



RurAL CAP Elder Mentor Program



Elder Mentors have been improving children's success in Head Start, classroom and other community settings across Alaska for more than 35 years. By providing one-on-one help with school work, modeling social and cultural values, and offering emotional support to children with special needs, Elder Mentors create inter-generational relationships with students, which are critical for healthy child development. In Alaska, Elder Mentors serve through the national Senior Corps Program.



Elder Mentor Joan Ulroan assists a young student in the Cup'ik language arts classroom at Chevak School. - Photo by Ted Irvin

Program goals include increasing school readiness for pre-school children, increasing school success for K-12 students, and reinforcing social skills, cultural values and resilience for all children. The Elder Mentor program is an investment in Alaska's past, present and future, with powerful results. This program has a direct impact on three special groups:

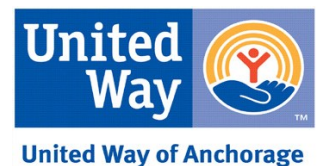
- **Children** who are economically, socially, or developmentally disadvantaged increase their school success through individualized tutoring.
- Lower income **Elders** who stay active in their community while sharing their skills and receiving a small, tax-exempt stipend and support for meals and transportation.
- **Education Professionals** benefit by having a supportive role model for the classroom and a mentor who can work with children needing extra help. Teachers often report that students are more engaged in learning when an Elder is present.

RurAL CAP does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring, firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, clients, volunteers, and subcontractors. Program Participants have the right to file a grievance if (s)he is not satisfied with the response to a complaint.

Contact Information

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Support for this program is provided by:



RurAL CAP Vision: Healthy People, Sustainable Communities, Vibrant Cultures

About the Elder Mentor Program

Benefits

Elder Mentor volunteers receive:

- An hourly stipend that can average about \$200/month.
- Paid time off (PTO) leave accrual and paid holiday benefits.
- Transportation and meals (if not provided by volunteer host site) are reimbursed based on federal guidelines.
- Stipends are tax-exempt and do not affect other benefits an Elder may be receiving (Medicaid, SNAP, etc.)
- Elder Mentors receive volunteer orientation and training, a Seniors Corps vest, and annual recognition.

Time Commitment

- Elder Mentors are expected to spend at least 5 hours per week with students during the school year.
- Participation in organized summer programs is encouraged, but not mandatory.
- Training time includes an extensive orientation and workshops covering topics that address child development, current education strategies, and also subjects of interest to seniors.

Eligibility

- Lower income seniors, age 55 or older. Maximum household income levels are \$31,200 for one person or \$42,260 for two. Further information for individuals with larger household sizes is available upon request.
- Seniors must pass and maintain status in the Alaska State Background Check System, which includes having fingerprints taken.

Volunteer Service

- Elder Mentors are expected to work directly with children.
 - The goal for pre-school children is to increase readiness to enter kindergarten.
 - The goal for older students is to increase engagement in school activities and learning.
- Elder Mentors bring compassion, social support, and cultural values to the students both individually and classroom-wide. Activities include: talking, reading, playing games, helping with assignments, modeling appropriate behavior, participating in crafts, telling stories, teaching cultural skills and language.

Site Supervision

- Supervising staff assign students to Elders based on special needs and goals - about 4 students per Elder.
- A simple work plan is written to guide the Elder in the activities and goals for each student.
- Each month, the Elder completes an activity sheet that is reviewed and approved by their supervisor.
- Supervisors are asked to fill out short surveys periodically to assess Elder performance/program success.
- Schools/supervisors will provide documentation of the Elder's ongoing training.

Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. | Jan Abbott, Elder Mentor Program Manager

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