efforts, not all relationships work out. You may experience insurmountable cultural differences, communication problems, or a lack of common interests, or you may simply not get along. You may also find that there are problems that cannot be addressed in the context of the volunteer program.

We encourage you to do your best to work things out, if possible. The youth will see that there is at least one adult who is willing to "go the distance" for them and may at the same time learn valuable lessons about determination and persistence. But you should also be aware of your limitations.



## In Summary

Building relationships with youth can be difficult but it is an extremely rewarding enterprise. Progress may be slow, and you may get frustrated. Hang in there! With some time, patience, and work you will make a real difference in the lives of our youth.

## Problem Solving

The process of helping youth explore and understand their concerns and thinking through solutions is called problem solving. You don't make suggestions or give advice to the youth; rather, you help them understand the root cause of the problem and construct alternative solutions.

The steps to effective problem solving are as follows:

- **Define the problem:** Ask the youth to describe the problem as they understand it.
  - *Ask the youth to clearly state the problem.*
- **Clarify the problem:** Using open-ended questions, uncover important facts, feeling sources, personal limitations and preferences. Understanding the problem also helps in understanding the emotions
  - *Ask the youth to be specific about the behavior, situation, timing, and circumstances that make it a problem.*
  - Restate the problem, locating its root causes.
- **Brainstorm alternatives:** Together, think of all options, no matter how far-fetched or impractical they seem, to dealing with the root of the problem.
  - Try to list at least 15 solutions, be creative and forget about the quality of the solution.
- **Evaluate options:** Discuss the benefits and risks of each alternative, narrowing options down to the most agreeable or most plausible solutions.
  - Go through and eliminate less desirable or unreasonable solutions.
  - Order the remaining solutions in order of preference.
  - Evaluate the remaining solutions in terms of their advantages and disadvantages.
- **Choose the best option:** Choose the best alternatives for the given situation, based on the solution's advantages and disadvantages and the youth's personal values, abilities and limitations. It's important that you respect and support the decision, even if you don't entirely agree with it
- **Taking action:** This step entails making observable efforts to bring about the solution best tailored to the youth's needs. It would be easy to ignore this last step, but then the problem-solving process wouldn't be the problem solving process!

Pay close attention and devote enough time to enhance your communication and problem-solving skills. They will be important to your mentoring relationship.



## Youth Manipulation

Understandably, you want to approach your volunteer service in a positive and optimistic manner, however you must be aware of the possibility of youth attempting to manipulate you for their own benefit.

### What is Manipulation?

Manipulation is any attempt to sway a person's emotions to get them to act in a specific way or feel a certain thing. While it's common in interpersonal relationships, it also frequently happens on a broader scale. Advertisers routinely attempt to manipulate people's emotions to get them to buy a product. Political candidates manipulate voters to win votes or change a voter's opinions about a given issue.

Socially acceptable manipulation, such as smiling and making eye contact, are considered healthy ways to increase the chances of human connection. But when manipulation is used to avoid vulnerability and establish power over others, it becomes unhealthy.

### Why do people manipulate others?

Not all manipulation has malicious intent, even when it causes immense harm. Some common reasons youth engage in manipulation include:

- **Poor communication skills.** Some youth may be uncomfortable with direct communication. Others may have grown up in houses where manipulative communication was the norm.
- **A desire to avoid connection.** Some people treat others as means to an end and use manipulation to control them.
- **Fear.** People may engage in manipulation out of fear, especially fear of abandonment.
- **Defensiveness.** Manipulation can be a way of avoiding blame. While some people avoid blame to control or abuse another person, others do so because they fear judgment, have low self-esteem, or struggle to face their own shortcomings.
- **Social norms.** Some forms of manipulation are normal, and perhaps even beneficial. For example, most people learn that it is important to be friendly and cheerful around work colleagues into professionally advance.

In many cases, manipulative individuals were not taught effective communication skills. Or worse, they were punished by an influential figure for expressing needs or wants. As a result, they use strategies centered on avoiding any sense of fault.

### Protecting yourself from manipulation

- Know yourself:
  - your personal goals and ethical limitations
  - your physical, emotional, and personal boundaries when working with youth
  - your value system
  - your strengths and weaknesses
- Realize that some youth will take advantage of you if you let them.
- Be firm, fair, and consistent.
- Learn to be assertive and use the word "NO" appropriately.
- Realize that when a youth is told "maybe", they often regard it as a promise.
- There is a mechanism in place for youth to receive what they need and are lawfully entitled to. If they ask for something, you can assist within the appropriate mechanism. If no mechanism exists, it is probably not allowed.
- Keep everything out in the open. If a youth's actions are questionable, ask for advice and assistance.
- Confront manipulative behavior and act as the issues arise.



### **How can you tell if a youth is “getting” to you?**

- You feel anger towards the system and see yourself as an advocate for the youth. You should maintain an emotional detachment.
- You are usually irritated at the staff to the exclusion of considering that there may be valid reasons for delays. You presume that a delay is caused by staff, and don't consider that a youth may be responsible for the delay.
- You begin favoring the youth, or some youths, over others and show it by spending more time with them or by sharing personal information with some, but not others.
- You begin to enjoy hearing stories of how other volunteers or staff are awful and you are wonderful.
- You feel good because youth like you.
- You begin to think about bending a rule for a youth, or you do bend a rule for a youth.
- You feel a strong sense of pity for youth, often to the point of wanting to rescue them from the natural consequences of their actions.
- You feel superior to other volunteers and have an inflated view of what impact you can have on a youth.
- You fail to report questionable behavior or requests because you don't want to get a youth into trouble.
- You unquestionably believe stories about cruel staff and find yourself buying into the “gossip”.
- Youth begin emphasizing common interests. For example, a youth may engage you in a long conversation about what you like, dislike or other personal matters. Be aware of personal probing to see where you stand. There may be an ulterior motive behind this behavior.
- Youth begin soliciting empathy or sympathy. Youth will tell you truthfully and sometimes untruthfully about the many problems that they have, such as a sick child, a dying mother, etc.
- Youth exhibit the “we/they” syndrome. Youth will try to pit you and them against the system, especially if they can determine that someone or some organization has treated you unfairly. They will point out a similar thing has happened to them and try to establish a commonality. Try to recognize this so you can make a response that promotes personal accountability.
- Youth begin testing your limits. Youths will ask for certain things, some of which may be acceptable and others which may be illegal, to see what you will allow them to do. Youth will break minor rules to see how you react. Report all infractions.
- The youth will suddenly offer favors, do extra work, be excessively nice and/or overly complimentary.
- Youth offer comments such as, “You're the only one who understands.” “You're the best teacher, preacher, counselor, etc. they have ever had.” “You're the only one who can help.”

**If you begin to identify with ANY of the above examples, contact the Community Relations Coordinator immediately for assistance.**



## Useful Definitions

**Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation (ANE)** – investigations conducted by the Administrative Investigations Division when anyone (parents, youth, staff, volunteers) voices concern that there is reason to believe a youth is being abused, neglected, or exploited.

**Adjudicated** – equivalent to “convicted” and indicates that the court concluded the juvenile committed the act.

**Adjudication Hearing** – a fact-finding hearing that determines whether a youth engaged in delinquent conduct or in conduct indicating a need for supervision.

**Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD)** – committee responsible for making the educational decisions for students in special education. Parents, teachers, and other facility staff are members of the ARD committee. An ARD is needed for initial placement or any time the school staff or parents feel a change is needed in a student’s special education program.

**Alcohol or Other Drugs (AOD) Treatment** – specialized treatment program for youth who are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

**Capital and Serious Violent Offender Treatment Program (CSVOTP)** – specialized treatment for youth who have committed a capital offense or a serious violent offense. This treatment is offered at the Giddings State School.

**Caregiver** – is defined to include the following individuals: biological, adoptive, step, or foster parents and grandparents, legal guardians, to include the spouse or domestic partner thereof; siblings (biological/step/adopted), to include the spouse or domestic partner thereof; spouse, or the parent of a biological child; biological or step children; any other individual related by blood; and caregivers and supportive individuals, identified by the youth and/or parents/guardians as important, and whose positive involvement contributes to the success in the youth’s rehabilitation process. Examples of supportive individuals are godparents, domestic partners, in-laws, a youth’s fiancé, coaches, and to a certain extent, volunteers.

**Case Manager** – the primary contact between a youth’s parent or guardian and TJJD.

**Certification** – the waiver of juvenile court jurisdiction and the transfer of a youth to the appropriate criminal court for criminal proceedings as an adult.

**Classification** – process for determining the needs and requirements of youth who have been ordered to confinement in a juvenile justice facility and for assigning them to housing units and programs according to their needs and existing resources.

**Classifying Offense** – the offense for which a youth is classified at TJJD and is the most serious offense of the relevant offenses documented in the youth’s record.

**Clinical Services** – health care services administered to youth in a clinic setting by persons qualified to practice in one of the health care disciplines.

**Committing Offense** – the most serious of the offenses found true at the youth’s most recent judicial proceeding.

**Community Relations Coordinator** – An employee of a facility who has been designated to coordinate volunteers, volunteer activities, and faith-based programming.

**Conduct in Need of Supervision (CINS)** – Conduct that, if committed by an adult, could result in only a fine or conduct that is not a violation if committed by an adult, such as truancy or running away from home. It is referred to as a CINS violation. \*Youth are not placed in TJJD for CINS violations.

**Contract Care** – facilities operated by private nonprofit or for-profit corporations or organizations in which the employees working daily in the facilities and directly with the residents are employees of the private corporation or organization.

**Correctional Care Form (CCF)** – CCF are the paper forms TJJD uses to document a variety of youth-related events and services.



**Correctional Care System (CCS)** – a mainframe database application used to store information on all youth committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Everything that happens to a youth in TJJD custody is reflected in the system, beginning at intake and continuing until discharge after completion of parole, or transfer to Texas Department of Criminal Justice. This information can only be accessed by authorized TJJD employees.

**Correctional Facility** – houses incarcerated youth accused of or adjudicated for criminal activity.

**Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU)** – This is for youth who need a lot of extra assistance because of mental illness. There are more staff and psychologists at CSU to work with the kids. There is also a psychiatrist on site every week to review medication issues/problems. All staff receive specialized training in how to help individuals with mental illness.

**Delinquent Conduct** – defined by the Juvenile Justice Code as conduct, other than a traffic offense, which violates a penal law of the state of Texas and is punishable by imprisonment or by confinement in jail; or a violation of a reasonable and lawful order which was entered by a juvenile court. In general, juvenile delinquency under Texas law results from either violation of the Texas Penal Code or violation of conditions of probation.

**Determinate Sentenced Offender (DSO)** – a youth committed to TJJD with a determinate sentence of up to 40 years for offenses specified in section 54.04(d)(3) or 54.05(f) of the Family Code. The sentence may be completed in the adult prison system depending on the youth's behavior while at TJJD.

**Determinate Sentencing** – a blended sentencing system for the most serious offenses that provides the possibility of juvenile court transfer of youth age 16 and older from TJJD to the adult system to complete their sentence.

**Director of Security (DOS)** – dorm supervisor at a secure facility who oversees the security unit where youth are placed for aggressive behavior, serious rule violations, or when they need one-to-one supervision.

**Disposition Hearing** – a court hearing held subsequent to the adjudication hearing only if the youth is in need of rehabilitation or the protection of the public requires that disposition be made.

**Discharge** – The youth is finished with TJJD completely. Working hard in treatment and in school, along with staying out of trouble, will help youth earn release and discharge the fastest.

**Faith Based Initiatives** – programs offered by congregations and faith-based organizations that address the issues of crime and violence, drug use, poor education and access to meaningful employment

**General Administrative Policies (GAP)** – administrative policies that detail expectations related to TJJD staff and facilities.

**General Educational Development (GED)** – earned when a youth has completed all of the requirements as outlined by the Texas Education Agency. It is an alternate way of completing high school instead of earning a diploma.

**Halfway House (HWH)** – a community residential facility where usually less than 24 youth reside. Halfway houses are designed to serve some youth as initial placements, but most youth at HWH go there as a "step-down" from a secure facility before going home or to live independently. At the HWH, youth receive education services appropriate to their needs and attend independent living and skills building groups. They also receive any specialized treatment services or aftercare such as alcohol or other drug treatment, sex offender treatment or mental health services. The youth in the HWH have opportunities to participate in community activities and work programs which enhance their ability to return to their community as productive citizens. Because HWH's are in predominantly urban areas, increased family involvement may be possible.

**Indeterminate Sentencing** – commits a youth to TJJD for an indefinite period, not to exceed his/her 19th birthday.

**Individual Case Plan (ICP)** – youth's individualized plan for treatment and education, based on his or her specific strengths and risks.

**Infirmary** – TJJD facility on-campus medical clinic.

**Juvenile** – A person who was at least 10 years old but not yet 17 at the time he or she committed an act defined as "delinquent conduct" or "conduct in need of supervision."



**Juvenile Correctional Officer** - TJJD staff who receive special training and work in all areas of a campus to help TJJD youth make positive changes in his or her behavior.

**Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC)** – person licensed in Texas to provide specialized chemical dependency treatment.

**Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider (LSOTP)** – person licensed in Texas to provide specialized sexual behavior treatment to youth who have committed sex offenses.

**Manager of Institution Clinical Services (MOICS)** – TJJD staff member who oversees treatment provided to TJJD youth.

**Mentor** – An approved volunteer who meets agency-approved mentor criteria, is recommended by the TJJD program staff, and has completed mentor training and training provided by authorized personnel.

**Minimum Length of Stay (MLOS)** – minimum time an indeterminate sentenced youth must stay in TJJD. This is set by TJJD policy.

**Minimum Period of Confinement (MPC)** – minimum time a determinate sentenced youth must be held in a TJJD facility before being eligible for parole. This is set in state law.

**Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)** – team, consisting of staff members at TJJD facilities that meets monthly to discuss the progress your child has made. Parents are valuable team members and are encouraged to participate in MDT meetings.

**Office of Inspector General (OIG)** – an independent law enforcement division of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department to investigate criminal allegations involving TJJD and TJJD interest. OIG was created in June 2007. OIG is staffed by law enforcement officers who investigate criminal acts committed by TJJD staff or youth and file criminal charges when appropriate.

**Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO)** – a state agency established for the purpose of investigating, evaluating, and securing the rights of the children committed to the department, including a child on parole.

**PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)** – is a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important behavioral outcomes for all youth. In general, PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making, (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, (c) practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable, and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices.

**Parole Officer (PO)** – officer assigned to a youth while he or she is on parole.

**Probation** – one of the dispositional options available to a juvenile court judge after a youth is adjudicated as delinquent; community-based corrections which presents the youth with a set of rules and regulations and addresses the needs of the youth and the family. Many youths have been on probation before being committed to TJJD.

**Progressive Sanctions** – a model to be used by the juvenile court to ensure that delinquent youth receive the punishment and treatment most appropriate to their crime; youth progress from less restrictive to more restrictive dispositions depending on offense history, type of offense, and previous sanction level.

**Redirect Program (RDP)** – functions as a means for delivering intensive interventions in a structured environment for youth who have engaged in certain serious rule violations. The program is designed to promote violence reduction and skill building as a means of increasing safety on Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) campuses.

**Re-entry** – this process is designed to facilitate a smooth transition from a secure facility or HWH to the community through aftercare, vocational training, work programs and specialized treatment services.

**Release Review Panel** – group of TJJD staff who determine whether release to the community is appropriate based on a youth's recent behavior, academic achievement, response to treatment and individual risk and protective factors.

**Revocation Hearing** – a hearing before the parole authority at which it is determined whether revocation of parole should be made final.



**Secure Facility** – facility designed and operated to ensure that all entrances and exits are under the exclusive control of the facility's staff, thereby not allowing a youth to leave the facility unsupervised or without permission.

**Sentenced Offender** – a youth committed to TJJD with a determinate sentence of up to 40 years for offenses specified in section 54.04(d)(3) or 54.05(f) of the Family Code. The sentence may be completed in the adult prison system depending on the youth's behavior while at TJJD.

**Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP)** – specialized treatment for youth who have committed sex offenses and who need intensive services.

**Special Prosecution Unit (SPU)** – created by SB 103, to assist district attorney's offices in the prosecution of criminal cases within the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. The SPU works in coordination with OIG in presenting and prosecuting investigations conducted by the OIG.

**Special Services Committee (SSC)** – committee at TJJD facilities that conducts entrance/exit assessments, release reviews, or discuss a request to seek a child's transfer to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The Special Services Committee is usually led by the manager of institution clinical services and includes the program administrator, principal, assistant superintendent, and others.

**Specialized Residential Treatment** – programs designed specifically for the treatment of capital and serious violent offenders, sex offenders, chemically dependent offenders, and offenders with mental health impairments.

**Statute** – a law enacted by the legislature. Statutes are generally placed in codes with other legislation on the same subject.

**Student Intern Volunteer** – A student who is enrolled in a university or community college, desires to volunteer for limited periods of time, and is taking course work which requires "internship" experience for course credit, pre-professional training, or work experience.

**Volunteer Chaplain** – An approved Chaplaincy program volunteer who has received additional security and Chaplaincy policy training.

**Youth Rights Specialist (YRS)** – TJJD staff responsible for oversight of the youth grievance system. At facilities, this function is performed by a staff member employed as a YRS. At community transition centers or halfway houses, the assistant superintendent serves as the YRS. In parole offices, the parole supervisor serves as the YRS.





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*Function-Specific  
Volunteers*

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## Spiritual Care Providers

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department is committed to ensuring all youth committed to our care receive equal opportunity to practice their individual and collective religious beliefs as guaranteed by the United States Constitution, Texas Law and TJJD policies.

The following guidelines are intended to set forth values, principles, and standards to guide you within your provision of care, prepare you for service within TJJD, and help you be successful in the spiritual care of our youth.

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***Any questions about appropriate conduct within the relationship of a spiritual care volunteer or provider and youth seeking guidance should be directed to the Community Relations Coordinator or facility Superintendent.***

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### Code of Ethics

When spiritual care providers behave in a manner consistent with the values of this code of ethics, they bring greater compassion and healing to our youth, TJJD, and our world.

### General Principles and Values

A historic and defining feature of spiritual care is the focus on individual spiritual wellbeing as well as participation in community and society. Fundamental to spiritual care is attention to the issues of spiritual strength and distress that create, contribute to, and address challenges and joys in living, which is essential to each person's experience of health, wholeness, and meaning in life.

### Dignity of and Respect for the Person

Spiritual care providers must be sensitive to spiritual and religious expressions of the youth and affirm the dignity and value of each individual.

### Integrity

Spiritual care providers must behave in a trustworthy manner. Act honestly and responsibly, individually and as members of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

### Importance of Human Relationships

Spiritual care providers understand that relationships are important to personal and communal strength, support, and growth and seek to engage persons as partners in the provision of spiritual care to address their challenges, joys, and needs. They also seek to resolve conflicts and promote effective communication and understanding.

### Responsibilities to Persons

Spiritual care providers understand persons to be any members of a faith/spiritual/cultural community, family members, staff, or youth to whom they provide spiritual care. Spiritual care providers must uphold the following standards of professional ethics:

- Speak and act in ways that honor the dignity and value of every individual.
- Respect and promote the rights of persons to self-determination and assist them in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Promote the best interest of the person and foster strength, integrity, and healing.
- Demonstrate respect for the spiritual, religious, existential, and cultural values of those they serve and do not impose their own personal values and beliefs on those served.
- Understand culture and its function in human behavior, community, and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures. Spiritual care providers should have a knowledge base of cultural competence particularly that of persons they serve and demonstrate sensitivity to that culture and to differences among people.



- At all times, spiritual care providers have a duty to limit a person's right to self-determination when the person's actions or potential actions involve or suggest a threat to the safety and security of the institution, are illegal, or pose a risk to themselves or others.
- Use of derogatory language and actions by spiritual care providers to or about persons, their beliefs, or any aspect of their culture, either by verbal or written means, is strictly prohibited. This includes any kind of language or actions that are abusive, coercing, harassing, or intimidating. Accurate and respectful language should be used in all communication toward any person.

### **Responsibilities to Colleagues**

Spiritual care providers must engage in harmonious relationships with peers, including other spiritual care professionals and providers, community religious, spiritual, and existential belief system leaders, cultural community elders and leaders, and those from other professional disciplines.

- Treat colleagues and their qualifications, views, and professional obligations with respect, regard, support, and confidentiality.
- Avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues and youth in all verbal and written communications. Unwarranted criticism includes but is not limited to colleagues' level of competence or individuals' attributes.
- Take responsible action when concerns arise about incompetence, impairment, misconduct, or legal violations.
- Demonstrate cooperation with other spiritual care providers and other disciplines to enhance the well-being of persons being served.
- Participate in quality improvement projects and programs to enhance the provision of spiritual care services and contribute to the overall setting.

### **Scheduling Programs & Activities**

Spiritual care providers shall be utilized by TJJD as time, space, availability of supervisory staff, and security concerns permit. Programs offered shall be in keeping with agency goals, mission, and sound practices for security and orderly operations. All programs and activities, including content, length, frequency, materials, location, and the individuals and organizations involved in presenting them, shall receive prior approval by designated staff.

Activities are generally scheduled far enough in advance to ensure the safety of everyone involved and the security of the facility.

### **Cancelled Activities**

If an activity is cancelled, please be cooperative and understanding and refrain from airing any disagreements in front of youth. We ask that you follow up with the Community Relations Coordinator on the following work day. They will attempt to resolve any problems and reschedule your activity.

### **Materials, Equipment, and Gifts**

Any materials brought into TJJD facilities must be approved by the facility Superintendent ahead of time. This includes curriculum, devotional books, and other printed materials. You may not give anything to a youth without prior approval from the facility Superintendent – that includes even a piece of paper. Likewise, you are not allowed to take anything from a youth without making the facility Superintendent aware of it.

It's also necessary to get permission before bringing in any equipment or supplies, including musical instruments, laptop computers, CDs and radios, microphones, art supplies, Bibles and other religious texts, and food. You should contact the Community Relations Coordinator several days before your activity is scheduled.



## Bringing Guests Along

You are not permitted to bring any guests with you unless they have been approved well in advance. Never just show up with a guest hoping they will be admitted to the facility. This puts everyone at risk and it could jeopardize your ability to remain involved in the program.

## Limits to Proselytizing

We have youth who represent many religions of the world and denominations within Christianity. You will likely encounter youth who have very different beliefs than yourself, and some youth who simply don't believe in God at all or subscribe to any religion. It might be natural to you to proselytize and share our faith with the youth; however, there are limits. If a youth is willing to talk to you about your faith, then you are welcome to continue that discussion. It's always best to let the youth guide the conversation!

Remember to keep your conversation within the framework of a discussion, and never a lecture. If a youth shows resistance, try to understand where they are coming from and redirect the conversation. Generally, the youth are open to discussions, if they feel heard. Avoid discussing denominational differences or convincing a youth that your way of thinking is the best or only way of thinking.

You may want to share your own story of struggles and challenges you've experienced. Never lose sight, however, that it's not about YOU – it's about the youth. Focus on the topic that the youth initiates and share your personal story in the context of that conversation. Avoid sharing intimate details about yourself, your family, or where you live. Such information can be easily used against you in the future. Never tell a youth where you live – never give them the names of your children or spouse – or discuss sexual or financial matters that should remain private.

## Leading Programs & Activities

### Arrive Early

It's a good practice to arrive at least 30 minutes before your scheduled program or activity begins, longer if you have approved equipment or materials. Be sure to sign in on the Volunteer Log at the gatehouse. The security personnel may also ask you to sign the Visitor Log too, but you still must sign the Volunteer Log so we can give you credit for all the good work you'll be doing!

### Consider Music

Youth enjoy religious music, even when you don't see them participating. Think of them when planning the musical selections. What will they relate to? What will they enjoy? Don't be disheartened if they don't sing. Do your best!

### Learning Styles

Become familiar with the learning styles of adolescents, and specifically, the youth you are teaching.

- By engaging multiple intelligences (musical, visual-spatial, verbal, logical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and existential) within the limits of the facility and regulations, the youth will be more likely to internalize the lessons you are teaching.
- Keep your lessons and sermons simple and to the level of the youth.
- Keep in mind that some youths may have little or no religious backgrounds.
- Most of our youth are about 3-5 years behind their peers in reading skills.
- Use practical stories to which they can relate. Try to engage the youth.
- Few of the youth have attention spans to listen for long periods of time.

### Avoid "Church Language"

Avoid "church language" that is unfamiliar. Telling a youth that he should be "washed in the blood" can mean something entirely different to him than it means to you. Terminology that you've heard all your life can seem like "Greek" to a youth who never belonged to a church or religious group.

### Staff Must Be Present

Youth are NEVER to be left alone with volunteers. There must be a Juvenile Corrections Officer (JCO) or another staff member present who can supervise the youth. If you suspect that a staff is about to drop off a youth and then leave, before a supervising staff member arrives, STOP THEM and remind them that you are not permitted to supervise youth.



## Keep to the Schedule

Keep your activity within the time allotted, even if the youth arrive late to the activity. The proverbial “buck” stops with the JCO on duty during your activity. Due to strict routines that are in place, they must adhere to the schedule, so regardless of whether you agree with the JCO, you must follow the JCO's instructions.

## Remain Spiritually Grounded

Regardless of your beliefs, it is important for spiritual care providers to be grounded firmly in their own faith. By having your own firm foundation, you can guide the youth on a much deeper level in their spiritual development.

Your primary goal is to LISTEN and provide unconditional compassion to our youth. Never force your beliefs and personal convictions on the youth, but instead give them room to develop their own beliefs and convictions. Actively listening to the youth will promote their trust and rapport with you. By listening and being a lay counselor, you have the chance to bring elements from your faith into their lives. This will help them develop a positive worldview through the lens of their faith. Don't be afraid to ask them what they have learned in a chapel service, personal or group religious study, or through speaking with other volunteers.

## Helping Skills for Spiritual Care Providers

As spiritual care providers, you may have the chance to function as lay counselors or “helpers” on a variety of occasions. Although you may not have any formal training, these tips and tools will help you be more effective when talking with the youth.

**Exploration Stage.** You first need to seek to establish a rapport, develop a trusting relationship, encourage the youth to tell their stories, help them explore their thoughts and feelings, facilitate the arousal of emotions, and learn about them. Having someone there as a sounding board is very helpful. At times, when people think about issues by themselves, they often become blocked by their defenses and anxieties. It also gives you a chance to learn about them. You cannot assume that you know their feelings and problems no matter how similar you are. It isn't about creating a solution immediately for them. You first need to understand them and help them come up with solutions for themselves through guided conversation. If you desire to explore thoughts, use restatements, and open questions about thoughts. If you desire to explore their feelings, reflect their feelings back to them, help them learn how to identify emotions, and use more open questions about how they are feeling.

Finally, make sure you make eye contact, use reflective listening statements; head nods, good body posture, not interrupting, and be reassuring. This allows you to affirm their words and their thoughts. While you observe and connect with these things, observe their body language. This gives you great insight into their true feelings.

**Insight Stage.** This stage helps you collaborate with the youth and help them achieve new understandings about themselves, their thoughts, their feelings, and their behaviors. Insight is important because it helps them see things in a new light and enables them to take appropriate responsibility and control over problems. Not only do you maintain an empathic and collaborative stance, but you also can occasionally challenge their perspectives, tentatively offer ideas, and use experiences to help them see things in a new way.

The most important thing to remember about this stage is to not rush into it. You might encounter resistance when the youth are encouraged to go deeper than they are willing to at the time. Allow them to open up to you on their own terms and when they are most comfortable with you. If you allow yourself to get to know them well (Exploration Stage) you will have an easier time working through gaining insight.

**Action Stage.** This stage takes some time to get to. This stage helps them think about changes that reflect their new understandings. This is where you help them explore the idea of changing. You can help them determine if they really want to change and the meaning of change in their life. You can help them brainstorm different ideas and challenge their ideas when necessary. As in the first two stages, the process is collaborative. It is important to continue to talk about their feelings related to changing. You are not an expert but a guide who assists the youth in exploring thoughts and feelings about action and about making positive changes in their lives.



During this process, you may have the youth go back to the Insight Stage, or even the Exploration Stage. Again, a helping relationship is not meant to be a quick process. You are there for the youth to be a sounding board and a guide for them. You are not there to offer easy solutions to their problems. It might feel as if deeper insight would automatically lead to action. This is not always the case. They may feel stuck, understand incompletely, or not want to take personal responsibility for maintaining their behaviors.

In this stage, it is your chance to ask them what they think they will do. Ask guided questions to help them create a plan, explore different possibilities, and pull information that they have learned to implement into their life.

***There are four different types of action you can look for:***

- **Relaxation.** Identify stress/anxiety as a specific problem. Teach relaxation.
- **Behavior Change.** Identify a specific problem. Explore idea of action. Assess previous change attempts and resources. Generate options together. Evaluate options. Choose an option. Assign homework. Check progress/modify.
- **Behavioral Rehearsal.** Assess behavior. Determine goals (based on values and rights). Provide a model. Role-play with feedback. Assign homework. Check progress/modify.
- **Decision Making.** Articulate options. Clarify values. Rate options/values. Evaluate results

**Summary**

The exploration stage lays the foundation for the youth to understand their motivations and take responsibility for changing. Both you and the youth need adequate understanding of the scope and dynamics of the youth's situation before developing any sort of action plan. By relying on careful, thoughtful listening and probing to help the youth fully explore their issues and gain new insights for themselves.

Each of these stages are equally important. The first stage helps the youth gain new insight, and this deep insight prepares the path for the youth to make good decisions about action. Finally, making changes encourages the youth to come back for exploration of other problems in their life.

Just remember that these are guidelines, and you are not a counselor. Use these skills as you see fit to make an impact in the life of the youth. Remember: Listen!



## Mentors

Congratulations! You've chosen to take on one of the most difficult, often frustrating, and ultimately rewarding responsibilities in the world: Acting as a mentor to an adolescent in need. To meet the challenges of this new relationship, you'll need an abundance of patience, creativity, and good humor. You'll also need top-notch communication and problem-solving skills.

### Do Mentors Really Make a Difference?

Essentially, mentoring ensures that a youth has at least one supportive person in their life that can encourage growth and development.

- Youth involved in the same mentoring relationship for a year or more reported improvements in schoolwork, social relationships, and behavioral outcomes.
- Mentors can be instrumental in helping youth develop emotionally and behaviorally. They can be both a challenging and comforting agent on a youth's journey toward independence.
- Youth participating in mentoring relationships show improvement on important educational measures compared to youth with similar circumstances that are not participating in mentoring programs.
- Youth participating in mentoring programs have better attitudes and behaviors at school.

### What's the Commitment?

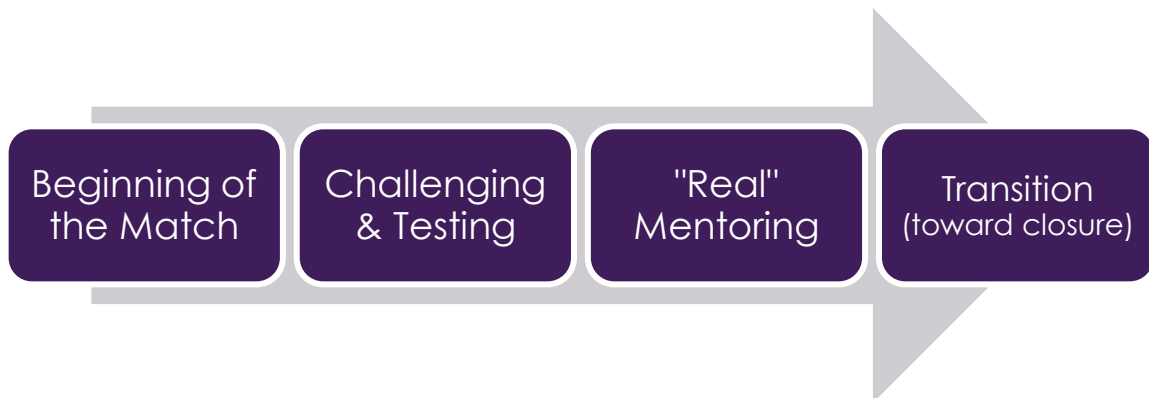
Longer-term mentoring relationships are consistently associated with more benefits to youth than shorter-term relationships. Evidence for the importance of relationship duration has emerged from many studies of community- and school-based models of volunteer youth mentoring. Youth who participate in a relationship that lasts at least 12 months have more positive benefits as compared to youth in relationships that lasted fewer than 12 months. Other studies have confirmed the value of meeting frequently and regularly, with mentors committing to meeting their youth a minimum of four to six hours each month.

The most critical aspect of a mentoring relationship is that it lasts for the intended duration of the original commitment. Prematurely ending a match may result in negative outcomes as the youth may feel rejected, abandoned, or at fault for a mentor failing to follow through on his or her commitment (especially if the match ends suddenly or on bad terms).

### The Mentoring Relationship Cycle

Mentors have an easier time getting through trouble spots in their mentoring relationships if they understand the basics of the typical match "life cycle." All matches go through a similar set of ups and downs and you will have an easier time working with your youth and getting appropriate support from staff if you know what to expect.

The first two stages are critical as they lay the foundation for what the relationship will eventually become. If mentors are to be successful, they need to work through the difficulties presented early on so that the match gets to a place of trust and mutuality where "real" mentoring can take place.





## The Mentoring Relationship Cycle

| Stage   | Characteristics  | Effective Communication  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Beginning of the Match</b></p> <p>The beginning of any relationship is often awkward, and mentoring relationships are no exception. Your first few months will focus on getting to know each other, exploring similar interests, discussing expectations, and starting to form norms and bonds that will shape the rest of your first year together.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting to know each other</li> <li>▪ The first impressions</li> <li>▪ Trying to see the positive in the relationship</li> <li>▪ Bonding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask open-ended questions</li> <li>▪ Use body language that is open and not guarded</li> <li>▪ Active listening</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate empathy</li> <li>▪ Avoid “prescriptive” communication</li> <li>▪ Use prompts</li> <li>▪ Speak with language that you feel comfortable with</li> <li>▪ Don’t be afraid of silence</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Challenging and Testing</b></p> <p>Once the mentoring relationship is off the ground, it is normal for youth to start testing boundaries of the relationship. Though you’ve spent time affirming that you appreciate and enjoy your youth, he may still want to see how far your commitment really goes. Because youth often come from situations in which adults can’t always be relied on, trusting another adult is difficult for them, and they may even try to sabotage the relationship by “acting out.”</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Youth challenges</li> <li>▪ Testing phase</li> <li>▪ Rethinking first impressions</li> <li>▪ Difficult feelings or emotions may surface</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be consistent in your communication, even if it is difficult</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate respect</li> <li>▪ Build in problem-solving techniques in your open-ended questions</li> <li>▪ Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your interactions</li> <li>▪ Make sure to separate behaviors from who the youth is</li> <li>▪ Disclosure of personal feelings &amp; experiences when appropriate</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>“Real” Mentoring</b></p> <p>In this stage, the mentoring relationship has reached full maturity. Trust and closeness have been established and the match is comfortable having fun and relating to one another. It is during this phase that mentors can use the trust they have built to move their youth along the developmental pathway—asking them to think about goals or try new things. There may still be testing or behavioral issues, but they do not jeopardize the relationship itself. Mentors that reach this stage must be prepared to maintain this hard-won status—this is where the real impact of mentoring happens.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparing for closure</li> <li>▪ Relationship may become deeper or youth may start pulling away</li> <li>▪ Reflection</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find common language to sum up your feelings</li> <li>▪ Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed</li> <li>▪ Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your youth may have</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Transition (toward closure)</b></p> <p>The transition toward closure can be a difficult time for both mentors and youth. There may be many strong feelings about the match ending and it is important to not let the process of ending the match negate the many positives it provided to everyone involved. As the end of your match approaches, work closely with the Community Relations Coordinator to end on a high note and make sure that the transition leaves the youth feeling positive and fulfilled about the experience.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparing for closure</li> <li>▪ Relationship may become deeper or mentee may start pulling away</li> <li>▪ Reflection</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find common language to sum up your feelings</li> <li>▪ Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed</li> <li>▪ Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that the youth may have</li> </ul>   |





## Effective Mentor Strategies

What are the qualities of an effective mentor? What strategies do mentors use to engage and connect with youth? These questions are at the heart of all mentoring relationships. How are mentors able to make a difference? How does the magic of mentoring happen?

Successful mentors understand that positive changes in the lives of young people do not happen quickly or automatically. If they are to happen at all, the mentor and youth must meet long enough and often enough to build a relationship that helps the youth feel supported and safe, develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and see new possibilities in life. First, trust and friendship. Change may then follow as you lead by example and role-modeling, including in matters of spiritual life. Successful mentors know they must:

- Take the time to build the relationship
- Become a trusted friend and maintain that trust

While establishing a friendship may sound easy, it often is not. Adults and youth are separated by age and, in many cases, by background and culture. Even mentors with good instincts can stumble or be blocked by difficulties that arise from these differences. It takes time for youth to feel comfortable just talking to their mentor, and longer still before they feel comfortable enough to share a confidence. Learning to trust—especially for young people who already have been let down by adults in their lives—is a gradual process. Youth cannot be expected to trust their mentors simply because program staff members have put them together. Developing a friendship requires skill and time.

## Adopt a Foundational Mentoring “Mindset”

There are some critical attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that serve as the foundation of being an effective mentor. It may be helpful to think of these as contributing to a “mentoring mindset”—a way of thinking and interacting that places young people at the center of this work and allows those of us serving as mentors to be true partners in a young person’s journey.

Take some time to reflect on the components of a mentoring mindset described below and do an honest assessment of whether and how these beliefs and principles show up in your work with young people. It may be challenging to be the impactful mentor you’d like to be if you are struggling to bring these types of core values to your relationship. Think of them as the foundation that you build on in this role.

### **Be Intentional (“I see you”).**

**Always prioritize youth’s needs** – Though you may get a lot out of the experience of being a mentor, the aim is to support youth by keeping their needs top of mind. Be curious! Make an effort to get to know the youth — their dreams, goals, skills, interests, personality — and, importantly, their history and context. We all come to relationships with our own unique biases and ways of seeing things, but it is important as adult mentors to spend time reflecting on our own biases about what we want to see happen for the youth. We need to get past these biases to effectively center what the youth wants from the relationship.

**Have a positive and respectful view of youth** – This work is not about “fixing,” “saving,” or having all the answers. Although there is space to bring your story, skills, resources, and expertise into the relationship in a way that can support youth on their journey, it’s important to provide this support without judgment. Check your biases and motivations and be able to make the decision not to mentor if your beliefs and motivations are grounded in negativity. Take the time to create a climate of mutual respect — your mentoring will not be valued without this.

**Honor the young person’s full self** – Recognize and appreciate the youth’s culture, identity, life experiences, and trauma, as they all contribute to how youth see the world and themselves. Don’t make youth have to fit your worldview or disregard things that make them “whole.” There is space for disagreement, difference, and challenge — with humility and openness to learning, and without rejecting or ignoring important aspects of young people’s identity.



### **Be Supportive (“I Got You”)**

**Commit fully to the relationship** – It is very important to commit and follow through on being there for the young person you are mentoring, and not back out even when the role becomes challenging. Being consistent and curious, checking in and communicating regularly, and being fully present in your interactions is essential.

**Be authentic and honest** – Act with integrity. There is no room for coercion or deceit when working with youth. You are enough and you can do it! Be yourself and share your story and life lessons. Just remember that anyone you mentor deserves your truth, your respect, and your real self.

**Do no harm** – Above all else, leave this young person at least as well as you found them. This is the most important foundational element in any mentoring relationship. Although mentors can do great good for young people, those who are inconsistent or disappear when things get tough can also do great harm. It's important to create a safe and healthy space for youth through boundary setting, appropriate disclosure, respecting privacy and confidentiality, and following through on promises to let the young person know they will always be safe in their interactions with you and you won't let them down. Incorporate and model wellness, mindfulness, and coping skills to demonstrate the importance of taking care of oneself and others.

### **Successful Mentor Attitudes & Styles**

Mentors who take these approaches are the ones able to build a friendship and develop trust. They are the mentors who are ultimately able to make a difference in the lives of youth.

**Be a friend.** Mentors are usually described as friends. But what does that mean? What makes someone a friend? The reality is that mentors have a unique role in the lives of youth. They are like an ideal older sister or brother—someone who is a role model and can provide support and gentle guidance. They are like a peer because they enjoy having fun with youth. But they aren't exactly either of these.

- ⇒ **Don't act like a parent.** One of the things youth will appreciate is that you are not his or her parent. However much they love their parents, young people might sometimes see them primarily as people who set rules and express disapproval. Youth need other adults in their lives, but they are unlikely to warm to a friendship with an unrelated adult who shows these parental characteristics.
- ⇒ **Don't try to be an authority figure.** It can be difficult for a youth to befriend an unknown adult. You want to help the relationship evolve into one of closeness and trust—but if you sound like you think you know everything and you tell the youth what to do and how to act, you are likely to jeopardize your ability to build that trust. If youth feel that they risk criticism when they talk to you about something personal, they are unlikely to open up to you.
- ⇒ **Don't preach about values.** Don't try to transform youth. Take a “hands-off” approach when it comes to the explicit transmission of values. And especially hold back opinions or beliefs that are in clear disagreement with those held by the youth's family. In general, young people don't like being told how they should think or behave—and they are uncomfortable if they feel that their family is being criticized. Preaching about values is likely to make it difficult for you to build a trusting relationship. Don't preach; instead teach—silently, by being a role model and setting an example.
- ⇒ **DO focus on establishing a bond,** a feeling of attachment, a sense of equality, and the mutual enjoyment of shared time. These are all important qualities of a friendship.

**Have realistic goals and expectations.** What do you expect will change for the youth as a result of his or her relationship with you? How will life be different? How will it feel different? Strong mentoring relationships do lead to positive changes in youth. These changes tend to occur indirectly, because of the close and trusting relationship, and they often occur slowly. If you expect to transform a youth's life after six months or a year of meetings, you are going to be frustrated. The rewards of mentoring are, most often, quieter, and more subtle.

Mentors might have specific goals for a youth. They might, for example, want the youth to earn better grades in school. They might want him or her to improve classroom behavior or get along better with



peers. But these should not be the primary targets of your efforts. If they are—and if you spend your time together trying to direct a youth toward these goals—you will just seem like another parent or teacher.

- ⇒ **Focus on the whole person and their overall development.** Do not focus narrowly on performance and change.
- ⇒ **Especially early on, center your goals on the relationship itself.** During the first months of meetings with youth, your primary goal should be to develop a consistent, trusting, and mutually satisfying relationship. You are very likely to find that you derive a sense of meaningful accomplishment from the relationship itself, from the growing closeness and trust.
- ⇒ **Throughout the relationship, emphasize friendship over performance.** A strong mentoring friendship provides youth with a sense of self-worth and the security of knowing that an adult is there to help, if asked. This friendship is central, and it is eventually likely to allow you to have some influence on behavior and performance outside of the relationship. As your relationship becomes stronger and more established, the youth may begin to approach you with requests for more direct advice or help. When your relationship reaches this stage, be sure to maintain a balance between attempts to influence the youth's behavior and your more primary goal of being a supportive presence. Keep the focus on your friendship.

**Have fun together.** Young people often say that the best thing about having a mentor is the chance to have fun—they have an adult friend with whom to share favorite activities. The opportunity to have fun is also one of the great benefits of being a mentor. However, for some mentors, fun might appear trivial in light of the scope and scale of unmet, pressing needs that may be present in the lives of TJJD youth. It is important to remember that fun is not trivial—for youth, having fun and sharing it with an attentive adult carry great weight and a meaning beyond a recreational outlet, a chance to “blow off steam,” or an opportunity to play.

- ⇒ **Having fun is important.** There are several reasons why you should focus on participating in activities with youth that are fun for both of you. Having fun breaks monotony, introduces them to experiences they would not otherwise have, and shows that you are reliable and committed.
- ⇒ **Focusing on “fun” activities early in the relationship can lead to more “serious” activities later.** As the youth comes to see you as a friend, they are likely to be far more receptive to spending some of your time together in activities that are less obviously fun, such as working on school-related assignments. Always be sure that these more “serious” activities are not forced upon the youth—that they are something the youth seems agreeable to doing. Also be sure that activities such as schoolwork sessions are kept brief, and that they don't become the primary focus of your time together.

Remember, it is always possible to weave educational moments—real-life learning—into the most “fun” activities. This is the kind of learning that youth tend to enjoy—it is learning with an immediate purpose and an immediate payoff—and they often don't even realize that they are learning.

**Give youth a voice and choice in deciding on activities.** Be sure that the youth is a partner in the process of deciding what activities you will do together. Giving youth a voice and choice about activities will:

- ⇒ Help build your friendship: It demonstrates that you value the youth's ideas and input and that you care about and respect them.
- ⇒ Help the youth develop decision making and negotiation skills.

#### HAVE FUN TOGETHER!

*How do youth and mentors spend their time together? The particular activities can be almost anything. What is important is that the youth play a role in deciding on the activity, and that it be fun.*

*Here are a few suggestions:*

- *Play games*
- *Hang out and talk*
- *Read a book together*
- *Write a story together*
- *Create artwork together*
- *Play chess*
- *Talk about your first job*
- *Talk about the future*



- ⇒ Help avoid the possibility that you will impose “it’s-good-for-you” activities—like homework sessions—on the youth without their agreement. This kind of imposition may make you seem more like a teacher or parent than a friend.

It might seem like it would be relatively easy to include the youth in the decision-making process, but often it is not. Youth might be reticent about suggesting activities because:

- ⇒ They don’t want to seem rude.
- ⇒ It really is difficult for them to come up with ideas.
- ⇒ If it is difficult for a youth to request activities or voice preferences, you can use these approaches to make it easier:
  - **Give a range of choices concerning possible activities.** Be sure the choices are youth-focused—be sure the youth will enjoy the activities.
  - **Create an “Idea File” together.** One good activity to do together is to make a list of activities you would like to do in the future. You can write the list on a piece of paper (or on a computer and then print it out) or use index cards and write one idea on each card. This is a great strategy because the list or file will help both of you when you are looking for ideas about activities you can do together. Making an “idea file” together is also an important symbolic act—it reminds youth that you care about their preferences and value their input.
  - **Emphasize to the youth that their enjoyment is important to you.** If the youth is extremely reticent and you feel as though you are having to play the lead role in choosing activities, you can let them know you want the activities to be fun. If you show through your words and actions that you value the youth’s input, they are likely to notice, appreciate, and respond.

**Be Positive.** People who feel negatively about themselves tend to live down to their own self-image. And youth who are matched with mentors usually have situations in their lives that are leading them to feel exactly that way. They might, for example, have problems with a parent or sibling, difficulties in school, conflicts with peers, or involvement with the juvenile justice system.

One of the most important things you can do as a mentor is to help a youth develop self-esteem and self-confidence. Doing activities together provides many opportunities for you to encourage the youth to feel good about themselves

- ⇒ **Offer frequent expressions of direct confidence.** Praise and encouragement help build youth’s self-esteem.
- ⇒ **Be encouraging even when talking about potentially troublesome topics, such as grades.** Be supportive, don’t sound like you are criticizing.
- ⇒ **Offer concrete assistance.** At times, your activities might include helping the youth with schoolwork, and this assistance should be given in a way that helps build his or her self-confidence.

**Let the youth have much of the control over what the two of you talk about – and how you talk about it.** Along with doing enjoyable activities together, listening and talking are at the heart of any relationship. The communication patterns you establish early on will be key to the relationship’s development over time. Especially in the early, tentative phase of your relationship, the youth should have a high degree of control over what the two of you talk about—it is important to respect the limits youth place on how much they choose to reveal about themselves. Take the time and effort necessary for youth to develop trust in you. While you know that the youth should trust you, the reality is that you must earn the trust.

- ⇒ **Don’t push.** It should come as no surprise to you that youths, especially at first, may be shy and reluctant to talk, especially about difficult-to-reveal issues, such as problems in school or at



home. Be careful not to push a youth to discuss issues that they feel are too personal or might risk your disapproval.

- ⇒ **Be sensitive and responsive to the youth's cues.** Follow the youth's lead in determining what issues the two of you discuss and when. Wait for the invitation to give advice on problems.
- ⇒ **Understand that just like adults, young people vary in their styles of communicating and their habits of disclosure.** Your own style of drawing out and supporting disclosure from youth may, to a large degree, determine the extent to which they feel comfortable speaking to you about personal issues. But remember that other factors will also influence youth's interest and ability in confiding. These factors include the youth's age, the amount of support available to them from other people, and cultural or family predisposition. Some youth open up only very slowly while some confide in their mentor just a few weeks or months into the match.
- ⇒ **Be direct in letting the youth know that they can confide in you without fear of judgment or exposure.** Having a mentor is probably a new form of relationship for the youth, who thus does not know whether, and to what extent, they can trust you. Make deliberate attempts to let them know that you are a safe person to whom they can talk.
- ⇒ **Remember that the activities you do together can become a source of conversation.** Whether you are playing a card game together or enjoying a snack, having a conversation about the activity itself can help the youth become more comfortable talking to you. This, in turn, can ultimately help them feel safer about personal disclosures.

**Listen.** When a youth does begin to “open up” to you, how you respond will serve to either promote or discourage his or her ongoing disclosure. One of the most valuable things you can do is to just listen—it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of being a great listener.

- ⇒ **“Just listening” gives youth a chance to vent and lets them know that they can disclose personal matters to you without worrying about being criticized.** The process of venting can also help them gain insight into whatever is bothering them.
- ⇒ **When you listen, the youth can see that you are a friend, not an authority figure.** Many youths appreciate being able to bring up issues and having an adult who responds primarily by listening. They recognize that listening is a form of emotional support, and they may have few sources of support in their lives.

**Respect the trust the youth places in you.** When a youth begins to talk to you about personal matters, be supportive. If you respond by lecturing or expressing disapproval, they are very likely to avoid mentioning personal matters in the future. Instead of seeking support and help from you, the youth might become self-shielding by, for example, dodging conversations about problems and hiding school or family difficulties.

- ⇒ **Respond in ways that show you see the youth's side of things.** This will encourage the youth to continue sharing with you things that he or she might normally keep from an adult.
- ⇒ **Reassure the youth that you will be there for them.** Some youth may be reluctant to disclose things about themselves because they worry that their mentor will disapprove of them and, as a result, disappear from their lives. This is a reasonable fear for youth who have an absent parent and may feel responsible for the parent's leaving—youth often believe that they did something to drive the parent away.
  - **If you give advice, give it sparingly.** A mentor's ability to give advice will occur at different times and to varying degrees in relationships, depending upon the youth's receptivity and needs. In every case, though, don't let advice-giving overshadow other ways of interacting and other types of conversation.
  - **If you give advice, be sure it is focused on identifying solutions.** The situations for which youth most commonly seek advice tend to involve arguments at home, struggles at school, and problems with friends. If the youth asks you for advice, he or she is most likely looking for help with arriving at practical solutions for dealing with the problem.



- ***If, on occasion, you feel you have to convey concern or displeasure, do so in a way that also conveys reassurance and acceptance.*** As your relationship develops into one of closeness and trust, there might be times when your youth discloses something to you that causes real concern. As a supportive adult friend, you may be able to express that concern—but deliver your message in a way that also shows understanding.

**Sound like a friend, not like a parent.** Youth have a keen ear for the difference.

**Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship.** Building a relationship cannot be rushed. During the early period, when you and your youth are getting to know one another, you may have to be particularly patient and persistent as you work to establish the foundation of a meaningful friendship, one that could ultimately help lead to positive changes in your youth's life. At first, the relationship might seem one-sided—you might feel like you are putting out all the effort while your youth seems passive or indifferent. Remember that this is the time when young people are going to be at their shyest and most reticent, because they do not yet know you. It is also the time when they may be testing you, because they could have limited reason to believe that adults can, in fact, be reliable and trustworthy.

To help build, and then maintain, the foundation of a trusting relationship, you should:

- ⇒ ***Take responsibility for making and maintaining contact.*** Having regular meetings with the youth is essential if you are going to be able to develop a strong relationship. You are the adult and must be responsible for being sure that the two of you meet regularly
- ⇒ ***Understand that the feedback and reassurance characteristic of adult-to-adult relationships is often beyond the capacity of youth.*** At times, some mentors feel unappreciated because they get little or no positive feedback. They may interpret this as meaning that the youth does not care about seeing them. But the fact that youth are reticent does not mean they are indifferent.

In some cases, mentors talk to program staff to find out how the youth feels about the relationship and to get reassurance that the youth is enjoying their time together.

And in all cases, mentors can allow themselves to recognize and appreciate the quiet moments that indicate they are making a difference.



## Asking High Quality Questions

### *Questions about Their Talents, Deep Interests, and Activities*

- What is something you really enjoy doing – that gives you pleasure and that you almost lose track of time when you do it?
- Is there a subject that you are interested in learning more about?
- What subject in school are you most interested in? It doesn't matter if you are good at it or not.

### *Questions about Their Strengths*

- What are some of the best things about you?
- What are you good at doing?
- Are there any rules that you try to live by?
- What do you think is important in life?

### *Questions about Their Struggles*

- Are there things that you worry about?
- Are there places you don't like to go or people you don't like to be around?
- Is there anything you wish you could change about yourself?

### *Questions about Their Supports*

- Who are the people that matter most to you?
- Who can you talk to when you have a problem?

### *Useful Questions to Clarify Outcomes*

- What do you really want in this situation?
- What is important about this outcome to you?
- What are all the ways you can go about getting what you want?
- Who/what can you use as resources to get what you want?
- Who do you know that has already achieved this outcome, and how did they do it?
- Is this outcome possible to achieve?
- Can the outcome be initiated and sustained by you?
- Is this outcome consistent with who you are?
- Considering what it will take and the possible consequences, is the outcome worth doing?

### *Questions to Elicit Values, Needs and Wants*

- What is important about achieving this particular outcome?
- How will you know that you have achieved your outcome? What will you see, hear, feel or experience to know that you have achieved your outcome?
- If you get what you want, what will this do for you?

## **Mentor Absences**

It is very important that once you are matched with a youth, you develop a regular meeting schedule. As your relationship grows, your youth will look forward to your meetings and may be disappointed when you have to cancel.

**Planned Absences.** Let the youth know as far in advance as possible that you will be unavailable on certain dates. Remind the youth of that date as it approaches. Let the youth know when you plan to return and schedule your next meeting with them. You must also inform the Community Relations Coordinator of your planned absences and intended date of return.

**Unexpected Absences.** Illnesses and unexpected problems cannot be avoided and may interfere with your scheduled visits. Call the Community Relations Coordinator as soon as possible to inform them of your difficulty so that the youth will be informed. Remember to tell the youth why you cannot meet. Let the mentee know that you will contact him/her soon about your next meeting together.



## **Closing a Mentoring Relationships**

We hope that this mentoring relationship will grow into a more natural one that will sustain itself. However, some relationships will not continue, and others will end prematurely due to geographic moves, incompatible relationships, etc. How a relationship ends is key to how you and especially the youth will think about and value the experience you shared.

Planned terminations can be facilitated in the following ways:

### ***If you initiated the termination:***

- The youth should be alerted well in advance of your departure from the relationship.
- The reasons for the departure should be discussed with the youth by you and reinforced by the Community Relations Coordinator.
- Youth may feel they are being abandoned and may demonstrate anger. Allow them to grieve and be appropriately angry.

### ***If your mentee initiated the termination:***

- Don't view this as a failure.

### ***In both instances, focus on the:***

- Progress you made
- Fun you had