



STARS Mentoring Program: Frequently Asked Questions

How do I gain school and teacher buy-in?

Creating relationships that gain buy-in is essential to program success. We create buy-in by:

- Ensuring that at least one principal sign the MOU and be fully on board with the program
- Developing relationships with counselors, office staff, other teachers (since these are the folks who can support the day-to-day logistics of the program)
- Asking students and parents/guardians to advocate for the program at their schools
- Working to make the program a part of the school culture. We can accomplish this by providing the program to all classes in one grade level, or working with the school to offer community service hours or school credit to mentors, attending back to school nights, and partnering with other extra-curricular activities already present at the school.
- Working with the school to ensure mentors are maintaining grades and you're supporting them in their classes. Go the extra mile (bring thank you cards, coffee, program t-shirts, etc. to staff who support the program. Check in with teachers to ensure mentors are still doing well in their classes)

How do I ensure student participation?

Engaging STARS Mentors throughout the year is an essential part of MentorLife. Here are some ideas to help STARS Coordinators engage STARS mentors.

Weekly STARS Mentor Meetings:

- Meet EVERY week with STARS mentors, even if the STARS mentoring session doesn't take place. Check-in with your mentors, reflecting, and discussing the wins and opportunities over the past week.
- Find ways to build in team activities and games to keep your mentors engaged

Monthly STARS Mentor Meetings:

- Hosting monthly meetings and activities to build deeper relationships among your mentors. To gain buy-in from your mentors, ask them for feedback regarding activities and ideas for the meetings. Try hosting a meeting outside of the school environment to create a more informal, relaxed environment.



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Teambuilding Events:

- Are a great opportunity to get the students together to work on & incorporate the lessons they have learned through their mentorship role, while strengthen the relationships between them.
- Activities can and will be based on your current environment & budget but think outside of the box and get creative. Some examples could include:
 - Hiking
 - Bowling
 - Picnic
 - Service Project
 - Volunteering
 - Hosting a Guest Speaker

Do I need a Program Coordinator?

Yes, having a program coordinator is important to the overall success of your program because they will receive extensive training around mentoring and classroom management. They also serve as a mentor and educator to your teen mentors so they can feel confident and have the skills needed to work with their mentees.

Where can I secure funding?

There are a variety of ways to seek funding to cover the license fee. Those options vary widely and can include things like:

- Crowdfunding or Kick-Starter Campaigns to bring STARS to your community
- Fundraising events
- Corporate or private sponsorships
- Foundation grants- we recommended searching for options in your local community. To find these opportunities check similar organizations' websites or 990's online to see where they get their funding. You can also use formal grant search lists like GrantStation, GrantWatch or GrantGopher (all paid subscriptions) or simply use Google and search with keywords like "grants for mentoring" or "positive youth development", "social-emotional learning", "protective factors in youth", or "character development."
- Local county or state government grants or state offices will have funding opportunities for youth development and you can sign up to receive notifications for funding.
- Federal grants- there are many federal grant agencies that offer grants for mentoring and positive youth development work (example, Office of Juvenile Justice and



Where can I secure funding? (Continued)

Delinquency Prevention, Federal Youth Services Bureau, and Office of Health and Human Services). We recommend routinely searching or monitoring the grants.gov website for relevant funding opportunities.

I can't afford the program / I am worried I won't be able to implement the STARS program due to the price.

We know and understand that funding is always a challenge. We also know that while most funders, key decision makers, and donors may say they understand the benefits of mentoring especially peer mentoring, many do not understand all of the benefits, unique value compared to more prescriptive teaching programs or the real cost of a structured high dosage mentoring program. The cost per student for STARS is right in line with the national and local average per student cost of mentoring. In fact, depending on the dosage STARS is significantly less than most programs. With that being said, with our cost structure, we believe you get better outcomes, schoolwide impact, and more bang for your buck if you can serve a larger number of students with STARS. Because most of our cost is fixed, our sales model allows you to purchase a license to serve up to 120 youth. The fewer students that you serve, the higher the cost per student. Now approaching 120-days of Covid-19, we have learned that we can accomplish a lot more virtually than we originally thought. Therefore, FF will be offering a slightly lower cost license with virtual trainings and site visits as opposed to on-site. Beyond that, you may need some help with helping funders and decision makers understand the unique value and the short-term and long-term benefits of a cross age peer mentoring program such as STARS. We can help you do that. However, if cost is truly your only barrier, then STARS right now, may not be the solution for you.

How does program implementation logistics play out when the schools are not geographically close?

This has been solved by:

- Program coordinators providing transportation to mentors to get to the mentees' school
- The school providing transportation (district mini-bus)
- Parents or students who drive transporting others (with permission). There may also be public transportation that works for students if they are provided with bus or transit tickets.

What resources do you have or provide to meet the needs of our bilingual students?

- FRIENDS FIRST partners with an outside translation service to ensure that mentor and mentee consent forms, STARS pre and post evaluations, and MentorLife® Summit (MLS) & the STARS National Conference (SNC) online registrations are offered in English and Spanish.
- Students may request translation services at MLS and SNC.



What resources do you have or provide to meet the needs of our bilingual students? (Continued)

- Translation services are offered at all Parent Engagement and Community Engagement events.

How does the training for our staff and students work?

- FRIENDS FIRST provides a three-day, comprehensive STARS Program Coordinator training, where new PCs can learn more about the program basics, the research behind peer mentoring, and practice STARS sessions through “teach-back” activities.
- FRIENDS FIRST can provide training to STARS mentors in two different ways:
 - FRIENDS FIRST will send a trainer to your site/school and will facilitate a full-day (5-6 hour) training and certification with your STARS mentors.
 - FRIENDS FIRST will facilitate a training with your STARS Program Coordinators so they are equipped to train and certify their STARS mentors.