

CAL RIPKEN, SR. FOUNDATION
BADGES FOR BASEBALL
BEST PRACTICES RESOURCE GUIDE



The *Badges for Baseball* Best Practices Resource Guide provides law enforcement officers with the tools to successfully implement the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation's (CRSF) signature juvenile crime prevention and mentoring program, *Badges for Baseball*. This resource guide is based on the *Elements of Effective Practices in Mentoring (EPPM)* and was developed using feedback from youth partners currently running *Badges for Baseball* programs across the country as well as other measurement tools used regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ripken Foundation programs.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Badges for Baseball ("Badges") pairs at-risk youth with civilian, law enforcement, public safety, and military mentors who participate in structured, curricula-driven, afterschool programs that help youth build life skills, stay in school, and make positive behavioral decisions that lead them to success in life. By engaging law enforcement/public safety officers as mentors, *Badges* also creates an environment for officers and at-risk youth to build healthy, strong relationships that promote safer communities.

The program concept is simple, yet substantive. Each week, groups of at-risk youth that have been recruited from local afterschool youth-serving organizations and schools are mentored by law enforcement officers. Youth participate in sports activities while mentors integrate the character education curricula that focuses on building life skills and developing youth accountability. Utilizing discussion-based curricula, law enforcement mentors interact using sports as a vehicle to gain the youth's attention. Before, during, and after sports activities, trained *Badges* mentors use specially-designed lesson plans to engage youth in discussing a variety of topics including leadership, teamwork, peer influences/choices, and personal responsibility. In addition to the *Badges for Baseball Coaches Manual*, CRSF also provides law enforcement officers and program partners with the *Healthy Choices, Healthy Children* curriculum series to help mentors expand these discussions and relate them to topics such as resilience, bullying, cyber bullying, financial literacy, being an engaged U.S. citizen, physical fitness, and nutrition. This series also includes a guide on adaptive sports for mentors working with youth who have physical and intellectual disabilities. This model ensures youth are connected with mentors no less than one hour per week while participating in sports-themed activities and discussing the lessons in CRSF's character education curriculum.

OUTCOMES FOR BADGES FOR BASEBALL PROGRAM

Two significant outcomes arise from this program model: young people are deterred from the activities associated with juvenile delinquency, while community members and law enforcement officers are provided with direct opportunities to build affirming relationships and find common ground through fun activities. Providing youth with opportunities to connect with their community in positive ways can further enhance their favorable opinions of both the community and the police.¹ *Badges* provides a strong platform for law enforcement mentors and program partners to give young people and law enforcement mentors the ability to positively interact, and provide healing and transformative experiences. This meaningful connection creates trust between law enforcement and community members promoting a healthy relationship that garner positive future outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF BADGES FOR BASEBALL PROGRAM

The CRSF implementation strategy includes multiple benchmarks and enhancements from the *Elements of Effective Practice in Mentoring (EPPM)* that create a comprehensive approach for both law enforcement mentors and youth mentees, providing structured activities, ongoing training, and family involvement.

The core components of the *Badges for Baseball* program include:

- A character education curriculum in the form of 12 life lessons outlined by the *Badges for Baseball Coaches Manual* and supported by the *Healthy Choices, Healthy Children* curriculum series
- Consistent mentorship and interaction with youth partners, law enforcement, military, or public safety officers
- A team sport or other physical activities

Below outlines the implementation of a *Badges* program with specific *EPPM* benchmarks and enhancements noted in parentheses. *Badges* advocates high levels of interaction between mentees and mentors, consistent operational procedures to ensure a safe environment, careful screening of mentors, training for mentors, monitoring of the program, and activities that enable mentors and mentees to spend at least one hour per week together for the duration of the program.²

SITE SELECTION

The first step in successful program delivery is the selection of a strong local program partner serving the target population and potential mentees whose needs match the services offered by the *Badges* program (*Recruitment B.1.7*).³ CRSF encourages law enforcement mentors and local program partners to verify the need based on community and individual risk factors. CRSF annually collects and reviews data from law enforcement mentors and program partners, including poverty levels, free- and reduced-priced lunch eligibility, and the percent of youth from single-parent homes. Law enforcement mentors can also review publicly available local data as well as data provided by the local youth-serving organization or program partners.

Based on the above criteria, law enforcement officers would identify a local youth-serving organization (i.e. Police Athletic League, Boys & Girls Club, or City Parks & Recs) to partner with to implement the *Badges* program. CRSF invites law enforcement officers and program partners who are interested in starting a *Badges* program to apply. The lead partner would then develop an implementation plan and budget for a new *Badges* program, which allows CRSF to oversee appropriate use of funds. Upon selection and review of the application, CRSF and the CRSF program partner enter into a working relationship via a signed letter of agreement. This includes CRSF's commitment to provide a program grant, program materials/equipment, training, and high-impact experiences for mentees and mentors.

Challenges to Site Selection

During site selection, there are a few challenges that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Developing a budget for the *Badges* program. Solution: To develop a budget, law enforcement mentors and program partners focus on the aspects of *Badges* needing financial support from CRSF (e.g. full and/or part-time staff, equipment, travel, etc.) to finalize the expenses in their budget.
2. Utilizing CRSF's Grant Management System (GMS). Solution: To use GMS, CRSF program managers supply information on how to use this tracking system to all law enforcement mentors and program partners. This information allows law enforcement mentors and program partners to successfully complete and submit the application and budget for review. To successfully complete and submit the application, budget, reimbursements, and reports for the *Badges* program, utilization of GMS is mandatory for all CRSF program partners.
3. Identifying and selecting the right local program partner. Solution: Law enforcement agencies reach out to local schools and afterschool programs, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and youth sport organizations, to discuss the *Badges* program with staff to get youth involved in the program. Law enforcement may offer a one-day event with youth to participate in games and learn more about that specific agency as a recruitment event. Depending on who is initiating contact, local program partners may be reaching out to law enforcement agencies in their community such as police departments, sheriff's departments, police athletic leagues, school resource officers, military, and federal agencies (FBI, DEA, ATF, CIA, secret service, etc.) to be involved in the *Badges* program. In this instance, youth-serving organization staff may invite law enforcement volunteers to a one-day event with youth and learn about the *Badges* program. And finally, if both law enforcement volunteers and program partners experience difficulty in identifying a local partner to run the program, they may contact CRSF program managers to help connect the law enforcement agency and the program partner with one another.



RECRUITMENT

To start a new *Badges* program, law enforcement and program partners must recruit adult mentors as well as at-risk youth in need of the program.

Law enforcement agencies who want to start a new *Badges* program will work with CRSF and local youth program partners to recruit caring adults and law enforcement mentors to serve as positive role models. There are various strategies to recruit mentors (direct ask, presentations, social media, or other mass communications, asking current mentors to recruit); recruitment methods focus on how mentoring and volunteering can benefit mentors (personally and professionally) while striving to build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring. (*Recruitment B.1.2, B.1.3, B.1.4, E.1.1, E.1.3*).⁴ Additionally, it is important to recruit adult and law enforcement mentors with diverse backgrounds to relate to the youth served by the *Badges* program.

Adult mentor examples include:

- Local university students, athletic teams, and coaches
- Church group volunteers
- High school athletic teams, coaches, leadership, and teachers

As part of the *Badges* program, program partners starting a program will recruit mentors through local law enforcement agencies. These agencies include but are not limited to, local police departments and sheriff offices, state police, military, and federal law enforcement agencies. Program partners that are veteran-focused organizations broaden the mentoring scope by engaging military veterans in all stages of their life, giving them unique opportunities to engage at-risk youth. Military veterans interact and help youth build resilience skills using their unique perspective to help them navigate life's challenges.

Additional law enforcement mentor recruitment strategies include:

- Create an internal database, within program partner organization, of local law enforcement agencies and contacts
- Provide a consistent *Badges* schedule to local law enforcement mentors participating in the program
- Use equipment, apparel, and other items to incentivize law enforcement mentors to participate in the program
- Broaden the scope of law enforcement agencies by engaging first responders, park police, park rangers, cadets, etc.

Before participating in the *Badges* program, law enforcement mentors receive approval from senior leadership (e.g. Chief of Police or Board of Commissioners). Law enforcement mentors expect to spend one to two hours per week participating in the program. Additional time and resource commitment is required if law enforcement mentors are responsible for planning and implementing the *Badges* program.

Recruitment of mentees is equally important as caring adult mentors running the *Badges* program. That is why law enforcement mentors and program partners recruit at-risk youth, ages 9-14, in communities with a need to provide positive youth development. Through the CRSF *Badges* grant, law enforcement mentors and program partners implementing the program must serve at least 100 youth. This is required for all CRSF *Badges* program partners on a yearly basis.

Law enforcement volunteers and the local program partner staff often host a recruitment event, which parents/guardians are invited to attend, to garner excitement about the new *Badges* program and to explain what it means to participate in *Badges*. This event includes CRSF's *Quickball*, a fast-paced version of baseball that allows youth with varying abilities to play together as a team. Youth and their families have the opportunity to meet law enforcement and other adult mentors through the recruitment event. Law enforcement mentors and program partners send information home with an overview of the *Badges* program for parents/guardians. (*Recruitment B.1.6, E.1.5, Family Engagement, Matching & Initiation E.4.2*)⁵

Other youth recruitment strategies include:

- Host open-house at program partner facility for potential youth and their families to attend to learn more about the *Badges* program
- Use in-house recruitment at program partner organization, such as poster boards, announcements, and small events
- Partner with Title I schools to encourage youth to participate in *Badges* program
- Use social media to advertise *Badges* to youth, families, and schools
- Use sports or activities that interest youth
- Use equipment, apparel, and other items to incentivize youth to join the *Badges* program
- Provide the opportunity for reliable, safe transportation for youth to participate in *Badges* at program partner location

Law enforcement mentors utilize community and afterschool programs to recruit youth for *Badges*. Organizations to consider:

- Police Activities League or similar organization
- Recreation Center
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- YMCAs
- Youth sports organization
- Schools



Challenges to Recruitment

During recruitment, there are a couple of challenges that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Availability of law enforcement, staff, volunteers, and youth to participate in the program. **Solution:** Law enforcement volunteers and program partners follow a specific schedule of the *Badges* program and keep constant communication to ensure maximum attendance. Also, to promote consistency from volunteers, program partners ask for a four- to five-month commitment in the *Badges* program.
2. Law enforcement agencies that have limited access to youth-serving organizations. **Solution:** To gain access to youth for the *Badges* program, law enforcement mentors build positive relationships with community and afterschool organizations.

CRSF utilizes the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program's (OJJDP) National Mentoring Resource Center (NMRC) as a reference to assist in recruiting, screening, monitoring/support, and training of mentors from local, state, and federal law enforcement and public safety agencies (e.g. police and sheriff's departments, state police, units of the National Guard, fire departments, and the U.S. Marshals Service). CRSF connects affiliates to the National Mentoring Resource Center website and encourages them to request no-cost technical assistance through the NMRC. (*Training B.3.1, B.3.2, B.3.4*)⁶

SCREENING

CRSF requires that law enforcement mentors and program partners ensure all staff, mentors, and any other adult volunteers or interns working with children in a CRSF supported program have submitted the required personal information and passed a national criminal background check. CRSF requires that background checks be conducted annually as long as the program partner remains an affiliate. Any individual whose background check results in a positive finding of any violent crime, sexual abuse, or molestation will be permanently banned from working/volunteering in CRSF activities. (*Screening B.2.1, B.2.4*)⁷

Challenges to Screening

During the screening process, there is one major challenge that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Providing background checks on all adult staff, mentors, and volunteers proves to be a challenge for some law enforcement mentors and program partners. **Solution:** The CRSF online resource portal ("CRSF portal"), www.ripkenfoundation.org/resource-portal, offers an entire section devoted to the provision of training on risk management related to child protection. This training includes seven training videos, a model child protection policy, and access to affordable criminal background screening for those utilizing the CRSF portal. CRSF requires that law enforcement mentors and program partners' senior management, program staff, mentors, and volunteers review the child protection training videos and materials.

When implementing a CRSF program, program partners ensure there is one staff member with law enforcement mentors, volunteers, and youth at all times. Adults not employed by the program partner are not allowed one-on-one contact with youth. All interactions should be visible to others and interruptable.

TRAINING

Once recruited, law enforcement mentors and program partner staff receive multi-layered training from CRSF through online training via the CRSF portal and webinars. Online and webinar trainings cover program requirements, keys to building an effective and positive relationship with mentees, curricula content, sources of assistance available to support mentors, and grant management. With the provided webinar training on the CRSF portal, volunteers discuss topics such as mentor goals, expectations, roles/obligations, as well as the aspects of program participation and implementation within the context of their organization's *Badges* program. In addition to the online training, CRSF program staff work closely with law enforcement mentors and program partner staff throughout the year to provide them with opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge of mentoring best practices.

Through the online and webinar trainings, law enforcement mentors and program partners learn about the *Badges* education curriculum, which consists of 12 life lessons:

- Sportsmanship
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Communication
- Respect
- Resilience
- Personal Responsibility
- Worth Ethic
- Developing Good Life Habits
- Choosing to Be Healthy
- Choosing Your Teammates
- Choosing Your Future



Along with the *Badges* curriculum, law enforcement mentors and program partners receive the *Healthy Choices, Healthy Children* curriculum series to provide additional educational resources to youth. The *Healthy Choices, Healthy Children* curriculum series includes the following topics:

- Nutrition
- Fitness
- Civics & Leadership
- Rise Above Bullying
- Resilience
- Financial Literacy
- Quickball
- Adaptive Sports

As a CRSF program partner, law enforcement mentors and program partners receive the necessary training, curriculum, and resources to successfully implement the *Badges* program.

Challenges to Training

During training, there is one major challenge that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Staff turnover. Solution: Ensuring staff is consistent within organizations provides a better opportunity to grow the program and establish meaningful relationships with youth. Organizations that experience staff turnover refer to the online and webinar training to give new staff the opportunity to learn about the *Badges* program. Additionally, law enforcement mentors and program partners work closely with volunteers to maintain consistent mentorship within the program.

TRAINING ENHANCEMENT

Expanding and enhancing training for CRSF law enforcement mentors and program partners' staff through the *Badges* program have been, and will be, a large focus in CRSF's ongoing efforts. CRSF continues to improve training and support for our mentors through the CRSF portal. Through fresh content, videos, interactive training, and personal testimonies, the online platform presents both technical assistance and a strong daily channel of communication.

Challenges to Training Enhancement

During training enhancement, there are a couple of challenges that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Youth retention from year-to-year. Solution: Law enforcement mentors and program partners differentiate the program by incorporating new sports and activities. Incentives for youth encourage them to return to the program the following year.
2. Engaging older youth. Solution: Through the *Badges* program, utilizing older youth in the program as peer mentors provides them with a sense of responsibility while reinforcing lesson concepts. CRSF program managers assist law enforcement mentors and program partners to discover new avenues to teach the program and maintain their youth on a consistent basis.

MATCHING AND INITIATION

At each *Badges* site, youth ages 9 to 14 participate in CRSF programming. Using sports-themed activities, law enforcement mentors and program partners will have the ability to utilize the *Badges* curriculum and implement the program with at least three different mentors. CRSF works with law enforcement mentors and program partners to plan the first program session as an orientation, which serves both as an initial match meeting for mentors and mentees as well as a training session for mentees. CRSF emphasizes the importance of creating an environment conducive to mentors and mentees getting to know each other as people first. This is the foundation for successful mentor-mentee relationships, team building, critical discussions, and keeping youth mentees engaged in the program. The orientation is also an opportunity to discuss goals, expectations, roles of mentors and mentees, and any program-related risk management or safety policies. Law enforcement mentors and program partners serve throughout the yearlong program allowing them to interact with multiple groups of youth. Due to the varying schedule of law enforcement, CRSF provides program partners scheduling flexibility based on the availability of the mentor. Program partners ensure all law enforcement mentors support the *Badges* program through various roles determined by the mentor's interest and level of comfort. Tasks assigned to law enforcement mentors include coaching, curriculum facilitation, and special presentations (e.g. equipment show-and-tell, SWAT, and K-9 presentations).

Program match duration can vary from a few months to a full year; however, program sites are required to track youth for the calendar year and reengage in direct mentoring as needed. CRSF program managers communicate regularly with law enforcement mentors and program partner staff to address any issues that might arise, including potential match impediments that can be corrected with additional training and a variety of team building activities. (*Training B.3.3, E.3.4, E.3.5, E.3.6, Family Engagement, Matching & Initiation B.4.2, B.4.3*)⁸

When implementing the *Badges* program, law enforcement mentors and program partners ensure a minimum of one day per week with at least one to two hours of programming. The *Badges* program schedule includes:

- Specific time and day to implement *Badges* program
- Lesson component of the day
- Location of lesson
- Selection of sport or activity for *Badges* program
- Staff, law enforcement mentors, and volunteers assigned to *Badges* program session to ensure small ratio of youth to adults

When selecting a location for the *Badges* program, law enforcement mentors and program partners create a safe place for youth to play and learn. Locations vary between an outdoor space and classroom. The main goal is to ensure there is enough space to safely implement the *Badges* program. It is important to choose locations that are open and visible or that have a lot of windows. Locations include, but are not limited to:

- Gymnasium
- Baseball field
- Grass field
- Turf multipurpose field
- Classroom
- Any open space

Challenges to Matching and Initiation

During matching and initiation, there are a couple of challenges that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Coordinating the *Badges* schedule to ensure all adult mentors are available for each session. Law enforcement mentors have rigorous schedules and some agencies are short staffed. Solution: With this combination of obstacles, law enforcement officers and program partners find creative and thoughtful ways to include law enforcement mentor interaction in their *Badges* program.
2. Adult mentors and volunteers are not readily available at some program partner sites. Solution: Law enforcement volunteers can ask local program partner to use a part-or full-time staff member to recruit mentors and volunteers which will engage more role models for youth in the *Badges* program. Through constant communication, program partners are cognizant of law enforcement and adult mentor schedules and remain flexible during the *Badges* program.



MONITORING AND SUPPORT

The core focus of the *Badges* yearlong, weekly program includes high-quality, structured, and rigorously evaluated program activities across the country. Each law enforcement agency or local program partner is assigned a CRSF *Badges* program manager who oversees individual *Badges* programs. All sessions occur in the presence of the youth partner running the *Badges* program, allowing for constant monitoring and support of mentors and mentees. Youth partner staff and mentors work together throughout the sessions, not only discussing logistics but also the challenges and/or needs of youth mentees and how to support them. CRSF program managers correspond with program partners at least once a month to provide additional support. (*Monitoring & Support B.5.1, E.5.2*)⁹

To ensure continuity and engagement in the program, law enforcement mentors and program partners are encouraged to make introductory contact with parents/guardians to inform them of the *Badges* program in an effort to stimulate communication and awareness of their child's participation in the program. Mentees' parents/guardians feel included in the ongoing progress of their youth and are able to give feedback and suggestions about their youth in the program. This keeps the lines of communication open and productive between mentors and parents. (*Monitoring & Support E.5.2, Family Engagement*)¹⁰

Challenges to Monitoring and Support

During the monitoring and support process, there is one major challenge that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Engaging families in the *Badges* program. Working with the population of underserved youth in some of the most distressed communities in America, many families are unable to attend graduation ceremonies and other events associated with the *Badges* program. Solution: Law enforcement mentors and program partners create other avenues for families to participate and understand the *Badges* program through newsletters, parent or guardian pick-ups and drop-offs, and other community events.



CLOSURE

At the close of the program, law enforcement mentors and program partners host an end-of-program graduation that recognizes progress made by mentees and the time and effort of mentors. CRSF program staff work with law enforcement mentors and program partners on planning these events, including topics to discuss with mentors and mentees at the closure of their matches, creative ideas to thank mentors and recognize mentees for their accomplishments, as well as an invitation to mentees' parents/guardians to attend the ceremony. To enhance the graduation ceremony, law enforcement mentors and youth partners may disseminate awards, or incorporate law enforcement officers to be the keynote speakers to reinforce the positive messaging to youth who have successfully fulfilled their commitment to the *Badges* program. (Family Engagement, Closure B.6.1, B.6.7, B.6.8, E.6.1, E.6.2)¹¹

CRSF encourages law enforcement mentors and program partners to host special events in addition to end-of-program graduation ceremonies. Special events garner interest and commemorate youth success in the *Badges* program. Events should be limited to day events. Overnight trips require very specific limitations and parameters. Special events include, but are not limited to:

- Participating in CRSF events
- Hosting a tournament within program partner site
- Planning field trips
- Scheduling games for youth to compete against law enforcement and adult mentors
- Attending community and school events

Challenges to Closure

During the closure process, there is one major challenge that law enforcement mentors and program partners may encounter:

1. Creating extracurricular events and/or trips due to lack of transportation. Solution: Ensuring a safe mode of transportation for youth to attend events and/or trips in the *Badges* program is a necessity. Law enforcement mentors and program partners collaborate with local transportation agencies, schools, and other organizations to identify safe transportation. CRSF encourages law enforcement mentors and program partners to use the support supplied from program managers to determine how transportation costs can be reduced through the *Badges* grant.

This *Badges for Baseball* Resource Guide features the elements of responsible mentoring, as detailed by *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*:

- Structures relationships that focus on the needs of youth mentees in a team setting
- Fosters caring, supportive relationships – celebrating the individual
- Encourages youth to develop to their fullest potential and develop personal accountability using the curriculum to discuss the choices each person has the power to make, and providing opportunities to practice the social and emotional skills needed for success
- Helps an individual to develop his or her own vision for the future, both through discussions on goal setting and choosing one's future, and exposing youth to multiple pathways, including college and careers in law enforcement or the military
- Acts as a strategy to develop active community partnerships between program partners, state and local law enforcement agencies, and municipal agencies.

¹Goodrich, S.A. Anderson, S., & LaMotte, V. (2014). Evaluation of a Program Designed to Promote Positive Police and Youth Interactions. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 3, 55.

²*How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements of Effective Practice*. MENTOR/The National Mentoring Partnership. < http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_413.pdf >

³*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

⁴*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

⁵*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

⁶*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

⁷*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

⁸*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

⁹*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

¹⁰*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

¹¹*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.

¹²*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Fourth Edition*. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. 2015.