



# Finding a Mentor

By Raquel Castaneda

January is National Mentoring Month! I thought it would be fitting to write an article about the benefits of mentors for youth with disabilities.

If you're a parent and have wondered how to help with your child's behavior and outlook on life, then maybe you should consider finding a mentor. I think that mentors have the ability to push young people forward and guide them toward the right path.

If you're a student, a mentor can give you advice and tips based on their own experiences, encouragement, support, and information about getting ahead in life.

Of course, parents are an intricate part of their child's life. Besides parents, young people often look for reassurance and guidance from their peers and others. Having other positive role models looking out for you and guiding you through life can provide extra motivation and reason to do your best.

A mentor can be an older classmate, a teacher, a family member, members of an organization, or someone you know through friends and family. When you are looking for a mentor, it is important to express what you hope to get out of the relationship. It is also important that you find someone who is

trustworthy, respects your privacy, is a good listener, and will support and encourage you.

When meeting with your mentor, you should feel safe and comfortable. The meeting should be held however you feel most comfortable. Whether it is somewhere formal or informal, it is up to you, e.g. you can meet at a coffee shop, library, home, or a park. The meetings should also happen somewhat regularly, e.g. once a week, once a month, or whatever you feel is necessary. Your mentor should also be available to you when needed outside of meetings. However, this does not mean you should call them all the time, at odd hours, or spend most of your time with them. It is important to let your mentor breathe.

Having a mentor can have such an amazing impact in a young person's life. I encourage families to find a mentor wherever they feel comfortable.

I would also like to encourage anyone willing and able to become a mentor to someone with a disability to do so. Being a mentor to someone with a disability can be a bit challenging, but, I believe that it is worth it. They need to know that there are people outside of their home who care for them and want to see them succeed. Mentors are heroes in multiple ways and can make all the difference in a young person's life.

**You can find mentor programs locally at this website:**

[http://www.volunteermatch.org/search/orgs.jsp?  
r=subregion&aff=&l=Jefferson%2C+Harahan%2C+LA%  
2C+USA&k=Mentor](http://www.volunteermatch.org/search/orgs.jsp?r=subregion&aff=&l=Jefferson%2C+Harahan%2C+LA%2C+USA&k=Mentor)

**You can also find mentors or become a mentor at these locations:**

Awesome Ladies of Distinction Mentoring Programs

535 Holmes Blvd., Terrytown, LA 70056

<http://www.awesomeladiesofdistinction.org/>

Jefferson Parish Department of Juvenile Services

1546-B Gretna Blvd., Harvey, LA 70058

Girls and Boy Town  
Behrman Hwy., Gretna, LA 70056  
<http://www.boystown.org/locations/louisiana/Pages/contact-us-admissions.aspx>

Each One Save One  
1636 Toledano St., New Orleans, LA 70115  
<http://www.eachonesaveone.org/>

Volunteers of Greater New Orleans  
4152 Canal St., New Orleans, LA 70119  
<http://www.voagno.org/>

Covenant House New Orleans  
611 North Rampart St., New Orleans, LA 70112  
<http://www.covenanthouseno.org/>



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