National Federation of the Blind of Missouri

Mission BEAM Handbook for Mentors and Mentees

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# **Welcome**

We would like to welcome you to Mission BEAM. It is our hope that through your participation in Mission BEAM (Blindness Empowerment, Advocacy & Mentoring) that you will be enriched and empowered to live the life you want.

# **What is the National Federation of the Blind (NFB)?**

Mission BEAM is a part of the NFB. We have the power, influence, diversity, and determination to help transform our dreams into reality. Our members work together for a brighter tomorrow by raising the expectations for blind people everywhere so that blind people can live the life they want. Our programs are supported by the funds we can raise.

## Who We Are:

The National Federation of the Blind of Missouri is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization made up of blind and sighted people of all ages, their families, and friends. Our strong local chapters and divisions and well-trained leaders help newly blind people adjust to vision loss and promote the full participation and integration of blind people in our communities. We bring our collective experiences together and volunteer our time to effect change at the state and national level.

## What We Do:

* assist blind people to acquire the skills of independence
* help blind people to develop confidence in themselves through our many service activities
* teach blind people the skills of leadership through active participation in conventions, chapter meetings, and civic activities
* encourage blind seniors to continue their active and meaningful lifestyles
* encourage blind high school seniors and college students to pursue post-secondary training through our annual state and national scholarship programs
* educate blind diabetics on various accessible devices needed to treat and maintain the disease as well as provide support in coping with related vision loss
* support parents and friends of blind children with information about the capabilities of the blind
* protect and promote the civil rights of blind people through public education and legislative action

# **What is Mission BEAM?**

# **(Blindness Empowerment, Advocacy & Mentoring)**

It is the mission of the NFB of Missouri Mission BEAM program to empower blind/visually-impaired transition-aged youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to live meaningful, productive lives. The program is designed to address independence, self-advocacy, social-emotional, and career readiness. Through job exploration and work experiences, the youth will be prepared to be fully integrated into their community and become successful, contributing members of society.

## Why is Mission BEAM Important?

In many cases, blind youth do not have positive blind role models to guide them through the challenges of transitioning to adulthood as blind individuals. Mission BEAM will allow blind youth the opportunity to connect with successful blind adults. This is important because Mentors can share how they transition to being a blind adult. This gives the youth room to reach for their goals and dream about living the life that they want.

## Outcome of Participation in Mission BEAM:

It is our hope that Mission BEAM will provide mentors and mentees an enriching and valuable learning experience that will empower youth to strive to be the best they can be.

## What to expect as a Mentor:

As a mentor you can expect to share valuable experiences as a blind individual with a young person who may need guidance in many areas in their life. You will help guide them in decision making on such topics as education, future employment, skills of blindness, social skills, and many other topics.

### **Dos for Mentors**

* Maintain confidentiality
* Be open and honest with your mentee
* Give appropriate feedback
* Offer suggestions but do not give solutions
* Support your mentee’s independence
* Lead by example
* If you are not sure of the answer, go to the Program Coordinator for assistance
* Have a healthy sense of humor

### **Don’ts for Mentors**

* Be judgmental
* Be discouraging of your mentee’s goals
* Ask your mentee to do something you are not willing to do yourself
* Ignore what your mentee is saying

## What to expect as a Mentee:

As a mentee, you can expect to have the benefit of having a mentor who has experienced many of the things you have already experienced. Your mentor will be able to help you gain knowledge regarding decisions about education, future employment, skills of blindness, relationship building, and many other topics. You can also expect your mentor to give guidance and not make those decisions for you so that you learn to make decisions on your own.

### **Dos for Mentees**

* Be open and honest with your mentor
* Be open to suggestions and think outside the box
* Participate actively in creating and implementing your goals
* Strive to be as independent as possible
* Use your mentor as a resource
* Have a healthy sense of humor

### **Don’ts for Mentees**

* Be closed minded
* Be afraid to try new things
* Be afraid to voice your opinion
* Share information about other program Participants

## Benefits of Mission BEAM:

You will have opportunities and experiences related to future employment, continuing education, advocacy, social skills, and skills of blindness that you will need to be a successful adult.

# **What is the Program Content of Mission BEAM?**

Mission BEAM will focus on assisting the blind mentee in developing alternative techniques used by blind people in their everyday life to enhance their opportunities to live independently in their communities as a self-supporting member of society.

## Independent Living Skills:

Alternative skills to blindness in their daily living such as money management, shopping, and identifying transportation resources in their communities.

## Self – Advocacy:

Learning to speak up for oneself in educational and vocational planning and making personal choices in everyday life to achieve their goals.

## Educational and Vocational Exploration:

The mentee will explore educational and vocational opportunities while participating in the Research of a career pathway. Once the mentee selects an area of interest, they will be asked to identify the prerequisites needed to pursue this goal. The mentee will make appropriate application to school or employer to determine the course of action needed to secure a position within the company. Resume writing and interviewing skills will be conducted.

## Pre-Employment Skills:

Job readiness skills will be measured through individual and group activities for enthusiasm and attitude, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork, communication, professionalism, and ability to network.

## Pre-Employment Work Based Experience:

The blind mentee will participate in a work-based program which involves measuring attendance, punctuality, appearance, initiative, quality of work, teamwork, response to supervision, problem solving, workplace culture, policy, and safety. The position may be a paid position or non-paid position.

## Social-Emotional Support:

The following areas in the realm of social skills and emotional intelligence will be explored during Mission BEAM activities and conversations.

* Identifying strengths and talents and interests will be built upon during the program.
* There will be an exploration of a full array of emotions and understanding emotions in others.
* Communication skills including active listening will be a focus for both mentors and mentees.
* Speaking up and speaking out in respectable ways is part of self-advocacy.
* Calming and coping skills will be introduced and strengthened.
* Goalsetting, decision-making and problem-solving will be an important part of the program.
* Health and well-being will be promoted.
* Building self-esteem, self-confidence and resiliency is another focal point of the program.
* Learning will take place in developing a growth mind set and moving away from a fixed mind set.
* In the event of a mental health crisis, crisis lines and resources will be shared.

## Parent Involvement:

We, at Mission Beam, know that parents are an integral part of their children’s growth and success. Mission Beam will ask for your participation in attending periodic learning opportunism, open communication through questionnaires and feedback regarding program implementation. Parents will also play a key role in goal setting with their child.

Parents will learn more about the following topics:

* Continuing to support their children’s emotional, Social and academic development and growth.
* Nine things parents should say to their children every day and why.
* Strengthen communication skills including active listening.
* Strengthen relationships, set healthy boundaries and build confidence.
* Learn about the TEAM approach (Togetherness, Autonomy, Encouragement and Minimal interference).
* Problem solving and decision making.

# **Important NFB Links and Contact Information**

The NFB of Missouri is a very active affiliate which carries out activities on local, state and national levels. To learn more about these activities and to find information about local chapters and state divisions, committees and groups please visit our affiliate web site.

<https://nfbmo.org/>

The National Federation of the Blind Missouri affiliate president is Shelia Wright. She can be reached by email or phone.

Email: president@nfbmo.org

Phone number: (816)679-5258

The NFB, national website provides valuable information about the numerous activities, resources for blind people and their families and details of how we are working to improve the lives for all blind people. You can find all of this information and more at the web site.

<https://nfb.org/>

All participants in the Mission BEAM program are required to follow the policies and procedures set forth in the Code of Conduct. This is the link that provides all of the information about the code of conduct.

<https://nfb.org/about-us/history-and-governance/code-conduct>

The NFB of Missouri, Mission BEAM wants your participation in the program to be meaningful for you. If at any time you have questions, concerns or comments please feel free to reach out to the Program Coordinator, Jenny Carmack, by phone, text, or email.

Email: jcarmack314@gmail.com

Call or text: 314-239-9776