



## College Access and Post-Secondary (CAPS) Program Mentor Information

### Program Overview

The College Access and Post-Secondary (CAPS) Program at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) matches mentors with high school juniors and seniors to equip our youth with the tools and knowledge necessary for their pathways after high school. Some youth may be seeking advice on how to apply to and afford college. Other youth may be considering alternate trajectories, such as attending a vocational school, taking a gap year, or entering the workforce immediately after graduation. And some youth may be unsure of their next steps. If matched, mentors would provide one-on-one attention and support to their mentee as they navigate their post-secondary options.

A majority of young people in CAPS are first-generation, low-income, English language learning, and/or recent immigrants. Students come from various schools in the greater Boston area, including Boston, Quincy, and Malden Public Schools. As a mentor, you are expected to create a safe and inclusive space that centers your young person and helps them explore their interests and future goals in the ways most meaningful to them.

### Program Logistics

Mentor matches are around a year in length, starting in a youth's spring semester of their junior year and continuing until the end of the youth's spring semester of their senior year.

Mentors will meet with their mentees every two weeks for at least an hour at a time in their junior year and over the summer. Beginning in the fall of senior year, mentors will meet with their mentees weekly until all applications are submitted at the beginning of senior spring. The exact days and dates are to be set through consensus between mentor and mentee.

Mentors can meet with their mentees either virtually on Zoom, Google Meet, or any video calling platform of their choice, **or** mentors can meet with their mentees in-person in a public setting, such as a library or café. Mentors must notify BCNC staff of their public meetings via Google Form.

Mentors may email, message, or reach out to their mentees via the communication platform that both parties are comfortable with. Mentors and mentees may not follow each other on social media.

Because CAPS is a voluntary program, youth are reminded to be communicative and responsive with their mentors. Should there be recurring last minute cancellations, or increased absenteeism on the youth's end, mentors must notify BCNC staff immediately.

### Mentor Norms and Expectations

The Youth Center (YC) believes that the young people that come to our programs inherently have strengths, formative experiences, and autonomy. Young people are encouraged to come as they are. Core values of YC surrounding youthwork include the following:

- Youth should have access to the economic, socioemotional, academic, pre-professional, and community resources that they need to survive.
- There are structures of power and oppressive systems in place that constrain a youth's access to said resources.



- YC staff and adult volunteers who become involved in our young people's lives are responsible for advocating for them.
- Youth ought to be given the power of choice with their own priorities.

Thus, we believe that a mentor must first and foremost play the role of safe and affirming adult in their mentee's life. Mentors are not parents, teachers, social workers, or peers. There will be times when mentors may see themselves in their mentee. There may be other times where mentors are doubtful and in opposition to a path or motivation that their mentee may be choosing to follow. As a safe and affirming adult, mentors are expected to first listen, understand the factors that have gone into their mentee's life choices, and ask clarifying questions, before offering advice or opinion. In the case that mentees inform Youth Center staff that their mentors seem to be constraining them or oppressing their hopes and dreams, staff will intervene.

Because BCNC is a community-based organization that serves immigrants and marginalized populations, mentors are also expected to provide culturally responsible knowledge and support to their mentees. Mentors and mentees may come from different upbringings and positionalities —not limited to the intersections of gender, race, socioeconomic status, disability, generational status, and geography. Thus, mentors are expected to be mindful of their own biases in respecting and honoring their mentees' needs.

### **Early Match Closure**

Despite both parties' best efforts, a mentorship match may need to close before the end of the program timeline. The causes for early match closure vary by case, but they occur after repeat attempts at conflict resolution and facilitated discussion, between mentor, mentee, and staff. Should a match close, the mentor and mentee will meet with BCNC staff for a final meeting. The mentor and mentee will then be expected to no longer be in communication with one another going forward. The mentor may be given the option to be re-matched with a new mentee, depending on capacity and the mentee pool.

Should a youth vocalize that they feel their mentor compromises their safety, Youth Center (YC) staff will end the match immediately.

### **BCNC Involvement and Support**

While youth enrolled in CAPS are paired individually with mentors, they are also expected to attend regular workshops taught by BCNC staff. Linda Zhang designs and implements programming for the junior year students in CAPS, working with the youth to explore post-secondary options, develop professional development plans, and develop the elements required for college applications. Lydia Duan designs and implements programming for the senior year students in CAPS, working with the youth to identify options for financial accessibility in college, oversee application processes, and share resources surrounding socioemotional, cultural, and academic needs for after high school.

Mentors are expected to have two check-in meetings with Lydia within the first two months of their match. After these check-ins, mentors are expected to check-in with Lydia, at minimum, once every semester. Lydia will provide a Calendly advising link for mentors, where mentors can also sign-up in any given open time slot on an as needed basis. Lydia will be overseeing the progress of matches over



the course of the mentorship year, and she will be the point person regarding match needs and updates.

### **Program Materials**

All mentors are expected to join the Google Classroom to access resources and materials. BCNC staff will upload suggested activities, checklist items, talking points, and essential questions.

In addition to resources uploaded on Google Classroom, newsletters with resources and upcoming events are sent out on a monthly basis.

### **Program Learning Outcomes**

Youth will be equipped with the resources to create a plan for after high school that aligns with their academic and career interests.

Youth will feel confident in identifying the steps they need to take while in high school to apply to college or post-secondary education in the United States.

Youth will know the different options available to them to make post-secondary education more financially accessible.

Youth will learn what supports they need in a positive learning environment.

Youth will learn how to update their resumes, network with people, and find internships and opportunities for career readiness.

Youth will learn how to write narratives about themselves and their experiences for applications, scholarships, and job cover letters.

Youth will feel more comfortable with advocating for themselves and seeking support when they need it, be that in an academic, pre-professional, or socioemotional context.