**“When I Grow Up”**

**A Subset of Youth of Tomorrow**

**Program Guide**

**Program Overview**

The majority of students who are blind and visually impaired have never met a blind or visually impaired adult. Without blind adult role models, students may not think about what they will be when they grow up. Instead, they wonder what they CAN be. “When I Grow Up” will be a part of Youth of Tomorrow that will help young adults “see" their future possibilities by getting to know adults who are blind or visually impaired who have succeeded in a sighted world. Each time a young adult who is blind or visually impaired is delayed in reaching a developmental milestone that their sighted peers enjoy--such as riding a bike, reading a menu, or recognizing friends on the playground-- students suffer a loss and a blow to their self-confidence. In fact, adults who are blind or low vision often report that early feelings of inadequacy translated into low self-esteem that impacted both their social and financial security. Rarely, do these youths with vision loss have the chance to meet adults who are similarly challenged but have achieved personal and professional success. "When I Grow Up" will help transition students learn about the daily lives of independent and productive adults who are blind and visually impaired. Adult mentors will provide guidance and advice to the young adults and help them gain the confidence needed to achieve whatever they want in life. If there is a need, this program may expand to include younger students as well. Having the chance to meet successful adults who are blind, or have low vision, visit them at their work sites, learn about their childhood, education and family life will give these young people role models during their formative years to gain the confidence they need to live independently.

**Program Participants**

One adult mentor will be paired with one student. The transition specialist will be involved in finding adult mentors by reaching out to groups dedicated to the blind such as the Shared Paths group, Silicon Valley Council of the Blind, The National Federation of the Blind local chapters and Facebook groups dedicated to blindness. Communication and relationship building will be set up between the adults who are blind and visually impaired and the young adult. Adults must be able to commit to mentoring for a school year (9 months) with communication via phone, email or telepresence at least twice a month and a minimum of two in person visits. One at a job site and the other visit will be a group visit at one of our Vista Center locations. The adult mentors may contact the young adult via email, telepresence (Zoom), or by phone. In person visits are strongly encouraged but can be difficult to arrange based on schedules and transportation. The Transition Program Specialist will be involved in the recruiting of youth participants and adult mentors and for feedback purposes after the program is completed. Parents will be allowed to attend meetings (if they choose to) with the mentor except for the vocational visit for program evaluation purposes.

**Requirements for Adult Volunteer Role Models**

Volunteer mentors who are blind or visually impaired will complete training on HIPAA requirements and also complete a Department of Justice Background check which will be arranged and paid for by Vista Center. Mentors will call or email the transition program specialist and will sign up as a volunteer on our website. After the sign up process is complete the mentor will then receive paperwork to get fingerprints scanned at their local LiveScan facility. Vista Center will provide paperwork for reimbursing the mentor for fingerprints and then the mentor will receive a link to complete HIPAA training online.

**Steps in the Program**

**Training and Screening**

The mentor will fill out a form answering questions regarding employment, hobbies, location and references. These questions will help the transition program specialist get a better idea of how to match the young adult with the role model.

The role model will participate in a training via telepresence or by appointment to help break the ice and go over what is acceptable behavior when mentoring the youth or young adult. The transition program specialist will periodically check in (once a month via email or telepresence) with mentors to see how the program is going and if they need further assistance.

**Student Mentor Matching**

Parents or the participant will complete a form designed to gather information about the student’s lifestyle, hobbies, activities and family support. This information will be used to match the student with the appropriate role model. These forms will also be used to evaluate the experiences gained from meeting adult mentors.

**Visit with Role Models and Youth**

One adult will be paired with a youth via phone/teleconference or other appropriate location. The youth and the mentor will decide what type of transportation they will need in order to meet. The purpose of the visit is to share how the blind adult performs daily tasks as well as to talk about childhood experiences as a blind or visually impaired youth.

Discussion topics will include:

childhood

school

family life

social life

vocational experience

technology

transportation

preparing foods

handling money

managing personal care and health needs

other transitions you deal with throughout life

self advocacy

self determination

obtaining housing

The visit will be a relaxed conversation. Using open-ended questions will help to facilitate a back and forth dialogue. Questions may include:

· Try to use a fun icebreaker to start the conversation

· Have you ever wondered how someone who is blind shops and prepares food?

· When I go shopping or go to a store it is important I know how to manage my money. Would you like me to show you how I fold bills and also check bills with my bill reader or phone app?

· I really enjoy spending time on my hobby. What are your interests and can I show you how I \_\_\_\_?

· Other questions can be practiced during workshops once a month or via appointment with the transition program specialist

This visit will help the youth to start to gain confidence about living independently as an adult who is blind or visually impaired and role models will encourage the youth to ask questions and to be curious about all aspects of life.

**Vocation Focused visit**

The vocational visit will be between the adult role models and youth participants. The meeting may occur at the role model’s work or volunteer setting for the purpose of job shadowing to experience what a working adult encounters daily. The adult role model will explain their job or volunteer work and briefly why they enjoy their work. The youth will learn what it takes to perform the job and other aspects of how to be productive as a blind or visually impaired adult. Topics and appropriate demonstrations may include:

- Education needed to be successful and how the role model succeeded in their educational pursuits

- Technology used for the job or volunteer work

- Tips for being successful in a sighted work environment. Including, social skills, how and when to ask for help, self-advocacy skills

 **Program Evaluation**

The program success will be evaluated by the Transition Program Specialist by completing a brief survey. Parents will also complete a brief survey.

The students will be given a pre-program and post-program survey which will be used as a discussion tool to gather their perceptions before and after the meeting with the blind or visually impaired role models.

**Recruitment for Youth and Young Adults for When I Grow Up**

Youth and adults ages 14-24 must express an interest in learning about vocational training and independence from another successful individual who is blind or visually impaired.

Youth will be recruited via teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, rehabilitation counselors, and other blindness organizations.

Youth and young adults will fill out a form with hobbies and interests.

A group visit can be arranged at any of the Vista Center locations or other offsite location of the youth/mentor’s choice.

Parent or adult must be present during in person visit but they don’t have to interact.

If it is a phone or telepresence visit adult does not need to be present but the phone topics should be related to transition.

If the youth is curious or needs help about how to approach and learn about these topics we can discuss them during workshops and by appointment with the Transition Program Specialist.

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 (Mentor Matching Form)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pn1Gt_3kWJhOFZDP2FZL23Ha6XAjEZnmqS4psyB7z3M/edit>

(Mentee application form)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1fT-B720cdzC8_3d0LXfvibHTqG4-gGDpuIZ7rKzlmY8/edit?usp=forms_home&ths=true>

(Mentor Reference form)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zsiATdOjNJErD03FKBJqaPVQYuxzkBh87qXO3TIWwxc/edit>

(Mentor application form)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1MQ1s_QqJG84BPDmN0npvwPB3bgwyYhF5QzEUTFJLFds/edit?usp=forms_home&ths=true>

(Mentee matching form)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1lY0cO0Iq7O-0MdR2ESkBGwOq2mMrumK16GcfvZWAq5o/edit>

(WIGU follow up)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18vrQV56eGplK0jvI36LkgitqKTYYlhpqtWZHF2B58xs/edit>

(WIGU before mentor survey)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/17xTl5pG9twhQG4AyHBUdURIqoPLTLe3CiHChsYvEq44/edit>