

Title: How to Involve Parents and Guardians Successfully in Mentoring Programmes for Children?

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Number of participants: 16

Who are you and to which institution do you belong?

My name is Jasmin Azar and I have been working as a mentoring coordinator with kein Abseits! e.V. for more than four years. kein Abseits! e.V. is a German non-profit organisation (NPO) committed to supporting children facing adversity and enabling integrative encounters between people from different backgrounds. In close partnership with schools, universities and refugee shelters, kein Abseits! has been developing educational and integrative projects since 2011. The main goal of the NPO is to contribute to educational equality and a peaceful coexistence in Berlin.

Both local and refugee children are being promoted by the approach of kein Abseits! which combines experiential education and physical activities, 1-on-1 mentoring as well as vocational education. While the projects are mainly targeted at children aged 7 to 13, the community service project targets teenagers (former mentees) between 14 and 18 years to make their own first experiences as volunteers in their community.

As a result of the kein Abseits! programme, participants improve their self-confidence, as well as their social and linguistic skills and learn about the possibilities of participation in society. Friendships beyond any differences develop between peers as well as cross-generationally.

In addition, kein Abseits! e.V. provides impact-oriented trainings regarding the development and impact measurement of mentoring programmes.

kein Abseits! has already won several awards (among others “Hauptstadtpreis für Integration und Toleranz” - Berlin Award for Integration and Tolerance) and has been certified with the impact-label by Phineo.

Starting questions:

From the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring Programmes we know that for youth mentoring programmes the involvement of parents and guardians plays a crucial role for the mentoring relationship. But the extent to which parents and guardians engage during the programme can differ significantly in the different mentoring programmes. The session dealt with the following questions:

- How to involve parents' in mentoring programmes?
- On which scale of intensity parents should be engaged in the mentoring programme?
- What challenges have the session participants already experienced?

Sequence of content/methods:

The session started with a short introduction of each participant. The participants shared their experiences with parents and guardians in their mentoring programmes. In the following the different possibilities of how to involve parents following the mentoring programme process-map have been discussed (from the recruitment of children to the closure of the relationship). The main objective was to discuss the process step by step and how to engage parents during each step, understanding the challenges of each step and how parents experiences' can contribute to overcome some challenges.

Main results presented by the facilitator:

During the session the following challenges involving parents have been discussed: lack of motivation, language barriers and the mismatch between the parents' expectations for the future of their children compared to their child's expectations.

Results of the session:

To better involve parents during the mentoring programme the facilitator suggested to visit families and children at home, train mentors on how to listen to the mentee, organise appreciation events to celebrate the mentoring process with parents, mentors, mentees and coordinators.

Organisations could also provide certificates, trainings for mentors and parents/guardians together. That would promote the communication between the involved parties as well as help the mentor to figure out the child's needs.

Main statements highlighting the results of the discussion:

- “Empower the parents to be supportive for the kids even after the mentoring programmes.”
- “How do you solve expectations? - Give information since the very beginning.”
- “...mentors can support parents on how to support their child. With time parents start to better understand the role of the mentor and learn to appreciate that mentors are supporting their child. With time they start to see mentors as someone that helps. If the parents don't support what the mentor does, the involvement is less.”
- “It helps to make it clear to the parents that they are important in the mentoring relationship as well (...). This motivates a lot. Most parents want the best for their children, but they don't feel important enough in their role.”