

## FAQ for Parents

### **How do volunteers go about building a mentoring relationship with their mentee?**

KidStart provides young people with the opportunity to develop a supportive friendship with a caring, vetted adult to increase their resilience against life challenges they may be facing. Here's a few ways our mentors do just that:

- Having fun together through activities in the community
- Being a role model
- Taking their time and having patience as the friendship develops
- Giving youth voice and choice in how time is spent together
- Being encouraging and expressing confidence in their mentees
- Being an active listener and asking questions (but not always requiring answers)
- Focusing on a mentee's strengths

### **What activities can mentors and mentees do together?**

Mentors and mentees can do a lot together! Low cost and no cost activities are encouraged.

Arts and crafts, cooking projects, visiting museums, bowling, visiting the climbing gym, playing games, fishing, going on bike rides, walking on forest trails, swimming, visiting the beach, playing disc golf, and geocaching are all activities that our mentors and mentees like to do together.

Mentors and mentees are most often connected based on their similar activity interests and bring their own creativity in coming up with activity ideas.

There are some activities that are not allowed as part of KidStart, including: extreme sports, certain watersport activities, ATV and motorbike riding, and overnight activities such as camping. Mentors are provided with a more detailed list of unallowable activities.

### **What will the first meeting between a mentor and my child be like?**

Before your child meets their mentor, you will be invited in for a conversation between the coordinator, potential mentor, and you, the parents/guardians. If you and the mentor agree you would like to move forward with the match, the coordinator will set up the first meeting between the mentor and your child. The coordinator, mentor, you, and your child are all part of the first meeting between your child and the mentor. This first meeting is about an hour long and happens wherever you and your child are most comfortable. During this meeting, the coordinator will help with introductions, and discuss the role of the mentors, scheduling, communication, activity ideas, and the rights of young people in KidStart. After this meeting, mentors will coordinate primarily with you for their weekly hangouts with your child.

## **How long will my child have their KidStart mentor?**

We ask our mentors to commit to their mentoring role for at least a year. Exactly how long depends on everyone involved.

## **How does a mentor-mentee relationship end?**

At KidStart, the mentor-mentee relationships are all unique and open-ended. Some may last a few months, others last for many years, and with parent/guardian permission some may continue outside of the formal KidStart program. If it ever feels like a relationship is coming to an end, our coordinators are there to provide guidance, including:

- Preparing to end the relationship – answering questions, explanations, discussion of what future contact may look like
- Reflecting on the relationship – looking back on the fun had together, sharing appreciations of each other, and talking about how everyone is feeling about the change in the mentor/mentee's time together
- Planning a final outing or communicating through a card or letter

## **What does mentor screening involve? Will my child be safe with the volunteer mentor?**

Volunteer mentors are thoroughly screened and interviewed by John Howard staff. Mentors must provide 4 references, an annual driving record, 2 criminal record checks (1 from the RCMP and 1 from the BC Ministry of Justice), 2 interviews, and a home assessment. KidStart also provides ongoing training, support, and supervision to volunteer mentors.

## **Can we be involved in choosing the mentor for my child?**

Yes. The KidStart coordinators involve parents/guardians and potential mentees in choosing just the right mentor. Age, interests, and personality of both the mentee and mentor are collaboratively considered before making an introduction. Before your child meets their mentor, you will have a chance to meet them and decide if you think they have the potential for a good connection with your child.

## **What is my role as a parent/guardian?**

To meet with the John Howard KidStart coordinator to discuss the program, answer questions, and sign permission slips. Parents/guardians also coordinate with the mentor for pick up and drop off times. It is also helpful for parents/guardians to remind your child of planned meeting times with their mentor.

## **Who makes arrangements for outings?**

The volunteer mentor will arrange a time that is good for you both. The mentor will pick up your child and drop them off.

### **Do we have to pay?**

No. If you are in the position to do so, any help toward the cost of an activity is great but is not required! John Howard KidStart mentors are encouraged to keep expenses to a minimum.

### **Is KidStart counselling?**

This program is not counselling or social work. Volunteers are positive role models and additional support for your child as they grow up.

### **What is the difference between KidStart and a program like Big Brothers & Big Sisters (BBBS)?**

These 2 mentoring programs have a lot of similarities in that they both offer 1-to-1 mentoring for children and youth who could use extra support. The main difference is that Big Brothers & Big Sisters is not offered in the Campbell River area, and in the Comox Valley area is only offered as a school-based option, rather than happening out in the community.

### **Can you provide information about other resources available to me?**

Yes. Contact your area KidStart coordinator.  
Call 250-203-3111 for Campbell River KidStart.  
Call 250-898-4842 for Comox Valley KidStart.

### **Is there a waitlist?**

Yes. In the Comox Valley it's a 6-month to 2-year wait and in the Campbell River area it is a 2-year to 5-year wait. The good news is that mentees and their families love being involved in the program, so it's well worth the wait. Many matches continue into the teen years, and some develop into lifelong friendships. While your child is on the waitlist, you can ask the coordinator for assistance finding other recreational or social activities in your community.

### **How do I refer my child to KidStart?**

Many KidStart referrals come from professionals (counsellors, teachers, support workers, EAs, social workers, etc.) connected to a child or family. If you would like a professional to refer your child, please have them fill out the [referral form](#) and email to [mail@jhsni.bc.ca](mailto:mail@jhsni.bc.ca) or fax to 250-286-3650 in Campbell River or 250-338-6568 in the Comox Valley.

Additionally, you are welcome to make a referral for your own child by emailing [mail@jhsni.bc.ca](mailto:mail@jhsni.bc.ca) or calling your area KidStart coordinator.

Call 250-203-3111 for Campbell River KidStart.  
Call 250-898-4842 for Comox Valley KidStart.

### **What information will you collect about my child?**

We need some personal information so we can help them as best we can. We promise to only collect the information that we need. This information will only be used for reasons you agree to. The only time we must share your information is when we are required to by law, or when we need

to share it to protect your child or others from serious harm. We will tell you exactly what information we need, why we need it, how we will use it, and who else will see it. We promise to keep this information secure. Sometimes we use information for reporting and evaluation purposes. This information will remove anything that could identify your child, like their name.

**Will my child’s privacy be protected?**

Yes! All the information we keep is locked away or password protected. Additionally, mentors agree not to share photos of their mentees on social media.

**Who do we contact if we have any questions about privacy?**

You talk to your child’s mentor, your KidStart coordinator, or your coordinator’s manager. You can also contact Tyler Fainstat, John Howard’s Privacy Officer, at [mail@jhsni.bc.ca](mailto:mail@jhsni.bc.ca)

**What if we have a complaint?**

Talk to your child’s mentor, KidStart coordinator, or your coordinator’s manager. If after doing so you are not satisfied, you can contact John Howard’s executive director at [mail@jhsni.bc.ca](mailto:mail@jhsni.bc.ca)

**Who do I contact if I have other questions?**

Your child’s mentor or KidStart coordinator.