



Volunteer Mentor Position Description

MENTORING

Title:	Mentor Volunteer
Program:	Mentoring Programs
Hours:	11 per month
Duration:	Minimum of 12 months, once matched
Location:	Metropolitan Melbourne; Barwon; Bendigo; Gippsland
Key Whitelion staff member:	David Shannon
Contact details -	Phone: (03) 8354 0800 Email: mentoring@whitelion.asn.au

Open Family Australia and Whitelion are non-profit organisations that support disadvantaged young people and help to make our communities to be a more inclusive and safer place. Each year, thousands of youths are disconnected from their families and our communities due to abuse, neglect, drug addiction and poverty. These young people have often had challenging life experiences with few positive role models, and are caught in a 'cycle of discouragement'. Many of them end up in Out-of-Home Care, the Youth Justice System or homeless. Open Family Australia and Whitelion work to give these young people the best chance to 'break the cycle' through outreach and mentoring services, positive role modelling, employment services and the opportunity to build positive and meaningful lives.

Together, Open Family Australia and Whitelion are committed to:

- Changing the lives of homeless and at-risk young people by working with them individually, offering long-term and focused intensive support; and
- Supporting disadvantaged young people to live more positive and fulfilled lives.

Key role

To develop and maintain a mentoring relationship with a young person considered to be at-risk with the support of Whitelion staff over a minimum of a 12-month period.

About the position

The aim of the mentoring program is to promote purposeful, voluntary, relationships in which mentors assist young people to develop a positive sense of self and connections with their community. Mentors engage in regular recreational activities with individual young people to facilitate the development of an enduring, constructive relationship. This reduces the isolation many young people experience following institutional living and engenders hope for a positive future and active engagement in the community.

Mentoring offers many opportunities for mentors. If accepted into the program you will:

- receive regular support and training from our mentoring staff;
- be able to have fun and connect with young people in the pursuit of recreational activities and other interests;

- be challenged and rewarded on a personal and intellectual level; and
- gain a greater understanding of the community in which you live.

People interested in mentoring are required to:

- attend an information session on a designated weeknight;
- undergo an interview with a mentoring staff member during business hours;
- take part in compulsory all-day training on a designated Saturday;
- undergo a police check and reference checks;
- commit to obtaining a volunteer Working with Children Check; and
- attend a 'Mentor Matters' evening to complete the accreditation process.

If successful, they are then able to participate in group activities with young people before they are matched with an individual young person.

Accountabilities

- Build a constructive relationship with a young person considered to be at risk in society, either because they are in custody, involved in community Youth Justice or on a Child Protection order.
- Maintain the mentoring relationship beyond times of transition for the young person, such as the end of their custodial sentence or Child Protection order.
- Engage with a young person through the pursuit of common interests.
- Provide non-judgemental support and friendship with the young person.
- Abide by the Whitelion Mentoring Program's Code of Ethical Conduct – refer to the Mentor Welcome Pack.
- Meet with the young person for at least 3 hours per fortnight.
- Contact the young person at least weekly by phone.
- Commit to a minimum of 12 months matched with a young person.
- Maintain, at a minimum, monthly contact with your Mentoring Coordinator:
 - engage in supervision as required;
 - provide information about the progress of the mentoring relationship;
 - seek guidance when ethical dilemmas arise; and
 - respond to invitations for training and activities in a timely manner.
- Attend ongoing 'Mentor Matters' training and other Whitelion organised activities.
- Make every effort to attend the Community Days to encourage you and your young person's sense of community with Whitelion.
- Have respect for the systems in which Whitelion's young people are placed and the key people in their lives.
- Although every effort is made to match mentors with a young person in a similar geographical location, mentors must be willing to travel up to 40 minutes one way to meet their young person.
- Represent Whitelion positively and act as a positive role model in all interactions in the community.

Days and times of volunteer work

Three hours per fortnight at a time that is negotiated between the mentor and the young person, and is suitable and convenient for both parties.

Key Attributes of Mentors

- 1. Communication skills:** mentors are friendly, engaging and able to establish communication in a non-judgemental and appropriate manner. They are able to develop active listening skills and communicate with empathy and integrity that fosters trust.
- 2. Self Awareness:** mentors have awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and are able to ask for help and support. They are able to set boundaries. They recognise their feelings and prejudices and aim to manage their emotions such that they can respond to situations in a considered way.
- 3. Team work:** mentors work well with others and are able to take initiative while remaining accountable to Whitelion's policies.
- 4. Resilience:** mentors demonstrate commitment and reliability whilst remaining flexible and sensitive to a given situation. They persevere to achieve goals even in the face of obstacles, cope effectively with disappointments and setbacks, remain calm under pressure and accept constructive criticism without becoming defensive.
- 5. Life stage:** mentors have both the maturity and time to commit to an ongoing relationship with a young person. They have a range of life experiences that show that they are able to take 'the rough with the smooth'.
- 6. Interests:** mentors have a range of interests that they may be able to share with a young person and are also open to exploring and encouraging the interests of a young person.
- 7. Diversity:** mentors have an appreciation of diversity in the community. They are willing to challenge the stereotypes they carry about those who are different from themselves.
- 8. Ethics:** mentors have an appreciation of ethical issues and can be entrusted to behave appropriately around vulnerable people and seek guidance when ethical dilemmas arise.
- 9. Outlook:** mentors demonstrate a generous and positive outlook. They are self-confident and enthusiastic. Mentors do not try to 'save' or 'fix' young people. They are open to learning from their young person as well as developing mutual interests. They are able to relax and have fun.
- 10. Confidentiality:** mentors respect the confidentiality of information shared by their young person whilst maintaining an awareness of the statutory and moral obligations of Whitelion.

Personal values of volunteer

Volunteers' personal attributes and values should reflect those of the organisations. Volunteers should be:

- **Committed:** works as hard as they can to be the best they can be, individually and collectively, and to 'hang in there' with young people no matter what.
- **Real:** is true to both themselves and others and will be open, honest and genuine in their dealings with young people, their families, colleagues, other partners and stakeholders.
- **Collaborative:** truly appreciates diversity of thought and genuinely values the input that others can make, and works in partnership to implement the best possible outcomes.
- **Courageous:** is confident and passionate enough to step up and make a difference; is proactive; and makes a positive effort to change things for the better.
- **Innovative:** explores new ways of working to drive personal, team and organisational growth, as well as the growth of partnerships.
- **Professional:** aspires to continually meet standards of best practice and to be the best they can be, individually and collectively.
- **Passionate:** has infectious enthusiasm in every interaction, and looks for what is possible – and what can be done – and does it.