



# BEYOND BELIEF NETWORK

## Beyond Belief Network Guides: Observe National Mentoring Month

January is National Mentoring Month, a project started in 2002 by the Harvard School of Public Health and [MENTOR](#): the National Mentoring Partnership. National Mentoring Month focuses national attention on the need for adults to serve as mentors for children, particularly at-risk youth. This guide contains information on establishing mentoring relationships with individual children and opportunities for BBN teams to mentor newer or less experienced BBN teams. January is the perfect time to establish a long-term mentoring relationship with individual children or another group. Because mentoring is generally a one-on-one opportunity, you may not be able to mentor as a group, but you may submit a monthly [summary](#) of your mentoring activities.

### Facts about mentoring children

- A mentor is a caring, adult friend who devotes time to a young person. Although mentors can fill any number of different roles, all mentors have the same goal in common: to help young people achieve their potential and discover their strengths ([National Mentoring Partnership](#)).
- Mentors help children in three separate, but interacting ways (e.g., [Rhodes et al., 2006](#)):
  - Socioemotional development: learning techniques for emotion regulation, practicing social interactions and establishing relationships, and stress reduction
  - Cognitive development: exposure to new ideas and educational opportunities, encouraging academic success, and specific educational activities
  - Identity development: provision of positive role models, introduction to more ambitious and positive “future selves,” and establishing realistic goals and plans for the future

### Mentor a child

1. Start a mentoring relationship with a young child through your local [Big Brothers Big Sisters location](#). You will need to sign up at a particular location; a representative will contact you about volunteering opportunities.
2. Find a mentoring opportunity near you through the [Volunteer Referral Service](#). You can specify the distance you are willing to travel and the age of your mentee.
3. Help foster children by becoming a [Court Appointed Special Advocates volunteer](#). This opportunity requires 30 hours of pre-service training and a one year minimum commitment, so it's not a casual opportunity. However, CASA volunteers are vital advocates for abused and neglected children who help the children understand the situation, recommend services, and serve as liaisons between court, the family, and any local services.

## Mentor a student team in collaboration with the Secular Student Alliance

1. According to the [Secular Student Alliance](#), secular students are very interested in community service and volunteering. One of the challenges for student groups is that their leadership changes almost annually so they have difficulty building relationships with the larger community and local charities.
2. Thanks to a National Partnership between SSA and BBN, BBN teams can ask to be matched with students interested in volunteering. At a minimum, this could include inviting student groups to participate in planned service activities, asking students to volunteer at fundraisers and other events, and helping students get in touch with local charities and planning their own events. BBN teams can also invite student teams to social events and assist student teams with their own fundraisers.
3. If you're interested in mentoring a student group, please email [Brittany@foundationbeyondbelief.org](mailto:Brittany@foundationbeyondbelief.org), who will forward your request to SSA. Please keep in mind that mentoring should be limited to community service, and that your team should not interfere in the governance or leadership of a student team.



## Mentoring BBN teams

1. BBN teams who are at least Level One and have been doing service for at least 6 months can mentor newer teams. A mentor team will give the mentee team advice and assistance with event planning where possible. To request a mentor or volunteer to mentor another team, email [Brittany@foundationbeyondbelief.org](mailto:Brittany@foundationbeyondbelief.org).
2. Reach out to other groups in your area to include in your service activities. Encourage them to [join BBN](#) and indicate in their application that your team referred them and would like to mentor them. You can help them establish relationships with local charities, navigate potential problems with religious organizations or charities, point out opportunities for collaboration, and help them establish their own schedule of events.