

## Mentoring During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Perhaps more than ever those we are serving need MB3's mentoring services. Our model has dramatically changed (as has everything else!) because we cannot meet in person with our core group members in our Nurture, Support and Accountability Groups. But folks are continuing to be released into our community from incarceration and need our help. So we asked our experts what they recommend to our mentors as ways to continue to have a positive impact during this most unusual time. Below are some tips and advice.

Please don't give up! Continuing to be a mentor during this pandemic may be the most helpful thing you can do. If you need help or have questions, don't hesitate to contact Rev. Caitlin Simpson, MB3's Mentor Coordinator. Thanks for all you are doing!

1 - Stay engaged using text, email, phone, social media; many use Facebook messaging. If possible, try arranging on-line NSAG meetings.

2 - Assume that internet access will be limited for the client. Don't rely on Zoom or Facetime, sometimes texting and phone calls will be the best options.

3 - Know your local resources on housing, food pantries, and utility/rent relief programs. Use the MB3 returning citizen guide to find up to date and helpful resources.  
[www.returningcitizenguide.com](http://www.returningcitizenguide.com)

4 - Don't assume they've had access to virtual worship or Bible studies - some might need help getting physical copies of devotional books to stay engaged.

5 - Encourage participation in AA/NA, even if meetings aren't available. There are devotional books that can help. Connect them to virtual AA/NA meetings. Here's a link:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z4o4uO-EkMzVQZEUi2q18zHUe0J9L7iY/view?fbclid=IwAR3m\\_jdJ6hHWVf-d6FN64Z8t1SW8kt-UjEIY7d6Rov-Aa81\\_fnvPQcrq\\_M](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z4o4uO-EkMzVQZEUi2q18zHUe0J9L7iY/view?fbclid=IwAR3m_jdJ6hHWVf-d6FN64Z8t1SW8kt-UjEIY7d6Rov-Aa81_fnvPQcrq_M)

6 - For those that have children, check in about how school is going. Parents with access to resources are stressed, meaning those with less access are even more stressed.

7 - For furloughed and fired workers, ask about filing for unemployment and check in about status each week. (They must file weekly to keep that benefit.)

8 - Remember to check in about their self-care during this increased time of stress; their risk for relapse is high.

9 - See if they have access to a mask and other protective supplies. Many jobs are requiring it and public shopping areas are as well. There are many local churches with

mask ministries. If they don't have any, see who can help them get what they need so if they are working, they can keep going in to work.

10 - Remind them regularly that they are doing a good job and that this is hard for everyone. It's easy to doubt yourself in these unprecedented times, and doubt can lead to reduced self-worth, which can lead down a dark path for us all. We are truly in this together.

11 - Feel free to pray with them and ask them what they would like to include in those prayers.

12 - Provide them with information about mental health resources that are available, even if they do not have a diagnosed condition. COVID has led to increases in anxiety, depression, and suicide so everyone needs to know about these services. Try to connect them with hotlines and other online services that are available.

13 - Ask them how COVID has changed their life and ask about their most pressing needs. Most people are not accustomed to asking for help or admitting they're struggling. We need to make them feel comfortable sharing.

14 - Ask them about how they're managing their parole/probation/court requirements during these times. Sadly, parole and probation requirements are still mandatory for many individuals. This unnecessary stress during these trying times can be difficult to manage. Many may feel overwhelmed.

15 - Recognize your own privilege during these times. While some of us may be blessed enough to have our jobs and salaries, we need to understand that our people are experiencing COVID on a level many of us will likely never experience. Never forget that we must always try to see the world through their lens and while standing in their shoes. Empathy and compassion during these times is vital.

16 - Ask them if they have any questions about COVID or the quarantines. Many of our people are under-educated and there is a lot of misinformation out there. Although none of us are experts in epidemiology, we should try to be a voice of reason while not providing false hope.