

THE CONNECTICUT MENTORING ADVOCACY NETWORK

Background

The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership, a program of The Governor's Prevention Partnership, has been selected to be part of a new national effort, led by MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, to build local, state and national advocacy networks comprised of individuals who will promote mentoring with their legislators, congressional delegation and other policy makers. This national effort is based on the recognition that closing the gap between the number of children who could benefit from a mentor and those who have one (140,000 children in Connecticut alone) will require a concentrated, coordinated effort to influence public policy for the purpose of bringing about the resources and public support necessary to expand mentoring opportunities.

In Connecticut, for example, there is no line item in the state budget that supports mentoring and most of our legislators, like those in other states, are not well educated on 1) the benefits of mentoring, and 2) how mentoring can help advance critical state goals in the areas of education, criminal justice, teen pregnancy and substance abuse prevention, children's mental health and positive youth development.

Simultaneous with the formation of these advocacy networks, MENTOR is conducting a National Conversation on Mentoring with high level national leaders, mentoring experts, local mentoring providers and mentors. These individuals will be asked to address the barriers that stand in the way of expanding mentoring, prioritize the needs facing the mentoring community and provide input in the development of a plan of action to address those needs at both the state and federal levels. The result will be the creation of a national Mentoring Public Policy Agenda. A similar dialogue will occur in Connecticut.

What is the Connecticut Mentoring Advocacy Network?

The Mentoring Advocacy Network is a grassroots effort to harness the power and enthusiasm of individuals who are passionate about mentoring and bringing the benefits of mentoring to more children. The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership is looking for 100+ individuals who are willing to join this statewide network to both initiate and respond to opportunities to advance mentoring and secure additional funding for mentoring programs at the state and national levels in conjunction with our own state needs and the national Mentoring Public Policy Agenda.

What is a Mentoring Advocate Expected to Do?

A Mentoring Advocate Commitment Form is attached, but in general, individuals who agree to join the Network as an Advocate will be asked to do things like write letters to, call or visit with their elected officials to educate them about mentoring, contact them to ask for their support on specific mentoring legislation that may arise at the state or congressional level, write letters to the editor to promote mentoring and work with CMP to gain more public attention to their mentoring programs etc.

Recognizing that many mentoring program staff and mentors, have not been involved in these types of activities before, the Connecticut Mentoring Partnership and MENTOR will provide a wide range of support including:

- A Mentoring Advocacy Kit with basic “how-to” information on being an effective Advocate;
- A web-based system that will provide 1) timely alerts about opportunities and legislation that will advance mentoring, 2) easy to use on-line links to contact your elected officials, 3) sample letters to the editor and position statements on specific issues, and 4) briefing papers on topics such as the benefits of mentoring, effective mentoring practices etc.;
- Workshops and personal TA on how to be an effective Advocate and gain public attention for your program and its benefits to youth;
- Someone who is more experienced in these activities to mentor you in this role;
- Incentives such as free training or resource materials as thank you’s for individuals who become Mentoring Advocates.

The overall time commitment is small, but timeliness of response will be critical, especially in supporting mentoring related bills in Connecticut or Congress, so we are asking that individuals who are willing to become Advocates recognize that this is an important commitment. We are looking for committed activists, not names on a list!

For more information, please call Jill Spinetti
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