

WAM Volunteer Mentor FAQs

For a comprehensive understanding of our mentoring program, please ensure you have watched the Volunteer Info Session

What sort of commitment is required?

Significant time and resources go into our volunteer screening, training and providing ongoing professional development and support, as such, a minimum 12-month commitment to the mentoring role is required. Regular attendance at monthly peer supervision is also crucial to a mentor's understanding of the role, as shared learnings with peers contribute to developing skills and strategies that improve a relationship's success. Mentoring can require flexibility in other areas of your life. If you are uncertain about your capacity to commit, discuss this in your pre-training interview.

Can I mentor if I work full-time?

It's important to have availability and flexibility when mentoring. Most women require support during day-time business hours for appointments and social catch ups. If your full-time job offers a lot of flexibility and you can prioritise taking time to catch up with your participant (mentee) then it could be an option, however you will need to think carefully about whether this is realistic for you. It may also mean that it takes longer for you to be matched to a participant due to having less availability.

Can we catch up after hours or at the weekend?

We do not encourage catching up after hours, particularly because Program Coordinators do not work after hours and cannot provide support. Also, there are less free activities that you and your mentee can enjoy doing together.

If you and your mentee agree to both catch up on weekends occasionally there is some flexibility there, however participants may also have their children on weekends or want to relax outside of their own commitments.

What if I go away on a holiday?

We understand that people go on holidays and have commitments. As long as you communicate openly with your Coordinator in advance, we are likely able to find support for your participant whilst you're away.

What if I have a criminal record myself?

All volunteers will need to undergo a new criminal record check and are required to hold a current Working with Children Check. If something comes up on your check, it doesn't necessarily mean you can't volunteer but we do work through it on a case-by-case basis. We ask that you are upfront and provide this information during your application and screening process.

What exactly do mentors do?

What individual mentors do will vary according to the needs of program participants. The relationship is voluntary, egalitarian, and is not a substitute for case management or other professional support. Participants are supported by mentors to address the factors that might underlie their contact with the justice system and strengthen pathways to decrease the likelihood of future contact.

As a mentor, you might:

- Support a participant to manage their time and keep their appointments or attend court.
- Help someone work towards setting and achieving their goals.
- Visit a financial counsellor together.
- Assist in connecting with local activities and resources.
- Liaise with services and community agencies, such as Centrelink or Office of Housing.
- Support someone who is experiencing family violence to feel empowered, find their voice or create change.
- Spend quality time together, building up the woman's confidence and exploring new interests.

Do I need qualifications in social work or a similar profession?

No, we have mentors from a wide range of professional backgrounds and lived experience. We are really looking for people who care and want to support someone, have the capacity to create time for that support, and possess the qualities outlined in the information session that participants of our program have identified that they are looking for.

Some of these qualities include, being a good listener, reliable, non-judgmental, and compassionate. Much of the role involves listening, supporting and researching local supports. We have 2 days of training that prepares mentors for their role and continuous support through peer supervision and professional development, where you will continue to learn and grow in the role.

Will I be matched straight away?

Not necessarily. We take time and care in making matches that will last long-term for both mentors and participants by considering what you both share in common, your location, availability, the participant's support needs etc. This may mean that you are matched immediately if there happens to be the right fit for you when you come through the program, however some mentors take several months to be matched. Whilst you wait to be matched you can still attend peer supervisions where you can meet other mentors and learn about their experiences, giving you knowledge and confidence in preparation for your match. We also have guest speakers and professional development opportunities you can join.