

# The Mayfly Project

## Mentor Orientation Handbook

[www.themayflyproject.com](http://www.themayflyproject.com)



2024/2026



## Welcome to The Mayfly Project!

Dear TMP Mentor,

Thank you for joining The Mayfly Project team! Becoming a TMP mentor means you agree that mentoring goes beyond just teaching a child how to fly fish-- it means you are dedicated to providing a safe environment for children in foster care to find a connection with the outdoors. We value your time, and it is our goal to take care of you as a mentor as well!

Please read this entire handbook, watch the trauma informed care videos in the mentor information center, discuss these topics with your leads, and prior to your first outing, such as at your project meeting, [please sign the Mentor Agreement Form](#) and return it to TMP or your lead mentor.

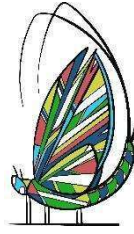
Contact us with any questions or concerns about mentoring or about our mentor requirements/safety policies.

Thank you for helping us improve the lives of foster youth with fly fishing!

Sincerely,

The Mayfly Project Team

[www.themayflyproject.com](http://www.themayflyproject.com)



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## **The Mayfly Project Information**

The Mayfly Project is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization, as described in section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Our tax identification number is 47-5685618.

TMP Mailing Address: 3541 Harrison Rd. Benton, AR 72019

Website: [www.themayflyproject.com](http://www.themayflyproject.com)

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/themayflyproject/>

Instagram: @themayflyproject

VIMEO: <https://vimeo.com/user61659104>



**Mentor Information Center:** <https://themayflyproject.com/mentor-information-center/>

Password: MentorsRule!

## **The Mayfly Project Staff**

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## **About The Mayfly Project**

### **Mission Statement:**

The Mayfly Project is a 501(c)(3) organization that uses fly fishing as a catalyst to mentor children in foster care.

Our mission is to support children in foster care and introduce them to their local water ecosystems through fly fishing. We believe that connecting children in foster care to the rewarding hobby of fly fishing, provide an opportunity for them to have fun, build self-confidence, and develop a meaningful connection with the outdoors.

Find out how we got started here: [Who We Are | The Mayfly Project](#)

### **TMP Goals:**

- ✓ To support children in foster care by offering them a mentoring friendship and teaching them about fly fishing.
- ✓ To provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for children to learn about fly fishing and have positive outdoor experiences.
- ✓ To be a role model to the children, caregivers, caseworkers, and community we work with-- exemplifying consistency, honesty, patience, healthy lifestyles and sharing our genuine love for the outdoors at all times.
- ✓ To introduce children to their local water ecosystems and teach them important conservation skills, while providing a positive example of being good stewards of the environment.
- ✓ To have a positive impact on our local communities and eventually around the world!



## **Project Mentor Roles**

Please let your lead mentor if you have some specific ideas for how you can help with this project, or what you could possibly teach if needed.

**Lead Mentor:** The lead mentor is assigned by TMP staff, but is generally the person that has worked hard to bring TMP to their community. They are in charge of organizing the project details, organizing mentors, communicating with TMP staff about project-specific details (ordering gear, needs for mentors, etc), communicating with foster parents, adoptive parents or group home managers for project set up. The lead mentor can delegate another mentor to one of these roles if needed, but communication is the key. They need a great team behind them to make this project work!!

**Co-Lead Mentor:** A co-lead assists the lead mentor with tasks and organizing the project. It's so helpful for leads to have someone to work with that can help motivate mentors and add more support.

**Conservation Mentor:** The goal of having a conservation mentor is to educate the children on how to care for their environment and for the fish they get to experience. This role includes conducting a quick talk at the beginning of outings that helps teach our Conservation Initiative. We have a Conservation Mentor training zoom session once a year!

**Safety/First Aid Mentor:** If you have any training or knowledge of up to date CPR and First Aid training, please let your Lead Mentor know so we can designate a first responder and let the group home know what our team has available for crisis intervention. Each project should have their own First Aid kit as well.

**Fundraising Mentor:** This mentor is in charge of rallying the other mentors, networking in the community, searching out local grants, and working with national staff to create fundraising events for your project. If you like to ask folks for donations or you're great at organizing events, please sign up!

**Non Fly Fishing Helpers:** Just because you don't fly fish, it doesn't mean you can't help with TMP projects! We need people willing to take pictures, video, if possible, help with serving food, help with making sure mentors and mentees stay hydrated, setting up and tearing down project gear. We have even had volunteers who sewed and embroidered individualized rod sleeves for the kids! \*Note, all of the helpers need to be approved through TMP staff, group home managers, and background checked if working with the children.

**How do we fill these roles?** Please talk with your lead mentor and let us know how we can help! Thank you for volunteering to fill these roles!!!



## **What is a Project?**

### **5 Session Mentoring Commitment:**

The TMP project model consists of 5 group mentor/mentee sessions within a 6-month time frame. We ask that all mentors commit to joining every project outing! Our mentees need consistency! In addition to providing mentoring at every project outing, our mentors are required to help develop their local TMP project with fundraising and networking.

### **The Basics from the Curriculum:**

If you feel comfortable teaching any one of these topics, please let your lead mentor know. The more mentors teaching, the better!

- Knot Tying
- Rod Set Up
- Casting
- Line Management
- Various Flies: Wet, Dry, Nymph, Streamer, etc
- Entomology
- Tying Flies
- Reading Water
- Water Safety: Rivers and Ocean

### **Characteristics of an Angler:**

These topics are found in the mentor curriculum. During your circle up times, or when you are mentoring, please talk about these parts of the curriculum. It can be simple, such as when you're dealing with a wind-knot, point out how to not overreact and stay calm...drawing connections from fly fishing to long-term successes. When a child overcomes a fear of walking in water, or being around a hook, remember those successes are just as important as catching a fish!

- Patience
- Self-Confidence
- Finding Brain Rest
- Building Grit
- Seeking Wisdom
- Appreciating the Environment



## **The Mayfly Project Outing's**

### **What does the process look like at a project outing?**

Every project Lead Mentor will design their project outings a bit differently; however, this is the general plan for a TMP project outing:

1. Mentors meet, typically an hour before the outing, to go over the safety rules for the day, plans for specific mentees, and getting gear ready.
2. Mentors meet with the mentees together during circle up time, to go over the safety rules and expectations of the day. Designate meet-up times, talk about conservation topics and buttons, and give lots of high-fives.
3. Mentors and mentees spend time fishing or doing the activity for the day. A couple mentors or the lead mentor will be the float mentors, going around to check on everyone and see if they need help catching fish, bathroom trips, or to stay hydrated.
4. Group up at the end of the project outing time to go over what you learned, hand out buttons earned, let the kids brag about big catches, and to get group pictures (just remember to ensure appropriate permission has been received to take photographs of mentees). Sometimes we'll do a quick closing chat, like, what did you learn today or what's one word to describe how you feel about fly fishing.
5. Mentors help take down gear and meet to discuss successes or struggles to improve on for the next planned project outing.

**Gear Mentors Need to Bring/Not Bring:** TMP provides basically all of the gear needed to mentor, but it is appreciated if you can bring your net and a pack to hold some of the mentoring tools. Bring your name tag to every outing, your own waders and boots if fitting, and please leave any gear you don't want broken, or possibly stolen, in your vehicle. **Firearms and knives are prohibited at TMP Projects.** TMP is trying to kick as much plastic as we can, so please bring a water bottle from home if you can!



## **Tools We Use**

Forms and training videos are found on the [Mentor Information Center](#)

**Mentoring Kids Tools:** Curriculum, Art of Tying Program (tying kits with matching videos on our website), [Conservation Initiative](#) & Button Incentive Program (the buttons kids can earn for program participation), [Mentee Education Center](#) (where they can continue to learn after the project).

- **Mentee Curriculum**—each child will receive their own mentee curriculum book that will include ‘Characteristics of an Angler’, and all things fly fishing. This book is to be used parallel with the Button Incentive Program and as directed by your lead mentor.
- **Buttons**—As part of our Conservation Initiative, mentees will be able to earn buttons throughout the project. Check with your lead mentor to find out more about this incentive program and how it works throughout the project process.
- **Art of Tying Program**—We have packaged tying materials for youth to tie wooly buggers, gurglers, or pheasant tail flies. Not every project will tie, but we would like to encourage our projects to introduce the fun of fly tying and we have supplies to support these efforts. Each child will receive instructions in their tying kits and we also have specialized [TMP videos](#).

**TMP Fundraising:** Fundraising is a necessary component of every project; however, we have developed some resources which aim to bring some clarity and ease to this process. Donor Packet, Donor Infographic, Individual Project Fundraisers (linked to website), Facebook Fundraising, and TMP’s Fundraising Plans Document.

National Fundraisers: Giving Tuesday, Buy a Fly Event, and Mending the Line Fundraiser Dinner.



## **Positive Prints/Conservation Initiative**

**Conservation Initiative:** Each project should have a conservation mentor in charge of teaching this initiative at every outing. Conservation mentor training is available in the spring and found in the Mentor Information Center. Topics that need to be covered are found in the mentor curriculum. There are several buttons for mentees to earn at every outing that represent the various skills and knowledge points TMP wants mentees to learn. The buttons are pretty cool and all the mentee needs to do to earn them is show up! Have questions about our initiative? We'd love to connect you to our biologist, Katie Bartling!

- **Catch and Release**

- Use the plastic fish we provide to show kids how to correctly hold a fish and how to let them go unharmed. Utilize the curriculum that has a diagram of the fish and point out areas that can harm the fish if we hold them too tight, or if we keep them out of water too long.

- **Clean Waters**

- Picking up garbage and leaving places better than when we found them.
- Use trash bins and Fishpond piopods provided during the project. Have a group clean up after the project and give candy and a button to kids who participate in the clean-up. You can get creative too—get old fishing line and wrap it around the plastic fish and talk about the harm garbage does to the ecosystems.

- **Contamination**

- Teaching about aquatic invasive species and local ecosystems.
- We have an invasive species matching game available in the mentor information center (leads order). Other ideas are making an invasive species poster, or diagram. Have a boots and wader wash station available to show kids how to wash their gear to protect against invasive species.



## **About Fund Balances and Fundraising**

### **How are TMP's individual project funds divided?**

We have all of the projects divided out into their own fund accounts, so each project can find out what they have in their account anytime, they just need to ask. We also try to keep your Pure Charity Fundraisers (donation button on your webpage) up to date. At the end of your project season, or if you have ordered a booth set-up with gear to keep, your project will be billed and those funds will be taken out of your account. Please reach out to us with any questions!

### **What is my project required to raise each year to support our project?**

The fundraising goal is how many kids you plan to serve, times \$780. The \$780 is broken down in our cost-per-kid spreadsheet. This number is created by the estimated cost of gear for the year per child, not including our gear discounts. Your project is only billed for what funds are used, so if we have a great discount from Cortland and other gear, the cost per kid for the year will be lower and we won't need to bill your project for the full cost per kid. Please let us know if you have questions about this—TMP is an open book!

### **What happens to the money I raise locally? Do I have to raise money to start a project?**

All of the funds you raise locally will stay in your project. The benefit of adding funds to your project is it helps The Mayfly Project because we do not have to take funds out of the main TMP Fund account, which provides money for other projects as well. During your first year you are not expected to have big fund balances, but raising money sometimes helps get the word out in the community and is beneficial to networking.

### **Can I have a booth at a fly fishing show or event?**

We are only allowing booths at events if they are planned out 4-12 months in advance and have a specific format for our booth presentation, etc. Please talk to Jess or Debbie if you would like to schedule a booth at an upcoming event to find mentors or sell merchandise. It is ordered through the mentor information center, by lead or co-lead mentors only.

### **What should I do if someone donates money or gear to my project?**

Please mail checks directly to us or add the funds to your online project fundraiser. For gear, report on the Mentor Information Center, in-kind donation form, along with the person or company's name, and contact information. This ensures we get the person their tax receipt and a thank you note!



## **Support and Resources Available to Mentors**

Please communicate with your lead mentor about project plans and mentor support options.

- **TMP Swag**--All mentors will receive a TMP t-shirt at the date of their project, ordered by the lead mentors and will arrive with project gear (please let your lead mentor know your shirt size). We also give mentors discounts on everything we sell, so let us know if you need the updated code before your purchase TMP swag!
- **Gear and Reimbursements**--TMP plans to help with expenses and take care of mentors as much as we can. We will send practice gear and gear for the mentees to keep at the last outing. We do not want you bringing your own gear that could get broken. If you need reimbursed for last minute purchases, please let your lead mentor know.
- **Pro-Deals**--Once the Mentor Information login information is shared with you, please check out the Pro-Deal discounts available to you for becoming a mentor! Please do not reach out to companies without talking with Jess as we already have relationships with most of the ff industry!
- **Get Connected**--Check out our mentor Facebook Page in your welcome email for updates and feel free to post any new ideas you have or things you have found that worked well with your project!
- **Problem Solving/Training**--TMP staff is available to help with any problems that arise, either with other mentors, DHS, foster care parents, or the foster child. If you have a grievance, please contact your lead mentor and our staff right away. Also, we want to make sure you are comfortable working with this population, so please let us know if you would like further training or information. If at any point you are not comfortable with the mentor role, we have several other ways you can be a part of TMP.





## **About Children in Foster Care**

### **Why are children in foster care?**

Children are in foster care because they or their families are going through a crisis. Often these children—from babies to teens—have been removed from their parents because they are not in a safe environment that has caused the child/teen to be abused, neglected or both..

Children are taken into state custody for several reasons, typically because of:

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
- Neglect– child’s basic physical and emotional needs are not met by the caregiver.
- Death of caregivers with no relative or fictive relative available to care for or adopt the child.
- Caregiver drug or alcohol abuse which creates neglectful circumstances
- Caregiver mental/physical health emergencies where there are no relative or fictive relatives to provide safe care.
- Caregivers cannot manage their child’s behavioral problems or mental health diagnosis and need state support.

### **How are children placed in state custody and foster care??**

Every experience is different for a child that is placed in foster care, but generally the children are taken from their home by law enforcement and declared in imminent danger. Once they are placed in imminent danger they are placed in the custody of the state. Being placed in the custody of the state initiates all legal proceedings and court involvement for the child, state caseworkers and caregivers.

When children are removed from their home oftentimes it is with none or very little of their belongings. The children are not allowed to have any unsupervised contact with their caregivers until the court rules it is safe to do so. Shortly after removal from their caregivers home they will experience a series of supervised visits and supervised telephone calls with their caregivers. Who the children contact, when and how is approved of and often supervised by the state caseworkers. with some of their belongings and are not allowed to have contact with their parents or family, (besides during supervised visits and supervised phone calls). They are not allowed to visit or talk on the phone with anyone outside of school unless it is approved by their caseworker.

After the children are removed and placed within the legal custody of the state, they are placed in a foster care home. Priority is always given to relative foster placements, which means each state is required to find an appropriate relative that will complete all necessary training and background checks as a non-relative foster parent.

If a relative foster placement is not possible the child is placed with non-relative foster parents who are approved by the state. From the beginning of the child's placement all efforts are made to ensure the child is placed in the most likely "forever home" should reunification with their caregivers not occur. Generally, caregivers are given a certain amount of time to prove they are capable of caring for their children-- during this time caregivers will often be required to take parenting classes, pass drug tests if needed, and meet with caseworkers to achieve parenting goals.

Other-times, parental rights are terminated which means all legal rights between the caregiver and child cease to exist. Once parental rights are terminated the child is either adopted by a relative foster parent or non-relative foster parent. Some children in foster care are never able to find a forever home and will age out of foster care.

### **Are foster homes where the child stays during their time with the state?**

Ideally, children will remain in one foster home throughout the duration of placement in state custody. Unfortunately, many times this is not possible and foster children end up experiencing multiple foster care placements. There are many reasons that affect foster care placement instability; however, foster care children often attend multiple schools, experience multiple caregivers throughout different foster care placements and can even experience being placed in a group home, have multiple caseworkers, are engaged in multiple after school programs, sometimes they are moved to different states and have very little certainty in knowing where they will find stability. When children experience a disruption in their foster care placement, too often very little notice is given.

### **Do children in foster care know what the plan is for their care?**

Children rarely know when, or if, they will be allowed to return home. Depending on the child's age, they are often invited to attend the majority of court hearings, some can even be appointed their own attorney. Nationwide every child who enters foster care is assigned a court appointed special advocate (CASA) who works to represent the best interest of the child in the legal system and meets with the foster child on a regular basis to help them better understand what the plan is for their care. The court system and caseworkers actively seek reunification; however, when the caregivers are legally ordered to follow a reunification plan it is unknown whether or not the caregivers will be successful and reunified with their children. If the children are returned home, there is a time period where the court system and caseworkers continue to stay involved and monitor the safety and wellbeing of the children.

**Do children in foster care all have troubled behaviors?**

Just because a child is in foster care it does not mean that they have done ANYTHING wrong. Sometimes there can be behavioral or mental health issues that stem from their history or traumatic experiences, but the state provides counseling and services to assist these children. Some group homes are for kids with higher needs and behavior problems, but your lead mentor will fill you in!

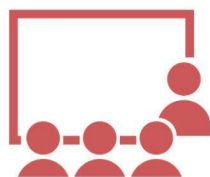
**What's the most important thing to know about when working with children in foster care?**

Their relationships with adults have been messy, unreliable, confusing, scary and uncertain. They come to our projects with a myriad of concerns, defense mechanisms that were developed to keep them safe but unhealthy when a safety threat is not present, and oftentimes maladaptive coping mechanisms in place. It sometimes takes a bit of time for this population of children to let down their guard when they first meet you, try your best not to take it personal! Do treat them with utmost respect, show them they are worth your time, and don't put too much pressure on them to react in a specific way, and they'll no doubt have a great time with you.

**Who qualifies for TMP?**

Children over the age of 8 years old that are in foster care, have previously experienced foster care, children adopted from foster care or who are in the care of relatives, under the state's care qualify as well. Children must not be a safety risk or at risk of harming themselves or others. Some mentees come back to participate in our projects every year if there is room. If you know of a local foster family or organization that wants to register their children, please send them this registration link:

<https://themayflyproject.com/mentee-registration-form/>



## **Physical and Mental Disabilities and Disorders**

**Common Mental Health Disorders** seen among foster care youth include: post-traumatic stress disorder, reactive attachment disorder, depression, and anxiety disorder. 80% of children in foster care have a significant mental disorder and often if they have one, they typically have comorbid disorders. \*Please watch our recording about working with these specific disorders or disabilities on the Mentor Information Center.

**Developmental Delay:** Some children will have developmental delay, which includes: cognitive, social, emotional, motor, speech and behavioral delays. Children in foster care are sometimes behind developmentally and can seem much younger than their stated age.

### **Physical Disabilities:**

**Short Term Disabilities–** Includes broken bones, hurt muscles, or physical injuries from abuse. Often children can still participate as long as there are plans in place for using tools or expected healing.

**Long Term Disabilities–** Include disabilities like muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy or degenerative conditions, permanent spinal injuries, congenital conditions and deformities.

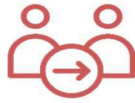
**Ask the Important Questions:** If you are mentoring a child with a physical disability, there are important questions to ask before we approve them as a mentee or you begin mentoring.

- What does this child need to be safe with TMP?
- Do we have a mentor team that is able to go the extra mile for safety?
- Are the locations we fish accessible to accommodate this child's disability?
- Can your Lead Mentor talk with the child's PT or OT for intel and ideas for accommodations?
- What rules does your project team need to put in place to ensure the child does not get injured?
- What does success look like for that child fly fishing with TMP?

**Learning Disabilities:** It's important to know what these children are going through so you do not traumatize them by asking them to do things they cannot do.

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder—is a mental health disorder but impacts education and learning ability. It's an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.
- Dyslexia-- difficulty reading due to problems identifying speech sounds and learning how they relate to letters and words.
- Dysgraphia--difficulty turning their thoughts into written language for their age and ability to think, despite exposure to adequate instruction and education.
- Dyscalculia-- a learning disorder that affects a person's ability to do math, similar to dyslexia.
- Autism-- is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. It may take longer to process social or sensory information, so use fewer words and allow time for what you say to be understood.

Tips: Never require kids to write or read, or put academic pressure on them. If you are great with these types of children, please let your Lead Mentor know so they can pair you accordingly. Keep lessons short, hands on, and entertaining. If you have several kids with ADHD, consider doing separate smaller groups to keep attention spans. Think about the continued trauma these kids receive at school—TMP needs to be a place where they feel equal and like super stars!



## **Trauma Informed Care and Inclusive Goals**

Trauma Informed Care– When we work with our mentees, it's essential to always remember that the children we serve have been through trauma and everything we do needs to reflect that knowledge. Please watch all of our training videos on the [Mentor Information Center](#) prior to mentoring.

### **Trauma-informed care means to:**

- Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand every child reacts differently to trauma from their past.
  - This means if a child is struggling with the day, it's important to remember they have a lot on their plate just dealing with their own trauma, so treat them carefully.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in mentees:
  - Sometimes it's behavioral, body language, verbal outbursts, the clothes they will wear (sweatshirts in 100-degree weather), scars from self-harm, not wanting to be around specific genders, etc.
- Actively avoid re-traumatization:
  - Children can be traumatized at TMP outings by mentors not calling them by their correct name, their preferred pronouns, gender ID, mentors not giving them space or putting too much pressure on them to succeed, using racist or homophobic language or actions, stirring up questions about their past, not using effective communication tools, not following requested boundaries, to name a few.

### **Understanding Diversity and Inclusion:**

- **Diversity** is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, physical or mental ability and attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, immigration status, language, learning styles and family structure.
- **Inclusion** is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. We believe fly fishing is for everyone, and it's important our mentors create environments where **all** kids and mentors feel included.

*The beauty of TMP is we have mentors from all types of backgrounds, political positions, religions, races, ethnicities, and genders, coming together for one common goal: serving children who need us most! Any behavior that is not supportive of our inclusive environment will lead to immediate termination as a mentor.*



## **Communication and Behavior Response Guidelines**

### **Communication and Relationship Building with Mentees**

Verbal and nonverbal communication are so important to understand when working with kids. With this population, we do need to be more sensitive to their needs, in how we present ourselves, and how we plan for the future.

### **Verbal Communication/Relationship Rules**

- All verbal communication should be pointed towards encouraging, teaching, and uplifting your mentee. If you are angered or frustrated, you need to distance yourself or change team members so that the child does not experience any negativity. Keep your tone light and fun as much as possible.
- Use the child's name and the gender pronouns they prefer during your time with them. If they look like a boy to you but they prefer to be called female, it's essential you call them by girl pronouns, such as she/her, in order to not traumatize them further.
- Some children may choose to share their story with you, but we encourage you to try to keep the relationship light and focused on fly fishing. Respond in a way that lets them know you care about what they have gone through and you hear them, but turn it back to why time in nature can be so therapeutic, etc.
- Always have the goals of TMP in your mind when working with your mentee. You are not there to become the child's best friend, be a counselor, or be a connection for them outside of TMP outings (unless arranged with the caseworker). Be careful not to make future plans or create a relationship where the child will feel left behind when the sessions are over. Our job as mentors is to facilitate a lifelong connection between our mentee and nature. There is so much they do not have control of and have lost in their lives; however, helping them build a connection to something that no one will ever be able to take away from them is one of the coolest things we do—their connection to nature!!

- Do not discuss your personal life unless it offers an example for the benefits of fly fishing or time in nature.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

- Many of these children have had their space violated in the past by adults, so always make sure you stay outside of their personal space bubble, and if you are not sure where that is at, feel free to ask if you are standing too close. Some of these children do not have awareness of personal space bubbles, theirs or yours, and redirecting physical proximity is important ie. "There are so many cool fly fishing things I want to show you and if you stand there and I stand here we can get to it!"
- Ask permission to touch a child's arm or manipulate their arm while casting. When crossing a river, always ask for permission to hold on to the child before you attempt to cross. If the child has had severe abuse or trauma, make sure you plan your fishing day where you do not cross rivers or put the child in any situations where they may feel violated.
- Make sure your body language is positive by not folding your arms tight or stay turned away from the mentee. When they see you facing them and engaged, they know you are there for them. And if you are frustrated, take a break or trade mentors because children pick up on non-verbal cues just as well as verbal cues.
- When you're around other mentors, try to not visit too much with other mentors so you can stay focused on your mentee. Just remember they are the priority.
- Make eye contact and respond with appropriate motions to indicate you are listening to your mentee. They enjoy having someone to listen to them and someone there just for them-- it really makes their day actually!

\*When teaching casting, it is beneficial to make sure you allow the child to have their personal space, which is a minimum of a foot, but for most foster kids the space gap is bigger. If you need to manipulate their arm to show them how to cast, you need to ask for permission to show them before touching their arm. This makes the child feel in control as well as shows the child that how they feel is important to you.





## **Handling Escalation and Disruptive Behaviors**

Some of the issues foster children have from being in foster care, or growing up in an unsafe environment can affect the way they interact with others. The best way to avoid behavior issues is to keep these preventive steps in your mind and understand there is much more behind their behaviors.

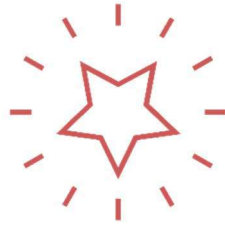
- **Triggers**–Behavior issues or anger outbursts are often a response to a trigger that usually is derived from when the child felt unsafe, scared, or out of control. An example of a trigger could be seeing someone that has similar features to an individual who threatened/harmed them which initiates a behavioral response. To prevent a child from escalating, it is important you meet their basic needs of providing a safe environment, a consistent positive demeanor, and make them feel they are in the best care possible. Ask your lead mentor for information about the child’s triggers from the mentee registration form.
- **Handling Escalation**–Do not challenge a child or match their tone if they are beginning to escalate. Simply remain calm, give them space, and change the topic to something other than what was triggering them. If they continue to escalate or become unsafe to themselves or to you, call the foster parent, adoptive parent or caseworker over to help you and if needed, contact emergency services to ensure the child is safe.
- **Handling the Push-Away**–Some children who have attachment disorders or trust issues will frequently challenge mentors by either being dramatic and seeing how mentors handle it, or trying to seem that they don’t want anything to do with the mentor. The best way to handle these types of situations is to be consistent about your goals for mentoring with TMP and reiterate with the children that you are there to teach them all about fly fishing and you can’t wait to help them catch a fish. Sometimes the child will just see if you will “hang in there” or if they are able to push you away. If you can get past the initial “push away” phase, you will have all of their attention and respect. Someone once told me that the kids who appear to not want anything to do with you are often the ones that want it the most, [and I can’t tell you how many times that has been true in our mentoring years]. Go against your instincts to run by staying present, keep it simple, keep it safe, always bring it back to fly fishing, be patient and be consistent.

- **Boundary Setting**– Just because you’re there to have fun, doesn’t mean boundaries aren’t important. Establish early on that you have boundaries and you will follow the rules of the project. You can say, “I know that sounds fun, but we have to do it this way today because that’s the rules.” Your boundaries may be tested, so make sure you are consistent and stay true to the plan of the day. Talk to your lead if there are problems with a child testing a boundary.
- **The Story Teller/Drama Inducer**– Sometimes you’ll work with a child that likes to tell lies to get attention. Try not to react to the stories too greatly, but react to the neat fishing things they are doing. Praising good behavior is often the best way to curb negative behavior. If a child reports anything dangerous, it is to be reported to leadership.
- **Flirtatious Behavior**- Some teens will use their flirtatious nature to try to manipulate caregivers or mentors. If you have a mentee that is making you uncomfortable with their flirtatious behavior you can switch out to a different mentor, talk with the lead mentor about confronting the child together, or speaking with the child’s caregiver about how to handle it.
- **Mix and Match**– If your mentee isn’t having fun or if you can tell the two of you do not have a great form of communication going on, feel free to chat with your lead mentor about switching it up.

**What if a child tries to run away?** If you are with a child and they take off running, do not try to restrain the child in any way or put your hands on the child.

- Call the authorities and notify the members of your group to call the caregiver. Follow instructions by the dispatch or house parent to ensure the child is found safely. \*We have never had this situation happen and don’t predict this ever happening, but it’s important to be aware of this protocol. Also, you are not obligated at all to follow the child if a child does run.

*Note: If you are not comfortable working with a certain child or have concerns, talk with your Lead Mentor prior to the day. Mentors need to feel comfortable and capable!*



## **Conflict Resolution and Mandated Reporting**

Incident Report Form: <https://themayflyproject.com/incident-report-form/>

- Problems with children should always be reported to the foster parent, adoptive parent, group home staff or case worker the day of the issue, and then reported to TMP staff as soon as possible.
- If there are issues amongst the TMP mentors, lead mentor, or caseworker, you are encouraged to contact TMP staff (Jess and Kaitlin) for assistance on working out this issue if it cannot be dealt with firsthand. We take every complaint or issue very seriously and are here to support you in any way we can. We have staff trained in conflict resolution and de-escalation so please do not hesitate to ask for help.
- If you suspect child abuse, or inappropriate behavior, with any TMP volunteers, foster care parents, children, or anyone in the child's life, please report immediately to the child abuse hotline in your state first, the child's caseworker next, and then TMP staff (we can also walk you through the process if needed). We are there to be protectors of these children and even if you do not have evidence, reporting is mandatory with TMP and taken very seriously.



## **Medical Emergencies**

- Prior to outings, establish who in your mentor group has First Aid and CPR training, and every project should bring a first aid kit. Make sure you know of any allergies, or medical complications that mentors and mentees have prior to your trip, and make a safety plan prior to your outing.
- Always call emergency services if you suspect a child or adult needs immediate medical attention. If they do not need immediate attention, communicate with your Lead Mentor, and call the caseworker or house parent to pick the child up and to take care of the child. Fill out an incident report form as well (top of page).
- Do not attempt to perform any medical procedures or wound care without proper training, such as, **pulling a hook out of someone's eyeball** or setting a fractured arm. Discuss with your group mentors on the best way to handle an emergency and work together as a team to keep the child and the group safe.
- In the case of an emergency, mentors are allowed to transport the child as long as there are 3 in a group and all of our safety policies are covered.
- If you get hurt or injured at a TMP outing, please let your lead know ASAP, file an incident report, and get in touch with TMP staff. We want to know how you are doing too!



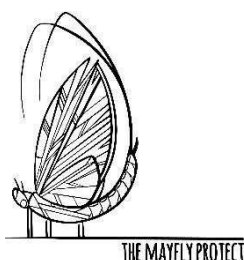
## **Tips for Being a Great Mentor**

- Make mentees the centerpiece of the project day (sometimes they want you to hold their chips, and that's ok).
- Be sensitive to the mentees' boundaries and histories (don't bring up trigger topics or ask about their foster care time).
- Show up and stay consistent with all outings...they miss you when you're gone!
- Be sensitive to the backgrounds of the mentees. Try to focus on fishing more than the other things unless the child is eager to talk to you (we have found most of our outings are so busy with fishing that these times don't happen very often).
- Promote success—show youth many alternative forms of activities and life choices which provide opportunities to feel successful when academics may be the only measure of success. A fish in the net isn't the only way they can succeed at fishing. Celebrate the small successes too.
- Minimize failures—Allow them space to learn, don't compare, criticize or be judgmental.
- Engage in a positive relationship and if you feel the child is frustrated, talk about it and see how you can change the situation.
- Demonstrate positive self-esteem and self-talk.
- Safety is paramount—create a comfortable environment where your mentee can concentrate on learning new things and taking positive risks. Ask permission before you side hug, put your hand on their hand to show casting, or touch their shoulder.
- Build respect by being a respectful person and not talking bad about others, etc.
- Be flexible, some kids may just want to walk in the water or throw rocks, and that's ok.
- Don't ignore problems or do something if you are uncomfortable– ask for help.
- Don't become discouraged— fly fishing takes a while to grasp, but the most important goal is that the child is having fun. So find creative ways to make the trip fun and don't be afraid to switch up mentors if you feel you need extra help with a specific child.
- Listen well and use body language to show the child you care about what they are saying, such as eye contact, little time on your phone, and staying close to the child to make sure they know you are dependable.
- Allow yourself to be silly!



## **Tips for Being a Great Fly Fishing Mentor**

- Don't focus on the number of fish, but on the fun you're having fishing too! If they just want to throw rocks or dig up bugs, then roll with it! But make sure they catch fish!
- Now is not the time for fishing only dries...sometimes you have to tie on a squirmy worm and an indicator!
- If you aren't getting any fish, switch out flies, check your depths, look for shady areas or watch your shadows, look for seams or where fresh water is distributed (such as in ponds or runs into pools), try a smaller size tippet, change locations and check in with other mentors that are catching fish.
- Sometimes you have to just cast for the mentee and do the classic, 'take this rod' when you have a fish on, if they want you to do that for them (ask first). Do ANYTHING (safely) you can to make sure your mentee catches at least one fish, if that is important to the child. Over helping should be the last resort! Remember, it's the mentee's chance to fish and that means we are the 'guides', i.e. not fishing.
- Go in with a plan, but be flexible. Sometimes it's wise to switch up mentors or take a break for snacks if the fishing is tough. Don't feel bad asking for help!
- Take time to point out as much as you can about your environment- introduce them to the fish lingo, the dynamics of the river ecosystem, and even the animals you may see along the way. Generating a sense of curiosity is something we hope these children develop on the river.
- ~~Dig up some bait and dip it in corn juice.~~ 😊



## **The Mayfly Project Program Rules**

*We want the mentor/mentee relationship to be fun and easy-going, but safety is our number one priority when working with this fragile population! Please follow these rules at every outing!*

**Confidentiality:** Foster children are to be protected from being identified in the community. We expect our mentors to uphold the laws and to respect the goal of keeping these children protected. Mentors cannot share information about their mentees, which includes information about their caseworkers, parents, foster parents, group homes, or any detail that would identify them in public. You can talk in general about your time with TMP, but every effort should be made to be discreet and ensure the child is unidentifiable to others outside of TMP.

**Pictures are not to be shared unless they are approved** by the caseworkers (some children that are up for adoption are allowed to be photographed but you must have permission).

**Appropriate Relations and Respecting Space:** Mentors are absolutely prohibited from engaging in inappropriate and/or illegal physical contact with their mentee, or in building a relationship outside of TMP. Physical touch should be limited in general; the only appropriate form of touch is hand on the arm or back after permission has been given during casting, a side hug, and high-fives. **Front hugs are not allowed.** Should it be discovered that a mentor has engaged with a mentee inappropriately, or is crossing one of these boundaries, the mentor will be immediately expelled from the program. If abuse is suspected or a law was broken, a police report will be filed by TMP staff.

**Appropriate Behavior and Integrity:** Mentors must uphold the integrity of The Mayfly Project and the mission. Mentors are role models for these children and should model healthy behavior, use kind and appropriate language, and not be discriminatory in any way towards any TMP participants.

**Substances and Smoking:** Mentors may not use illegal substances or abuse controlled substances at any time, or talk with their mentee about these things. Mentors may not consume alcohol, or be under the influence of alcohol or other substances, around our mentees. No smoking or vaping is allowed around our mentees as well.

**Social Media:** We ask that all of our mentors represent TMP well in their communities and online. Since our nonprofit is designed to encourage children in foster care, it is our priority to be a positive example at all times. We ask that you represent us well by not glorifying drugs, alcohol, or any explicit or abusive behavior on any social media accounts while you are involved with TMP.

**Personal Defense Items:** Guns, nun chucks, knives, etc. are not allowed at TMP projects where the kids will be able to access them. Keep all of your personal items locked in your vehicle or at home.

**Mandatory Reporting:** All TMP volunteers are mandatory reporters of child abuse. This means that if a volunteer is witness to, or obtains knowledge of, abuse or endangerment to a child they must report it to authorities immediately.

**Three in a Group Rule and Child Supervision:** To protect both the mentor and the mentees, **TMP's policy is that a mentor is never alone with a foster care child.** In all Mayfly Project activities there must be at least two foster care children per mentee or at least two mentors per foster care child. This is the three-deep rule, which includes trips to the bathroom, trips in the car, anywhere. If a child needs to go to get something, there needs to be a buddy with them or another leader.

When fishing in groups of two, mentors need to be within eyesight and ear-shot of each other so that there is always another adult ready to help if an emergency takes place, and there is always another person there as a witness. Children are never allowed to be left alone without supervision and should always be within eyesight of the mentor.

**Bathroom Trips:** Mentors are not allowed to go into the bathroom with a mentee, unless the stalls are efficient (private) and they have another mentor or mentee with them. Before a child goes into the bathroom, the mentor needs to check the bathroom to make sure there are no other people in the area. Never leave a child alone in the bathrooms unless you know it is vacant.

**Scan for Danger:** In public settings, the mentor is the mentee's protector- it is the mentor's job to predict possible dangerous scenarios and avoid them, and to make sure the child never feels unsafe or vulnerable. Check for potential drug paraphernalia, self harm objects and dangerous animals before taking a child to outing locations. Be aware of the wildlife in your area and be well educated on the potential dangers of interacting and respecting that wildlife.

**First Aid and CPR Certified:** Each project outing should have a mentor with them trained in CPR and First Aid, or at least educated in this area, as well as a first aid kit with them for emergencies.

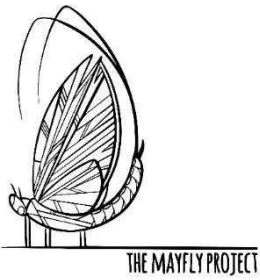
**Glasses are Mandatory:** Every child needs to have sunglasses or glasses on when fly fishing. If your project doesn't have them, please get them asap.

**Basic Water Safety and Project Outing Safety:** During an outing, mentees need to have appropriate weather attire, and must be well educated prior to the outing regarding water safety (in curriculum). When planning for an outing, mentors need to choose the most accessible, easiest water to wade, and have prepared their team for how to handle a potential crisis that could arise at that specific location. Every project must go over water safety rules with mentors, staff, and children prior to entering the water, as dictated by the project Lead Mentor.

- All water needs to be checked by mentors prior to allowing children in the water.
- Children that cannot swim, must have a life jacket on them (see the child's registration form).
- If children are wading with waders, a wading belt is required.
- In a river or faster water, children are not allowed to go past their shins while wading and must be within reach of a mentor at all times.
- In slow water, children are not allowed to go past their knees and must be within easy reach of a mentor at all times while in the water.

**Transportation:** In order to transport you need 3 in the vehicle, your vehicle cleaned out of any harmful items or items you don't want potentially stolen, send a picture of your driver's license and a copy of your car insurance to TMP staff, and communicate with the foster families about any concerns with transportation. Transportation is a last resort! We prefer mentors to not transport.





## **The Mayfly Project Mentor Agreement Form**

Thank you for joining us on this important mission this year. In order to participate with TMP, we need your background check done and this form signed! Thank you for your help!

By signing this form, you agree to:

- Follow all of the safety rules, trauma informed care videos, and mentor orientation tools provided to ensure all children are physically and emotionally safe at all times under your care.
- Protect the confidentiality of the children in your care by keeping their name and information about their story private and not sharing any identifiable pictures of the children without prior authorization.
- Uphold the integrity of TMP in your community during your time volunteering for TMP-- which includes using discretion when posting online, being a good example to our youth by not discussing or glorifying drugs or alcohol or participating in any form of sexual harassment or discriminatory behavior against any race/ethnicity/disability etc. (on social media as well).
- If you are released from being a TMP mentor by our staff, or our relationship is otherwise terminated, you agree to not share any of our forms, curriculum, processes, wording, or passwords with anyone or anywhere.
- If you have any grievances with TMP you will discuss it with our Directors, Jess Westbrook, or Kaitlin Barnhart, immediately.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Location: \_\_\_\_\_