



## **Explore Austin Mentors**

### **The Skinny**

#### *Timeline*

- September. 1<sup>st</sup> – October 15<sup>th</sup> Application Period - Applications due at [www.exploreaustin.org](http://www.exploreaustin.org) (found under “Get Involved” “Become a Mentor”)
- October 15- November 15, applications reviewed and interviews scheduled.
- November 18 – New Mentors announced
- January 28-29– New Mentor campout (Mandatory)

#### *Why should I become an Explore Austin Mentor?*

- Leadership – You will have the opportunity to grow as a leader while you serve the community by leading a group of young people (Explorers) through their adolescent lives.
- Mentoring – Through building relationships with your Explorers, you will change their lives while being positively transformed yourself.
- Adventure – Through the progressive adventure curriculum, you will increase your confidence in outdoor pursuits like camping, biking, rock climbing, canoeing, etc.

#### *How do I become a Mentor?*

The first step to becoming a Mentor is applying on our website and completing a \$14.95 background check. You will be contacted by one of our staff after your application is submitted.

#### *How much does it cost to become a Mentor?*

There are no fees involved in becoming a Mentor, other than the background check completed through our website volunteer portal. However, we are a community supported nonprofit, so we ask that our Mentors contribute through annual fundraising activities.

#### *How long is the commitment?*

Although we formally request a two-year commitment, our hope is that all mentors will remain for the full six years of the program to see their Explorers through high school. When considering this commitment, be honest with yourself. Can you give us 6 years?

*How much time is required?*

Mentors connect with their Explores during Saturday Challenges (SC) once a month during the school year (9 Saturdays per year) and on the week-long Summer Wilderness Trip (SWT) during the summer. Mentors are required to attend both Saturday Challenges and Summer Wilderness Trips. If you miss more than 3 SCs per year, or more than one SWT over the 6 years, you will be asked to leave the program. We hold both our Mentors and our Explorers to this policy. In the past, Explore Austin has formally requested Mentors' employers not to count Summer Wilderness Trip time off against that employee's vacation time, rather, count it a community service donation. This is common, but not guaranteed.

*What do you look for when selecting Mentors?*

- Strong desire to give back and be a part of something big.
- Experience with Youth
- Longevity in Austin (Commitment)
- Leadership experience
- Affinity for Adventure- Do you like spending time outside?
- Spanish speakers (A plus, certainly not required)

*Is Explore Austin a one-to-one Mentoring program? What is group mentoring?*

Explore Austin recruits five Mentors for each class of 15 Explorers. With the 3:1 Explorer to Mentor ratio, our program is designed for Mentors to spend quality time with all 15 Explorers over the 6 years.

*Do I have to have experience with kids?*

Explore Austin does not require Mentors to have previous experience with underserved youth, but it is preferred. If you do not have much experience with underserved youth, we encourage you to volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club of Austin or another agency to gain that experience. We've had mentors in the past visit the Boys and Girls Club for a few months while waiting for our Mentor recruiting and selection season to end. This shows great resourcefulness and strong desire to work with at-risk youth and particularly Explore Austin.

*How are the kids in the program selected?*

Students are selected on the basis of leadership potential, maturity, and program commitment and by recommendation of their Teachers at our partner schools. The students apply for the 15 available spots in the program by completing an application that includes an essay portion on why they want to be in Explore Austin. We want to select the students who are going to make the most of the opportunity and go on to become community leaders, mentoring others in their community as they grow up.

*Is outdoor adventure experience required?*

Although Explore Austin catches the attention of NOLS/Outward Bound graduates and outdoor enthusiasts, we do not require any particular outdoor

experience or accreditation. However, we do ask that Mentors have the desire to spend time outside, be willing to try new activities, and often be pushed outside their comfort zone.

*What training is available if I'm selected to become a Mentor?*

We provide our Mentors with training in our best practices, leadership, youth development, and safety and technical skills. These training weekends are mandatory and take place from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon the 3 months leading up to your first SWT. They are designed to bring connect you with your fellow Mentors, equip you for our various outdoor activities and inspire you for your future in Explore Austin