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True Colors Inc. Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services of Connecticut

Mentoring Policy and Procedure Manual

Mission Statement

True Colors works to create a world where youth of all orientations and genders are safe to be free and celebrated within all communities. We challenge all forms of oppression through education, training,, advocacy, youth leadership development, mentoring and direct services to youth and those responsible for their well-being. True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for LGBT youth is committed to supporting a group of informed and dedicated adults who make themselves available as either group or one-on-one mentors.

Non-Discrimination Policy

True Colors, Inc. encourages and invites applications from adults who represent the diverse range of individuals who are part of our communities. Furthermore, there will be no discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, racial or cultural group, religious affiliation, HIV status or disability.

Background Information and Mentoring Rationale

This program extends the substantial benefits of mentoring to a chronically underserved, and at risk, population: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth, both from the community at large and from the population of adolescents involved in the child welfare system. In addition the project creates a replicable model of mentoring recruitment, training, and programming that can be successfully implemented in communities across Connecticut.

Youth mentoring programs have had a profound effect on the quality of life for disadvantaged, single-parent or otherwise 'at-risk' identified youth all over the country and around the world. Nationally, the well-known mentoring program, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, found that mentored children were significantly less likely than their peers to use illegal drugs or alcohol, skip school or be welfare dependant as adults. In addition, these children were significantly more likely to graduate from high school and from a college or university. Connecticut results are similarly positive: One survey of caseload files of children in mentoring relationships found that 77% improved school grades; 63 % improved school behavior; 93% stayed free of drugs or alcohol or both; and, 96% stayed out of gangs. These are impressive results; clearly, mentoring makes a difference.

In spite of the fact that LGBT youth meet all of the requirements for inclusion in an "at risk" or "high risk" category many barriers exist to the provision of services, including mentoring, to these youth. All too often, youth who are (or who are perceived to be) LGBT are met with harassment and violence at home, at school, and in the community at large. The social isolation and stigma attached to sexual minority status and/or gender variance leads to significantly higher rates of substance abuse, suicide attempts and completions, truancy, school drop-outs, running away and homelessness.

Regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, adolescents who are part of the child welfare system are at special risk. In 1991 the U.S. department of Health and Human Services released a survey tracking young adults after leaving foster care. Nearly half did not complete high school. Less than half had jobs. Only one in six was completely self-supporting and 25% had been homeless since leaving foster care. More recent studies in California, Nevada, and Wisconsin continue to verify the nature and scale of issues identified in the HHS survey (Advocacy, Fall, 2001). In this study, although drop out and unemployment rates were similar, other findings were even more abysmal: nearly 60% accessed federally funded youth shelters in 1997. After exiting foster care, 34% had been homeless or lived in 4 or more places within 12 to 18 months. 24% have sold drugs to support themselves. 11% have had sex in exchange for money. And 41% have spent time in jail. Information regarding the sexual orientation or gender identity of these young people is not available. But, if statistics gathered in other areas of youth risk hold true with this population, then two things are certain. One, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth leaving care are at much higher risk for all of these issues. And two, support services which target or even acknowledge their needs are virtually nonexistent.

The goals of the True Colors, Inc. LGBT mentoring program are to:

- Ensure that the substantial benefits of mentoring accrue directly to LGBT youth by actively recruiting and matching LGBT youth with LGBTTA mentors. An additional benefit of the mentoring program for LGBT youth in foster care is that it will provide an opportunity for community connection and the development of valuable support systems as they transition out of care and into the community.
- Create an effective, validated and replicable model which can be used to implement similar programs throughout the State of Connecticut and nationally. This includes the development of culturally competent curricula for mentor recruitment, screening, training and event programming; program outcome and evaluation, and a 'train the trainer' module that will be used to assist mainstream mentoring programs in providing culturally competent services to and for LGBT youth.

Central to the success of the program is a thorough screening, orientation, matching and follow-up process.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions will be used:

Youth - a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, queer, genderqueer or questioning person, 12 to 22 years of age, who has indicated an interest in utilizing the services of the project.

Applicant - an adult, 24 years of age or older, who has indicated an interest in becoming a community mentor, but who has not completed the orientation/screening process described in this manual.

One on One Mentor - an adult, 24 years of age or older, who has been appropriately screened according to the process described in this manual and who is, or is available to be, matched with a youth for contact in the community, where the youth does not live in the mentor's home.

Group Mentor- an adult, 24 years of age or older, who has been appropriately screened according to the process described in this manual and who is available to participate in group mentoring activities.

Staff - Kamora Herrington, Mentoring Program Director

Hillary Weiss, Group Mentoring Coordinator

Robin McHaelen, MSW, Executive Director of True Colors, Inc.

True Colors, Inc. Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services of Connecticut LGBT Youth Mentoring Policy and Procedure Manual

Criteria for Involvement in True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender Youth

The ultimate decision about whether an adult or youth is eligible to be involved in True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program rests with the staff of the program, and will be based on the complete assessment process, as described in this manual, as well as an evaluation of the needs of youth who present themselves and the capacities of available mentors.

Criteria for Youth Involvement in True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender Youth

Youth who wish to become involved in this program must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be between 12 and 22 years of age;
2. Must participate in an introductory orientation session that explains their rights and responsibilities in the program;
3. Must agree to participate in the program under the conditions set forth in the introductory interview and to meet with their mentor as mutually agreed;
4. Must identify as LGBTIQ in their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

Apart from the above criteria, youth may vary in a number of different ways:

- Some youth may have had some involvement with substance abuse, prostitution, criminal activity, shelters or homelessness; others will not have been involved in any of these activities or lived in these circumstances;
- Some youth will be very "out" and comfortable with their sexual orientation and gender status; others may be unsure about their sexual orientation or gender status, and not very comfortable about not being heterosexual or not complying with traditional gender identity;

- Some youth will have fairly positive relationships with their parents and be living at home, but want to be connected to an unrelated adult mentor; others will be living at home and may have very problematic family relationships, and want a positive adult in their lives for informal support in dealing with their families;
- Some youth may only recently have been forced to leave their families; others may have been living independently for a very long time,
- Other youth may come from fairly stable homes, but their parents were unable to accept or support their struggles around sexual orientation or gender because of their strong cultural or religious beliefs;
- Some youth will be seeing a counselor on a regular basis, and also want informal contact with an adult mentor to help them integrate into the community; others will not have any connections with a counselor or other service provider;
- Some youth may be 12 years of age, and be wards of the child welfare system; others may be former wards of the child welfare system, who are in transition to independence and still eligible for financial assistance from the child welfare system;
- Some youth will be in high school or university, some will be employed or in training programs, others will be unemployed;
- Some youth may be HIV+ or have AIDS, or have other physical and/or emotional disabilities;

Criteria for Adult Involvement in True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender Youth

Adults who wish to become mentors in the mentoring and housing program must meet the following criteria:

1. They must be 24 years of age or older;
2. They must have completed the entire application process including: attending the orientation session and mandatory training sessions, completing the mentor application form, providing personal references, undergoing a criminal record, child welfare and Motor Vehicle background checks, participating in a personal interview to assess their suitability to be mentors;
3. They must sign an agreement to maintain confidentiality and to abide by the policies of the project;
4. They must agree to contact their assigned mentee at least 4 times a month, with a minimum of 2 face-to-face meetings each month.
5. They must agree to record the times and dates of each contact with their mentee and to submit that report to True Colors monthly.
6. They must check the YAHOO mentor group at least weekly.
7. They must agree to attend at least 4 group functions a year, and at least 4 out of 12 monthly mentor trainings and feedback sessions.
8. They must agree to be a mentor, or to be available as a mentor, for a period of at least one year following the completion of the entire application process.
9. In addition, mentors should have:
 1. A Sense of Humor
 2. The ability to follow through on commitments
 3. Good decision-making skills
 4. Present self as a good role model
 5. Have a desire to take part in recreational activities
 6. Have (or be willing to learn) a basic understanding of adolescent development, foster care issues
 7. Have decent record keeping skills
 8. Be willing to advocate for your youth
 9. Be willing to learn about life skills required to prepare youth for adult life

Apart from the above criteria, mentors will vary in a number of different ways:

- They may be single or in a relationship;
- They may be parents;
- They may be students, employed, self-employed, retired, or unemployed;
- They may have a comfortable income, or be on social assistance or disability benefits;
- They will come from diverse cultural or religious backgrounds;
- They may be HIV+ or have AIDS, or other disabilities.

Mentor's Rights and Responsibilities:

Mentors have the right to:

- Decline from an initial match
- Make suggestions in order to enhance the program
- Have their concerns addressed in a timely manner

Mentors have the responsibility to:

- Maintain a one year commitment with the youth
- Promote activities that will enhance the youth's future (i.e. staying in school)
- Work with Youth to set immediate and future goals
- Help youth establish attainable goals and methods to achieve those goals for school and career to prepare for adult life
- Help involve youth with additional positive role models and situations
- Serve as a member of a team of adults working to meet the youth adult's overall preparation needs
- Check the mentor YAHOO group (at least) weekly

True Colors Responsibility to YOU: We will:

- Provide training before you are matched with a youth
- Match you with a youth who has been screened by the Program Director
- Have on call support at all times, either through the program staff or the DCF Hotline
- Have at least 4 support meetings available for mentors only each year
- Provide at least 4 group activities each year
- Have telephone contact with you monthly
- Hear and address any and all concerns you have in a timely manner
- Make any reasonable changes to the program or your commitment to the program

Communication-Expectations of One on One Mentors

Mentoring is fundamentally about communication, sharing yourself with a young person and being open to receiving their communications to you. Simply being together is a form of communication. As a mentor, you are a valuable resource to other mentors. Once you have been matched, you will receive an online invitation to the True Colors YAHOO mentor group. This is a place to share information, questions, ideas etc. It is also our main form of communication with mentors. Please familiarize yourself with the site and check it frequently. Staff and mentors need to communicate as well. We expect you to:

- Contact your mentee at least weekly. This is an average expectation. We understand the demands of work, other relationships and occurrences. The contact may be by phone, postal mail, e-mail, facebook, myspace or in person. It's important to keep in touch. As a mentor, you will have a face-to-face contact with your mentee at least three times per month.
- If applicable, talk with your mentee's social worker, probation officer or other service provider(s) at the start of the mentoring relationship and as necessary. These people will be invited to the initial match meeting and their information will be provided to you prior to your match.
- Fill out a simple monthly report form that documents the number and type of contacts with your mentee. This form is located on the YAHOO mentor page and is sent electronically every month.
- Respond to calls and e-mails from Mentoring Program staff and volunteers. You will receive a bi-monthly e-mail informing you of upcoming events and activities. You will also receive notices on the YAHOO mentor page for recreational/engagement activities and program meetings.
- Fun activities are offered monthly for all mentors and mentees. Attend a minimum of four per year!
- Attend the monthly mentor's meeting, held during the second week of each month from 6-8 p.m.(the day of the week changes every 6 months). Because this is a statewide program, we vary which towns the meetings are held in, please refer to the calendar on the YAHOO mentor page for the location. You are required to attend four of these per year, but we strongly encourage you to attend as many as possible.
- Call the Program Director, Kamora Herrington, when issues, emergencies or just questions arise. You can reach Kamora at True Colors 860-232-0050 ext. 313, or by cell phone 978-729-7943. If Kamora is not available due to illness, emergency etc., call Hillary at the True Colors Office 860-232-0050 ext. 306.
- If you have an emergency after office hours, call the DCF hotline at 1-800-842-2288.

Communication-Expectations of Staff

Staff is here to support you and your mentoree and help develop a productive relationship. You should expect the following from staff:

- **Accessibility:** Kamora Herrington is the Mentoring Program Director and your main contact person. She works 40 hours per week for the mentoring program but is usually available to you days, evenings and weekends. Feel free to call her at the office with questions, suggestions or just to check in.
- **Education:** There are several aspects to working with youth and staff is responsible for providing you with information. Monthly mentoring meetings will provide information to support you as a mentor. Topics include but are not limited to: working with different racial/ethnic/cultural groups, bi and trans issues, the Child Welfare System, social and emotional issues faced by youth, The Juvenile Justice System, engaging youth, coming out and family issues for youth. Feel free to suggest areas for education and discussion.
- **Communication:** True Colors Inc. should contact you at least once a month by phone or e-mail to check in on how the mentoring relationship is progressing. When you call us, you can expect a return call within 24 hours.
- **Intervention/Mediation:** Kamora is responsible for communicating with service providers. She should keep you updated regarding any special issues regarding your mentee. Common issues include changes of address for youth in the DCF system, rules and practices of youth residential facilities, assisting and supporting you in working with the facilities (rules, policies, access to your mentoree etc), emotional or mental health issues and helping you to work with parents.
- **Regular Meetings and Activities:** You can expect staff to be prepared and to conduct regular meeting and activities and to facilitate these events in a friendly, fair and professional manner.

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Current Types of Mentoring Arrangements

One on One Mentoring

One on One Mentoring (OOM) involves matching an LGBTIQ youth, between 12 and 22 years of age, with an adult who is LGBTIQQA, who is willing to be a positive adult role model to the youth in a regular, organized way. Community mentoring does not involve having the youth live with the community mentor, although the youth may stay at the home of the community mentor from time to time (Only if home has been approved as a respite or foster home by DCF) when deemed appropriate by program staff and the specific youths guardian.

One on One mentoring arrangements will be tailored to the specific developmental and social needs of the youth; the exact nature of the relationship will be spelled out in a contract between the youth and the community mentor at the six week check-in. All arrangements must conform with the project's policies and guidelines, as described in this manual.

Group Mentoring

Group Mentoring involves LGBTIQQA adults and the LGBTIQ youth who have been referred to the True Colors One on One Mentoring program. Youth involved in this program have not been matched with a One on One mentor yet, but still need the support and community that comes from mentoring. Youth in the group mentoring program are invited to a minimum of 3 social activities per month. These activities will take place throughout the state to alleviate transportation issues.

Adults involved in the group mentoring program will commit to attending a minimum of 6 group mentoring activities per year. They will also make themselves available to provide transportation for at least one youth participant for the activities that they attend. These activities will be mostly social in nature, but will involve workshops on topics that are interesting and important to the participants. Adults involved in the group mentoring program may or may not move on to becoming One on One mentors.

True Colors, Inc. Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services of Connecticut LGBT Youth Mentoring Policy and Procedure Manual

Policies for True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender Youth

Final Right of Refusal

Program staff reserves the right to finally accept, reject, or match any potential mentor, or any youth who applies to be matched with a community mentor.

Non-Discrimination Policy for Matching Adults and Youth

While it is recognized that matches involving common experiences or interests may be mutually beneficial, ultimately matches are made on the basis of the needs of youth and the capacities of potential mentors. Where it is deemed important for the well being of youth, efforts will be made to match mentors and youth on the basis of sex, gender, age, racial or cultural group, religious affiliation, HIV status or disability. However, mentors may not categorically exclude potential matches with youth on the basis of the sex, gender, age, racial or cultural group, religious affiliation, HIV status or disability.

Conscientious Beliefs

A mentor may have conscientious beliefs, but must show acceptance and respect for beliefs other than his/her own. Potential mentors will not be accepted into the program if project staff consider the beliefs of the mentor to be extreme, or there is intent to impose these beliefs on the other, or a possible outcome of the match would be to impose these beliefs on a youth. Similarly, involvement with True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth will be terminated if it is learned, after a match or placement is made, that the mentor is imposing or attempting to impose these beliefs on youth.

Information from Personal References

Information about potential mentors obtained from personal references will be confidential and available only to program staff. Ultimately, staff of the project may use this information to reject any potential mentor. In this case, staff would inform the potential mentor that the rejection is based on information obtained from personal references, but will not disclose the contents of that information to the potential mentor.

Disclosure of Contents of Criminal Record Check

A potential mentor must agree to reveal the contents of his/her criminal record check to the staff of the program, and to discuss the contents of the criminal record check with staff as required. Ultimately, staff of the program have the right to decide whether a potential mentor is suitable for the program, based on this process.

Individuals with charges or convictions involving murder, sexual abuse of children, sexual assault, or physical violence will not be accepted as mentors.

Careful consideration will be given to charges or convictions involving, but not limited to, threats of violence, prostitution, harassment, stalking, drug trafficking, impaired driving, drunken and disorderly conduct, fraud and possession of drugs. The frequency and recentness of these offenses will be factors in the decision to accept or reject applications. Applicants with criminal records involving these offenses will be given the opportunity to contextualize any charges or convictions.

Disclosure of Medical Information

A potential mentor must provide the program with a medical reference, and agree to discuss the contents of the medical reference with staff of the project, as required. Ultimately, staff of the program have the right to decide whether a potential mentor is suitable for the program, based on this process.

The purpose of the medical reference is to determine whether an individual has any physical illnesses, mental health issues, or history of substance or medication use which would hinder or impede her/his ability to mentor a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender youth who is 12 to 22 years of age.

Individuals with histories of sexual abuse of children, sexual assault, or other violence will not be accepted as mentors. Careful consideration will be given to histories of physical illness, mental health problems, and substance or medication abuse. The chronic or acute nature of these problems/behaviors, as well as their recentness, will be factors in the decision to accept or reject applications. Individuals will not be accepted as mentors if it is determined that these problems/behaviors would hinder or impede their ability to mentor a youth.

Release of Information

To protect the confidentiality of mentors and youth, all information about mentors and youth will be available only to the staff of True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth, and will be used only for project purposes. The project will obtain signed consent before any information regarding the mentor or youth is released, except where disclosure is required by law.

Access to Records

All records, files and documents created and maintained by True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth are the property of the program. The Program Supervisor is responsible for the proper security of such material, except as required by law (including any court subpoena of records). Access to such material will be confined to

appropriate volunteers (who have signed a Volunteer Statement of Confidentiality) and authorized project staff for purposes of conducting the normal course of business for the project. All Confidential materials and files will held in a locked cabinet with restricted access.

Mentors and/or youth may have access to information on their files at the discretion of the Project Supervisor. In such situations, information from personal references will be removed before file information is shared with the respective mentor or youth.

Sharing of Relevant Information

Mentors, youth and project staff are encouraged to keep each other reasonably informed of information which will, or likely will, impact the relationship between the mentor and youth. This information will be provided as part of the matching process, and youth and mentors should continue to keep each other, project staff, and any other parties listed on the match form informed of such information as the match progresses.

Confidentiality

Mentors are required to sign a Mentor Confidentiality Agreement regarding personal information related to youth (and their families), except where disclosure is required by law.

Agreement to Policies of the Program

All mentoring applicants must sign an agreement to abide by the policies of the program. The agreement indicates that an applicant has read and understands the policies related to the program and willingly promises to abide by them in the course of being a mentor, or applying to be a mentor. This includes policies related to attending regular ongoing orientation and/or training sessions provided for mentors, and meeting with project staff as required.

The policies of the project may change from time to time. Should this happen, mentors and mentoring applicants will be informed of the changes, and will have the option of withdrawing their agreement to abide by the policies of the project, thereby terminating their involvement with the project.

A breach of any of the policies of the project may result in an application to mentor being rejected, or an existing match or involvement with the program being terminated.

Home Visits:

Home visits in the mentor's home are not allowed for the first three months after a mentor/mentee match has begun. After that time, mentors are under no obligation to allow their mentee to come to their home. If the mentor wishes to allow the mentee to visit their home after the initial waiting period, a home visit and safety check must be completed by True Colors mentoring staff prior to the visit. Under no conditions, may a mentee stay overnight at a mentor's home. (The only exception is if the mentor's home is currently licensed as a foster or respite home and prior written approval is secured by the youth's legal guardian or a DCF Supervisor.) All mentors will read and sign the home visit policy.

Matching Contract

Mentors, youth and project staff are required to sign a contract at the six-week check-in meeting. The contract will stipulate the type of mentoring arrangement, and detail the specifics of the arrangement including expectations, rules, guidelines and boundaries. Mentors and/or

youth must notify project staff if substantial conditions are not being upheld, or if there are intentions to substantially alter any of the conditions of the contract.

Romantic and/or Sexual Relationships

Any romantic or sexual relationship between mentors and youth matched with them are expressly prohibited, and will result in an immediate termination of the match or placement and an immediate termination of participation in the program. By participating in the program, mentors are deemed to be in a position of trust and/or authority in relation to youth matched with them and are therefore responsible for any romantic or sexual relationships that occur between them and their mentee.

Mentors are also responsible for informing their families and friends of their mentoring arrangement, as appropriate, and explaining that friends and family members are also expected to refrain from romantic or sexual relationships with youth matched with mentors.

Because mentors are in a position of trust, they should avoid being involved in any situations with youth matched with them that may be interpreted as sexual or romantic. Therefore, mentors should avoid becoming involved in any behaviors with youth which may be interpreted as having sexual or romantic overtones, or which increase the potential for sexual relationships including, but not limited to, sharing pornographic materials, flirting, harassment, sexual innuendoes, going to a bathhouse together, taking baths or showers together (except in public places such as locker rooms), or sleeping in the same bed. Because of the vulnerability of youth to abuse, and the vulnerability of mentors to charges of abuse, mentors should err on the side of caution in questionable circumstances.

Mentors and youth are required to report any romantic or sexual relationships between them, or any concerns about potential romantic or sexual relationships between them to project staff immediately.

Mandated Reporting

Mentors are considered 'mandated reporters' under Connecticut General Statutes (CGS 46b – 120) and are obligated by law to make a report to the State Department of Children and Families by telephone (1-800-842-2288) and with a follow up written report on DCF Form 136 (see attachments) if they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that any child under the age of 18 has been abused; has had non-accidental physical injury or an injury which is at variance with the history given of such injury; is at imminent risk of serious harm by an act or failure to act on the part of any person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care; or has been neglected. In addition, any questions, concerns, issues regarding reporting may be explored with mentoring Project Staff at any time.

Violence or Threats of Violence

Violence, or threats of violence, on the part of either mentors or youth are expressly prohibited, and must be reported to project staff immediately. Violence, or threats of violence by mentors will result in termination of match, and potentially termination of involvement in the program. Violence, or threats of violence, on the part of youth may result in termination of match and program.

Unlawful Behavior / Safety

True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth considers the use of drugs or alcohol on the part of the mentor in the presence of youth to be inappropriate role-modeling. All True Colors mentor/mentee events and activities are free of drug, alcohol and sexual contact.

Mentors are reminded that the consumption of contraband drugs and the consumption of alcohol by youth under the age of 21 years is illegal.

Mentors must not endanger the lives and safety of youth matched with them by driving while legally intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Similarly, mentors must not endanger the lives and safety of youth matched with them by permitting them to drive a vehicle belonging to a mentor without a proper license or while legally intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

Financial Responsibility/Liability

The program, True Colors, Inc. Mentoring Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth, is not responsible for any costs incurred by the mentor as a result of a community mentoring match. However, if there is a True Colors Inc. event or activity that a mentor won't be able to attend with their mentee due to financial constraints, the program will attempt to absorb the cost in order to allow the match to attend.

The respective financial contributions of mentors and youth in any matches will be detailed in the contract. The program is not responsible for any outstanding debts owed to the mentor by youth matched with them.

Gifts between mentors and mentees of other than of nominal value are prohibited. Requests for substantial gifts should be declined and reported to staff if the mentor/mentee feels the requests are inappropriate.

The program is not responsible for any theft or damage to a mentor's property by a youth matched with them.

Mentors should ensure that they have sufficient liability coverage before permitting youth matched with them to drive the mentor's vehicle. Similarly, housing mentors should ensure that they have sufficient liability insurance to cover the tenancy relationship.

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Mentoring Policy and Procedure Manual

Mentor Application Process

Inquiry

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender adults, 24 years of age and older, who are interested in further information about becoming mentors are encouraged to call True Colors at 860-232-0050. The call will be returned by a volunteer or staff person involved with the program. They will be provided with more information about the program along with an application and background check forms.

Mentor Application Package

To officially apply to become a mentor, a mentor application package needs to include the following components:

- Mentor application form
- References with addresses
- Two (2) Release of Information forms

If an application package is not complete the assessment process will not begin until all of the components listed above are included in the package. A mentor application file will be opened when all of the above completed documents are received by the program.

Where two individuals are applying to mentor "as a couple", each should complete the entire mentor application package.

a) **Mentor Application Form:** This form must be completed by each individual who is applying to mentor. All applicants must complete the first two pages of the application form. All applications must be signed by the applicant at the bottom of the last page.

b) **Reference Request Form:** anyone applying to be a mentor in the program must provide the names of three references. Two should be personal references, and one should be a business, work or volunteer reference. All references should be 19 year of age or older, and have known the applicant for at least two years.

Program staff will contact the references directly in writing, and ask for written references using the "Letter of Reference" form. If there is no response from references within three weeks after the Letter of Reference is mailed to them, staff or volunteers from the program will contact references by telephone to request that they complete and return the form. Should a reference refuse to complete the form, every effort will be made to determine the reasons for this, and this discussion will be documented on the applicant's file.

Should program staff or volunteers be unable to contact the reference, or should the reference be unable to provide the required information (due to illness, for example), applicants will be asked to provide the name of an alternative reference. In any case, the application process will not be deemed to be complete without two written personal references, one business/work/volunteer reference and a physician's reference.

Any information provided by references will be kept confidential and will not be shared without the consent of the references, except where disclosure is required by law. The information will be kept in the applicant's or mentor's file. Should an applicant or mentor request access to information on his or her file, all personal or work reference letters will be removed before the information is made available.

d) Consent to Disclosure of Criminal Record: all applicants must sign 2 release forms allowing background checks for criminal, child welfare, and motor vehicle checks.

The applicant has the right to refuse to permit the Executive Director and the Program Supervisor to see the Summary Sheet. Should this happen, the application process will be terminated immediately.

Any information about an applicant's criminal record will be utilized solely by the program, and will be kept confidential.

e) Mentor Agreement to Policies of the Program: all applicants must sign an agreement to abide by the policies of the program. This agreement should be witnessed by an individual of the applicant's choosing, and returned to the program as part of the application package.

Mentor Training/Support/Supervision Meetings

All applicants and mentors must commit to attending initial and ongoing training sessions/workshops to be accepted and continue as mentors in the program.

Applicants must agree to attend a six-hour training session/workshop during the application process before they will be considered for a match with a youth. These initial training sessions/workshops will focus on developmental issues for youth, the relationship between youth and mentors, and current lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender youth culture.

To maintain their status with the program, all mentors who have been accepted into the program (including those who are not yet matched with a youth) must attend regular program meetings, support sessions, and ongoing training sessions/workshops. Some specific sessions may be compulsory for all volunteers; others will be optional. These sessions will be geared towards establishing open lines of communication among program members that will help facilitate networking, bonding, resource sharing. Mentors are required to attend a minimum of four sessions a year.

Mentor Interview

All applicants must undergo extensive interviews before they can be accepted as mentors in the program. Interviews will be conducted at the True Colors offices or in other mutually agreed upon locations.

Individuals applying to mentor "as couples" will be interviewed jointly and separately. It is strongly recommended that non-residing partners of applicants also be interviewed if it is anticipated that they will have significant contact with youth placed with the mentor.

In situations where applicants indicate no criminal record, or program staff determine that the criminal record is unlikely to hamper the application process, interviews may be conducted after personal and references have been received (assuming the information obtained warrants proceeding with the application), but before the criminal record check has been obtained.

Interviews will be conducted by program staff and/or qualified volunteers. Notes will be taken during the interview process. It is anticipated that interviews will be about 1 hour in length, and will be conducted according to a predetermined format. Information from the interview will be assembled and maintained on file.

True Colors Inc. Sexual Minority Youth and Family
Services of Connecticut
Mentoring Policy and Procedure Manual

Youth Application Process: Community Mentoring

Inquiry/Referral

Youth contact with the program may be initiated from a variety of different sources. Depending on the source of the initial contact, different steps will be taken, although it is expected that flexibility will be required to accommodate individual situations.

1. Youth-Initiated Contact:

Youth may initiate contact with the program as a result of hearing about it by word-of-mouth, promotion and outreach, information obtained from a service provider (health or social service organization, teacher, etc), or at the urging of a service provider. If the original contact is initiated by a youth, program staff will talk to them about the program and their interest in it, and make initial inquiries about their current circumstances. If the youth is interested in community mentoring and eligible for the program, staff will provide information and offer the youth an intake appointment.

2. Service Provider Contact:

If the original contact is made by a referring organization, program staff will provide initial information about the program to the service provider, encourage the service provider to share the information with the youth, and ask the youth to contact the program themselves.

3. Parent of a Youth:

If the initial contact is made by the parent of a youth, the parent will be given basic information about the program, and asked to encourage the youth to contact the program.

Intake Session

Youth referred to the mentoring program are required to attend an Orientation Meeting where they are introduced to the program and True Colors. During this session youth are informed of the policies of the mentoring program as well as their rights and responsibilities. After they have attended a session, they are required to fill out and return a Youth Interview form requesting the following information:

Demographic Information: including name, current address and telephone number, date of birth, biological sex, first language, and legal status.

Interest in Mentoring: reason(s) for wanting to become involved in the program and type of mentoring requested.

Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity: information about how youth currently identify in terms of sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and some description of their coming out or transitioning process.

Support System, Living and Financial Situation: including relationship to parents and other family members, current support system, suitability of current living situation, and financial resources.

Racial, Cultural and/or Religious Affiliation: connection to cultural community or religious organization, and the significance of these connections to them.

Daily Activities: school attendance or work status, information about what they do each day, and plans/hopes for the future.

Health Information: including information about general health, chronic conditions, communicable diseases, and contact with the health care system.

Substance Use: information about frequency of use of alcohol, recreational drugs, and tobacco, and any problems with using any of these.

Involvement with the Criminal Justice System: including current charges, and past charges and their disposition.

Involvement with Other Services: including job training programs, social services, child welfare authorities, etc.

Interests: including hobbies, knowledge of/participation in activities in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.

Matching Information: including their description of the kind of person they are (shy, reserved, outgoing, funny, wild, etc) and the kind of person they think they would best be matched with (sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, racial or cultural group, very active, low key, etc) .

Release of Information / Consultation with Other Sources

If, during the intake session, program staff become aware of involvement with other service organizations, staff will request permission to contact these service providers. Examples of situations where this might occur include concerns about the youth's emotional state or risk level, incapacitating substance use, violence or communicable diseases, or where the youth is unable to provide sufficient information.

The youth will be informed that they were not required to consent to the release of information/consultation, but that in certain circumstances, it may mean that they could not be matched with a mentor.

If a youth agrees to a release of information or consultation, program staff will complete a Release of Information/ Consent to Consultation form. It will include the name of person or organization information is being requested from, type of information being requested, and the duration of time the agreement is in effect. A separate form should be completed for each person or organization.

The form(s) would then be signed by the youth, witnessed by someone other than program staff, and kept on file. In the event that the person or organization from whom the information is being sought requests a copy of the release, it will be mailed or faxed to them.

Matching Process

Presentation of Potential Matches

Once a youth has completed the screening / assessment process and is ready to be matched with a mentor, program staff will review accepted mentors and select one whose interests and capabilities seem to be compatible with the needs of the youth. Program staff will then contact the mentor by telephone, and present the youth to them based on the information contained in the Personal Profile. At this stage, only the first name (or the name the youth prefers to be known by) will be revealed, and every effort will be made to preserve the identity of the youth, while providing enough information to enable the mentor to make an informed decision. If this conversation results in the potential mentor deciding to move forward with the match, they will be given contact information for the youth's caregiver along with a list of questions to ask about the young person. The mentor will contact the caregiver to learn a little more about the youth. If at the end of that conversation both parties feel that this will be a good match, they will set up a match meeting (preferably at the True Colors office) and contact Lea to add it to Kamora's schedule. If for some reason Kamora can't attend, another TC representative will.

The youth will also be contacted, by telephone or in person, and will be presented with a profile of the potential mentor. At this stage, the identity of the mentor will be preserved, and only first names will be used.

Initial Meeting(s)

The initial meeting should be scheduled for about one hour, allowing for the Mentoring Program Coordinator to leave after the first half hour. All relevant parties will be invited, but the only people required to attend are the youth, the mentor and True Colors staff.

Program staff will be present at the beginning of the meeting, and will facilitate an exchange of information to enable the two participants to get to know each other better. Program staff will also discuss the purpose and parameters of the mentoring relationship, based on the needs and interests of the youth.

At the end of the meeting, the youth and mentor will arrange to meet again without program staff present or may make plans to discuss a future meeting.

If, after the first meeting, youth and mentor decide the match would not be compatible, program staff will follow up with each individually to discuss the match and encourage them to give it time. If after the six week check-in both parties still feel that they are not compatible, the relationship will be terminated and the process will begin again. Remember, no relationship is built overnight.

If, after the six week check-in both agree to the match, the contract will be filled out and given to the Mentoring Program Coordinator.

Contracting

Program staff will meet with the mentor and youth together at the six week check-in to broadly determine the parameters of the community mentoring relationship. This information will eventually be written into a contract that will be signed by the mentor, the youth, and program staff. Copies will be available to both the mentor and youth and will be in the youth's file at True Colors, Inc.

The contents of the contract should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Names of youth and mentor
- What the youth would like to achieve from the match
- What kind of activities the mentor and youth will engage in
- Frequency of meetings and telephone calls, if applicable
- Minimum anticipated duration of the mentoring relationship
- Agreement to adhere to the general policies of the program
- Agreed upon process for addressing concerns and disagreements
- Agreement to maintain contact with program staff, and involve staff in any significant variations to the contract
- Agreed upon process for terminating the mentoring relationship

Follow-up

Program staff will provide telephone follow-up with both the mentor and youth individually two weeks after the contract has been completed.

Both the mentor and youth will be encouraged to contact program staff at any time for assistance or support. These contacts will be recorded.

Youth and mentors will both be involved in a more formal evaluation of the mentoring relationship 6 months after the contract is signed.

Third Party Information/Complaints

The project is receptive to information or complaints about mentors or mentor matches from third parties if this information is relevant, or thought to be relevant, to the mentoring process. Every effort will be made to deal with this information in a thorough, respectful and expeditious manner. The following general guidelines will be employed in the handling of information or complaints from third parties.

Any information received from a third party about a mentor applicant, mentor, or mentoring match will be followed up by the project social worker, or in her absence, by the project supervisor, within two days of receiving the information or complaint. The manner in which the information is dealt with will depend on the source of the information, the way in which it was received, and the nature of the complaint.

1. Community Information or Complaints about Specific Mentors or Matches:

Information or a complaint from a community member may come to the attention of project staff through a telephone call, by letter or email, or in person. The professional skill and judgment of the social worker will determine the exact nature of the immediate response to information or complaint, with consideration to the following:

- The program values information or complaints about mentors or mentor matches from community members, when this information is relevant to the mentoring process;

- Program staff will advise community members calling with information or complaints about mentors or mentoring matches whether or not the individual(s) named are participants in the project, although not about the exact nature of their involvement at the current time;
- If the individual(s) are not participating in the program, no further information will be heard;
- In the event of information or a complaint made by email or letter, every effort will be made to establish telephone or in person contact with the person making the complaint;
- Once the nature of the information or complaint has been communicated to the social worker, the program has a responsibility to deal with it, in a manner that is deemed appropriate;
- The program cannot guarantee that the anonymity of the person providing the information or making the complaint will be maintained in the process of addressing the information or complaint with a mentor and/or youth;
- Although the program will give serious consideration to the information or complaint, and address it as is deemed appropriate, the outcome of this process will not be communicated to the informant or complainant;
- Should the person making the complaint appear to be distressed or in need of support, the program staff will suggest appropriate resources to them, if possible;
- Information received from community sources will be documented in detail as soon as possible after it is communicated;
- The program staff will consult with the project supervisor as soon as possible to determine an appropriate course of action;
- Any contacts associated with the information or complaint, and the outcome, will be documented.

2. Community Inquiries or Complaints about the Project's Screening and Monitoring Process

In the event of a general inquiry or complaint about the project's screening or monitoring process, an effort will be made to determine the cause of the concern, or the circumstances that led to the inquiry. Should it become clear that the concern relates to an individual mentor or mentoring match, the process described above will be followed. Otherwise, the person inquiring or complaining will be informed of the project's policies and procedures for screening mentors and monitoring matches, and offered a written summary of this process.

3. Information or Complaint from an Adult or Youth Participant of the Mentoring Project

Should the information or complaint come from an adult or youth participant of the project, every effort will be made to meet with the adult or youth in person. The course of action that will subsequently follow will be determined by the project social worker, in consultation with the project supervisor, with reference to the guidelines outlined in 1 above.

Confidentiality Agreement

Any information created or obtained regarding a youth and his/her family in connection with this Agency shall be strictly confidential. Information will not be released without the youth's permission or without an official signed release form signed by the youth and his/her legal guardian, authority representative, Attorney and/or DCF Social Worker.

I, _____ (Mentor's signature), understand that any information regarding a youth, a youth's family member, Agency staff member, DCF staff member and/or fellow mentor is to be handled with the strictest of confidence. I will be held accountable for any legal procedure brought against this Agency due to unauthorized disclosure of information pursuant to Connecticut State Statute 17a-28. The Agency's Mentoring Program Coordinator shall keep the original copy of this form. A copy of the original form shall be given to the mentor if requested.

Date: _____

Mentor (Please Print) _____

Address: (Home) _____

(Work) _____

Phone: (Home) _____

(Work) _____

Signature: _____

Witnessed by Mentor Program Coordinator: _____

True Colors, Inc. MENTORING PROGRAM

MENTOR/MENTEE CONTRACT

Today's Date_____

Name of Mentor:_____

Name of Mentee:_____

Match Date:_____ Review Date:_____

We will commit to meet for 2-3 times per month, face-to-face.

We will commit to have phone contact weekly.

We will commit to attend 4 scheduled group events offered this year.

We have decided to work on the following during our one-year commitment:

Mentor's Signature:_____

Mentee's Signature:_____

Witness:_____

Our review date will be one year from today.

That date is:_____

Office Use:

True Colors, Inc.
Youth Mentoring Partnership
Home Visit Policy

By signing this form, I understand the following policies regarding my mentee coming to visit my home:

1. Mentees may not visit a mentor's home prior to the six week match 'check-in'. In general, home visits are not allowed during the first 3 months of a match, but that condition may be waived with the explicit written permission of the Mentoring Coordinator and the DCF Social Worker (is DCF is the guardian)
2. Before a mentee can visit my home, a home visit and safety review must be conducted by either DCF or True Colors staff.
3. True Colors Mentees are not allowed under any conditions to stay overnight at a mentors home. In some cases, The Department of Children and Families may license a mentor's home to provide respite or a housing resource to a child under their care. In that case, overnight visits would be arranged, approved and provided by the Department of Children and Families. True Colors mentoring program does not and will not provide approval for overnight visits.
4. I am not required to allow my mentee visit my home (please check the box below).
5. If a mentee comes to your home before your safety review is complete, the match may be terminated at the discretion of the Youth Mentor Coordinator and the DCF Social Worker.

Please Place Your Initials In One:

_____ I am not interested at this time in having my mentee visit my home.
Should I change my mind, I will contact the Youth Mentor Coordinator to have a home visit conducted.

_____ I would like to have a home visit conducted so that my mentee can visit my home under the conditions described above. I realize that although I will have a home visit conducted, my mentee will NOT be allowed to sleep overnight in my home.

_____ (sign) _____ (date)

Please print your name