

PTM MENTOR MANUAL



Dear Mentor,

Thank you for saying yes.

Before you ever help with homework or share a meal, your presence already matters. Research on *Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)* confirms what many of us have seen firsthand: **children who experience consistent, caring relationships with adults are significantly more likely to demonstrate resilience, emotional health, and long-term well-being**, even when facing adversity. In other words, steady adults change the course of a young person's life.

At Preston Taylor Ministries, we believe that joy-filled friendships, a love for learning, and God-inspired dreams are often realized through faithful relationships. Mentorship is not about having all the answers. **It is about showing up.** It is about being a safe, steady presence in a young person's life—someone who listens, encourages, and reflects back the image of God they carry in them.

I can personally testify to the power of mentorship. The adults who shaped my life did not always give grand speeches or life-altering gifts. They gave consistency. They gave belief. They gave time. They gave visibility. Their steady faithfulness helped me see possibilities in myself I could not yet see in myself. And now, I have the privilege of watching that same transformation happen through mentors at PTM every day.

Mentoring benefits the mentee, certainly. Students gain confidence, broadened perspective, stronger academic engagement, and a deeper sense of belonging. But mentoring also changes the mentor. It refines patience. It strengthens empathy. It deepens gratitude. **Many mentors discover that while they came to make a difference, they themselves are profoundly shaped in the process.**

This is the heart of our core values: Christ-centeredness, Character, Collaboration, Consciousness, Compassion and Creativity. Compassion is showing up. Christ-centeredness is showing up knowing that we leave change and transformation in the hands of the one who can keep us from falling.

When you mentor at PTM, you are not just volunteering. **You are becoming part of a story God is writing in the life of a child—and in your own.**

Welcome to the journey.

Gratefully,

Dwight Johnson
Executive Director of Preston Taylor Ministries

ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

At Preston Taylor Ministries, mentors play a vital role in shaping the lives of students through consistent, caring relationships. Mentorship is not about being perfect or having all the answers; it is about being present, dependable, and engaged.

What is the Role of a Mentor?

As a mentor, you are a **trusted adult, encourager, and role model**. Your presence helps create a safe and supportive environment where students can grow socially, emotionally, and academically.

Mentors at PTM are expected to:

- show up consistently and on time
- build a positive and encouraging relationship with their mentee
- listen with empathy and without judgment
- model healthy communication, respect, and character
- support, not “fix”, their mentee
- encourage growth, confidence, and curiosity
- reflect what it looks like to be a **steady, caring adult**.

Our Goals & Expected Outcomes

Our mentoring model is rooted in a simple but powerful belief: **Healthy relationships with consistent, caring adults lead to empowered, emotionally healthy, and resilient students.**

Research and experience both show:

- Longer-term, consistent mentoring relationships lead to stronger outcomes for youth
- Positive relationships foster confidence, belonging, and academic engagement
- Mentors themselves experience increased well-being, purpose, and personal growth

“My mentee has helped me grow as a person, as a father, and he’s given me a lot of hope in what kids can become.” -PTM Mentor

At PTM, our goal is not perfection, it is **presence, consistency, and relationship.**

What Will You Do as a Mentor?

Mentoring is meant to be both meaningful and enjoyable. Depending on your program, you may:

- Share meals together
- Help with homework or academic goals
- Play games or participate in group activities
- Have intentional conversations
- Attend special events (field trips, bowling, Topgolf, Nashville Ballet, etc.)

We believe that sometimes the most impactful moments are the simplest: showing up, listening, and spending time together.

Commitment & Consistency

Mentors are asked to commit to *(at least)*:

- **A full school year or semester** (depending on when they complete onboarding)
- **Weekly, consistent meetings** with their mentee

Consistency is critical. Mentoring is only beneficial when the relationship is positive and consistent. **Inconsistency can unintentionally cause harm, leaving a student feeling forgotten or at fault.** Ending a mentoring relationship early can negatively impact a student’s sense of trust and belonging. Because of this, we ask mentors to thoughtfully consider their availability **before** committing.

If challenges to consistency arise:

- Communicate proactively with your mentee and PTM staff
- Model healthy communication by letting students know when you will be absent

- Reach out for support rather than withdrawing

Your reliability communicates value more than anything you say.

BUILDING A STRONG MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Long-term, positive mentoring relationships are built through:

- Authenticity: Be yourself
- Empathy: Seek to understand before responding
- Collaboration: Engage alongside your mentee
- Companionship: Simply enjoy time together

Your visits with your mentee should not be transactional; they should be focused on building relationship.

Respect, Boundaries & Empowerment

Mentors are called to honor the dignity and individuality of each student.

This means:

- Respecting each student's voice, choices, and experiences
- Avoiding judgment or attempts to "fix" their situation
- Encouraging students to take ownership of their growth

Your role is to empower, not control.

Support & Communication

Remember, as a mentor with Preston Taylor Ministries, you are not doing this alone.

If you experience:

- Concerns about your mentee's well-being
- Questions about your role

- Scheduling or relationship challenges

You should reach out to your **Program Coordinator or PTM staff contact**. All concerns—especially those related to student safety—should be reported promptly following PTM guidelines (refer to the Student Safety section below).

The Reality of Mentorship: Benefits & Challenges

Mentorship is deeply rewarding, but it also requires commitment.

Benefits include:

- Meaningful, joy-filled relationships
- Watching your mentee grow and develop
- Personal growth in patience, empathy, and perspective
- A sense of purpose and fulfillment
- Access to special events and shared experiences

Challenges may include:

- Navigating inconsistency in schedules
- Building trust over time
- Not always seeing immediate impact
- Difficulties with self-regulation and other behaviors
- Supporting students through difficult circumstances

Even in challenges, your presence matters more than you realize.

Call to Action: You Are a Role Model

Whether you realize it or not, your mentee is learning from you—how you speak, respond, show up, and care. You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be **consistent, respectful, and present**. That is what makes the difference.

Additional Mentor Responsibilities

As a PTM mentor, here are some other expectations PTM will have of you:

- Lead encouraging conversations and interactions with mentee and other students
- Display Christ's love and kindness
- Provide guidance to mentee and help with setting goals
- Ensure that PTM standards, safety measures, daily programming guidelines, and the safety and well-being of children are always followed
- Adhere to the policies outlined in PTM's Code of Conduct
- Assist in furthering PTM's mission
- Have form of communication with mentee's parent/guardian
- Be open to setting up appropriate "off-site" visits directly with parent

Mentor Requirements

- Commitment to meet consistently with mentee
- Commitment to student safety
- Ability to relate effectively to diverse groups of people from all social and economic segments of the community
- Passion for discipling students and building positive and appropriate friendships

STUDENT SAFETY:

Wisdom from our Social Work Director, Latausha Stevenson:

1. **Why are consistent adults impactful in the lives of children and youth? More specifically, what is the significance of having a mentor?**

Mentors matter because consistent, caring adults play a critical role in a student's development and overall well-being. By faithfully showing up, mentors support their student's mental and emotional health while helping them build stronger, healthier relationships.

This consistency is especially impactful for students who may not experience stability at home. Mentorship provides exposure to a safe, supportive relationship—offering a sense of stability and care outside of their immediate environment. **It also opens the door to positive influences, including new perspectives, ideas, experiences, and dreams for the future.**

Above all, consistency is what creates lasting impact. When a student has someone who shows up regularly and genuinely cares, it builds trust, security, and a deep sense of belonging. These are the kinds of foundations that extend far beyond the time spent together and shape a student's life in meaningful, lasting ways.

2. **How can mentors build positive relationships with students? If a child is hesitant to open up/ warm up to a mentor, what are some helpful tips and tricks?**

Be present and show up consistently; trust is built over time through reliability. If a student is hesitant to open up, **try engaging in low-pressure, shared activities like coloring, reading, playing games, or simply spending time in the same space.** When many questions are asked upfront, students can sometimes feel like they are being interviewed, which may cause them to withdraw. Shared activities can help create a more relaxed environment where connection can grow naturally while still showing that you care.

It's also important to remember that some students may “vet” their mentor before fully engaging. This is completely normal. The best way to build trust is not by pushing for conversation, but by consistently showing up and allowing the relationship to develop at its own pace.

3. **How can a mentor know if/ when a student is in a dangerous or vulnerable situation? What are some signs they can look for?**

It is the primary responsibility of every individual associated with Preston Taylor Ministries to uphold our mission and ensure the safety of the students we serve. **Above all, we are committed to protecting every child from harm.**

As a mentor, it is important to be aware of signs that a student may be in a vulnerable or unsafe situation. **Indicators of distress can be physical, behavioral, or verbal.** Physical signs may include visible bruising or noticeable changes in hygiene, such as a strong or unusual



odor. Behavioral signs could include sudden changes in demeanor, such as increased fidgeting or withdrawal. In some cases, a student may also communicate concerns directly through what they say.

If a student shares something concerning or if you observe signs that raise concern, do not attempt to handle the situation on your own. Instead, promptly report your concerns to a PTM staff member. PTM staff are trained to respond to these situations and have established relationships with students and their families to ensure appropriate next steps are taken and students are safe.

Reporting your concerns to a PTM staff member fulfills your responsibility as a mandated reporter, and our team will ensure that all necessary policies and legal requirements are followed to protect the student.

For any questions about student safety, feel free to contact PTM's Social Work Director, Latausha Stevenson, at latausha@prestontaylorministries.org

4. **What are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate interactions between mentors and students? What can a mentor do to maintain healthy boundaries with students?**

Maintaining boundaries is essential to creating safe and respectful mentoring relationships. Touch can be important when building a relationship, but we need to be cautious of what we are communicating. Mentors must only use appropriate physical contact with students and should never engage in behaviors that could be considered grooming. Examples of inappropriate physical contact include but are not limited to: sitting on laps, piggyback rides, and frontal hugs. Examples of appropriate interactions include but are not limited to: side hugs, handshakes, high fives, or fist bumps. Mentors should also refrain from giving gifts to their mentee.

Mentors must remember that they are role models not peers. Conversations should be student-centered and student-led. Mentors should limit how much personal or sensitive information they share and use discernment about when sharing personal information is beneficial to the student. Mentors should reflect on their "why" for mentoring and avoid



having a savior complex. Mentors are role models meant to support, empower, and respect their student's dignity, while maintaining clear, healthy boundaries at all times.

OUR MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS:

Lunch Buddies:

Lunch Buddy Mentors meet with their student during the school day at the student's school to eat lunch and spend time together. Mentors visit once a week during lunch-time for roughly thirty minutes. Scheduling is flexible, but mentors are urged to visit once per week and proactively communicate with their student and student's family when they will be absent.

Staff provide resources, monitoring, and occasional site visits, but the relationship is otherwise self-led. Activities may include card games, coloring, arts & crafts, and bible studies, but is open to creativity. Lunch Buddies interact with PTM elementary students and their partner schools.

After-School Mentoring (R.I.S.E.: Realizing I'm Someone Extraordinary):

R.I.S.E. Mentors meet with their student during PTM after-school programming (between 3-5pm) at a PTM after-school site. Mentors visit once a week during programming time for roughly one hour. Scheduling is flexible, but mentors are urged to visit once per week and proactively communicate with their student and student's family when they will be absent.

PTM staff are present in the building for all meetings, but activities are largely up to the mentoring pair. **Activities may include card games, coloring, arts & crafts, playing outside, sharing snacks, and bible studies, but is open to creativity.**

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RESOURCES & STAFF CONTACTS:

Mentors receive a monthly “Mentor Memo” email newsletter sent at the beginning of each month with announcements, important dates, special events, and fun activities. Mentors are encouraged to use these resources and reach out to PTM staff for any additional information, materials, or questions. **PTM staff are excited to support you and your mentee.**

Staff Contacts

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Research for this manual was informed by experience and:

Garringer, M., Kupersmidt, J., Rhodes, J., Stelter, R., & Tai, T. (2015). *Elements of effective practice for mentoring* (4th ed.). MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.



PTM Mentor Commitment

Mentors are Expected to:

- Meet with their mentee weekly
- Follow PTM Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Adhere to the Role of a Mentor Outline described in Mentor Manual
- Adhere to PTM Core Values
- Model healthy communication with PTM staff and mentee

I _____ commit to following the Mentor Commitments.

Sign _____ Date _____