A Mentor is not…

It is important to realise that the role of mentor does have limitations:

• **A mentor is not a parent** – a mentor is not there to take over the role of a parent; no one can take over the role of a parent no matter how difficult a home life can be for the child.

• **A mentor is not all knowing** – no one but the young person knows what it is like to wake up every day in their home, go to school, walk in their neighbourhood, or handle the realities of their daily life. A mentor who comes in with an “I know best” agenda runs the risk of losing the trust of his mentee or offering ineffective advice.

• **A mentor is not a coach** – coaching involves having an end goal or target which needs to be achieved, whereas mentoring is directed by the needs of the young person and these can change.

• **A mentor is not a tutor** – it is so tempting for mentors who see their mentees failing in school to want to turn themselves into super tutors. A mentor can be there to offer resources and to provide help, but only if and when the mentee wants it.

• **A mentor is not a provider** – mentors have an important role in a young person’s life – it is not as a source of financial support. If asked, mentors may be able to help find other resources for support and even serve as advocates, but taking on the role of direct financial support can seriously jeopardise the relationship.

• **A mentor is not a saviour** - it has been clearly shown that it is much more important to focus on the relationship than on goals of salvation, enrichment, or betterment. Goals come only after relationship is established and they will differ with each young person. For one young person, a positive relationship may inspire them to go to university, become a doctor, or find a productive career goal. For another, it may simply give them the comfort of knowing that there has been one source of support in their life – just that feeling can have powerful impacts.