

## **ISF Mentor Program**

### **Purpose**

The ISF leadership mentoring program is designed to develop the leadership potential of disadvantaged college-aged students in preparation to become leaders in their respective homes, communities, businesses and churches thereby advancing the kingdom of God.

### **A. Mentor's Role**

A leadership mentor is part of a formal, one-to-one relationship. A leadership mentor offers emotional, psychological and spiritual support, direct assistance with career, professional, personal and leadership development, and role modeling. A leadership mentor oversees the leadership development of another person through teaching, counseling, listening, providing support, protecting, promoting and sponsoring. The nature of the relationship means they will often become a confidante and offer personal advice and support, although this may never be formally discussed.

The role of a leadership mentor:

- Develop a trusting relationship
- Encourage spiritual development
- Encourage the exploration of ideas
- Be a good listener regarding young leaders' problems
- Provide appropriate and timely advice
- Share life experiences, difficulties and rewards
- Provide appropriate skills training
- Guide the young leader to identify and solve problems
- Confront negative intentions or behaviors

A leadership mentor helps young leaders learn and understand:

- Ability to readily see potential in themselves
- Tolerance with mistakes, brashness, abrasiveness, and the like in order to see that potential develop
- Flexibility in responding to people and circumstances
- Patience, knowing that time and experience are needed for development
- Perspective, having vision and ability to see down the road and suggest the next steps that a young leader needs
- Gifts and abilities that build up and encourage others
- Timely words of counsel and insight
- Resources such as book, articles, contacts, etc. that can assist in personal development

## **B. What Young Leaders Want from a Leadership Mentor**

When asked, young people invariably say they want a leadership mentor to help in three key areas:

- Advice
- Access
- Advocacy

### **1. Advice**

As a leadership mentor, you bring a wide range of life experiences to the relationship. As a result, you can be a great source of advice and information. From time to time your young leader may need a second opinion, or a different perspective that you can provide.

Help your young leader gain a new perspective by sharing your life and leadership experiences. What did you do in a similar situation? How did it work out? Be willing to share, but check to make sure your young leader is interested first!

Remember that you and your young leader are different people. Your young leader will have his/her own values, which may be very different from yours and may lead them to very different ideas about what to do. Your role is to offer insight, advice and suggestions. It is your young leader's role to evaluate the options, consider what you have said, and then make the best decision.

### **2. Access**

One of the most valuable things you can do for your young leader is to help open doors. That's what access is all about -- helping your young leader find and get involved in new situations.

You can help your young leader find people, opportunities and information that he/she might not have found on his/her own. You can take your young leader to new places, introduce them to new people and help him/her learn about resources that will help reach his/her goals.

Improved access to resources is one of the most valuable benefits you can give to your young leader!

### **3. Advocacy**

Have you ever had someone stand up for you when you needed it? Or speak on your behalf? That's what advocacy is all about.

If your young leader needs a job reference or a college recommendation, you can be a big help!

But remember -- in order to be an effective advocate, you have to really get to know your young leader. You will have to create opportunities to get to know your young leader as a person. The more you learn about your young leader, the stronger an advocate you can be!

### **C. Qualities of Successful Leadership Mentors**

It is important to understand that you don't have to be brilliant or perfect to be a good leadership mentor! If you want to be a leadership mentor, and care enough to do it right, here is what we know about successful leadership mentors. While the specifics of each leadership mentoring program relationship may vary, the qualities of an effective leadership mentor remain the same.

#### **1. A Sincere Desire To Be Involved With A Young Person**

Leadership mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people's lives, to help them pursue their interests, achieve their goals, and handle tough decisions. They have to be invested in the leadership mentoring program long enough to make a difference.

#### **2. Respect For Young People**

Leadership mentors should not have preconceived notions that youth need to be "rescued". Leadership mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their partners, and the privilege of being advisors to them.

#### **3. An Ability To Listen Actively**

It is relatively easy to give advice or express opinions. It's much harder to find someone who will suspend his or her own judgment and really listen. Leadership mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions, and giving participants an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.

#### **4. Empathize**

Empathy is the ability to understand, at a very deep level, what another person is going through- even without having had the same life experiences. It is very different from sympathy, which is sharing sad feelings.

Of course you won't always understand completely what your young leader is going through - that's natural. The ability to empathize and the willingness to try to understand are the keys. Effective leadership mentors empathize effectively- they can understand what a young leader is going through, without becoming caught up in the problem too.

**5. See Solutions And Opportunities**

Good leadership mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their young leaders with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.

**6. Flexibility And Openness**

Good leadership mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their young leaders, to learn new things that are important to their partners (music, styles, and philosophies), and even to be changed by their relationship.