



australian **YOUTH**  
**MENTORING**  
**NETWORK**

## Factsheet for program coordinators Recruiting male mentors

This factsheet provides program coordinators with advice on how to recruit male mentors



Recruiting male mentors is one of the greatest challenges programs report. However, many of the methods for engaging men are the same as engaging other potentially "hard to reach" groups in the community. This Fact Sheet focuses on what methods appear to be specific to engaging men in a mentoring capacity.

## General considerations when talking with men about mentoring

This Fact Sheet addresses the main components of a complete recruitment message including:

1. Making the case for male mentors
2. Addressing concerns
3. Being clear about things
4. Creating a positive environment
5. The way you recruit men
6. Demonstrate and celebrate success

The factsheet then provides you with talking points by speaker type for the following audiences:

- Recruiting Younger Men
- Recruiting Older Men
- Women Recruiting Men
- Recruiter to Employer
- Employers Recruiting Male Employees
- Mentors Recruiting Men

Finally, it gives some tips on how to practically implement the advice

## Making the case for male mentors

Recruiting volunteer mentors is common; specifying male mentors is not. For much of the general public, the knowledge that there is a shortage of male mentors is not necessarily obvious. So if men do not know that their help is sought, they cannot be expected to join your ranks. Articulating that need is therefore the first step to meeting it and communicating the need for male mentors might appeal to some men's desire to "fix things."

## Addressing concerns

While being aware of men's concerns about mentoring is important, that understanding may serve you even better if it is communicated to recruits. You may want to emphasize to them that inexperience with the young people or not feeling comfortable with the situation does not preclude a positive mentor experience and that you are willing to train volunteers. Such reassurance may help men to put aside their trepidation with the knowledge that they are neither alone nor unsupported.

## Being clear about things

Men, just as most mentors, need clarity regarding the commitment required. Right up front they will want to know, “What do you expect of me? How much time will this really take? When does it end?” Help potential male mentors make the right choice by providing clear information from the start about what is being asked of them. However, there is a need for balance. Refrain from scaring away potential candidates, but determine whether a prospect is serious about working with children.

You may also want to use this opportunity to ask questions to identify reasons that might prevent someone from becoming a mentor. This will allow you to address any questions or concerns raised. Be prepared to discuss concerns such as one’s inability to make the time commitment, not being a perfect role model or not knowing what to say to kids.

## Creating a positive environment

Because volunteering sometimes lands outside the traditional realm of “men’s work,” some men who may be considering

volunteering as mentors fear having their motives questioned. This possibility has particular import in programs involving young people and many men will have particular concerns about being alone with a child, being perceived as unusual for wanting to spend time with a young person or worried about any false allegations that may be made against them.

Program managers may be able to overcome this challenge by creating a comfortable and supportive environment in which they understand men’s concerns and offer them the opportunity to work through any doubts. Explaining that your program has strong and clear policies and procedures about how the mentoring relationship is to be conducted is a good start. You must also be sensitive to the defensiveness that potential mentors may feel when they must comply with background checks and interviews, but reassure them that policies and procedures have been designed to make the mentoring relationship safe for both the mentor and mentee.

## **The way you recruit men**

Research shows that people often volunteer simply because someone asked them. If your program is not directly asking men to be mentors, the above points to an obvious means of recruiting male volunteers: ask them. Now obviously you can't ask every man one by one, but certainly, if you wait for men to come to you, you may be waiting a long time! Therefore several programs recruit by going to specific locations men congregate, including places of business, gyms, meetings of social or service organizations (such as the Rotary, Surf Clubs) sports teams, and branches of the military or reserves. Your efforts may be especially well-received by organisations that already have volunteer programs in place. However, you also need to be specific about the type of men you want to recruit, for example, men from specific cultural groups may be more likely to attend a local religious institution than a sporting event.

## **What do your marketing materials look like?**

Are there positive images of men in your promotional materials? For example, are your marketing materials all photos of men sitting and talking to a young person, or are they activity based. Do any of your male mentors fish? Why not show them doing it? Do any of them work on cars in their spare time, go to the gym, surf or anything else your mentees are interested in? Show it.

## **Demonstrate and celebrate success**

Potential volunteers need to know mentoring is a positive proposition – both for themselves and the young person they will mentor. Perhaps the greatest fear men will confront in this process is the fear of failure so be sure to paint a clear picture of success, but be mindful that success isn't always what is accomplished. While many youth experience increased academic and social behaviours, these results are often not always observed immediately. Success is also about being someone a young person can go to when life bowls a bouncer or when there's

an occasion to celebrate.

## Recruitment tips

### Talking points for younger men

Most younger men will be unable to relate to creating a legacy of caring. Instead, focus on how a young person would benefit from being around them. Also be specific on the types of activities that mentors can engage in as it will reduce concerns that they don't have enough experience. Talking points include:

- You are the type of guy a kid would want to be like. Do you remember the older guy you used to think was so cool and how much you wanted to be like him? It's your turn to be that person to someone.
- Many of the boys in our program tell us they want a mentor who is young enough to be cool but mature enough to be like an older brother.
- Here are some of the types of activities we do with our mentees [specifics].
- How cool is it to know you influenced a child's life into adulthood?

### Talking points for older men

Mature males begin to look at their legacies. They realize that they can share their life experiences through another human being. Some men think they are too old; that a young person would not want to spend time with them when in reality there are many mentors who enjoy great relationships with mentees. Talking points include:

- How often are we provided a unique opportunity to "Pass It On" or to share the qualities that make each of us so special?
- How would you like to be remembered in life?
- A mentee is one person who will be able to define what you gave back.
- What qualities do you possess that you think would be useful to a young person growing up today?
- We have all made choices in our youth that, given the choice, we would not necessarily make today. Mentoring is one way to pass your wisdom along to others.
- It's like being a kid again – a great

excuse to play games and have fun!

## Women to men talking points

Women can be very persuasive by acknowledging the positive traits of the candidates and recognizing that males share a unique bond that cannot be substituted. Talking points include:

- Women are wonderful mentors, but some conversations can only happen with another guy.
- Think of the types of important talks you have had with other men. Now, imagine a young boy not having that opportunity. You can provide that for them.
- I know these kids, and I can tell that you are someone they would connect with.
- It's hard for a boy to have a man-to-man talk with a woman, no matter how wonderful a role model she is.

## Mentoring program to employer talking points

One recruitment strategy is to partner with an employer. Employees are more likely to volunteer if their workplace

encourages it. Help the employer understand how they might benefit if their employees mentor. Talking points include:

- Research shows that mentoring increases workplace skill development including leadership, communication, team building, and strategy.
- Employees who volunteer were more likely to be more satisfied at work and describe companies who encourage volunteer programs, such as mentoring, as a “good place to work.”
- Younger workers prefer work environments that reflect their social consciousness.
- We are happy to make it easier for you by coming to your site for screening and training sessions if you and your employees choose to get involved.

## Employers to male employee talking points

To succeed, the speaker must lead from personal experience in mentoring or indicate a willingness to devote time to learning how to be a mentor. Talking points include:

- As good corporate citizens we need to give back. Each of us owes our successes to people who helped us, taught us, and mentored us along the way. This is your turn to be that person to someone else.
- None of us is too busy to give an hour of our time to such a worthy cause: the improvement of other people.
- We believe mentoring is in line with our corporate values and beliefs.
- What kind of men do you want these boys to become?
- As a mentor, I want to “win,” and that means finding men like you to mentor these boys. A win means you enjoy the accomplishment of knowing you have put another young man on the path to success rather than failure.
- How did I succeed as a mentor? I became one, and I get great assistance from the program.

## Mentors to men talking points

The essential difference between earlier talking points and the mentor-to-men discussion is the sharing of experiences. The mentor should share his or her own positive mentoring experience first. Talking points include:

- This is a “win-win” experience. You get far more out of being a mentor than anything you could possibly give.
- We need you on the team! I feel really good about mentoring, [insert name]. I see that kids are still waiting, and it frustrates me to see so many boys waiting to be matched.

- “Showing up on the field” creates an instant win for you and the child you mentor.
- In the eyes of a child with few positive role models, you are an example of a successful man.

## Recruiting in practice

### What might engaging men look like in practice?

Some recruitment strategies for men included:

- Approaching men at venues where they congregate: Personally approaching men at schools, childcare, sporting events, football

training, the gym, a local library and playgroups.

- Partner support: By approaching the partners of the men, many of them (especially those who are already mentoring in your programs) became keen for their partners to participate in mentoring
- Host information sessions in a familiar environment: A local football club was purposefully chosen as a male friendly environment to encourage men to become mentors.
- Program design and structure: Timing of the sessions takes into consideration the target parents—if the group targets dads, it will be held in the evening.

### **Considerations in the planning and delivery of a recruitment strategy**

Promoting programs in spaces traditionally frequented by men will not necessarily reach all men in a community. For example, men from specific cultural groups may be more likely to attend a local religious

institution than a sporting event.

- Where do men in the local community gather?
- Consider men from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds: Where do they meet? How can your program develop relationships with the men in these communities?
- What type of language is used in promotional materials? Does it state what men will get out of the program and what they will be doing at the program?
- Are there positive images of men in the space and/or in promotional materials? Are there positive stories about men in promotional materials?
- Does your program provide “hands on” learning experiences?
- Is your program available outside business hours?