

ROOTS Project | Genealogist Mentors' Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteer Mentors' copy

Your rights

- Receive training, support, and appreciation throughout your volunteer service
- Have Labor & Industries insurance coverage during volunteer shifts
- Receive a Burlington Public Library Card at no charge
- Have access to the tools and supplies needed to support the project
- Be recognized and respected for your service

Your responsibilities

- Attend ROOTS orientation sessions for genealogist mentors
- Authorize and pass a criminal background check
- Notify the project coordinator of any changes to your contact information or availability
- Notify the project coordinator if you are unable to meet at a scheduled time
- Notify the project coordinator if you are having difficulty in your volunteer duties or need assistance
- Be on time for scheduled meetings
- Consistently attend weekly meetings with the teens (approximately 20)
- Read, understand, sign, and submit the Genealogist Mentor Agreement
- Report situations where the teen's safety or well-being is at risk directly to the student's teacher
- Ask for help when needed
- Accept guidance from program staff or the teen's teacher
- Refrain from contacting or seeing any teen ROOTS participant outside of the ROOTS program

Philosophy

- Respect all participants, including other mentors and the teen participants
- Keep an open mind and accept different points of view
- Participate in the project with a positive, enthusiastic, and supportive attitude, so that all participants thrive in a productive collaborative atmosphere
- Encourage teen researchers to take the lead, practice new skills, and develop confidence

Expectations

- At the close of each session, please review the next homework assignments with the teen researcher so the student is clear on the assignment's objectives. At the next meeting, build in time to discuss the homework topic to assure the teen understands the concepts before proceeding to the next lesson.
- Explore the various resources available at BPL. Encourage teen participants to check out books, educational DVDs, and materials related to their research and for the pleasure of reading/watching/listening.
- Maintain an (anonymous) activity log of materials and resources used at BPL to be submitted at the close of the project for use in measuring which resources were most helpful to the project.
- Maintain confidentiality. Information pertaining directly or indirectly to any staff member, customer, or volunteer shall not be repeated or discussed inside or outside the library. Our commitment to confidentiality has deep roots, not only in the law, but also in the ethics and practices of librarianship. The American Library Association's Code of Ethics says, "We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted."

Qualities of successful Genealogist Mentors

Make a personal commitment

Genealogist Mentors have a genuine desire to inspire young people to participate in and successfully complete the ROOTS project. Mentors create an encouraging, supportive environment for the teens. It's important to "be there" with the teens long enough and consistently enough to make a difference to them.

Have respect for individuals, their abilities, and their right to make their own choices in life

Mentors who convey respect for the teen and invite them into a relationship of equals win the trust of their teen researcher.

Listen and accept different points of view

Most people can find someone who will give advice or express opinions. It's much harder to find someone who will suspend his or her own judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions, and giving teens an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.

Empathize with another person's struggles

Effective mentors feel *with* people without feeling pity *for* them. Even without having had the same life experience, they can empathize with a young person's feelings and personal problems.

See solutions and opportunities as well as barriers

Effective mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by teen with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of many conflicting issues and point out sensible alternatives.

Be flexible and open-minded

Effective mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop, and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their teen co-researcher, learn new things that are important to teens (music, styles, philosophies, etc.), and even to be changed by this relationship.