

**SOMEONE TO
COUNT ON**

A STORY ABOUT MENTORING



CHILDREN'S AID
AND FAMILY SERVICES





One of Children's Aid and Family Services' many support services is the Mentoring program, where children and adolescents in the agency's foster care are matched with adult mentors. Pairings are based on their talents and interests. Mentors are a positive influence on children's lives, because they serve as adult figures that the children can trust and build a connection with. Following is the story of one woman's experience mentoring:

My name is Jackie, and I've been involved with Children's Aid and Family Services' Mentor program for more than four years. I've mentored two children. My first mentee was a 14-year-old girl whom I mentored for more than two years. Then, I started mentoring Kristen*, a 10-year-old girl who lives in one of the agency's group homes for young children. We generally meet once a week at the group home for at least an hour, and I call her about twice a week to check in and see how things are going. We do many things together, such as going out to dinner, watching movies, and shopping.

I decided to be a mentor when I saw an ad in my local paper for the program, and wanted to know about the requirements. While background checks were being done to determine my eligibility, I started a nine-hour training program, provided by the agency, during a three-week period.

The training helped me prepare for the mentor experience. I was told what to expect, and was given examples of situations I might encounter. I learned that it might take awhile for a child to open up to me, because most of the children had been abandoned or neglected previously by the people who were supposed to care for them. The staff taught me that mentoring is a labor of love, and that praise and recognition are not things to expect of these children immediately. Knowing that was helpful to me, and I went into mentoring with an open mind.

I have two grown children, and enjoy mentoring because it allows me to be around children and share my maternal instincts. Additionally, I feel a sense of giving back, accomplishment, and of making a difference in Kristen's life.

I strongly encourage anyone considering being a mentor to do so. Mentoring gives you a chance to share your affections and talents with a child who needs a caring, trustworthy adult in his or her life. I have an overwhelming sense of peace from my experience; it's truly beyond words.

*Name has been changed to protect client privacy.

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