

2019-2020

# STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE

Partner/Mentor Handbook





Dear Partners and Mentors,

Welcome to Student/Partner Alliance!

We are thrilled and very grateful that you have agreed to become part of our important mission to improve the lives of high school students in our area through the gift of a quality education and your time, advice, and encouragement. We hope that you will enjoy getting to know your student and find your experience rewarding and fun.

Our students face many daily challenges, including financial, educational and social challenges. Your support can make a big difference between a successful high school experience and just getting through.

This handbook will provide you with information about student mentoring through Student/Partner Alliance (S/PA). We are always ready to answer your questions and very much appreciate feedback, so please do not hesitate to call our office with any concerns, comments or questions.

We wish you a fun and rewarding experience with your student and with Student/Partner Alliance.

With much appreciation,

Margaret Momber  
Executive Director

# THE STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE

## MENTOR HANDBOOK

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# ABOUT US

In the late 1980s, Tom Cash informally started what would become called Student/Partner Alliance by providing ten students in Jersey City with tuition assistance at St. Mary's High School. Tom recognized that students attending top quality, college preparatory high schools in their neighborhoods were more prepared to qualify for college admission and scholarships. Student/Partner Alliance was formally incorporated in 1993, and since that time, has provided scholarship and mentoring support to more than 2,100 students from low-income areas in NJ. Mentoring is an effective way to provide guidance and support to students.

## **Our students:**

- Well over 50% are from single parent homes
- Average income is lower than \$40,000
- 100% have gone on to college in the past 6 years
- Represent a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and religions

## **Students who are mentored are:**

- 52% less likely to skip a day of class
- 46% less likely to start to use illegal drugs
- 93% of mentees try harder, improve their attitude about school, and benefit from an improved self-concept
- 100% of students in the past 6 years have enrolled in college

## **The Schools**

- 7 Schools in Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Bayonne, and Montclair
- College preparatory, community-based, structured, committed, nurturing

# S/PA MENTORING PROGRAM

## STRUCTURE AND EVENTS

**STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE** was conceived as a program offering a combination of financial and coaching support to underserved high school students residing in the urban areas of Greater Newark, Elizabeth, and Jersey City in order to improve the students' chances of attaining a quality education at a nearby private school.

**STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE** is affiliated with 7 urban private schools that offer a solid, college preparatory education in a structured, caring environment. While each school is unique, they all produce an almost 100% graduation and college acceptance rate. S/PA coordinators at each school and S/PA staff work closely together to bring the best student/partner/mentor experience to all involved through a carefully constructed program.

**STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE** is unique because we provide scholarships and mentors. This unique combination has led to 100% graduation rates for our students over the past six years.

**PROGRAM:** At the beginning of each academic year, incoming students attend a S/PA orientation with their parent(s)/guardian, to learn about S/PA's program and the benefits of having a mentor. The students will also learn about the events that S/PA has arranged for them to meet with their mentors.

Each fall, a mentor training workshop is offered for mentors, so that our mentors can learn about the role of a mentor, how to be an effective mentor, S/PA events, their student mentees and expectations of the mentoring relationship. Legal and ethical considerations are discussed in this valuable training.

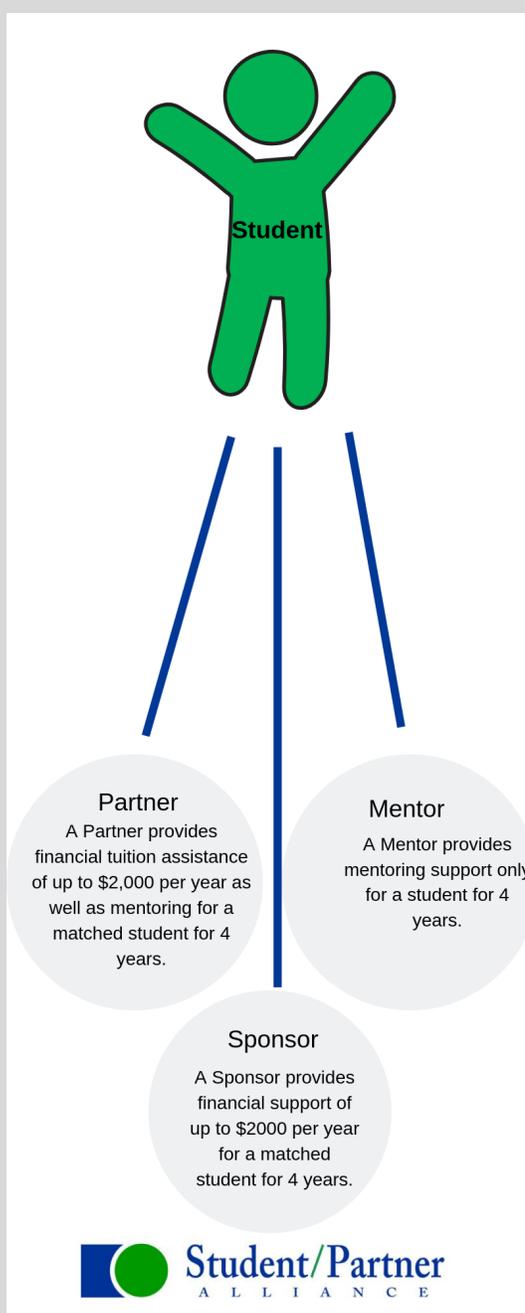
**EVENTS:** Throughout the year, S/PA sponsors events to encourage the student and his/her partner/mentor to meet and spend time together in a comfortable environment. These activities are fun, often help the community, and are especially important in the early days of the relationship. Yearly scheduled events have included:

- Student/Partner/Mentor Breakfasts/Lunches 2X yearly (Sept/October; and again in March/April, at each school)
- Day of Service at Community FoodBank (November)
- Holiday Party (early January – families invited)
- Day of service at Newark Conservancy (April/May)
- Bowling and pizza party

# WHY MENTORING MATTERS

The combination of a quality education and a supportive mentor can allow low income urban NJ students to reach their highest potential. Studies have established that mentoring results in higher self-esteem, improved relationships with parents, peers and teachers; and greater success in school.

Mentoring is a powerful way to positively impact a young person's life by forming a strong developmental relationship, or close connection.



# WHAT IS A MENTOR?

## A MENTOR IS:

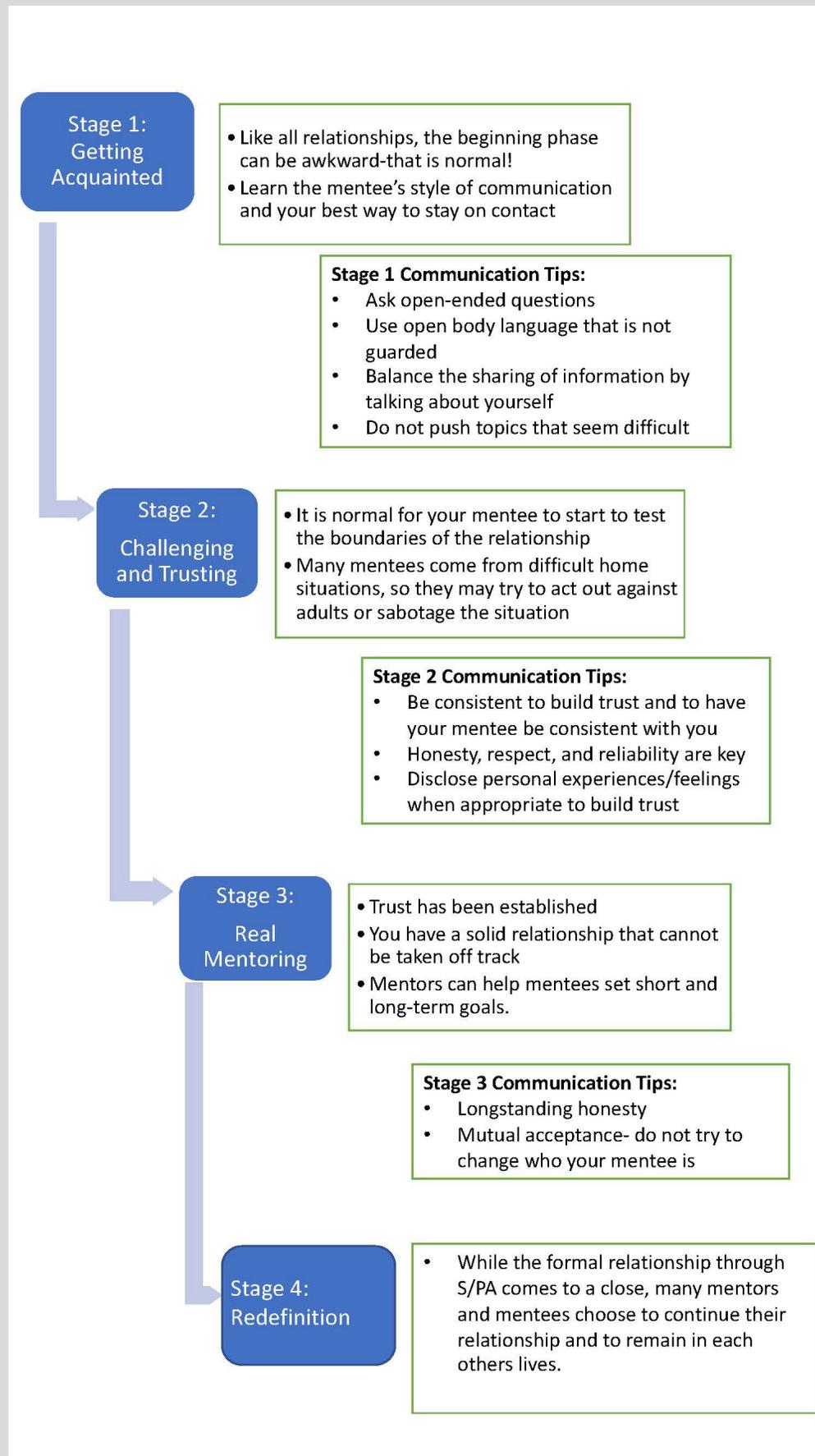
- A trusted guide and friend
- Someone who will listen to their mentee
- Someone who will help their mentee explore new opportunities
- Someone who will have good ideas about how to deal with difficult situations
- Someone who supports their mentee
- A Coach
- An Advisor
- Consistent and dependable
- A positive role model
- Someone who always puts the child's safety and well-being first

## A MENTOR IS NOT:

- A parent
- A peer
- An "ATM" (students are never allowed to ask their supporters for money)
- Someone to constantly unload on
- A taxi-service
- A therapist
- A tutor



# STAGES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP



## The Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

Elements	Actions	Definitions
 <p><b>Express Care</b> Show me that I matter to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be dependable</b>.....Be someone I can trust.</li> <li>• <b>Listen</b>.....Really pay attention when we are together.</li> <li>• <b>Believe in me</b>.....Make me feel known and valued.</li> <li>• <b>Be warm</b>.....Show me you enjoy being with me.</li> <li>• <b>Encourage</b>.....Praise me for my efforts and achievements.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Challenge Growth</b> Push me to keep getting better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expect my best</b>.....Expect me to live up to my potential.</li> <li>• <b>Stretch</b>.....Push me to go further.</li> <li>• <b>Hold me accountable</b>...Insist I take responsibility for my actions.</li> <li>• <b>Reflect on failures</b>.....Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Provide Support</b> Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Navigate</b>.....Guide me through hard situations and systems.</li> <li>• <b>Empower</b>.....Build my confidence to take charge of my life.</li> <li>• <b>Advocate</b>.....Stand up for me when I need it.</li> <li>• <b>Set boundaries</b>.....Put limits in place that keep me on track.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Share Power</b> Treat me with respect and give me a say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Respect me</b>.....Take me seriously and treat me fairly.</li> <li>• <b>Include me</b>.....Involve me in decisions that affect me.</li> <li>• <b>Collaborate</b>.....Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.</li> <li>• <b>Let me lead</b>.....Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Expand Possibilities</b> Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inspire</b>.....Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.</li> <li>• <b>Broaden horizons</b>.....Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.</li> <li>• <b>Connect</b>.....Introduce me to people who can help me grow.</li> </ul>	

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

# BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP TAKES TIME

Allow your relationship to develop gradually, but focus on being an attentive listener.

The first two years of your relationship should be about listening, getting to know each other, and building trust. Learning to trust is a gradual process that will not start on day one. Communication may be touch and go in the early years, but the most important thing is to be consistent. Showing up at S/PA events, sporting events, or the school play will demonstrate to your student that you are committed to developing a strong relationship.

- Do not view mentoring as a way to change your mentee. Successful mentoring relationships rely on supporting youth develop and grow as a friend.
- Do not expect to have an instant bond, but with time your student will be able to trust you and depend on you. If your mentee is slow to bond, it is likely due to previous experiences; trust is gradually built as the relationship develops.
- Be responsive to your student's texts but understand that he/she may not respond every time.
- Be patient if your mentee does not immediately open up.
- Let your student know if you will be an event or if you cannot make it.
- Be predictable and do not make promises that you cannot fill.
- If your student is struggling with a particular subject, try asking if he/she can get extra help, but also praise subjects that your mentee is excelling at.
- Focus on the positive as you help your student get through certain experiences.
- Establish a clear understanding of confidentiality between you and your mentee, but understand that certain situations will warrant breaking confidentiality.
- **You must break confidentiality if your mentee or anyone else is in threat of physical harm.**

From time to time, mentee/mentor matches are not a perfect fit due to outstanding circumstances. If you are experiencing difficulties, contact S/PA or an experienced mentor for possible suggestions on how to improve the relationship

As your mentee enters junior and senior year, the testing period of the relationship is usually over and your mentee will typically become more engaged and committed to the relationship. You can help establish goals for the future, help your mentee evaluate potential colleges, or brainstorm about possible college essay topics.

SPA staff is always available for any questions or issues.

# QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

1. Be a friend.
2. Have realistic goals and expectations.
3. Have fun with each other.
4. Be positive – help your mentee develop self-esteem and self-confidence.
5. Allow your mentee to control what you talk about – The communication patterns you establish early on will be key to the relationship's development over time. Do not push your mentee to discuss things that she/he does not want to talk about.
6. Listen – An effective listener will listen without judgment to make it clear that you care and are empathetic.
7. Respect your mentee's privacy and trust.
8. Be reliable.
9. When giving advice, focus on the solutions.



# FREQUENTLY ANSWERED QUESTIONS

## **How should I first initiate contact?**

We ask you to meet your student at the first breakfast or lunch of the year, and during that time establish how you will communicate with each other. Most students have phones and will prefer texting over email or phone calls. Be patient when the relationship develops and understand that your mentee may from time to time not respond in a timely fashion to texts.

## **How often should I be in contact with my mentee?**

S/PA recommends that you see your student 4 times a year and that you text/email/phone your mentee twice a month.

## **What should you do if your student never returns your texts/emails/phone calls?**

Many students are reluctant to initiate a contact with their mentor and do not call their mentor back. It is incredibly frustrating. More than likely the student is not calling you back because s/he is not receiving the messages, or is too timid, not because s/he is ignoring you. When you connect with the student. Explore the reasons that s/he is not calling you back and explain that you will need her/his help in making the relationship successful. You may also suggest alternate ways to keep in touch, like email or setting up phone appointments in advance. Show your mentee how to organize commitments, book appointments, and follow through.

## **What should I do if my student does not show up or is consistently late for a planned event or outing?**

If your student does not show up or is consistently late, explain why you are upset with him/her and work on activities to improve his/her organizational skills. Your mentee may not be used to scheduling activities and keeping appointments and may not understand why showing up late is a problem. Engage your student and help him/her develop these skills. The next time your student arrives on time, congratulate him/her for being prompt.

**What are your policies on connecting on social media?**

We discourage mentors from connecting with their mentees or their mentee's family on social media.

**What should you do if you cannot reach your mentee?**

If you have repeatedly tried to reach your mentee and have had no success, contact the S/PA staff and we can reach out to the school. Mentees often change phone numbers.

**What should I do if my mentee is not doing well in school?**

If your mentee is struggling in school, talk with your mentee about any academic problems and encourage your mentee to go for extra help or afterschool study sessions if they are available to him/her. When addressing problem subjects, also praise your student for those classes that he/she is excelling at.

**What should I do if my help isn't wanted?**

Relationships take time to develop, and it may take a lot of time to build trust. Do not confuse caution with rejection. Your student may not show appreciation in the beginning of your relationship, but that does not mean that your help is not wanted.

**What should I do if my student cannot relate to me?**

Many first-time mentors worry that differences in age, race, religion, education, or economic status will be insurmountable barriers. Actually, most veteran mentors report that mentoring a young person from a different background broadened their own horizons and deepened their understanding of other people and cultures. After four years, most say that they learned more from their student than their student did from them.

**What should I do if my mentee's parents don't speak English?**

Ask your mentee to translate for you if you would like to speak with the parent/s.

**What should I do if something serious comes up?**

While most sponsor/student relationships develop and flourish without serious problems, things do happen. You have an important role as a student's partner/mentor, but that role does not include medical or psychological treatment, or family counseling. Please call S/PA when something of a serious nature arises.

## **Student/Partner Alliance Policies and Guidelines**

### **GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH MINORS**

#### **A. Guidelines of Student/Partner Alliance for Partners/Mentors Modeling Positive Behavior:**

The following standards are intended to assist S/PA volunteers (Trustees, Staff, Partners, Mentors, Consultants and Interns) in making decisions about interactions with minors in S/PA sponsored and affiliated programs.

1. All volunteers have a responsibility to interact with minors and model positive behavior. All volunteers are prohibited from:
  - a. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while in the presence of minors.
  - b. Swearing in the presence of minors.
  - c. Speaking to minors in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
  - d. Engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with minors.
  - e. Possessing sexually oriented or morally inappropriate printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.).
  
2. Volunteers should only release minors in their care to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. In the event you are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a minor, you should contact the local police prior to releasing the minor.

## **B. Standards for Offsite Events and Transportation of Minors**

1. Partners and Mentors should meet with their student in a public place, never alone anywhere, including a car while transporting minors.
2. If a volunteer is to drive a student anywhere, S/PA will need prior to the event, a signed permission slip found on our website from the parent or guardian in advance of the event. You must also provide a copy of a current driving license and a copy of current auto insurance.
3. Minors should be transported directly to their destination. No stops should be made unless approved by the director of the program.
4. Volunteers assigned to transport minors must be at least 21 years old and have a valid New Jersey driver's license and current automobile insurance.
5. Volunteers are prohibited from having minors stay overnight at their residence.
6. Volunteers should not give gifts to minors in excess of \$100.00 per year.



### **C. Guidelines of Student/Partner Alliance as to Physical Contact with Minors**

1. All volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.
  
2. Appropriate affection between volunteers and minors is important for a child's development. However, all volunteers should always be aware that physical contact with minors can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual, when there is no possibility of others perceiving it as sexual, and when such contact is otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.
  
3. Every individual responds to touch differently. Exercise good touch practices.
  - Ask permission before making any physical contact.
  - Avoid being with a student in a one-to-one meeting place.
  - Do not assume that physical touch or contact is acceptable to a student.
  - Respect boundaries if a student indicates that she/he is uncomfortable with touch.

4. The following forms of affection are regarded as appropriate examples of affection for most S/PA sponsored and affiliated programs:

- Hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Hand-shakes.
- “High-fives” and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of minors.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Sitting beside small children.

Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of affection that are not to be used in S/PA sponsored and affiliated programs:

- Touching knees or legs of minors
- Wrestling with minors
- Tickling minors.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult.
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development.
- Pats on the head.



## **D. Standards of Student/Partner Alliance as to Screening of Volunteers Who Work with Minors**

1. Without exception, all applicants for volunteer positions that will involve working with minors must comply with the following procedures:

- a. Completion of a standard application that includes authorization to conduct criminal background checks.
- b. Reading and signing an agreement to abide by the S/PA Code of Ethics.
- c. Cooperating, as necessary, with a criminal records check. This criminal records check shall be conducted prior to beginning volunteer work.

2. Additional screening procedures, such as reference checks and face-to-face or telephone interviews, will be conducted for new applicants.

## **E. Standards of Student/Partner Alliance as to Training for Volunteers Who Work with Minors**

1. All volunteers shall review the Policies on Conduct and read and sign an agreement to abide by the S/PA Code of Ethics.

2. S/PA volunteers who work with minors must read our Mentor Handbook and participate in training, as soon as possible.

## STUDENT/PARTNER ALLIANCE PROCEDURE FOR THE MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD NEGLECT & ABUSE

### **How and When to Report Child Abuse/Neglect**

In New Jersey, any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or acts of abuse should immediately report this information to the State Central Registry (SCR). If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 as well as 1-877 NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873). A concerned caller does not need proof to report an allegation of child abuse and can make the report anonymously.

Source: State of New Jersey, Department of Children and Families

Please feel free to call the S/PA office to discuss.

## CODE OF ETHICS

All Trustees, Partners, Mentors, (volunteers) and staff shall exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity.

All volunteers and staff shall provide an environment that is free from harassment.

All volunteers and staff shall not take advantage of any counseling, supervisory and/or authoritative relationship for their own benefit.

All volunteers and staff shall not abuse or neglect a minor or an adult.

All volunteers and staff shall share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with the Executive Director of S/PA, Margaret Momber at [mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org](mailto:mmomber@studentpartneralliance.org).

All volunteers and staff shall adhere to the requirements of the laws of the State of New Jersey regarding the reporting of any suspected abuse of a minor.

If the child is in immediate danger, and it is not possible to contact the S/PA office to discuss, please follow the prescribed procedure according to the laws of the State of New Jersey, stated below. If there is no immediate danger, you may contact the office to discuss.



S/PA gratefully acknowledges Student/Sponsor Partner, New York City; and The New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative, Patrick Fennell, MENTOR - The National Mentoring Partnership; The Archdiocese of Newark, NJ, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties; The Search Institute; and Yvonne Bryant; for their ideas and materials which we have used in this handbook.

# ADDITIONAL INFO: TIPS FROM OUR STUDENTS

“I like how my mentor is really involved. Our relationship isn't just sitting in a cafeteria talking. We go out and do things together as well, to really get to know each other.”

“My mentor helps me by giving me advice when I have an issue.”

“What I liked best about having a mentor, consisted of the fact that I had someone with experience (in life) and wise knowledge to provide for myself, available at just an email away. Fortunately my mentor was an active member in my school, thus I got to see him in person at least twice every month and was able to see how much service he provides for his alma mater.”

“My mentor did multiple things to help me throughout the two years that I was assigned to him. From giving me opportunities to gain community service hours at my school, to using his connections from working with the alumni office at my school to get me in touch with someone who works in what I wish to major in college.”

“Being a first generation student, my mentor helped in many different ways. She had answers to the questions I had during my college process. I really liked the fact how the experiences I was having at school she could relate to because she is an alum of my school. She understood what hardships and even the goals I was reaching for.”

“My mentor motivated me and gave me advice on how to manage my work.”  
“The learning & bonding experience”

“They guided me to a better path and gave advice when I need it.”

“I liked being able to receive advice and know I could talk to them about anything”

“ She gave me tips about the college process as well as informed me about information I needed through my four years”

“ Having someone support me through my high school time.”

# ADDITIONAL INFO: TIPS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

- Mentor can be most helpful to student by remaining in contact on a regular basis with student, school, and parent.
- Mentor training should prepare mentors for unresponsiveness of teens to alternate means of communication
- Be encouraging
- Find out what the student likes to talk about
- Attend opportunities planned by SPA



Immaculate Conception High School



## ADDITIONAL INFO

### WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR iGENERATION MENTEE\*

#### **What to Know About Your iGeneration Mentee**

- Too young to remember a world without problems (economic crashes, failed wars, obsession with terrorism)
- Highly competitive
- Take in information instantaneously but can lose interest quickly
- Live life in fear of missing out (FOMO)
- View online personas and branding differently than millennials
- Demographic shifts have yielded shifts in attitude, culture and social issues

#### **Characteristics of the iGeneration**

- Conscientious and mindful of the future.
- Hard workers and efficient multi-taskers
- A bit anxious and hyperaware
- Compassionate
- Mature and in control
- Entrepreneurial

#### **iGeneration Values**

- Long for success and job stability
- Inclusion and equality as necessities
- Merit of ideas/voice being heard
- Flexibility and work life balance
- Accumulating rewarding experience
- Growth opportunity
- Meaningful connections

\*Content attributed to Patrick Fennell, Founder/President Empowerment Solutions, LLC

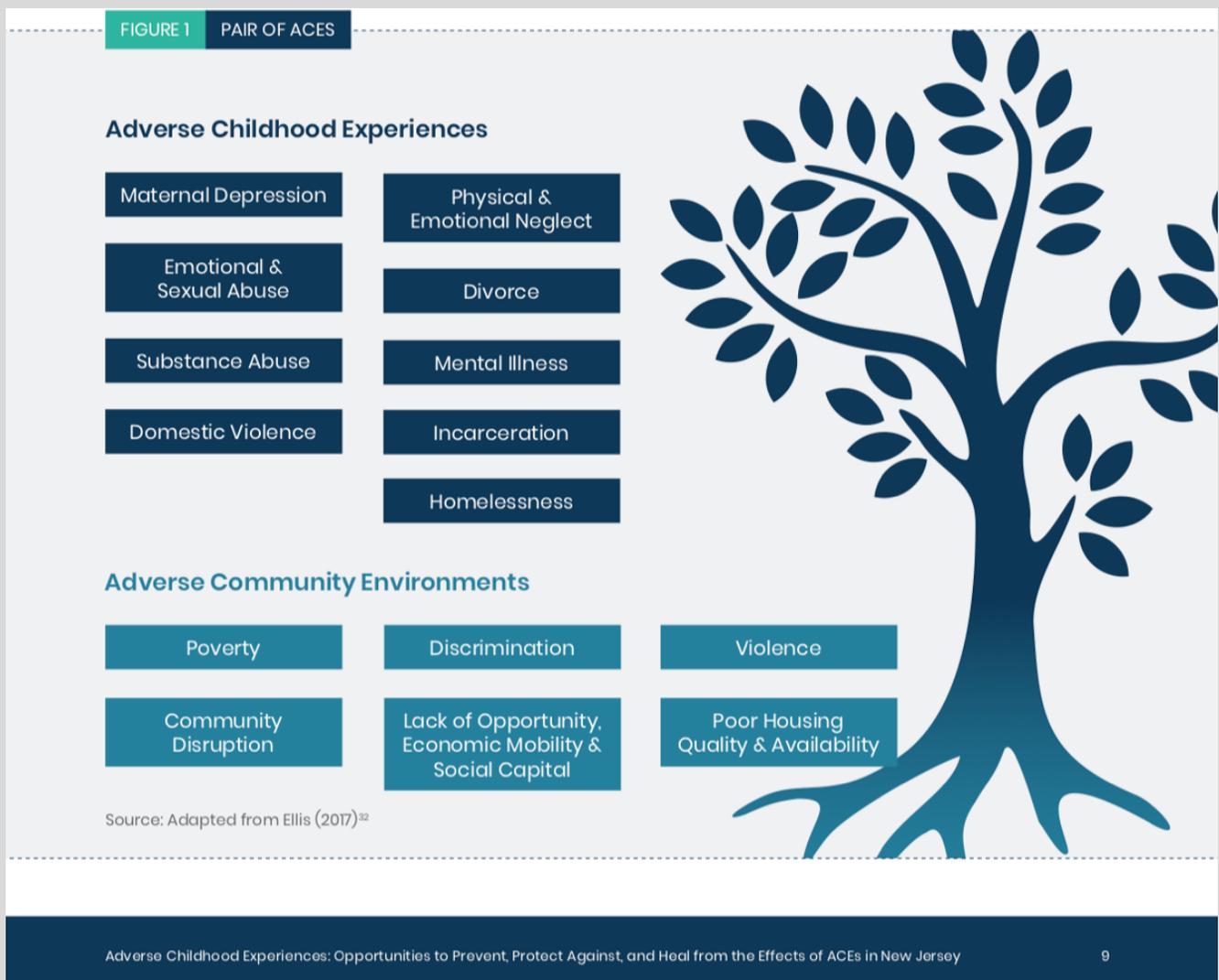
# ADDITIONAL INFO

## ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES\*

ACE's Notes: (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

ACEs-Stressful or traumatic events that occur before the age of 18. They trigger unique stress response in the body that disrupts ordinary child development.

Include Experiences like: Psychological, Physical, Sexual Abuse, and Exposures to substance abuse, mental illness, violence, and parent incarceration



\*Data taken from the "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey" Report by the by The New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative

# IMPACT OF ACEs\*

## Impact at a Glance:

- Behavioral Health**- 7xs more likely to self-identify as alcoholics in adulthood than those with no ACE's.
- Physical Health** - 4xs more likely to develop lung disease
- Education** - 3xs more likely to repeat a grade than those with no ACE's
- Criminal Justice**- Juvenile Offenders 4xs more likely to experience 4 or more ACEs than college graduated adults

\*Multiple and chronic ACEs lead to toxic stress. The more experiences before the age of 18, the greater the impact

ACE in NJ-more than 782,000 estimated to have experienced at least one ACEs- 18% have experienced multiple. Higher in children of color or in poverty.

## ACEs experiences in numbers in NJ:

- 27% of African American Children
- 22% Of Hispanic Children
- 16% of non-hispanic white
- 28% children below poverty level
- 8% above poverty level

\*Data taken from the "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey" Report by the by The New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative

# 5 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY TO APPROACH ACES\*



## Addressing ACEs

- Support parents and caregiver
- Target stressors that arise from lack of basic needs
- Ensure that adults who work with children know about ACEs and provide resources to provide support
- Train education and behavioral health care staff to:
  - Recognize the signs of aces and address them properly.
  - Adopt trauma-informed care practices through all levels of institutions
  - Build pipeline of diverse, sensitive, early care education and behavioral health professionals to train and provide trauma-informed care and work with parent and child.
  - Invest in evidence-based behavioral health approaches for children
  - Increase public understanding of ACE through campaigns, discussions, and events
  - Focus advocacy efforts on the voices of those directly impacted.

\*Data taken from the "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey" Report by the by The New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative

# Certification Page

I certify that I have read and understand the Partner/Mentor Handbook in its full entirety and I agree to abide by the S/PA Code of Ethics.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_