

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

MENTOR established the following eligibility requirements for participating programs to ensure that high-quality mentoring is provided to the children served by Mentoring Children of Prisoners: Caregiver's Choice. Please review the FAQs and the eligibility requirements checklist to see if your program qualifies to be an approved Caregiver's Choice Program.

## 1. What types of programs are eligible?

Community-based and site-based mentoring programs that have at least one year of experience sponsoring and supporting one-to-one, in-person mentoring relationships between adults and youth are eligible to participate.

## 2. What are the minimum requirements for the duration and frequency of mentoring relationships?

Programs must require an initial match commitment from mentors and mentees of at least 12 consecutive months. Matches have weekly contact and meet in-person for at least 4 hours per month. This contact must be continuous, even during summer months.

Site-based mentoring programs that currently support match meetings during the academic year (or for periods less than 12 months) can become eligible if they agree to expand their services to include year-round mentoring.

*Example:* A school-based mentoring program that sponsors year-round mentoring may be eligible if matches meet frequently and consistently during months when school is not open. However, a school-based mentoring program that only sponsors relationships during the academic calendar (9 months) would not be eligible unless it requires match contact and adds match support components during the summer months.

## 3. In addition to the duration of the mentoring match and frequency of meetings, are there additional practices required for match support?

Yes, programs must have best practices in place to create, monitor, and sustain high-quality mentoring relationships. These best practices include:

- Provide training for mentors that includes:
  - a. Minimum of 2 hours of pre-match training; and
  - b. Ongoing training on a quarterly basis.
- Provide a minimum of 1 hour of age-appropriate orientation/training to mentees.
- Match mentors and mentees based on pre-established criteria including similar interests, preferences of child, and preferences of parent/guardian.
- Provide ongoing support/case management to matches through in-person or telephone contacts with the mentor and mentee (or parent/guardian):
  - a. Twice a month for the first month of the match; and
  - b. Monthly after the first month of the match.
- Offer clear policies and procedures for match closure.

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## 4. Are there requirements for volunteer screening that programs must follow?

Yes, programs must have clear policies and procedures for volunteer screening that include the following minimum requirements:

- Mentor application.
- An FBI fingerprint-based background check on the mentor [can be accessed through SafetyNET ([www.mentoring.org/safetynet](http://www.mentoring.org/safetynet)) or your state agency].
- In-person interview with the mentor.
- Reference checks.
- Clear mentor eligibility requirements.
- Mentor job description.

Programs must upload an electronic copy of their volunteer screening policies and procedures during the application process.

## 5. Are there any liability and insurance requirements?

Yes, programs must provide proof of liability insurance.

## 6. What are the staffing requirements?

At a minimum, programs must have at least 1 full-time equivalent (F.T.E.) of paid staff dedicated to mentoring.

*Example:* A social services agency in Iowa that provides a range of services to youth has 10 staff. If two of the 10 staff work half-time (.5 F.T.E.) on the mentoring program, this program meets the minimum 1 F.T.E. requirement. However, a mentoring program that only has 1 paid staff member that works part-time would not be eligible.

## 7. Are there any requirements related to program capacity?

Yes, programs must have a proven track record of supporting matches and demonstrate the capacity to enroll and support additional youth. This includes:

- At least one-year of experience matching and supporting mentoring relationships.
- A sustainability or development plan that describes how the program will continue to provide services in the future.
- A written policies and procedures manual.

## 8. Are current Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) grantees eligible?

Yes, current MCP grantees are eligible to participate in Caregiver's Choice if they are exceeding the capacity of their existing MCP grant. Exceeding capacity is defined as meeting the yearly match goal and will be re-evaluated for each year of the grant.

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## 9. Once a program is approved, are there any further expectations or requirements for participation?

Yes, all programs granted provisional approval must complete the following activities before becoming eligible to accept vouchers:

- Obtain permission from the board of directors to participate.
- Participate in training on working with children of prisoners and Caregiver's Choice project guidelines.
- Update the policies and procedures manual to include information about working with children of prisoners and participating in Caregiver's Choice.
- Complete training on the use of MentorPRO™ Basic.

Approved programs must also agree to:

- Comply with all project policies.
- Cooperate with all evaluations and return survey forms in a timely manner.
- Use MentorPRO™ Basic to track the progress of voucher-supported relationships (requires Internet access).
- Reapply for the program on an annual basis. [MCP grantees will only be approved for the current grant year and must reapply to continue redeeming vouchers in subsequent grant years.]

Please visit [www.mentoring.org/caregiverschoice](http://www.mentoring.org/caregiverschoice) for more information including a complete list of eligibility requirements, FAQs, the milestones and related payments, and a link to the Caregiver's Choice application.