

Confidentiality and the Concern Mechanism

Trailblazers is a one of a kind program. There have been others similar in terms of community service projects involving children and programs involving tutoring. But there is nothing like it in terms of the **frequency of contact** with the children and the potential for a significantly strong, influential relationship to develop as a result of this frequency. Your attention and personalized time four days a week for the entire year is likely to have a significant impact on their lives. This is not to scare you. It is to draw your attention to the opportunity that lies ahead and to impress upon you the responsibility that we hope you will have toward your role and your relationship. You will be much more than a tutor. You will be a **very special, influential person in these young people's lives**. You may well be one of those few individuals whom your mentee later recognizes as one of the most influential people in his/her life.

Confidentiality will become a relevant topic in your role as a mentor. As your relationships deepen, your mentee will develop more and more trust in you and he/she may begin to confide in you. In most instances the information he/she will share will be commonplace and unremarkable. Once in a while, though, your mentee may share something with you that will leave you feeling uncomfortable. Maybe it is a story about being hurt from a spanking or about people doing a lot of drinking at their house, or something of this nature. We must respect each individual's right to privacy, yet we also need to have parameters for insuring children's safety and well-being.

In terms of one's right to privacy this means being careful with the information your mentee shares with you. This means **you may talk with others in the program about your mentees and you may talk with your parents about your mentee but you may not talk about your mentee in public and not with people outside the program.**

In terms of insuring a child's safety and well-being we have what's called the **concern mechanism**. **It must be used** in the following situations:

- When there is suspected **physical or sexual abuse**.
- When there is suspected **substance abuse** in the family.
- When there is mention of **weapons** in the home.
- When your mentee uses any **suicidal** talk.

It is as follows:

If any problems occurred that you weren't sure of how to handle, or if something came up that was of concern to you, you need to see the on-site supervisor before you leave for the day or contact him or her by phone later in the day. If you are able you would also want to let your teacher know. If you're feeling uncomfortable about a situation, chances are it needs to be talked about further. Trust your instincts.

We do not want you to play social worker in any of these conversations with your mentee. When your mentee brings a topic of this nature up to you it is best to use reflective listening and show interest but don't probe much. This means acknowledging what they have said to you ("It sounds like your mom got pretty mad with you last night," "It sounds like that spanking hurt a lot,") but don't ask for details. Once you talk with the on-site supervisor, the supervisor will advise you about how to handle the situation for the next day. In most cases, the supervisor will take responsibility for any next steps.

Below are listed our phone numbers so that you may contact us outside of your visit times. Calling us at home in the evening is fine.

Mr. Packard (Pioneer: 994-1905 x38619) (Home: 663-3949) (Cell: 355-3351)
Mr. Stern (Bach: 994-2193) (Home: 665-4117) (Cell: 417-1605)

Recognizing the potential for the intensity of this relationship is one reason we want to build in a strong support network between you and us and between each of you. This is why our seminars together will be important, why we as supervisors wish to be very available to you, and why we want to encourage you to share your experiences with each other. These exchanges will become more important as time goes on and your relationships deepen. Please come to us with your feelings and concerns.

We look forward to working with you and supporting you.

Sincerely,

Your Trailblazer Supervisors