

Friendship. Support. Practical assistance.

CHESED MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentors provide essentials such as friendship, support, and practical assistance to returning citizens who are making a healthy transition to society. Chesed (kindness—Hebrew) matches an individual preparing for release with a mentor who maintains contact throughout the pre- and post-release transition. Mentors spend time with their mentee at the prison and continue to meet with them following release. Mentees benefit from encouragement in finding appropriate housing or employment and support during the ups and downs of adjusting to life outside of jail. Each mentor is part of a team that includes a caseworker and other professionals who are working towards the success of an individual inmate.

Our program, which works with the HOPE program, is a formal mentoring program that is considered a national research site. The documentation of the mentor and mentee experiences provides data for use by others—including 50 similar pilot programs around the country—and others who hope to replicate the Program.

The program is designed to improve outcomes for people returning to communities from prisons and jails.

Contact:
Chesed Program
The Aleph Institute
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412.421.0111

www.alephne.org

To the world, you may just be somebody. But, to somebody, you just may be the world.

ROLE MODEL
listen
ADVISER
encouragement
MENTOR
Helper
FRIEND
confidante
COACH
ALLY
Support
TEACHER

CHESED

AFTERCARE MENTOR

LIFE COACHING PROGRAM



ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Nurturing

“Sow an act and you reap a habit.
Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

PUTTING the past behind.

Moving on from incarceration is a daunting step and can be a very challenging life transition for many people. A mentor or life coach can play an immeasurably important role in supporting an individual in their journey to become a productive member of society. A listener. A fan. A mentor.

RECIDIVISM is the journey back to incarceration.

Many former inmates re-offend and return to jail after their release. They often recidivate when they are not prepared to reintegrate into society. Having people return to jail again and again is also very expensive for taxpayers. However, there are ways to help to prevent recidivism. You can play role in that prevention by becoming a mentor.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 35% of the general jail population avoids recidivism.
- 82% of male **Mentee** pre-release graduates avoid recidivism.
- 84% of female **Mentee** pre-release graduates avoid recidivism.



“I believe that it is each and every person’s responsibility to reach out to someone and help them. If the ex-offender is serious about

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coac Support RELATIONSHIP FRIEND Helper TEACHE CONFIDENT COUNSELOR mento gear ADVISER us listen PROBLEM SOLVER ROLE Futur

WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

The Mentor/Life Coaching Program aims to support a successful return to society for the formerly incarcerated and to generally reduce recidivism. Our hope is that, through mentoring before and after release, returning citizens will take new and positive paths to productive lives after incarceration. Mentoring is a significant



component of the Chesed Pre- and Post-Release Programs. The Aleph Institute has demonstrated that inmates

receiving appropriate support and resources experience a lower rate of recidivism. In Allegheny County, 65% of the men and women in the general jail population return to incarceration.

Since October 2006, more than 2,300 males have participated in the supportive mentor Pre-Release Program which provides inmates with tools and preparation for life on the outside. Only 18% of male mentee graduates have returned to jail. More than 1,100 women have participated in the mentor Pre-Release Program. Female graduates recidivate at a rate of only 16%. Our goals include matching mentors with approximately 100 mentees on a rolling basis each year.

QUALITIES OF A SUCESSFUL MENTOR

A successful mentor is someone who can actively focus on the needs of their mentee through active listening and a commitment of availability within the program's structure. Mentors aim to develop relationships of trust and respect by being supportive, encouraging and positive. Objectivity about personal aspects of

the mentee is essential. A mentor must adhere to the similar tenants of respect and confidentiality held up in professions such as teaching, counseling, or medicine. Training is provided to prepare mentors to work appropriately with their mentees by establishing appropriate boundaries for time spent together before and after release. This includes creating a Mentee Activity Plan to shape employment and skill goals.

MENTEES are participants in the Second Chance Re-entry Program. To prepare for work with their mentor, these motivated inmates participate in a required orientation and training session provided by Aleph staff and must sign the mentee participation form.

What should mentors expect?

Thorough preparation is available for those interested in serving as mentors. The first step is application to the program. The initial criteria for acceptance include commitments to:

- Volunteer 1 to 3 hours per week for a period of 12-18 months.
- Visit a mentee in the prison at least twice a month for a six-month period OR the length of their incarceration (whichever is shorter).
- Attend 10-12 continuing education workshops, held monthly in convenient area locations. A roundtable format provides mentor/coaches with the chance to share experiences, challenges, and success stories.
- Attend, with the mentee, monthly Aftercare Mentor Support Group meetings for the duration of the mentor-mentee match.
- Schedule activities with the mentee on a regular basis to support the mentee and to make the commitment manageable for the volunteer mentor.
- Live an exemplary life before the mentee.



Give people the time and the tools and they can be true

HOW DO I BECOME A MENTOR?

Certainly being a Chesed mentor may be challenging. However, what greater reward can be realized than having a positive impact on the life of another person? In addition, mentors may also indirectly impact citizens who might have otherwise been crime victims. A mentor may influence the lives of their mentee's children by encouraging their mentee to spend more time with their families.

Aleph Institute appreciates the commitment mentors make as volunteers. We recognize the juggling that often takes place between personal life and volunteering. Because mentoring requires a significant time investment, we ask potential mentors to thoughtfully consider their commitment to the program. Volunteers should be prepared to fulfill a commitment of approximately 18 months. We ask each mentor to remember that their commitment to the program is also a commitment to an individual who will be counting on their mentor.

Mentor requirements

Mentors must be at least 18 years old and possess a demonstrated commitment to making a difference in someone's life. A valid form of photo identification is required as identification for participants in this program to enter the Allegheny County Jail. Reliable transportation is also required to participate in the program.

Thank you for considering participation as a Chesed mentor. We understand that you may have additional questions. Prospective mentors may request an application form (also available on the website) and direct specific questions to the Chesed Aftercare Program Director.

Mentor preparation & training

The areas of training, given during orientation and subsequent workshops by experienced staff, cover:

- History, concepts and practices of mentoring and life coaching.
- Program overview, expectations, and goal setting.
- Aspects of working with ex-offender populations.
- Resources available to mentors and mentees.
- Communication, conversation, relationship building, and problem solving skills.
- Issues around safety, incident reporting, substance abuse, mental illness diagnosis, and challenging situations.
- The appropriate role of faith.

Mentors also receive a comprehensive manual for use during training and service. Following the workshop, volunteers are asked to commit to the program and uphold the rules by signing the Mentor/Life Coach Participation Agreement. The Chesed Mentor Program assists mentors with the admission process to the prison as volunteers. The screening process includes a criminal background check.



Allegheny County Jail