

Mentor Qualifications

- *Theater and Performing Arts Experience.* Strong candidates will have theatrical and/or performing arts experience. Having experience in working in collaborative, original, or experimental theater, and writing for the theater is particularly useful. Proud Theater pieces are created out of the youth's own stories, so a mentor needs to know how those stories can be transformed into living theatrical pieces. In addition the youth are oftentimes inexperienced in theater so the mentors act as theater, writing and performing arts instructors and teach the basics of the stage, acting, writing, and directing. There have been excellent mentors who have had limited theatrical experience, but have a creative orientation and have been open to learning these theatrical skills.
- *Experience working with diverse populations of youth.* Previous experience working with youth, particularly LGBTQ youth, and youth from diverse racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds is highly valuable.
- *Experience in youth development and support work.* A mentor with professional and educational background in youth support in the realm of counseling, social work, and mental health services, those with youth leadership development experience, and those with strong knowledge of community resources and a track record of connecting youth and families to community services, are vital as part of the mentoring team.
- *Commitment to the LGBTQIA Community.* While a mentor does not have to be queer-identified (in fact, we don't require any of our adults or youth to self-identify) they have to be committed to LGBTQ youth and to queer issues. Likewise, mentors are expected to bring with them a commitment to social justice that includes a multi-issue, racial, economic, and gender justice consciousness.
- *Willingness to Let the Youth Lead and Let Go of Ego.* Mentors must possess the ability to provide space and platform for the primacy of youth voices, youth stories, and youth leadership. Mentoring is not about telling youth what to do or trying to give them life lessons based upon your experiences. It is about listening to their stories and guiding them toward creative expression of those stories. Mentors must be skilled at asking the questions and letting youth find their own answers.
- *Collaborative Spirit.* Theater is the most collaborative of art forms and collaboration is paramount to Proud Theater's process. Mentors must be able to work in collaboration with other adults, youth, youth leaders, youths' families, community members, service providers, and other organizations.
- *Compassion, Empathy, and Emotional Intelligence.* Mentors must have the emotional capacity to be present, respectful, and engaged with young people while they are sharing their stories. Rather than trying to "fix" the situations, become emotionally un-done, or see themselves as adult agents of change, mentors must work with compassion, empathy, and skill to create a non-judgmental environment where young people can explore their (often painful) experience and find healing and transformation through the process.
- *Listening.* Mentors should be skilled at open, active listening.
- *Ability to creatively solve conflict.* Proud Theater believes in restorative justice principles that hold both youth and adults accountable for their actions in non-punitive ways. Within the group, mentors work to mediate conflict and constructively and creatively problem-solve with youth in order to develop their conflict resolution skills and non-violent communication strategies.
- *Organization.* Mentors must have organizational and time management skills.

Mentor Duties

Mentors play a facilitative role in the creation process with youth supporting them as they share their stories, engage in improvisation and theatrical exploration of their stories, develop scripts through collaborative and independent writing, and create theatrical works out of these stories. Mentors work with each youth to nurture their artistic development, hone their theatrical and leadership skills, and create platform for their personal and community voices. Some of the general mentor duties will include the following:

- Facilitate the “Proud Theater process” through small group discussions, story sharing, and creation sessions
- Teach various aspects of theater, performing arts and lead theatrical writing, and performance exercises
- Chaperone at performances, Proud Theater and community events
- Help write up scripts in collaboration with youth participants
- Coordinate and pick up food for rehearsal sessions
- Direct pieces to get them ready for performance (this often requires rehearsals outside of the regularly scheduled meeting times)
- Communicate via phone, e-mail, Facebook, etc. with youth and other mentors
- Meet weekly with the Youth Artistic Committee and youth leaders
- Handle conflict, crises, and youth issues when they arise
- Meet with parents, family members, and other adults involved in youths’ lives
- Assist with local fundraising and events
- Attend meetings as required (planning meetings with other mentors, Art and Soul Board meetings or committee meetings, meetings with other Proud Theater Chapters, or community groups, etc.)
- Attend all required trainings and actively participate in continuing education opportunities to expand the breadth and depth of one’s social justice consciousness, knowledge about LGBTQIA issues and the realities facing young people, and to further develop ones artistic and mentoring practice with youth.

Commitment

Mentors are expected to be consistent in their commitment by attending each Proud Theater session and additional rehearsals, mentor meetings, trainings, and performances as scheduled. The weekly time commitment will vary depending on the schedule and what each mentor is able to give and is roughly 4 hours per week when meeting on a weekly basis and more when meeting twice weekly in the spring. The hours may increase when there are additional rehearsals, special events, meetings, or if the mentor is taking on additional responsibilities within the group, serving in a staffing role, or working on a special project. Likewise, during the intensive rehearsal process leading up to community performances, the time commitment increases for both mentors and youth participants.

Aside from the time commitment there is an even larger commitment, and that is the commitment to the youth of Proud Theater. As an adult mentor you are their lifeline in many ways. You are there to support them, guide them to the truth in their stories, you are there when they need someone to talk to about a problem, and you are there as they grow into their self-identity.

Proud Theater Mentor Guidelines

Mentors are facilitators and mediators – We are here to serve not be served!

Mentors are expected to:

- Foster age appropriate self-expression and self-empowerment for youth participants.
- Nurture an inclusive, safe, respectful and affirming environment for all participants.
- Mediate conflict as a compassionate, non-judgemental voice of reason, not as a friend or therapist.
- Approach difference of opinion, perspective, or experience with curiosity, openness and a willingness to learn.
- Take responsibility for actions or behaviours that are not mentor-ly (such as yelling, arriving late). Acknowledge the mistake to those you affected, apologize and state how you could have handled the situation appropriately and will do so in the future.
- Interrupt “isms” (such as classism, racism, sexism), stereotypes, bias or prejudice, when they surface, immediately naming the hurtful language/action/assumption, holding youth accountable for their words/actions, educating rather than shaming, and conducting follow up with affected youth and the group as a whole, as needed.
- Utilize, and model, creative conflict resolution strategies with youth and fellow mentors and communicate non-violently and with respect.
- Be aware of power dynamics within the group and work to foster youths' voices rather than speaking for, or over, youth.
- Support and nurture youth, working to develop their own inner resources and agency rather than creating dependency.
- Encourage and affirm the participation, contributions, and growth of each youth.
- Stay educated and informed about current racial, social, economic, LGBTQ, educational, and gender justice issues, community activism, events, happenings and concerns.
- Remain consistent in commitment to the rehearsal and performance schedules and model accountability.
- Act as a leader and a professional, understanding your power and responsibility as a role model.

Mentorships are not friendships. Maintaining strong boundaries, without asserting authoritative power over youth, keeps both youth and mentors safe and fosters an environment of respect.

Boundaries mentors must adhere to:

- Mentors will not engage in romantic, flirtatious, and/or sexual relations with youth.
- Mentors will under no circumstances use verbal or physical violence towards youth or adults.

- Mentors will not discuss present use of alcohol or drugs or past glorified use of drugs or alcohol with the youth.
- When at a Proud Theater meeting, community event, or when representing Proud Theater publicly, mentors will not use nor be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Mentors will not use tobacco products in the presence of youth.
- If a mentor is connected to youth on any social networking/media site, it's their responsibility to limit access to “adult” and inappropriate content on their pages including but not limited to: drugs, alcohol, sex, violence, inappropriate language, and “isms”.
- “Hanging out” needs to happen in the context of Proud Theater. It's not acceptable for mentors to attend events or parties with youth that are not Proud Theater sponsored or approved.
- Mentors are expected to check in with each other on issues or concerns regarding youth, especially in regards to youth contacts outside of sponsored Proud Theater rehearsals and events. When mentors have contact with youth or are following up about a youth concern outside of structured rehearsal times, they are expected to document their contact.*
- Mentors will likely be involved with youth issues and conflict that may feel personal, it is inappropriate however to hold grudges against youth.
- Mentors will actively work to de-escalate and mediate conflict and drama between the youth rather than becoming a participant in the drama themselves.
- Mentors will respect the confidentiality of youth by not discussing youth issues with anyone other than fellow mentors in the group.
- Mentors will not disclose information shared by youth within the group with a young person’s family or other professionals without consent from the youth unless there is reason to believe there is eminent harm to the youth or others. In this case, the individual will be notified that this information will be shared with the appropriate sources (family, support professionals, etc.) and mentors will consult each other, or a designated youth support position within the Chapter, to determine an appropriate course of action.

*Each chapter will develop their own expectations for documenting Mentor's outside of rehearsal contact with youth.

I _____ (mentor’s name) have read thoroughly and agree to abide by the Mentor Guidelines and expectations outlined above along with all Proud Theater policies. I understand that my failure to abide by Proud Theater policies and the Mentor Guidelines may result in the loss of my mentor position.

_____ (mentor signature), on _____ (date)