

## Stepping Stones Mentoring Program

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**Location:** Anytown, USA 10001

**Address:** 123 Somewhere Street, Suite 4

**Phone:** (123) 456-7890

**Mission:** The Stepping Stones Mentoring Program enhances the lives of our community's youth by providing adult mentors to engage them in meaningful educational, recreational, and developmental activities.

**History:** The Stepping Stones Mentoring Program is a collaboration between Cook County Youth Services, Inc. and the Cook County School District. The program was founded in 1998 by two AmeriCorps members who added mentoring to the afterschool services at Thomas Jefferson Middle School. A 2004 U.S. Department of Education grant provided funding to increase services at Jefferson while also expanding the program to Bertrand Russell Middle School.

**Services:** Stepping Stones mentors are safe, successful volunteer adults from the community who meet weekly with their assigned youngster. Half the mentoring meetings are held at the school site, where mentors assist with academic activities. Other meetings feature field trips so mentors and mentees can explore additional educational, recreational, and youth development activities in the community. All Stepping Stones participants go on additional group outings once a quarter.

All matches are one adult to one youth and last a full calendar year. Community-based meetings are held during the summer months when school facilities are closed.

Youth participating in the program receive afterschool tutoring through the schools' 21st Century Learning Centers. In addition, they are able to take advantage of extended hours in the schools' libraries and computer labs.

**Community Partners:** Stepping Stones has a formal partnership with Techmo Systems, Inc., whose employees serve as mentors. Frontier Bank provides office equipment and financial support for group events. Stepping Stones is also a member of Cook County YouthLink, a local consortium of youth-serving agencies that collaborate for community events and joint funding opportunities.

**Goals:** Stepping Stones takes a broad developmental approach to mentoring that focuses on helping youth build their capacity to succeed in education and in life. By empowering youth to make good decisions and set positive goals, Stepping Stones strives to:

- Improve academic achievement and attitudes toward school and education
- Decrease alcohol and substance abuse
- Prevent gang involvement and delinquency
- Boost family and peer relations
- Enhance youth self-esteem and confidence

**Outcomes:** Mentoring has proven to be a successful strategy for addressing a number of youth problems. A landmark study of Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies found that mentored youth were less likely to engage in negative behaviors. Mentees skipped school 52% less and decreased lying to their parents by 37%. In addition, they were:

- 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to initiate alcohol use
- 38% less likely to engage in violence

The Stepping Stones Mentoring Program has also shown tremendous results in its annual evaluations. Among the positive results:

- 75% of our mentees improved their grades in key subjects
- Unexcused absences from school declined by 40% for mentored youth
- 85% of mentees reported feeling more confident about school
- 65% of mentees reported improved relations with their families and 55% said they improved peer relationships
- 83% of the parents of participating youth felt that the program had improved their child's self-esteem, attitudes, and relationships
- Alcohol and substance abuse decreased by 30% in mentored youth

**Youth Served:** Since 1998, Stepping Stones has served 275 youth through one-to-one mentoring relationships. There are currently 130 active matches spread across two program sites—Thomas Jefferson and Bertrand Russell Middle Schools. Stepping Stones is open to all students at the two schools, although most participants are referred to the program by teachers, counselors, parents, and other youth development staff from Cook County Youth Services.

**Mentor Demographics:** Stepping Stones mentors come from every corner of the Anytown community. They represent all ages (from 18 to 80), ethnicities, occupations, and faiths. We actively recruit volunteers from local businesses, religious institutions, colleges, retirement centers, and civic organizations. Stepping Stones also uses volunteers to assist with recruiting mentors, coordinating community outings, organizing group

events, and staffing the program offices. All volunteers must go through criminal background checks, reference checks, and an in-person interview.

**Potential Taglines:**

- Make a difference through mentoring
- Mentors improve learning, lives, and communities
- Mentoring: when just being yourself can change the future

**Potential Graphics:**

- Stairs
- Pathways
- River crossings
- Climbing/hiking
- Pictures of middle school kids (if you take your own photos, be sure you have a signed parental permission to use the photographs for promotional purposes)
- Logos of partner organizations