

GOALIES MATTER “**BACKUPS**” PROGRAM - GUIDEBOOK

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Introduction:

The “Backups” Program is more than just a mentorship initiative—it is a proactive opportunity to help individuals prevent the onset of mental health challenges and support those navigating existing issues, both on and off the field. This program fosters an informal, yet purposeful relationship between a mentor—typically outside the student's immediate personal circle—and a student. Mentoring plays a critical role in both athletic and personal development, serving as a foundational element in cultivating well-rounded, resilient individuals. Designed to drive positive developmental and real-world outcomes, the program emphasizes active engagement, leadership involvement, strategic planning, realistic expectations, and clearly defined goals. From improved morale and enhanced mental well-being to strengthened leadership and career development, the benefits of a structured, supportive mentoring program are wide-ranging and impactful, including:

- **Mental Health Support** – Providing meaningful support throughout an individual’s mental health journey—or helping to prevent a mental health crisis before it occurs—is a critical component of their long-term development. This support is essential not only in their growth as an athlete, but also in shaping who they become as individuals and how they navigate challenges in adulthood. By fostering mental well-being early on, we lay the foundation for lifelong resilience, performance, and personal success..
- **Skill Improvement** – Mentoring enables experienced, highly competent mentors to pass their expertise on to others who need to acquire specific skills and provides an opportunity for the individual to share their experience and education with members of the goalie and lacrosse communities.
- **Leadership Development** – Mentoring encourages the development of leadership skills. These skills are often more easily gained through examples, guided practice or shared experiences than by education and training.
- **Educational Support** – Mentoring provides guidance, tools, methods, and techniques to help retain information in preparation for examinations of knowledge. Sometimes using a hands-on realistic approach with a mentor compliments retention methods and techniques.
- **Team Building** – Mentoring assists in modeling desired behaviors, development of team building skills in support of TEAMWORK, and above all, cultivating the right attitudes.

Purpose

The primary objective of The Backup Program is to foster a culture of leadership development with a strong emphasis on mental health improvement. The program is designed to acknowledge and support the diverse talents and mental well-being of individuals, leveraging these strengths to help them achieve their athletic goals. This approach is rooted in the belief that holistic development—both mental and physical—is essential for sustained success. Ultimately, the program aims to create an inclusive and empowering environment where all participants can thrive.

Key components of Mental Health Mentoring include:

- Trust and Confidentiality
- Active Listening and Empathy
- Mental Health Literacy
- Boundary Setting
- Goal-Oriented Support
- Consistency and Presence
- Resilience and Coping Skills Development
- Modeling Healthy Behavior
- Cultural Competency and Inclusion
- Connection to Resources

Key components of a leadership culture include:

- Establishes and implements Mentorship and provides specific guidance.
- Develops and sustains a pool of high-performing, result-oriented mentors.
- Provides active and accessible mentoring, individual development, and learning opportunities
- Provides support in utilizing resources applicable to the mentees needs.
- Share the skills and knowledge of successful and experienced athletes/individuals with other athletes/individuals.
- Provides motivation for creativity, and innovation.
- Brings athletes/goalies together to establish a network of like-minded individuals.

Informal Mentoring (Definitions):

Informal mentoring meets most of the criteria listed above, but unlike formal mentoring, informal mentoring has minimal to no structure and oversight and may/may not have clear and specific goals. Informal mentoring is the progression of formal mentoring. The outcome and lessons learned from the formal relationship and the longevity of the informal mentoring relationship creates a network of professionals and a culture of trust and team building. The success of either type of mentoring is greatly dependent upon clearly defined roles and expectations in addition to the participants' awareness of the benefits of participating in the mentoring relationship.

Benefits – Mentor (The Back up)/Student (The Starter):

As a result of being a “**Backup**” - ***mentor***, the person:

1. Renews their enthusiasm in the role of being an expert;
2. Obtains a greater understanding of obstacles/challenges they've experienced in their own journey
3. Enhances skills in coaching, consulting, listening, and modeling;
4. Develops and practices a more personal style of leadership;
5. Demonstrates expertise and shares knowledge of their own athletic and mental health journey

As a result of being a “**Starter**” - ***student***, the person:

1. Experiences a smoother transition into new responsibilities or expectations;

2. Receives tools to further their development as a leader on and off the field, athletically and mentally;
3. Develops new and/or different perspectives;
4. Gets assistance with ideas and coping skills;
5. Demonstrates strengths and explores areas of improvement

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. The Head Coach (Executive Director)

- a. Provides oversight and guidance;
- b. Communicates the purpose and need for mentorship throughout the Goalies Matter community, obtains support, and ensures that the benefits are understood across the program;
- c. Assigns Program Directors;
- d. Facilitates and provides approvals for mentorship policies, procedures, plan of action and materials; and,
- e. Acts, as necessary, in the removal and reinstatement of participants.

2. The Assistant Coaches (Program Directors):

- a. Implements established policies, procedures, and responsibilities to include the mentorship application approval process;
- b. Implements an evaluation process;
- c. Develops and executes a communication strategy:
 - i. Promotes and advertises mentorship opportunities soliciting mentors from across the goalie community.
 - ii. Promotes and advertises the Mentorship program to interested participants and provides information through social media outlets.
 - iii. Reports on the progress/success of the mentorship.
- d. Revises training requirements as needed;
- e. Educates the goalie community on aspects and benefits of mentorship;
- f. Schedules activities (i.e. monthly/quarterly meetings, virtual trainings, etc.) to support mentors and students;
- g. Promotes mentorship throughout the lacrosse community, i.e., lacrosse events, goalie camps/clinics, speaking engagements, special information sessions, recruiting guest speakers, etc.;
- h. Identifies, collects, and shares best practices.

3. The Backups (*Backups and Starters* – Participants)

Mentoring Relationship: In a mentoring relationship, each person values the other and makes a connection with the other; without this, the relationship diminishes. The “Starter” must come to the “Backup” in an equal partnership and, understand that the “Backups” advice may not always work. The relationship must work for the “Backup” and the “Starter”, otherwise, it should be terminated.

Qualities of a Backup/Starter: Development of “starters” depends on strengths, and weaknesses; collaborating on the means to “get there” including implementing strategies and

evaluating along the way. The “Backup” provides the “light” for the “Starter” to follow. The “Starter” learns from the wisdom and past experiences of the “Backup”.

Ideally, a *Backup* should be able to:

- a. Be respected as an experienced and successful professional in the goalie/lacrosse community;
- b. Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program;
- c. Listen and communicate well;
- d. Offer encouragement through genuine and positive reinforcement;
- e. Offer honest and constructive feedback;
- f. Be a positive role model;
- h. Share “lessons learned” from their own experiences; and,
- i. Be a resource and sounding board.

Ideally, a *Starter* should be able to:

- a. Commit to self-development;
- b. Assume responsibility for acquiring or improving skills and knowledge;
- c. Be open and honest on their goals, expectations, challenges, and concerns;
- d. Actively listen and ask questions;
- e. Seek advice, opinions, feedback, and direction from their mentor;
- f. Be open to constructive feedback, and ask for it;
- g. Respect their mentor’s time and resources;
- h. Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program; and,
- i. Provide feedback to their mentor on what is working, or not working, in the mentoring relationship.

PROCEDURES:

1. Application Process: The application process is open year-round. All participants shall complete and submit an application through the Goalies Matter website.

2. “Backup” - Mentor Selection: Once the mentor submits the application, it will be routed through the Program Directors for approval. This is to ensure that only highly qualified mentors are accepted into the program, while students are automatically approved upon submission of their application. Once approved, the mentor becomes available for student assignment – unless a student has a mentor in mind. If that is the case, then that requested mentor must submit an application to be a mentor for approval; that way they are in the database and can be referred to future student candidates.

3. “Backup” - Mentor Requirements:

- a. Completes introductory mentorship training (located under Backup Training box);
- b. Meets with starter on a regular basis (for example: monthly);
- c. Defines goals and expectations for the mentorship with the “starter(s)”
- d. Provides guidance, support, and assistance with their “Starter(s)” reaching their individual goals and helping them overcome their challenges/obstacles.

4. “Starter” - Student Requirements:

- a. Completes introductory mentorship training (located under Student Training box);
 - b. Develops a leadership development plan with defined goals;
 - c. Seeks opportunities for growth;
 - d. Takes ownership of personal development;
 - e. Achieves/maintains technical proficiency in their athletic and leadership skills
- 5. “Backup”/ “Starter” Matching:** There are two ways that matching can occur:
- 1. Based on the various factors listed in the Backup/Starter applications; keywords will enable the best match.
 - 2. Based on a current relationship between the prospective Backup and Starter.

6. Mentoring “Rules of Engagement:”

The “Backup” and “Starter” must establish the appropriate relationship by setting fundamental rules. This can assist both parties in understanding expectations.

Trust is the core of any relationship and maintaining this trust is the responsibility of both the mentor and the student. The primary focus of the mentorship is to detail short and long- term goals both athletically and mentally to include activities, resources, and target dates.

A mentoring log for session notes can help the mentor and student stay focused and is highly encouraged, but NOT Required. A sample mentoring log is available on the mentorship website and can be used to record meetings and activities.

7. Initial Meeting:

- a. Discuss expectations for the relationship;
- b. Share personal and lacrosse/athletic, and mental health story (optional) information;
- c. Set the method and frequency of future meetings

8. Closure:

Once the mentorship has been achieved, and the students’ goals have been accomplished, the mentorship is officially terminated. However, Learning is a life-long, continuous process.

Students and mentors should be continual learners, even after their formal/informal relationship comes to an end. We strongly encourage that the relationship remain in tact as they can benefit from one another or build into a life-long friendship.