



LIFE LAUNCH

Mentor Volunteer Orientation

Program Managers:

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ABOUT US

The idea is simple: Connect people in need with people who care. In the course of our 18-year history at Stand in the Gap we've realized our passion for three specific populations: orphans, prisoners, and widows. For each of these "need categories," we offer specific support programs, but the overall methodology is the same. We surround our "Neighbors" experiencing a major life transition with trained, committed volunteers who care. These volunteers commit to be present in our client's life (for a minimum of one year) in a mentorship capacity. We do not offer handouts. No money is exchanged. Instead, through healthy relationships, education and prayer, individuals in need are empowered to break unhealthy patterns in their lives and achieve self-reliance.

Programs of Stand in the Gap

- Women in Transition Program (WIT)
- Kindred Community for Widows Program

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The Need

- 12,000 youth currently in foster care in Oklahoma; of those 12,000, approximately 300-500 will emancipate out of the foster care system each year
- A Pew study of 2009 states that within two years of leaving foster care, 6 out of 10 youth will be homeless, incarcerated, or dead
- The majority of youth "age out" of the foster care system with minimal emotional, relational, and spiritual support
- Some youth lack the skills needed to have a successful adulthood, such as how to look for a safe place to live, how to apply for a job, how to manage money, or how to establish and maintain healthy relationships

Who Are The Youth?

- Foster care youth or former foster care youth (a.k.a. foster "alumni") ages 14-26 who are in need of emotional, relational, spiritual, and practical support
- Victims of abuse or neglect
- Orphaned due to incarceration or death of a parent

Where Do They Live?

- Youth ages 14-16 typically reside in a foster home, therapeutic foster home, a group home, or a youth shelter
- Youth 18 years of age or older typically live in an apartment, with friends, family members, on a university campus; but...
- Some youth are homeless, moving from place to place ("couch surfing") or could possibly be living in tents or abandoned homes

What Are Some Of Their Struggles?

Because of their childhood trauma, which stems from abuse, neglect, abandonment, unfulfilled promises, these youth may...

- Have difficulty trusting others
- Be hesitant to establish relationships
- Have difficulty identifying healthy relationships
- Have poor boundaries and difficulty respecting the boundaries of others
- Struggle with the social, emotional and cognitive effects of abuse and trauma

What Would Be My Role as a Mentor?

POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
FRIEND
COACH
ADVISOR
SELF-ESTEEM BUILDER
CAREER COUNSELOR
ADVOCATE

The most positive impact for youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood is having one steady, stable and consistent adult in their life, providing support and encouragement.

Primary Tasks

- 1. Lift up the Mentee and each other in prayer.**
- 2. Become part of a committed and unified Life Launch Team:**
 - Partner with one to three other adults to support the Mentee
 - Seek to establish a unified Mentor team who speaks as One Voice when evaluating choices, decision and options in group discussions
- 3. Establish a positive, personal relationship with Mentee built on mutual trust and respect:**
 - Maintain open, honest, and regular interactions and consistent support
 - Make your meetings enjoyable and fun
- 4. Assist mentee in obtaining additional resources:**
 - Provide awareness of community, educational and economic resources available to the youth and how to access these resources (Act as a resource broker as opposed to a resource provider)
 - Act as a guide, advocate, coach and example; Avoid acting as a professional case manager

5. **Increase mentee’s ability to interact with people/groups/things from various backgrounds (cultural, racial, socioeconomic, etc.):**
 - Respect and explore differences among people/groups from various backgrounds
 - Introduce mentee to different environments, cultures; discuss differences in behavior, attitude and style of dress
 - Teach them how to stand up for themselves respectfully

6. **Assist Mentee in their spiritual growth, as they express or demonstrate an interest:**
 - Be an example of God’s unconditional love, grace, and gentle accountability
 - Be open and honest about your own struggles and walk with God
 - Offer the youth opportunities to pray, read Scripture, attend church or other Christian events, and be immediately respectful whenever they say “no”

7. **Help Mentee to develop or begin to develop life skills:**
 - Work with your Mentee to accomplish specific program goals (e.g., drop-out prevention, general career awareness)
 - Instill the framework for developing broader life-management skills, (e.g., decision-making skills, goal-setting skills, conflict resolution, money management)

H.E.E.T.S

Housing: (For transitioning or homeless youth) Exploring affordable housing options; making the appropriate applications.

Education: Getting enrolled in school; Completing their GED.

Employment: Job search strategies; Filling out applications; Role-playing job interviews.

Transportation: Learning how to use public transportation in their area; State assistance for vehicle purchases.

Support: Assisting youth to secure necessary support (e.g., legal, medical, emotional and spiritual support); Use of resource guide.

What Is Expected Of Me?

Program / Time Commitments

- Complete a Mentor Application
- Complete a personal Interview with Program Manager
- Attend the 4-hr Training sessions
- Make a one-year commitment to the Mentoring process

- Commit to a minimum of three hours per month with their Mentee and team
- Complete and pass Background Checks that include:
 - OSBI Background Check
 - Child Abuse Registry
 - Finger printing may be required by certain residential placements
 - Driver's license/Vehicle registration

Personal/Behavioral Expectations

- No felony record
- Have and keep a clean driving record
- No current use of illicit drugs
- No use of alcohol or controlled substances in an inappropriate manner
- Not currently in treatment for substance abuse and have a non-addictive period for at least five years
- Any mental health concerns are well-controlled

Contact with Youth

- Attending the regular/bi-weekly scheduled meetings
- Regular (weekly preferred) contact via phone, text, or email
- Face-to-face as a team, not one-on-one
- Transportation; rotation with other team members
- Consistency and Honesty as the key to a successful mentoring relationship
- Optional Mentee/Mentor group events throughout the year

What Types Of Things Do We Do Together?

- Engage in the leisure/recreational activities identified as your Mentee and team's shared interests, or something someone in the group would like to *learn* how to do
- Pick up the youth for church or church event
- Go bowling or hiking
- Go out to eat or have your own cookout
- Attend a sporting event or concert
- Provide car maintenance 101 and practice changing the oil or a tire
- Check out a museum or library
- Spend time in the park with a Frisbee or your dog
- Just chill and talk at a favorite location

Key Guidelines

- Mentors are NOT to meet with the youth alone
- There should at least be 2 or more team members at each meeting or it is cancelled
- Neither money nor materials goods are to be exchanged between mentors and mentees
- No direct financial assistance (e.g., utility payment, rent) is provided to the youth
- Respect personal space: Some youth may be uncomfortable with physical touch

When Will I Be Matched to a Mentee?

- Interest Inventory
- Potential waiting period of at least 2 – 4 weeks between attending orientation and finding a match

Who Are My Fellow Team Members?

- Fellow members of your church congregation
- Interested volunteers from the community

(If you do not know your team members, we will set up a meeting for you all to meet prior to the first meeting with the youth)

How Are Mentors Supported?

- Staff-initiated check-ins
- Mentor initiated contact: requests, concerns, clarification, advise
- Optional Mentor get-togethers

What Happens at the End of the 12 months?

- How have we grown in this experience?
- How shall the relationship end or proceed?
- Youth and Mentors' choice

What is the Next Step?