

Enhanced Practice: Community Events

Overview:

In strength-based mentoring rooted in a Positive Youth Development framework, we work to foster the development of the “5 C’s of PYD”, as discussed in Module 3 of the [Pre-Match Training Toolkit](#). The 5 C’s are qualities that have been linked to positive outcomes - character, connection, caring, competence, and confidence. One strategy to promote this is the intentional participation in community events that relate to the interests, talents, and aspirations of the mentee. Match support staff facilitate the participation of the mentor and the mentee in a selection of community events during the first year of their match. This Tip Sheet addresses implementation of Community Events as an enhanced practice. Be sure to review the Tip Sheet on Community Service activities as well (see [Enhanced Match Support](#) resources).

Key Components of Implementation

Most community-based matches will be doing activities together in the community. This enhanced practice has a subtle distinction in its intentionality. Community events are tied to the child’s interests, assets, and aspirations. They also build on the content introduced in Modules 3 and 4 of the [Pre-Match Training Toolkit](#) by focusing on exposing the mentee to opportunities to explore new places and meet new people. Planning for these opportunities should include the following points:

- Experiences that relate to the child’s interests and aspirations,
- Shared decision making in selecting the activities in which they will participate,
- Exposure to people, places, and activities that are new for the mentee,
- Opportunity to interact with other people in the community, and;
- Reflection about the activity with each other and with match support.

As matches plan activities, encourage them to plan activities that take place both in the youth’s immediate neighborhood, as well as in new areas and communities. Identifying activities in the mentee’s community can help them identify natural mentors (connections) who are readily accessible in their day-to-day life, as well as to build life skills they can use in their community. This can foster empowerment as the mentor is able to promote, recognize, and celebrate healthy choices made by the mentee. Something as simple as going to the local grocery store and picking food to cook for a meal together helps youth to practice making choices in an environment where they may later be faced with much tougher moments of decision-making. It also helps youth to identify assets within their own community.

By doing so, the mentor provides opportunities to develop confidence in their abilities to master their environment and empower youth to make choices and feel a sense of control and ownership of the activity, both “at home” and then anywhere. Planning activities in areas of the community that are new or unfamiliar to a mentee provides an opportunity to practice navigating new situations with the support of their mentor. This also serves to expand their awareness of the resources and opportunities that are available to them.

Examples of Community Events as an Enhanced Activity

Community Arts Festival: A child who enjoys doing arts and crafts might enjoy an afternoon at the community arts festival, talking to some of the artists about their crafts, and spending time with people in this shared community space.

College Basketball Game: The simple opportunity to go to a basketball game can be wonderful for anyone who enjoys the game. Consider games with an event attached such as a pep rally that includes an opportunity to talk with the players and walk out on the court.

Benefit Walk/Run: An event that brings the community together around a common cause also includes an opportunity to interact with other participants. Discuss the experience in terms of what they appreciated but also how they contributed as member of the group to an overall goal.

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House or Community Tours: Learning about other communities is always fun and for someone who has an interest in architecture, interior design, or urban development this can be especially rewarding. These activities generally involve a group of people with similar interests.

College Tours: Walking around a college campus can be really fun for a child or youth. For someone who has never done this but is interested in someday attending college, it can also be a bit daunting. Participating in a tour with other people that are interested in learning more about the college takes the experience of visiting the campus one step further.

Role of Match Support

- ✓ **Initial Match Meeting:** Introduce the concept of participating in community events and the service activity and discuss some of the options that might be considered. Make the connection to the interests and assets being discussed. Encourage the match to jot down some ideas.
- ✓ **Share information and suggestions:** Having a reference for ideas and opportunities will be helpful to the match as they plan their community activities. Keep a calendar of community events updated and provide specific suggestions. Remember to provide the information well in advance for planning. Share links to community calendars and local newspapers with mentors and encourage them to discuss the opportunities with their mentee.
- ✓ **Facilitate reflection and planning:** Match support is tasked with facilitating a deeper experience by inviting mentor, match, and parent to reflect about the event they attended. Ask questions such as: What other people did you see there? Did you talk with anyone? What did you/your child enjoy about the event? These questions allow the mentor and the child to consider their experience and can inform what types of activities they will select in the future.
- ✓ **Use community events as a goal setting opportunity:** Consider helping the match connect the community events they select with the concept of goal planning from Module 4 of the [Pre-Match training](#). Encourage the mentor to engage the youth in assessing their growth and identify events that can help them further develop a skill or goal. This reflection fosters self-awareness for the youth and provides an opportunity to celebrate the milestones.
- ✓ **Provide encouragement and reminders:** It is match support that will ultimately be responsible for guiding this enhancement in the match experience. Conduct periodic audits to determine which matches have been engaged in community events and which ones you'll want to follow-up with and provide suggestions.