



YOUTH MENTORING **FRAMEWORK**



NRPA National Recreation
and Park Association

Because everyone deserves a great park



Introduction to the Youth Mentoring Framework

SUMMARY

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recognizes the impact substance misuse has on park and recreation (P&R) agencies and their communities. To address this issue, we are piloting a mentorship program for youth impacted by the opioid epidemic in rural Central Appalachia. During a three-year period, NRPA will be working with five communities to develop and implement a sustainable, evidence-based mentoring program targeting at-risk and high-risk youth living in rural areas. We conducted site visits and focus groups in each of the five locations to better understand specific challenges in relation to the opioid crisis and other community factors (poverty, substance misuse, cultural barriers, lack of youth programming, job opportunities, etc.). In addition to challenges, we also examined assets that these communities have at their disposal including community leaders, partners, facilities, activities, events, etc. This data, in combination with the Search Institute's evidence-based [Developmental Assets® Framework](#),¹ was used to inform NRPA's Youth Mentoring Framework.

NRPA YOUTH MENTORING FRAMEWORK

The Youth Mentoring (YM) Framework has been developed to help local park and recreation agencies craft their own unique, individualized mentoring programs. It is designed to help your agency leverage local park and recreation assets that build protective factors around at-risk youth, while also forming strong social connections and positive relationships to address trauma, adversity and other challenges that youth experience. The YM Framework can be used in both group and one-on-one mentoring settings, provides suggested guidance for weekly discussions, activities,² reflection and self-care.³ This is not a prescription and each local park and recreation agency should ensure that their mentoring program reflects the needs of youth in the local community, the unique culture and the assets at your organization's disposal.

In addition to being informed by NRPA's research in five communities, the YM Framework is rooted in the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Framework. The framework outlines 40 research-based, positive experiences and factors that influence youth development and lead to positive life outcomes. The more assets individuals have, the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviors.

Research shows that youth with a high number of assets are more likely to succeed academically, to be engaged in the community and to value diversity; these youth also are less likely to use alcohol and illicit drugs and to engage in violence and sexual activity. Twenty assets are external and include supports, relationships and opportunities young people need. The remaining assets are internal and consist of personal skills, commitments and values youth need to make good choices, take responsibility and become independent. NRPA incorporated eight overarching themes outlined in this research into the YM Framework, as depicted in figure 1.

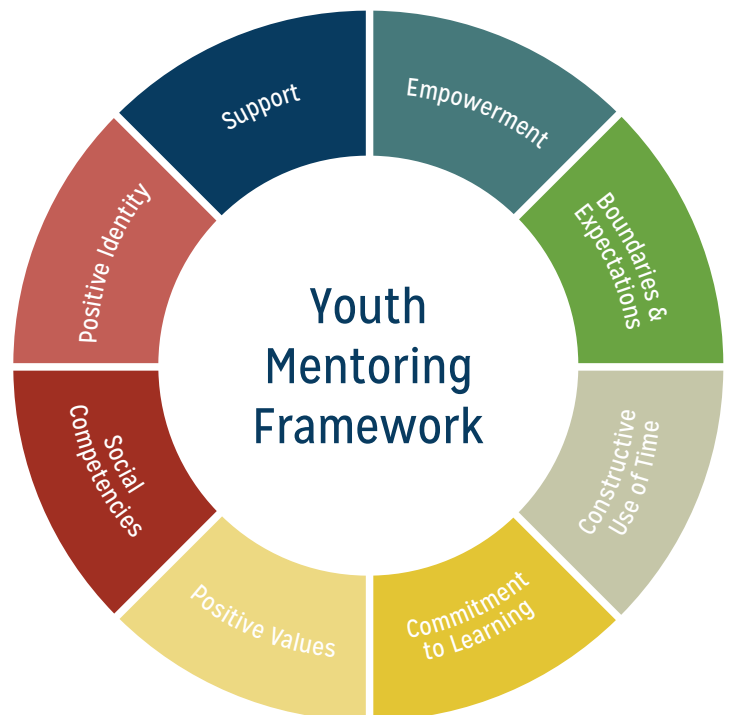


Figure 1. Eight evidence- and research-based themes to youth development are featured in NRPA's Youth Mentoring Framework.

GROUP MENTORING

Mentors and mentees should meet in a larger group setting on a weekly basis for 12 to 16 weeks. Each week, a theme or focus is provided. Mentors and mentees should discuss that week's topic, participate in a group activity² and end the session with a reflection of lessons learned and ways to apply these insights in mentees' lives. Mentors are encouraged to participate in the reflection activity with their mentee. At the next group meeting, conduct a short check-in regarding the previous week's theme and reflection. This facilitates continued building on important lessons and themes learned throughout the program. Periodically, self-care and mindfulness components³ are incorporated into the program to help mentors, program staff and mentees engage with each other. Family engagement also is key to developing positive youth assets. Plan two to three activities throughout the program that involve the mentees' family/caregiver.²



ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING

One-on-one mentoring should occur for one full year (mentors can continue to repeat or cycle through the framework). Together, matches discuss the theme of that week and/or any relevant topic specific to the mentee. This may include homework, school, the community, family, friends, sports, etc. Mentors should continually acknowledge and promote the mentee's strengths throughout the program. The pair is encouraged to participate in a relationship-building activity or event that is important to the mentee during each session (see suggested activities on page 11). Mentors are encouraged to participate in the reflection activity with their mentee. During the next group meeting, conduct a short check-in regarding the previous week's theme and reflection. The main purpose of this activity is to develop and strengthen the bond between the mentor and mentee by allowing direct, one-on-one time.⁴ Family engagement also is key to developing positive youth assets. Plan two to three activities throughout the program that involve the mentees' family/caregiver.²

¹ Search Institute, [Developmental Assets® Framework](http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets-framework), www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets-framework

² Suggestions for one-on-one and group activities are provided on page 11.

³ Ideas for mindfulness exercises and self-care are provided on page 12.

⁴ Mentors and mentees can meet for one hour on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis, depending on the capacity mentors and structure of each program.



Theme: Support

WHY: Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate and accept them.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION/SETTING THE STAGE

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn what is expected of them throughout the program.
- Learn about respect, trust and communication.

Session Format

Involve parents and caregivers in this week's meeting.

- Conduct introductions and discuss expectations for the program.
- Host week 1 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Today our goal is to talk about program expectations and building respect, trust and communication. What do these mean to you, and how does this impact your life?"*

- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Listen to your favorite musician/artist/band.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Ask mentees what they are looking forward to most about having a mentor.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 2: POSITIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn how to positively communicate with their parents/caregivers.
- Be willing to seek a parent/caregiver's advice and counsel.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 1 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 2 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"We will be learning about positive communication skills and how to use those skills when speaking with parents/caregivers. Can someone give an example of what that conversation may look like?"*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Practice positive communication with yourself and state one thing you are proud of accomplishing.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees practice positive communication with their mentors.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.



Theme: Empowerment

WHY: Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.

WEEK 3: SERVICE TO OTHERS

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn why serving in their community is important.
- Learn about the different ways they can serve in their own community.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 2 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 3 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Today we will talk about providing services to others in the community and why it is important. This could include helping a neighbor with yardwork, walking their dog, helping with a chore, etc. Does anyone already do tasks like these?"*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Go for a walk, either alone or with a friend.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees choose one community service project in which they would be interested in participating
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 4: SAFETY

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn how to practice safety at home, in school and around their community.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 3 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 4 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"This week, our goal will be to learn practicing safety at home, in school and the community. What does safety mean to you?"*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Do something today that makes you happy.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will name one safety rule they learned.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.



Theme: Boundaries & Expectations

WHY: Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules and encouragement to do their best.

WEEK 5: FAMILY, SCHOOL & NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Understand the boundaries, rules and consequences that may exist at home, in school and around their community.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 4 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 5 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"We will talk about boundaries, rules and consequences that exist at home, in school and in the community. Can someone share a rule or consequence they have in their home/school/community?"*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Spend some time outdoors in nature.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees give an example of a boundary/rule and a potential consequence.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 6: ADULT ROLE MODELS

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn the qualities of a positive role model.
- Be able to identify a positive role model in their lives or identify their ideal role model (this can be a celebrity, or just characteristics of an individual).

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 5 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 6 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"This week we will be discussing what a role model is, and the qualities or characteristics that make someone a positive role model. Does anyone have a person they look up to?"*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Watch this video on playfulness: [Self-Care Sunday: Playfulness](https://youtu.be/Sd0SQq_upgs) (youtu.be/Sd0SQq_upgs).

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will share qualities of a positive role model and identify their ideal role model (can be fictional).
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 7: POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn how their peers can impact them.
- Understand why it is important to have positive peers.
- Be able to identify a positive peer or identify their ideal peer.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 6 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 7 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Similar to last week, we will be discussing role models. This time, we will talk about peer role models and the qualities that make someone a positive peer. A peer is someone at your own level and would include your classmates and friends."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Take a break from social media and electronics for a few hours.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees share qualities of a positive peer and identify their ideal peer (real or fictional).
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 8: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Understand what it means to have high expectations and why they are important.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 7 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 8 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Today we will learn what it means to have high expectations and why they are important in all aspects of life."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Practice meditating or being in a quiet place for a few minutes without distractions.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will list one expectation they have of themselves.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.



Theme: Constructive Use of Time

WHY: Young people need opportunities – especially outside of school – to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.

WEEK 9: CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn about the different types of creative activities they can engage in, such as music, art, theater, etc.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 8 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 9 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"The goal of this week will be to explore different types of creative activities you can participate in. Creative activities involve more of your brain and imagination in comparison to physical activities, where you use more of your body. Creative activities may include drawing, painting or playing music."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Paint, draw or create something.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will share a creative activity in which they wish to participate.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 10: YOUTH PROGRAMS

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn about the different types of youth programs they can engage in such as sports, clubs, organizations, etc.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 9 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 10 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Many of you may already participate in youth programs available in your town. Can someone name an activity or program they are part of? Examples can include sports, clubs, organizations, school groups, etc."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Watch this video about connectedness: [Self-Care Sunday: Connectedness](https://bit.ly/2qjzjNF) (bit.ly/2qjzjNF).

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will share a youth program they wish to engage in.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.



Theme: Commitment to Learning

WHY: Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.

WEEK 11: ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION & SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn why it is important to do well in school and be actively engaged in learning.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 10 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 11 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Doing well in school and actively engaging/participating in learning is very important when it comes to your future. Education should not be taken for granted and is a privilege that many youth do not have."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Watch this video on mindfulness: [Self-Care Sunday: Mindfulness](#) (bit.ly/2Bd3Mzf).

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will list one subject or area they enjoy and want to succeed in at school.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 12: HOMEWORK HELP & READING FOR PLEASURE

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Be able to ask for help on their homework.
- Learn the importance of reading and identify a book they would like to read outside of school.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 11 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 12 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"This week, you will have the opportunity to discuss school and homework with your mentors. We will also talk about reading for fun outside of school. Raise your hand if you enjoy reading for fun."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Dedicate one hour to reading for fun.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will name and choose one book to read outside of school.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

Theme: Positive Values

WHY: Young people need to develop strong guiding values or principles to help them make healthy life choices.

WEEK 13: HONESTY & RESPONSIBILITY

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn about being honest and why it's important to tell the truth.
- Learn about being responsible and why it's important to accept and take personal responsibility.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 12 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 13 discussion.

Conversation starter: "Today's conversation will cover honesty and responsibility. What does being honest and responsible mean to you?"

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Watch this video about gratitude: [Self-Care Sunday: Gratitude](https://bit.ly/2MhuHjw) (bit.ly/2MhuHjw).

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will discuss why being honest and responsible is important to them.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

Theme: Social Competencies

WHY: Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions and to cope with new situations.

WEEK 14: SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION & RESISTANCE SKILLS

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn the dangers of substance use and abuse as well as strategies for resisting negative peer pressure and dangerous situations related to substance use.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 13 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 14 discussion.

Conversation starter: "This week, we will talk about the dangers of substance misuse and resisting negative peer pressure. Has anyone learned about drugs and/or peer pressure at school?"

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Watch the clouds, sunrise or sunset.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will practice resisting negative peer pressure related to substance use and resolving conflicts peacefully with their mentors.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.



Theme: Positive Identity

WHY: Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel that they have control of the things that happen to them.

WEEK 15: PERSONAL POWER & SELF-ESTEEM

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Learn how to feel they have control over things that happen to them.
- Learn ways to improve self-esteem.

Session Format

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 14 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 15 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"Our goal today will be to learn about personal power and positive self-esteem. Does anyone know what personal power or self-esteem are? Personal power is when you feel like you have control over the things that happen to you. Self-esteem is feeling good about yourself."*

- Lead an activity.
- Discuss weekly self-care tip.



Find three things you love about yourself and repeat it for five minutes.

- Mentor/mentee reflection.
- Mentees will share something that makes them feel good about themselves.
- If journals are provided, have the mentee complete a journal entry.

WEEK 16: WRAP UP/CLOSURE

Goals and Learning Objectives

In this session, mentees will:

- Be able to list two goals they'd like to achieve in the future.
- Share takeaways from participating in the group mentoring program.

Session Format

Involve parents and caregivers in this week's meeting.

- Check-in on the previous week's topic and reflection activity.
- Have someone share what they learned from week 15 and how it has been applied in real life.
- Host week 16 discussion.

Conversation starter: *"We will discuss setting goals for the future, and share what you learned during our time together in the program."*

- Lead a closing activity.

Sample Engagement Activities for Mentors and Mentees, Groups & Families

Use these suggestions to help plan activities for mentors and mentees. We encourage you to be as creative as possible and check in with mentees to ensure activities are of interest to them. We also encourage you to explore ways in which the activities can link back to weekly themes and goals.

Outdoor activities:

- Hiking
- Nature walks
- Navigation exercise
- Geocaching
- Fishing
- Swimming
- Gardening and planting trees and/or flowers
- Rock climbing

Team sports & games:

- Tag
- Field sports
- Basketball
- Dodgeball
- Relay race
- Scavenger hunt
- Hopscotch
- Jump rope

Cultural activities

www.education.com/activity/world-cultures

Nutrition education activities:

- [NRPA's Foods of the Month Curriculum](http://nrpa.org/CommitToHealth-Foods)
nrpa.org/CommitToHealth-Foods
- [NRPA's Community and Home Gardening Resources](http://nrpa.org/CommunityHomeGardening)
nrpa.org/CommunityHomeGardening

Social-emotional learning activities:

- [Centervention® resources](http://www.centervention.com/social-emotional-learning-activities)
www.centervention.com/social-emotional-learning-activities
- [School-based resources that can be used in out-of-school time programs](http://bit.ly/2FqgSKj)
bit.ly/2FqgSKj

Bullying prevention

www.pacer.org/bullying/classroom/elementary/activities

Substance/opioid use prevention:

- [Operation Prevention](http://www.operationprevention.com/classroom)
www.operationprevention.com/classroom

STEM/STEAM activities

Arts & crafts

Community service projects:

- Clean up a park
- Send a thank you letter to a service member
- Create care packages for the homeless
- Visit residents in a nursing home
- Help out at an animal shelter
- Do yard work for a neighbor
- Donate clothes/items to a shelter or Goodwill
- Take treats and cards to thank first responders

Team building activities

Mental health awareness:

- [Walk in Our Shoes lesson plans](http://walkinourshoes.org/content/Classroom_Lesson_Plans.pdf)
walkinourshoes.org/content/Classroom_Lesson_Plans.pdf
- [Mindfulness Exercises for Children](http://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/mindfulness-for-children.pdf)
www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/mindfulness-for-children.pdf

Suicide prevention:

- [Students Against Violence Everywhere \(SAVE\) suicide prevention and awareness](http://nationalsave.org/pdf/SAVE_Manual_SuicidePrevention.pdf)
nationalsave.org/pdf/SAVE_Manual_SuicidePrevention.pdf

Workforce training and related skills

Self-Care Suggestions & Resources



SELF-CARE RESOURCES

American Psychological Association,
[Self-Care Tips](#)

bit.ly/2MkP4g0

Alliance for a Healthier Generation,
[Self-Care Sunday Videos:](#)

[Self-Care Sunday: Gratitude](#)

bit.ly/2MhuHjw

[Self-Care Sunday: Mindfulness](#)

bit.ly/2Bd3Mzf

[Self-Care Sunday: Connectedness](#)

bit.ly/2qjzjNF

[Self-Care Sunday: Playfulness](#)

youtu.be/Sd0SQq_upgs

Active Minds, [Mental Health & Self-Care](#)

bit.ly/33xLapJ

SELF-CARE IDEAS

- Read a book
- Practice meditation
- Yoga
- Physical activity
- Explore nature/get outdoors
- Paint/draw/arts and crafts
- Take a bath
- Eat healthy foods
- Participate in your favorite hobbies
- Talk with a friend
- Limit time on social media platforms
- Listen to music
- Write in a journal
- Go for a drive
- Take a vacation or short getaway
- Have a spa day
- Ride a bike
- Learn a new skill
- Try a new food or restaurant
- Get enough sleep
- Volunteer for a cause you believe in
- Read Inspirational quotes/mantras



