

Athletes As Leaders



Mentors: Finding a Good Fit

When identifying a mentor to facilitate the program with athletes, these are some factors to consider. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of requirements. Rather, these are considerations in hopes that the mentors will be credible and relevant to youth. You are encouraged to ask the athletes, team leaders, and coaches about who may be a good fit as a team mentor. You can have one or multiple mentors co-facilitate a group.

Ideal Characteristics, Skills, and Attributes of Mentors:

- **Female-Identified, Non-Binary or Gender Non-Conforming:** Athletes As Leaders addresses sensitive and nuanced topics with athletes, including sexual assault, relationship abuse, shaming, body image, and gender stereotypes. The mentor needs to be aware of their own personal experiences and how they relate to these topics. Women, non-binary folks, gender non-conforming people, and individuals who have been raised as girls may be more comfortable discussing these topics due to a deeper understanding of the issues. We recognize many girls' teams have male-identified coaches. You can consider partnering with other individuals to mentor the team.
- **Near Peers:** High school athletes have reported wanting to hear from "near peers"- which generally means someone a little older than them, within about ten years. The program is based on social norms change. Having a mentor who the athletes feel is relatable may make the messages more relevant and credible.
- **Well Trained:** Ideally, facilitators have completed education or training related to sexual assault, dating violence, primary prevention (vs. risk reduction), feminism or women's studies, and anti-oppression. While advanced training is not required, it is recommended that the mentors have a passion for preventing violence and a willingness to learn. The Athletes As Leaders [Training](#) and review of the [Facilitation Guide for Mentors](#) are essential.
- **Skills & Experience:** There are several skills mentors will need to create a safe space for athletes to discuss sensitive topics. Successful facilitators are able to assess where the athletes are in their learning journeys and adapt sessions without losing the key messages. They keep an open mind and are active listeners. They

respect the leadership of youth. Experience working with teens, facilitating groups, public speaking, and knowledge of sports culture is a plus!

- **Diverse Mentors:** Mentors are role models, community builders, and facilitators. Young people will benefit from having mentors with identities both similar and different to their own. Consider mentors who reflect the different identities and backgrounds of the team. It's especially important to represent the diversity of the teams and school population, including those from under-represented groups.
- **Committed:** Consistency is essential, and the mentors(s) should be asked to commit to supporting the team for the entire season. Each program session is designed to be facilitated for 20 minutes once per week. Consider travel time, set up, clean up, etc.
- **Interested in Building Relationships:** Relationships are key. We have lots of great tips on [Building Relationships with Teams](#). The mentor should make time for this, too.
- **Someone who is passionate about creating a safe and respectful community for all:** It's ok if the mentors don't have all of these characteristics, skills and attributes! The mentor's enthusiastic approach and sensitivity to the topics will go a long way. And, Athletes As Leaders has clear scripts for facilitation, so it's easy to follow along! There are also optional YouTube videos featuring diverse perspectives from young people.

Who Can Mentors be?

- Sexual Assault Prevention Advocates
- Domestic Violence Prevention Advocates
- High School Alumni and Former Athletes
- College Athletes (could be an internship)
- University and Graduate Students majoring in: women's studies, sociology, sports psychology, social work, health education, public health, or related fields
- Interns and Practicum Students
- Head Coaches or Assistant Coaches
- Team Captains
- Current Athletes- ideally those who have been through Athletes As Leaders in a previous season, and/or those who tend to be natural leaders on the team

Important Note:

Make sure to follow the policies of your school or athletic organization to select and screen (i.e. complete background checks) for volunteers, interns or staff who you invite as mentors. More recommendations can be found in our [Recommended Policies](#).