

<http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/AB/20090828/NEWS01/908290328/>

August 28, 2009

Foster-child mentors to meet

*By Mark Curnutte
mcurnutte@enquirer.com*

In the face of increased public awareness of the problems faced by foster children, the first group of new foster-child mentors in a joint Hamilton County-University of Cincinnati program will meet Saturday for training.

Some 13 people - of the 25 mentors recruited for the county's HEMI program (Higher Education Mentoring Initiative) - will meet for training at UC, said program coordinator Annie Dick. The other 12 will meet within the next few weeks for training.

The program is asking for a six-year commitment, "So we want them to understand what will be expected of them," she said.

The mentor's role will be focused on creating awareness of higher education as an option once the child has graduated high school and left the protective system at age 18.

So far, with the help of Hamilton County Department of Job & Family Services, 25 high school seniors have been identified and will begin their mentoring relationships by Oct. 1.

The plan is for the pilot program to expand and reach high school juniors next year.

Foster children are at great risk of social ills and do not reach the same educational attainment as children brought up by their birth parents. More than 25 percent of foster children nationally are incarcerated within two years of leaving the system, and only 3 percent of foster children earn a college degree.

Volunteer mentors will be asked to spend an average of two hours a week with their student.

To volunteer or for information, contact Annie Dick at annie.dick@uc.edu or 556-4368, or contact Greg Hartmann, Hamilton County Commissioner, at 946-4405.
