



PHILADELPHIA CITY ROWING TEAM MENTORING GUIDE



THE PCR MENTOR PROGRAM

Welcome, and thank you for being a part of PCR's Mentoring Program! As you know, PCR is a privately funded nonprofit organization that **empowers inner city youth through the sport of rowing**. We believe by providing mentoring, enrichment, and academic support in conjunction with a highly structured athletic program we can close the achievement gap, stem the Philly drop-out epidemic, put more young people on the path to higher education, and **inspire them to reach their full potential** by leading healthier lives.

PCR was founded in 2010 in response to the challenges facing youth in Philadelphia. Philadelphia has one of the largest public school districts in the nation, and perhaps one of the most overburdened. Among major cities in the United States, Philadelphia's crime rate is one of the highest, resulting in poorer quality of life for all residents and increased costs to the City of Philadelphia. Regrettably, the School District of Philadelphia's underfunding has resulted in cuts to many after school activities, including sports. At the same time, crime and high school dropout rates have remained the highest in the nation, leaving many students "at risk." **PCR IS A SOLUTION**. We take a group of inner city students and draw upon the rich rowing history of Philadelphia and the proven power of sports to offer them the tools and support they need to reach their full potential.

One of the key ingredients to keeping our student-athletes engaged and increasing their chances for success in rowing and school is our Mentoring Program. PCR shares its goals with many other high school mentoring initiatives—helping young people set realistic goals, reach and even go beyond their expectations, make good choices for their future and motivate them to go on to higher education and be contributing members to society. By focusing on the strengths of these young people, rather than their deficits, the PCR Mentoring Program holistically develops each student in a positive and proactive fashion.

Using our own life experiences, our concern for others, and our willingness to give time and energy to a new relationship equip us for this role. **Only 35% of inner city youth say that they know an adult cares for them at school or in extracurricular activities. From Day 1, PCR Coaches, Staff, Volunteers and Mentors show that they care for 100% of the students, 100% of the time.** While you and your mentees may have many differences—race, age, socioeconomic status and gender among them, when people try and care, they do become friends.

The following materials are for you to keep. They provide guidance on basic mentoring, provide tools to help your mentor/mentee relationship grow and outline the processes and expectations for PCR Mentors.

THE MENTOR POSITION

PCR Mentoring Program Mission: Philadelphia City Rowing's mission is to empower youth through the sport of rowing. Along with the structure, discipline, confidence and self-respect that these young adults will develop, PCR wants to empower its athletes' minds, bodies and souls.

As a PCR Mentor, you will provide another source of support in the lives of your mentees to help empower them to see, and reach, their full potential in life. Every teen has strengths and talents to build upon. As a mentor, you should affirm your mentee's strengths and expand their horizons to discover new interests and skills.

All mentors will be grouped into Mentor Teams of 3-5 mentors, who will work with a Mentee Group of 12-15 student athletes. While a rowing background would be ideal, it is not necessary, but being able to connect the skills and lessons gained from an athletic endeavor, such as rowing, to career and life goals is essential. A mentor should be a positive role model for their mentees.

The mentors will serve as empowering friends, role models, advisers, & supporters to their mentees. Cultivating your relationship will take time and effort, but the return will be ten-fold for both you and your mentee. **Below is a list of minimum expectations that each mentor is required to meet in order to be eligible as a PCR Mentor.** We urge you to understand that this is not a pass/fail course where the minimum contributions will result in a passing grade. This is your opportunity to enrich, improve and ultimately shape a young person's life through your shared passion for rowing.

Minimum expectations

- 1. Weekly Contact:** One Mentor Team Member will contact all of the mentees by phone or email at least once a week. Possibilities for organizing this:
 - A single mentor reaches out between the mentors each week, with this responsibility rotating between the mentor team
 - Each mentor on the team is assigned to reach out to 3-4 student athletes every week
- 2. Face Time:** Mentor Teams will hold brief, informal presentations for their Mentee Groups throughout the academic year. If a Mentor Team Member is unable to make the time of the presentation, others will still be able to present and meet with the rowers.
- 3. Mentor Debrief Sessions:** Mentors will attend debriefing sessions held at PCR, which will allow Mentor Teams to share their experiences and ideas for working with their Mentor Groups, and also provide a time to organize PCR-wide events.

MENTORING:

WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?

- Fostering positive youth development
- Build Trust, offer support & encouragement
- Positive role models
- Better training for mentors
- More engaged Mentors
- More engaged rowers
- Mentor program evaluations

We Encourage Mentors to:

- Attend regattas – the athletes love seeing their Mentors come out to support them!
- Meet the families of their Mentee Group, ideally at the fall and spring parents' meetings, and socialize with the family at regattas and other events.
- If a mentee specifically contacts you (versus the Mentor Team), PCR encourages you to meet him/her outside of a rowing setting to talk about schoolwork, social life, and home life. This is an opportunity to share your lives with each other and show what your interests are outside of rowing.

Personal Qualities of Mentors:

- A source of unwavering support to your mentees: by being there during the good rows and the bad rows and to be there and celebrate your mentee group as they make good life choices and to help them learn from the bad ones.
- Empower your Mentee Group to be a dynamic part of mentor relationship by encouraging them to interact with the mentors and ask questions, whether related to rowing or otherwise.
- Believe that all kids have potential and the ability to be a force of good in the world. Engrain those positive character traits in to your mentee.
- Encourage the mentees in your Mentor Group in regards to crew results, academic performance and behavioral development.
- Engage your Mentee Group in activities outside of rowing! The Mentor Team and their Group can plan to hang out and go to the movies, go bowling, or to an event—help broaden their horizons. More suggestions are listed in the Mentoring 101 section of this handbook.
- Reinforce the importance of academics. Connect the dots between their interests and how academics contribute to these interests.
- Be a role model to your mentees and let them see how you make sound choices and prioritize your life. Talk about how you decided on a college and or a career.
- Be a trustworthy adult during this tumultuous time in their lives. Let them know that they can come to you, in confidence, during good and bad times.

MENTOR PROGRAM POLICIES

Rowing Advice. Sometimes your mentee may be confused, frustrated, or genuinely curious and seek your advice with respect to rowing workouts, supplemental workouts, race plans, and help with the college recruiting process. It's great that your mentee can come to you and we encourage them to do so! While you may think you have a correct answer and an opportunity to help, you may be duplicating the efforts of the coaches or your answer may be in direct contrast to what the coaches are teaching. You can also suggest that you, your mentee and his/her Coach discuss an answer together.

Meeting Places. First introductions to mentees and families will be made in a group setting determined by PCR. Depending on mentor and mentee level of comfort, the next few visits may be made within the rowing setting. If you are taking your mentee team somewhere or meeting them, the parent/guardian must be aware of this. PCR will try to schedule Team mentoring events where those available are able to attend.

Meeting Frequency. PCR recognizes the busy lives of our mentors and asks that each Mentor Team coordinate to have at least a few mentors at our events. If needed, the Team could nominate a captain to serve as the primary contact person for the Mentee Group.

Contact Information. Contact information will be exchanged with matched mentors and mentees via PCR staff. Mentors will receive contact information (phone and email) for their Mentee Group, the other mentors on their team and parents/guardians. The Mentor Team will be introduced to the parents and a brief bio of each mentor will be sent to the mentees in their Group, as well as their parents/guardians. **Family Contact.** We encourage families to be involved in the Mentor Relationship since family is the primary source of development for each young student involved

Physical, Emotional & Health Issues. The Mentor is to be a trustworthy friend and confidant. If you feel that your mentee has approached you regarding an issue that is putting the mentee at risk, inform the mentee that it is your obligation to speak to someone about his/her issue and you would like to support them through the process. Contact Terry immediately and, together with the Coaches, we will discuss the appropriate response and course of action.

Adult/Student Relationships. It is important for every adult to remember that there are responsibilities that come with the adult/student relationship. Young people look up to people they trust and respect and will look to mentors as their role models, and they will closely watch the adults' actions and see their behavior as appropriate. An adult may think that he or she is showing camaraderie and will fit in with a group of students by using the same offensive language the students use among their peers, and the reaction of the students may make the adult feel like he or she is part of the group. But what the adult is really "saying" is that inappropriate language is ok.

What makes for an effective mentor?

- **Commitment** to being involved with their mentees for an extended period of time. Mentors need to have a genuine desire to be a part of someone else's life, to help them with difficult decisions and to encourage them to become the best that they can be. They need to be invested in the relationship for long enough to be able to make a difference.
- **Respect** for individuals, their abilities and their right to make their own choices in life. Mentors can't start with preconceived attitudes that their ways are better or that their mentee needs to be "rescued." Those who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity win the trust of their mentee and the privilege of being their advisors. *Remember, you are not being asked to change who the other person is but rather to enable that person to become more of who s/he can be.*
- **Acceptance** of different points of view. Listening carefully and asking thoughtful questions gives mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with minimum interference and helps them feel accepted. This helps to create a relationship in which your mentees will be more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.
- **Compassion** for another person's struggles: showing empathy or sympathy without conveying pity. Do not pretend you know how someone else feels in a situation with which you have had no experience, as this is transparent. Instead, ask "how it feels" or "can you help me understand..."
- **Balance** of practical goals and expectations with encouragement. *Goals should come from the mentee and not be given by the mentor, who can instead help refine them.* For instance, a student with a poor attendance record (and poor grades) may not realistically make the honor roll during the next marking period and to apply early decision to Harvard. However, it is reasonable to work toward improving the attendance record and their grades. When goals are achieved, effective mentors take delight with their mentees, helping them to gain confidence and build on success.
- **Flexibility and patience:** relationships take time to develop and communication is a two-way street. Effective mentors get to know what activities their mentees like (and don't like) and structure their time together around these while encouraging new ones.
- **Dependability:** being available and following through when asked for help. Effective mentors make no promises which they are unable to keep but are supportive and offer assistance when appropriate.
- **Mindfulness** of the difference between their roles and those of parents/caregivers. Mentors act as advisors but not authority figures, teach but don't preach, and are role models.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

All sessions are meant to be informal and based on personal experience. Each session will focus on one topic, and the discussion points listed below are suggestions for sparking conversations. It is in these sessions that PCR hopes a mentee will find a connection with one or more of the Mentor Team Members.

- College application process
 - Mentors' backgrounds: Where did they go to college? What was the application and decision process like?
 - What does the timeline look like for visiting campuses (if possible), taking standardized tests (SAT/ACT), writing essays, and getting letters of recommendation? What about for financial aid (FAFSA, scholarships)?
 - What should students look for in a college? (Ideal fit: size, location, availability of academic programs of interest)
 - If there are any concerns related to academics, you can help connect the mentee to PCR's tutoring and college prep programs, which have dedicated staff and volunteers with training in these areas.
- Career choices
 - What are the professions of the mentors? How did they get there?
 - Have the mentees thought about what they might like to do in the future? This is a great opportunity to expand their horizons!
- Athletics and its impact on life
 - The importance of physical activity on well-being: physical, mental, and social
 - Lessons learned through sports can translate to other areas of life: perseverance, teamwork, dealing with what can and cannot be controlled,
- Time management and setting goals
 - What goals have the mentees set for themselves in the past?
 - What makes for an effective goal?
 - What are strategies to make sure a goal is actually achieved?
- Stress management
 - What are the stressors in your mentees' lives? How do they cope with them?
 - How do the mentors deal with stressful events?
 - Are there other strategies that you can introduce to them?

Suggestions for activities

Icebreakers

- 2 Truths and a Lie
- Mentoring Group Scavenger Hunt: have a list of characteristics and see if the group has at least one person who fits each characteristic

- Highs and Lows: go around the circle and each person talks about a high point and a low point in their week (this can be used every time)

Other activity suggestions

- Movie night with discussion at PCR
- Ice cream or frozen yogurt outing
- Ice skating
- Board game night at PCR

PCR will try to host two PCR-wide Mentor Activities each season in addition to the Mentor Group sessions. If you have any feedback or ideas for these sessions, feel free to send your suggestions to Terry.

Tips for interacting with your mentees

Dealing with your biases

Some of us can be put off by haircuts, baggy clothing, text slang, etc. We each have our own biases often based on what we may not fully understand. Try not to make assumptions based on stereotypes - each of us has to try and find out about one another.

Recognize that differences in values, dress, and language are just that: differences. Often, there is “my way” and “their way” and it is not necessary to decide which way is right. There is a place for both.

In some cases, there are standards that have been established and need to be validated: the dress of the workspace, the language of the academy, and the vocabulary of a polite society. These are not dependent on race, ethnicity, or economic standing. This is what it takes to “make it” and is a part of the package of success. How we instill these values is a sensitive undertaking.

Topics that may require outside intervention

If you sense that a mentee is going to tell you something that has criminal involvement or knowledge of criminal involvement, stop him/her before you know any more. Suggest to the mentee that he/she needs to consider what will happen if, with this knowledge, you are going to be put in a position of having to involve the appropriate outside authority. Sometimes, the student-athlete is counting on you to help with a challenging situation. Sometimes he/she is bragging and other times, a situation may be critical. Pregnancy, abortion, incest, drugs, guns, violence, cheating, hunger, abuse, and neglect are some of the subjects that may prey on the minds--and lives--of these young people. In these situations, reach out to Terry.

A FINAL WORD OF ADVICE

If this is the first time you have been a mentor, you are justifiably nervous. If you have mentored before, you're apprehensive also, because this is a new experience. Whichever it is, remember that you will have lots of support from PCR and we are here to discuss your successes and problems. Finally, have fun! You are embarking on a very special, very important journey.

RESOURCES FOR MENTORS

Key PCR contacts:

Executive Director: Terry Dougherty
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Academic Coordinator: Emily Catlett
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This material was based off information developed by Marciene Mattleman, with assistance from Carol Fuchs. Philadelphia City Rowing took this valuable information and geared it towards rowing and mentoring. Also used as a reference was Kristie Probst's *Mentoring for Meaningful Results- Asset Building Tips, Tools and Activities for Youth and Adults*, created with input from Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership and Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities. PCR's mentor handbook was further revised by students in the spring 2015 Public Health 588 course at the University of Pennsylvania.