

Mentoring 101

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment focuses on recruiting appropriate mentors and mentees, by realistically describing the program's objectives and expected outcomes. Recruitment strategies should build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring, and target mentors and mentees whose skills, backgrounds, and needs best match the goals and structure of the program.

Tips for Recruiting and Retaining Your Mentors

Recruiting Your Mentors

Target and Inform Your Audience

- Identify internal and external target audiences
- Craft a powerful message and talking points
- Send a packet of information and FAQs

Build Community Commitment

- Make presentations to local organizations
- Check media editorial and community calendars for best times to publicize
- Publicize stories and testimonials of local mentors
- Ask local media for public service announcements and coverage during National Mentoring Month
- Set up media interviews for print media, TV, and radio
- Ask local businesses, hospitals and state agencies to help you recruit employees
- Ask churches, schools, community-based organizations, nonprofits and local businesses to publish articles

Mobilize Community Action

- Create a call to action
- Create a media blitz
- Host special events to recruit volunteers and increase community awareness
- Celebrate milestones during the year
- Compile reports, testimonials, photos, achievements, media clippings and coverage

- Publicize numbers of recruits and good-news stories as the year progresses
- Debrief on successes and need for improvements as you plan next year's celebration

Retaining Your Mentors = C.A.R.E.

Communication

- Mentors should receive appropriate information from the program coordinator regarding any special needs the mentee might have. Mentors should feel free to mention any problems they are experiencing so that your school system and your volunteers can work together to solve them.

Appreciation

- Mentors should be thanked often and effusively, by both their mentees and your school system.

Respect

- Mentors should be greeted warmly and with respect each time they come to mentor.

Enjoyment

- Mentors should have a good time mentoring and should look forward to being with their mentees.

Goals for a Successful Mentor Recruitment Session

Goals:

- To provide prospective mentors with the information they need to decide if they have the personality, commitment and time to mentor a young person
- To provide a clear definition of mentoring and mentoring expectations
- To give information about where and when mentoring will take place
- To explain the application process and criminal background check policies
- To explain REACH Georgia's mentoring policies and standards
- To explain the support that will be provided to mentors by the school or mentoring program

Keys to a Successful Recruitment Event:

- If possible, make sure the school or mentoring program is ready to place mentors within six to eight weeks of the recruitment session
- Make sure someone from management (the higher, the better) opens the recruitment session and explains the support mentors will receive
- Give mentors plenty of notice so they can put it on their calendars
- Keep it to 1 hour
- Have food (coffee, soda and light snacks are fine);
- Invite an experienced mentor to be on the agenda. They are often the best salespeople for the program
- Keep extra handouts for those who could not attend but still may be interested.

SCREENING

Screening focuses on screening prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment, and personal qualities to be a safe and effective mentor; and screening prospective mentees to determine if they have the time, commitment, and desire to be effectively mentored. Screening emphasizes keeping participants, especially young people, safe in mentoring relationships.

Qualities of Successful Mentors

- **Personal commitment to be involved with another person for an extended time — generally, one year at minimum.** Mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people's lives, to help them with tough decisions and to see them become the best they can be. They have to be invested in the mentoring relationship over the long haul to be there long enough to make a difference.
- **Respect for individuals and for their abilities and their right to make their own choices in life.** Mentors should not approach the mentee with the attitude that their own ways are better or that participants need to be rescued. Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their mentees and the privilege of being advisors to them.

- **Ability to listen and to accept different points of view.** Most people can find someone who will give advice or express opinions. It's much harder to find someone who will suspend his or her own judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.
- **Ability to empathize with another person's struggles.** Effective mentors can feel *with* people without feeling *pity for* them. Even without having had the same life experiences, they can empathize with their mentee's feelings and personal problems.
- **Ability to see solutions and opportunities as well as barriers.** Effective mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their mentees with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.
- **Flexibility and openness.** Effective mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to their mentees (music, styles, philosophies, etc.), and even to be changed by their relationship.

TRAINING

Training is essential to the success of a mentoring program. Training focuses on ensuring that prospective mentors, mentees, and their parents or guardians have the basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to build a safe and effective relationship. Training of mentors, particularly, has documented implications for the length of match relationship as well as both parties' perceptions of the quality of the relationship.

Mentors Want to Know

Logistics:

- How is a match made?
- What things are considered?
- How much time/how often do I spend with my mentee?
- Will there be training so I know what activities I can do with them?
- What if the match doesn't seem to go well?

The Mentees:

- What are the mentees like?
- What challenges do they face?
- What are their backgrounds?
- Why are they in this program?

The Relationship:

- What roles will I play – parent, teacher, friend?
- Am I doing or saying the right things?
- Why am I not feeling satisfied with my work with this mentee?
- What do I do if I'm going on vacation?
- Can I give my mentee money or a gift?
- How do I answer questions about sensitive issues (e.g. sexuality, drug use, etc.)?
- What should we talk about?
- Why doesn't my mentee open up to me?

The Family:

- How do the parents feel about their child getting a mentor?
- How might the family respond to me?
- Do I contact the mentee's parent?
- How can I know I'm helping them when I feel their parents are telling them the opposite of what I am telling them?

Enhancement Training for Mentors

One way to keep mentors connected is to hold workshops or other training events that show them how to enhance their mentoring experience. Before designing such events, survey mentors to ask what types of additional training they think would be helpful.

Potential topics include:

- Adolescent Behavior and Youth Development
- Quick and Cost-free Activities to do with your Mentee
- Mentoring and Diversity
- Effective Relationship Building
- Communication and Conflict Resolution

- Bridging the Gap Between Generations
- Values and Self-Awareness.

Training Options:

- Connect with experts in your community to deliver training. Consider contacting personnel from nearby universities and colleges who might have expertise; some may even provide free training. Perhaps a researcher/professor could talk about the effects of poverty on youth for an hour, followed by a Q&A session.
- Partner with local community agencies that work with your target population. For example, you could invite an agency that works with troubled youth to share tips on building relationships.
- Contact REACH Georgia staff for additional resources.

Attendance Boosters for Meetings and Training:

- Offer refreshments or a simple dinner to entice people to come straight from work to the meeting. Solicit a local deli to provide food. Or, have a themed potluck where your program provides a main dish and volunteers or parents bring side dishes or desserts.
- Offer mentors the opportunity to receive a gift. For example, if mentors attend four out of five training sessions throughout the year, their name is entered into a drawing for a dinner for two, theater tickets and so on.
- Give mentors a sense of ownership over their meetings by rotating their responsibilities. For example, begin each meeting with a quote for reflection, and assign one mentor to bring in the quote for each meeting. Or, ask different mentors to call the others the day before a meeting to remind them to attend. You can also assign each mentor to bring in a resource to share.
- When selecting dates for future meetings, ask your mentors for their input. Discuss potential dates at a meeting where most mentors are present so they can provide feedback about their availability. Since people are usually pressed for time, consider cutting back networking meetings to twice a year. Supplement those meetings by sharing relevant information and tips via e-mail, directing mentors to helpful Web sites and other resources.

Preparing Youth

Just as participants need to be trained for their role as a mentor, it is equally important to orient youth to the program and the expectations of a mentee. Youth should be willing, committed, and available to have a mentor and open to the process. The overall objective of mentee training is to help youth become aware of the many benefits of participant fully in the mentoring relationship and to help them understand their role in making the relationship work.

Pre-match training of mentees will allow them to:

- Learn about the concept of mentoring
- Understand the roles of those involved in the program
- Develop reasonable expectations for the mentoring relationship
- Understand their responsibilities as mentees
- Learn how to get the most out of their mentoring relationships
- Understand the limits of confidentiality and the boundaries of the mentoring relationship
- Enhance skills for recognizing and dealing with inappropriate or abusive behavior by adults
- Know how to obtain assistance if they have questions or concerns, and
- Practice skills that will assist them in the mentoring relationship

The following list offers some examples of the types of information often covered in mentee trainings:

- ❖ Defining the concept of a mentor
- ❖ The role of mentors in your program
- ❖ The role of parents, and the youth themselves, in the program
- ❖ The ground rules of program participation
- ❖ An introduction of program staff
- ❖ The history and purpose of the program
- ❖ Boundaries and confidentiality issues
- ❖ Effectively communicating with their mentors
- ❖ How to use the Mentee Handbook
- ❖ Getting the relationship started effectively
- ❖ Who to contact when a problem arises
- ❖ Program paperwork issues, such as surveys, tracking logs, and evaluation forms

You may reference the Training New Mentees pdf located in the Resources section of this manual for additional training resources.

Periodically, mentees should meet as a group to discuss their reactions and feelings about the program. These group activities will help the program coordinator monitor the mentor-mentee relationships.

The following are some suggested training strategies for mentees:

- Use a group activity/warm up exercise to break the ice and facilitate interaction among the youth. This should be conducted at the beginning of each session.
- Summarize the goals of the project, such as doing well in school, finding an after-school or summer job, exploring career development, etc.
- Define mentoring and the role of a mentor.
- Describe the mentors who will be in the program.
- Provide some ideas and activities for helping youth to get to know their mentors.
- Introduce the mentoring project as a rare and exciting opportunity.
- Have a youth give testimony about how his/her mentor was helpful.
- Identify expectations of youth participants and discuss strategies for making this an optimal experience.
- Have youth brainstorm the kinds of things they would like to do with their mentor.

Common questions asked by youth in intergenerational mentoring programs, according to Linking Lifetimes and Across Ages, include:

Why do we have mentors?

How often do I meet with my mentor?

Do we get to choose our mentors?

Can I bring a friend?

Since he/she is older, will he/she like to do the things I like to do?

What if I don't like my mentor?

Can my mentor do sports activities with me?

Will my mentor be my parent and tell me what to do?

Is everything I say to my mentor confidential?

Do I have to tell my mentor about my family?

How do I tell my mentor that I'm having sex/pregnant, suspended from school, etc.?

MATCHING AND INITIATING

Matching helps create appropriate mentoring relationships by using strategies most likely to increase the odds that the relationship will be safe and effective. Matching should consider individual characteristics about the mentor and mentee in order to foster an enduring relationship. Initiating is the step that formally establishes the mentoring relationship.

Considerations for the Matching Process

Common Interests

- Vocational, educational and recreational.

Goals for the Scholar

- Educational enrichment, self-esteem enhancement, cultural enrichment, family and peer relationship improvement.

Backgrounds

- Childhood upbringing, culture, religion.

Life Experiences

- Absence of parent in household, growing up as the oldest child in a large family, death of a parent, raised by a grandparent, foster youth, first generation.

Expressed Preferences

- Review of scholar and mentor application.
- Race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, age.

Acceptance of Cross-Gender or Alternative Types of Matching

- Agreement by mentor, youth and parent/guardian.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Volunteer and Client

- Personality types, academic level, open-mindedness, energy level.

MONITORING AND SUPPORT

Monitoring and support is critical to mentoring not only to create satisfying and successful relationships, but also to adjust to changing needs of the mentee and mentor, and to ensure safety. Support ensures ongoing advice, problem-solving, training, and access to resources for the duration of a mentoring relationship.

Many programs have found that the following approach works well:

1. Contact the mentor within the first two weeks of the match. Use this contact to make sure the pair is meeting, to find out what activities they have done together and to assess how the mentor feels about the match thus far.
2. During the next few months, continue to check in with the mentor once per month. These ongoing contacts will help ensure that the mentor and youth meet regularly and are also important for uncovering any start-up problems that require program staff's immediate assistance. Many school-based mentoring programs keep track of how frequently each pair is meeting by having a logbook at the school where mentors sign in. While the mentor log may prove to be a useful tool for monitoring, program coordinators should strive towards a personal interaction as best practice.
3. The check-in discussion during this period should be focused on monitoring the quality of the mentoring relationship, assessing whether it is making progress toward its goals, learning whether the mentor or youth is losing interest in the match, and helping to address problems that may be arising between the pair. Your program should also make sure that mentors know how to contact staff, whenever necessary, for advice and support.

What Questions Should We Ask During the Check-Ins?

Possible questions for the mentor include:

- How is your match going? How do you feel about being a mentor?
- Do you and your mentee enjoy spending time together?
- What kinds of activities do you do when you are together?
- How do you decide what activities to do together? Do you and your mentee have trouble thinking up things to do together?
- Do you spend much time talking?
- How often do you see your mentee? How much time do you spend together at each meeting?

REACH Coordinator Resources



- Does your mentee keep appointments with you? Does he or she show up on time?
- When was your last meeting? What did you do together?
- Do you talk to your mentee on the telephone? How often? (for community-based programs)
- Do you need help with anything? Is there anything interfering with your match?
- How would you describe your mentee's behavior? Does your mentee exhibit any behavior that you do not understand?
- How are things going with the parents and other family members? Is the parent of your mentee cooperative? How are things going with the teacher?
- Are you satisfied with how things are going?
- Is there any training you think would be helpful for you?
- Is there anything else we should be aware of?
- Is there anything we can do to help?

Questions to ask the youth include:

- Do you enjoy spending time with your mentor?
- What do you enjoy most about having a mentor? What do you enjoy least?
- When was the last time you met with your mentor? What did you do together?
- How often do you see your mentor? How long do your meetings last?
- Does your mentor keep appointments? Does he or she show up on time?
- Who decides what activities you are going to do together?
- Do you like talking to your mentor?
- Is there anything you would like to change about the visits?
- Is there anything you would like me to talk to your mentor about?

Supporting Mentors

The role of the program coordinator is particularly important in intergenerational mentoring programs. The coordinator may have to serve as a mediator between the mentor and youth, the mentor and family or the mentor and a caseworker or teacher. Mentors need to be provided with relevant information and consistent support.

Some tips:

- Give each mentor specific written instructions on how to reach staff and what to do in an emergency.
- Encourage mentors to report problems, questions and concerns immediately.
- Ask mentors to keep a record of their activities using designated project forms.
- Provide one-to-one supervision. During these sessions, each mentor can meet with staff to discuss activities, progress, problems and questions.
- Maintain weekly or biweekly phone contact, and plan regular in-service meetings.
- Maintain a virtual or actual library of materials that mentors can use, including relevant material on positive youth development, behavioral management, etc.
- Provide opportunities for informal exchange of ideas among mentors during all project functions.

Managing Mentor Stress

Program-based mentoring can be stressful for mentors and youth. Mentors may become frustrated by what they perceive as a lack of progress or by negative events. In general, it takes at least six months to develop a trusting mentor-mentee relationship that is grounded in real friendship, and mentors may become impatient with the pace at which this occurs. Sometimes, when mentors realize the depth of the problems faced by their youth, they feel overwhelmed. It's extremely important for coordinators to help mentors develop realistic expectations and understand that initially the relationship will be one-directional. Persistence is a critical factor in successful mentoring. Assessing the needs of each mentor and responding to concerns in a timely manner will help prevent mentor drop-out. Make sure mentors feel a sense of belonging to the program and know they are appreciated. Youth may also feel uncomfortable being pushed into an unnatural relationship. Sometimes they react with fear and want to pull away. Periodically meeting with youth, either individually or in a group, will help reassure them they should stick with the program.

CLOSURE (TERMINATION)

Bringing a mentoring relationship to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of both the mentor and the mentee is essential to ensuring the relationship ends with positive consequences for the mentee. Closure is a normal stage in a mentoring relationship and mentors and mentees should be able to prepare for closure and assess their experience with the relationship.

Some mentor–mentee pairs do not need to worry about this stage until far down the road. However, at some point all relationships will come to an end, whether it is because the program is over or the mentor is moving or for some other reason. It is critical that this stage not be overlooked. Young people today have many adults come and go in their lives. Very rarely are they provided the opportunity to say goodbye properly.

1. Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial, and resentment.

Help your mentee to express his or her emotions by modeling the behavior. For example, if your relationship is coming to a close and you and your mentee enjoyed your time together, you might say something like “I am going to really miss you. I have enjoyed our time together.” However, you must be honest. If your relationship is coming to a close and your time together was all right but not great, then don’t lie and say that you are going to be sad that this is over. Also, do not expect the young person to reciprocate. Even though you shared your emotions as a means of modeling how to, your mentee still might not feel comfortable sharing his or her emotions.

2. Provide options for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful, and affirming way.

Don’t wait until the last meeting to say goodbye. Make sure you start addressing this issue as soon as you know the relationship will be coming to a close.

3. Address appropriate situations for staying in touch with your mentee.

Quite often, programs will be ok with the mentor staying in touch with the mentee but not under the umbrella of the program, primarily for liability purposes. It is then up to you and your mentee as to whether you will stay in touch and how you will do that. Don’t assume that just because you want to stay in contact that your mentee will want to as well. It must be mutual.

See Sample Generic Mentoring Policy and Procedure Manual pdf link located in Online Resources for more details.