



LUNCH PALS: PROGRAM HANDBOOK

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

MISSION STATEMENT

Companions for Children provides youth with a one-on-one mentoring relationship to increase their opportunities in life.

VISION STATEMENT

Companions for Children youth will have a better opportunity to become emotionally healthy, productive adults in our community.

NON-PROFIT STATUS

Companions for Children is a non-profit 501 (3) c that is local to the Minot area.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heather Cymbaluk, heather.cymbaluk@companionsforchildren.org

The Executive Director is responsible for the organization's consistent achievement of its mission and financial objectives. The Executive Director's responsibilities include but are not limited to: Financial strategies and budgeting, providing leadership to achieve long term goals for the organization, maintain official records and documents, ensure the longevity of the organization through grant writing, maintain knowledge of developments and trends in the field of non-profits and mentoring programs, conduct all marketing and fundraising activities, establish working relationships with community groups and organizations and oversee staff and the organization as a whole.

SERVICE COORDINATOR

Nicole McCarthy, service@companionsforchildren.org

The Service Coordinator is responsible for the organization's community-based and Lunch Pals matches in their entirety. The Service Coordinator's responsibilities include but are not limited to: Recruiting mentors and youth; scheduling and conducting interviews with mentors, parents/legal guardians, and youth; identifying qualities and interests to implement successful matches; ensuring mentors complete all screening and intake procedures and reporting to the Screening Committee for their final review; overseeing all matches and troubleshooting any problems, questions or concerns; assisting in all fundraising and service activities; planning and conducting quarterly mentor meetings and annual parent/legal guardian meetings; and assisting the Executive Director as needed.

Administrative Assistant

admin@companionsforchildren.org

The Administrative Assistant is responsible for assisting the Executive Director and Service Coordinator with duties as assigned. The Administrative Assistant's responsibilities include, but are not limited to: maintaining updated contact information for mentors, and families. Maintain our school-based youth mentoring program; Lunch Pals calendar and be the primary point of contact for mentors for scheduling purposes. Developing and distributing monthly newsletters, assisting in all fundraising and service activities.

CONTACT CHART



THE IMPACT

Studies have shown that strong relationships can develop within the school context and these relationships can make a difference in the lives of youth.

- > 55% were better able to express their feelings
- > 56% improved relationships with peers
- > 58% achieved higher grades in social studies, languages, and math
- > 60% improved relationships with adults
- > 62% more likely to trust their teachers
- > 64% developed higher levels of self-confidence

ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

COMPANIONS FOR CHILDREN'S ROLE

- ✓ Companions for Children will recruit, screen and support volunteers to serve as mentors to students in the program.
- ✓ Companions for Children will match with match every child with a mentor as soon as possible, taking into consideration the child's grade, interests and preferences.
- ✓ Companions for Children will provide orientation to mentors at the school for hands-on training.
- ✓ Companions for Children will facilitate match meetings for each match on their first lunch together.
- ✓ Companions for Children will notify the mentors of upcoming lunch dates and events through text messages, emails, calls, mailers or newsletters.
- ✓ Companions for Children will provide games, coloring books, etc. for matches to use at each school, in addition to periodic activities.
- ✓ Companions for Children will review all match reports within two (2) business days and respond to the mentor or school as necessary.
- ✓ Companions for Children will support the child's best interest by terminating any match which is not meeting Lunch Pal's Guidelines and Ground Rules as outlined below.

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN ROLE

- ✓ The parent/legal guardian must turn in his/her child's application to the school by the due date. All items on the application must be filled out, any missing or blank items will be considered incomplete. Late applications will not be accepted.
- ✓ The parent/legal guardian is expected to notify the school ASAP when his/her child will be absent. This allows school staff to notify his/her mentor in a timely manner.

SCHOOL ROLE

- ✓ The school is responsible for identifying students to participate in the Lunch Pals program and provide his/her parent/legal guardian with the provided application.
- ✓ The school is to provide an appropriate meeting space.
- ✓ The school will notify mentors if their mentee is not at school before 10 am.
- ✓ The school guidance counselor will be an active partner for matches to use as a valuable resource.
- ✓ The school will abide by the Memorandum of Understanding mutually agreed upon by Companions for Children and the school.

MENTOR ROLE

- ✓ Mentors must complete all aspects of Companions for Children's Screening Process as outlined below.
- ✓ Mentors are expected to stay engaged and demonstrate genuine interest in their mentee by remaining consistent and avoiding cancellations.
- ✓ Mentors must abide by all Guidelines and Ground Rules set forth by Companions for Children as outlined below. In addition, to reporting to the proper authorities as if necessary as outline by the Mandated Reporter Certification.
- ✓ Mentors are expected to follow their pre-designated lunch calendar and submit mandatory reporting after every lunch meeting.
- ✓ Mentors are expected to return emails and calls to Companions for Children's staff in a timely manner.

YOUTH ELIGIBILITY & ENROLLMENT PROCESS

YOUTH ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY

To be accepted as a mentee in the Companions for Children's school-based mentoring program; Lunch Pals, the student must:

- ✓ Be between 1st and 5th grade at a participating school.
- ✓ Have a parent/legal guardian who submits his/her application on time and is not frequently absent from school.

- ✓ Want to have a mentor (School staff will evaluate the students desire to participate in the program and ensure understanding of the program).

Companions for Children makes reasonable efforts to meet the needs of youth with special needs, but the needs of the youth must be appropriate for volunteer intervention. For that reason, Companions for Children is not able to serve youth who are severely physically handicapped or medically fragile, are currently involved in an inpatient treatment program, suffer from significant emotional disturbances, which may pose a threat to themselves or others, or have a history of delinquent/criminal behaviors. Youth who will more appropriately be served by other agencies may be referred to those agencies.

YOUTH ENROLLMENT PROCESS

- ✓ The school will identify students they feel would most benefit from participating in Lunch Pals, have a conversation with the student and send home an application after determining eligibility.
- ✓ Parents/Guardians must complete the application and return to the school by the due date. All items on the application must be filled out, any missing or blank items will be considered incomplete. Late applications will not be accepted.

MENTOR ELIGIBILITY AND SCREENING PROCESS

MENTOR ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY

To be accepted into the mentor screening process, a volunteer must:

- ✓ Have the availability to spend a minimum of two (2) with their mentee through the entirety of the school year.
- ✓ Be at least 18 years of age
- ✓ Complete all aspects of Companions for Children's screening process in a timely manner, including, but not limited to: application, mandated reporter certification, reference checks and background checks.
- ✓ Have a working cell phone with an active voicemail and an email that is checked regularly.
- ✓ Have a schedule which allows for consistency in meeting as scheduled.

MENTOR SCREENING PROCESS

- ✓ Fill out and submit an online Lunch Pals application at www.companionsforchildren.org. Paper copies are not available.

- ✓ Our Lunch Pals Coordinator will contact the applicant to set up an interview appointment and email necessary follow-up information.
- ✓ The applicant provides his/her supervisor with the reference form and ensures he/she emails a completed reference form to lunchpals@companionsforchildren.org by the due date.
- ✓ The applicant completes the Match Profile and Background Check paperwork and emails to lunchpals@companionsforchildren.org by the due date.
- ✓ The applicant participates in a thirty (30) minute interview with the Lunch Pals Coordinator at Companions for Children's office or his/her place of employment.
- ✓ Companions for Children's Screening Committee reviews all information gathered during the screening process and notifies the applicant of approval or denial by August 15th. No reason for denial will be provided, denied applicants may re-apply after one (1) year.
- ✓ The applicant completes online Mandated Reporter Training through North Dakota Department of Human Services website by the due date.
- ✓ From year to year, continued mentors must re-submit an application and provide any portion of the Screening Process as requested by Companions for Children. The applicant's previous year's match will be taken into consideration including but not limited to: reporting and attendance record. Companions for Children will inform the mentor of approval/denial by August 15th.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM DETAILS

MATCH SELECTION

Upon approval, Companions for Children will select a mentee based on availability, preferences, interests, etc. and a match meeting will be set up.

MATCH MEETING

A match meeting is conducted at the school office with a staff member of Companions for Children, the mentor and mentee. The purpose of this meeting is introduce the mentee to the mentor, assist in directing the match to the right location, answer any additional questions and provide a "get to know you" worksheet to complete as a way to "break the ice".

MANDATORY REPORTING

Mentors must submit mandatory reporting after every lunch meeting within two (2) business days. The Lunch Pals Coordinator will respond to any questions, concerns, etc. within two (2) business days; therefore any immediate concerns must be called in to Companions for Children's office immediately following lunch meetings or reported to school staff before leaving the school.

Companions for Children utilizes reporting to ensure safety, open communication, support and guidance to the mentor.

EARLY CLOSURE GUIDELINES

It is the expectation that all matches remain together for entirety of the school year. However, rarely, matches must be closed due to unforeseen circumstances. In all cases, it is in the best interest of the student to follow the match closure procedure, which outlines the best way to close a match. The following guidelines are in place to assist in any early closure situations.

Mentee Closure:

- > The school is expected to notify Companions for Children immediately following any notification of a student moving. Companions for Children will contact his/her mentor and assist in the match closure procedure when timing allows.
- > If the mentee is moving to another school in the Minot Public Schools district, Companions for Children will contact the school to see if the match can continue through the remainder of the school year.
- > If the mentee moves to a school outside of the Minot Public Schools district, the match will be closed. The mentor is eligible to be re-matched before October 31st.
- > It is the school guidance counselors responsibility to discuss any closures with the student.

Mentor Closure:

- > Should a mentor need to close a match due to unforeseen circumstances, Companions for Children will notify the school immediately. The mentor is expected to meet two (2) more times to ensure the match closure procedure is followed accordingly. If Companions for Children has a mentor who has completed the Screening Procedure and has been approved, they may re-match before October 31st.

- > It is the school guidance counselor's responsibility to discuss any closures with the student.

LUNCH PALS: GUIDELINES AND GROUND RULES

- ✓ **The start of the match is an adjustment time for the mentor and the mentee. Relationships take time and action to develop.** Try to be patient and don't expect quick changes.
- ✓ **It is appropriate for mentors to set ground rules and correct misbehavior during a lunch.** We do not permit physical punishment (spanking, slapping) or withdrawal of meetings as a means of discipline.
- ✓ **The mentor and mentee are expected to meet a minimum of two (2) lunches per month.** The mentor is responsible to follow the pre-designated lunch schedule and make-up dates as outlined in his/her calendar.
- ✓ **If it is necessary to re-schedule a visit, please call the school to cancel and Companions for Children to re-schedule.** Allow as much time as possible because the closer the cancellation or delay is to the expected outing, the more disappointing it is and damaging to the mentee and the relationship. **ALL RESCHEDULING MUST BE DONE THROUGH COMPANIONS FOR CHILDREN, NOT THE SCHOOL.**
- ✓ **It is prohibited for a mentor or a mentee to use alcohol or illegal drugs prior to lunch meeting or during any time they are in the presence of one another.** It is illegal for children under the age of 18 to possess or use tobacco products.
- ✓ **We expect the mentor to let Companions for Children know of any changes in his/her schedule or contact information** – address or phone number changes, marital status or job changes, serious illnesses, vacations longer than two (2) weeks, crime convictions, arrests, etc.
- ✓ **Companions for Children reserves the right to request an updated background check at any time without reason.** In addition, you must contact Companions for Children immediately if you have any contact with law enforcement including, but not limited to, receiving a citation or being arrested for a DUI, disorderly conduct, domestic violence or battery, etc.
- ✓ **It is mandatory for mentors to have contact via online reporting with Companions for Children after every scheduled lunch.** Companions for Children utilizes reporting to ensure safety, open communication, support and guidance to the mentor. Continued reminders to submit reporting creates unnecessary time-consumption and will result in match termination.

- ✓ **Mentor Confidentiality.** Do not release or discuss information about the child or his/her family with anyone outside the confines of the Companions for Children organization and/or the school. I understand that this agreement pertains to the time period prior to, during, and after the match closes. This agreement does not pertain to the reporting of suspected child abuse, neglect, or criminal activity to the appropriate authorities. Failure to comply with the above conditions may result in termination of a match without notice. Limits of confidentiality are outlined below.
- ✓ **Match contact is restricted to school grounds.** All matches in Companions for Children's school-based mentoring program; Lunch Pals are expected to limit contact specifically to lunch meetings. Matches are not to contact or meet up with each other outside of the school. Mentors are not allowed to give their mentee contact information or accept invitations to be "friends" on any social media platform.
- ✓ **Gift giving is to be limited.** Mentors are able to give a small gift, under \$10 on special occasions, such as the match meeting, birthdays, Christmas, end of year, etc. This is not an expectation and should be limited to no more than four (3) times per year. Mentors are expected to only give gifts in a one-on-one setting. Food, beverages, candy, etc. are prohibited.
- ✓ **Outside food, beverages, candy are prohibited.** Mentors are expected to eat school lunch.
- ✓ **As my contribution to the program, I understand that I will be paying for my lunches.** If my match ends prematurely, I will not be reimbursed for unused lunches. This money will be donated to Companions for Children.
- ✓ **Cell Phones are prohibited.** Mentors are expected to give their full attention to their mentees during lunch meetings.

LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Limits of Confidentiality Information will be released under the following circumstances:

- > Pursuant to a valid and enforceable subpoena.
- > To agency counsel in the event of litigation or potential litigation involving the agency. Such information is considered privileged and its confidentiality is protected by law.
- > Written requests for information must be submitted to the Executive Director. Written requests for information need to provide adequate information being disclosed is that the client intended and authorized.
- > Members of the Board of Directors have access to client information only upon authorization by a formal motion of the board. Violation of this privilege shall constitute adequate cause for removal from the Board of Directors.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

A number of behaviors are regarded as incompatible with Companions for Children's goals, values and program standards and therefore are considered unacceptable and prohibited.

- > Unwelcome physical contact, such as inappropriate touching, patting, pinching, punching, and physical assault.
- > Unwelcome physical, verbal, visual, or behavioral mannerisms or conduct that belittles, shows hostility, or aversion toward any individual.
- > Demeaning or exploitive behavior of either a sexual or nonsexual nature, including threats of such behavior.
- > Display of demeaning, suggestive, or pornographic material.
- > Known sexual abuse or neglect of a child.
- > Denigration, public or private, of any Junior Friend parent/guardian or family member.
- > Demeaning or exploitive behavior of either a sexual or nonsexual nature.
- > Pursuing a personal relationship with a member of the mentee's family.
- > Pursuing a relationship other than mentoring with a child or family member. (For example, but not limited to adoption, guardianship, etc. of the child or a family member.)
- > Intentional violation of any local, state, or federal law.
- > Driving under the influence of alcohol.
- > Possession of illegal substances.