

- Sponsor a mix of group activities that support program goals and encourage interaction among all participants in addition to one-to-one activities. Group activities foster a sense of community for both mentors and mentees, providing informal support for the mentors and a strong support system for mentees. Examples of group activities are field trips, social get-togethers, community service projects, recreational/cultural events, awards and recognition events and skill-building workshops.



**MENTORING TOOL**

See activity ideas, goal-setting forms and Internet resources in Section VI on the CD.

**Provide Resources and Materials for Activities**

Although the final mix of activities will be decided in part by the mentors and participants, some activities should be built into the program design and are strongly encouraged.

**EXAMPLES OF MENTOR ACTIVITIES**

Type of Activity	Examples
Skill-building workshop	Interviewing practice, goal setting
Social get-together	Picnic, potluck dinner, parents' night
Recreational/cultural	Concerts, sporting events, mentoring program sports teams (bowling, softball)
Field trips	Museums, colleges, local businesses
Community service	Neighborhood cleanup
Awards/recognition	Parent/family night, formal reception

**PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT, SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS<sup>12</sup>**

Successful mentoring relationships do not just happen. Although most mentoring pairs will derive enough pleasure from the experience to keep them going, some reach an impasse that makes them begin to doubt their willingness to continue. That's why providing ongoing support and supervision is so important.



**MENTORING TOOL**

See survey forms and guidelines in Section VI on the CD.

**Offer Continuing Training Opportunities for Program Participants**

Programs should offer special training sessions on a wide array of topics, including

diversity and cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, teen sexuality and pregnancy, communication skills and skills for setting limits. In the "Orient and Train Mentors, Mentees and Parents/Caregivers" section, we listed some possible training topics. You may also want to repeat popular training topics.

**Communicate Regularly with Program Participants and Offer Support**

The program coordinator should contact each mentor within the first two weeks of the match to see how things are going, then follow up every two weeks for the next few months. Contact can be made by phone, by e-mail or in person. Once the relationship appears to be making progress, the program coordinator might try contacting mentors once a month to ensure that the match continues to make progress and to address any problems that may arise.

Another way to offer support to participants is to observe and interact with mentors and young people during planned activities.

### **Help Mentors and Mentees Define Next Steps for Achieving Mentee Goals**

Refer to the CD for sample goal-setting activities, and look for sample forms in MENTOR's *Learn to Mentor Tool Kit* at [www.mentoring.org/mentor\\_training](http://www.mentoring.org/mentor_training) or [www.mentoring.org/mentee\\_training](http://www.mentoring.org/mentee_training).

### **Bring Mentors Together to Share Ideas and Support**

Schedule regular opportunities for groups of mentors to come together to discuss common problems and to socialize. Include time for problem-solving, discussion, ongoing training and networking. You may want to divide each meeting into sections by topic or dedicate a meeting to one activity (e.g., problem-solving). Consider holding similar sessions with mentees. Use the feedback to refine your program and increase mentor/mentee retention.

### **Establish a Process to Manage Grievances, Resolve Issues and Offer Positive Feedback**

Establish a formal process for managing grievances, rematchng mentors and mentees, solving interpersonal problems, handling crises and bringing closure to relationships that end prematurely. Make sure that all participants clearly understand the process and that relevant documents are maintained in a confidential file.

### **Assist Mentors and Mentees Whose Relationship Is Not Working Out<sup>13</sup>**

Working to effect positive change in someone's life is an unpredictable business, and mentoring isn't always easy. Because mentoring involves creating a new personal relationship, disappointments and hurt feelings are possible. Many problems that arise out of misunderstandings are not addressed. Frequently these misunderstandings come from cultural, ethnic or religious differences. It's important to have a set procedure for handling potential conflicts within a pair before issues arise. Establish a policy that encourages mentors and mentees to talk openly and honestly, and to inform the program coordinator immediately of questions or struggles in their relationship. The primary objective when the mentoring pair experiences difficulties is to help them successfully resolve their own differences. Healthy, supportive relationships depend on candid

give-and-take between mentoring pairs and program staff.

You can also help in the following ways:

- Coach the mentor and mentee separately;
- Bring them together for a mediated discussion;
- Introduce the problem to a support group of mentors; and
- Introduce the problem to a support group of mentees.

Finally, stay alert for mentors or mentees who want a new match right away or who are not compatible with their second or third mentor or mentee. Their complaints may signal other problems.

### **Ensure Appropriate Documentation is done on a Regular Basis**

For information on the types of documentation to gather, refer to "Design a System to Monitor the Program" in Section V, How to Manage a Program for Success.

## **RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

### **MENTORING TOOL**

See ideas for recognition in Section VI on the CD.



Providing recognition for significant contributions and accomplishments is an important component of a healthy, safe and rewarding mentoring environment. Little things—a pat on the back, the positive mention of one's name—do matter. Both public recognition and private kudos for a job well done boost morale, foster team spirit and raise retention rates across the board: mentees, mentors, volunteers and staff alike.

### **Sponsor Recognition Events**

Consider holding a formal event—such as an annual breakfast, lunch or dinner—to recognize the hard work and dedication of everyone involved with the mentoring program. Planning a major recognition event can be time-consuming but is well worth the effort. Hold at least one event a year to allow mentors and mentees to be recognized not only by their peers in the mentoring group but also by the community at large.

### Recognition Tips

The following are some ideas for recognition events:

- Recognize outstanding mentor and mentee efforts, especially in reaching personal goals, such as improved grades or maintaining perfect school attendance for a specified time (e.g., one month, two months);
- Encourage mentors to tell the story of their involvement, both through organization-sponsored programs and through their own initiative. (One of the most effective recruitment tools is having mentors ask their friends and colleagues to mentor);
- Develop special recognition programs, such as a “match of the month” to honor mentors and mentees; and
- Ask your advisory group to recognize and congratulate mentors and reiterate their personal commitment to mentoring.

Who doesn't feel good when they've received a compliment, an award, a good grade? What child would not like to have a trophy, a ribbon, a certificate of merit with their name on it, displayed in his/her room? This is especially important for mentees who may not have such experiences often. Your mentoring program can do wonders for a child's self-esteem and level of hope by making recognition of the child's accomplishments—both great and small—an integral part of your operations.

### Make the Community Aware of the Contributions Made by Mentors, Mentees, Supporters and Funders

- Invite local media to cover the event.
- Spotlight mentors' contributions in articles about them in organization newsletters, via e-mail, on bulletin boards—in whatever ways the organization spreads the word.
- Work with local print and electronic media to run stories about your mentoring program. National Mentoring Month (January) and National Volunteer Week (in April) are perfect tie-ins.
- Nominate mentors for local or national volunteer recognition awards, but be sure to get their consent first.

### Actively Solicit Feedback from Mentors and Mentees Regarding their Experiences

For information on soliciting feedback from mentors and mentees, refer to “Establish a Public Relations/Communications Effort” in Section V, How to Manage a Program for Success.

### Use Information to Refine the Program and Retain Mentors

Mentors and mentees need to feel that they are part of your organization and that their feedback is valuable. If they submit feedback, be sure to acknowledge it, and if appropriate use it to improve your program.

### HELP MENTORS AND MENTEES REACH CLOSURE

Mentoring relationships change over time and may end for any number of reasons:

- A mentor and mentee pair do not get along;
- Either the mentor or the mentee drops out of the program;
- Life circumstances make it difficult or impossible to continue the relationship (a mentor is transferred to another city or changes in family responsibilities or living situations occur for the mentor or the mentee);
- The mentee reaches a level of self-sufficiency with the particular mentor so that mentoring is no longer needed; or
- The program ends.

#### MENTORING TOOL

See closure resources in Section VI on the CD.



As with the end of other relationships, mentors and mentees are likely to have mixed feelings. If the relationship ends prematurely or on a negative note, one or both may feel angry, rejected, depressed or guilty. For young people with low self-esteem, the end of a mentoring relationship may reinforce attitudes of worthlessness and hopelessness. It may not be possible to have a formal closure process for both the mentor and the mentee because of circumstances surrounding their departure from the mentoring program. In these instances, it's important to reach out to each participant to provide closure.

Remind both mentor and mentee that their relationship is not necessarily ending but instead is transitioning from formal mentoring. When mentors no longer are needed for intensive support and nurturing, they can still hold an important place in their mentees' lives.

Think of the ending of a mentoring relationship as a process rather than a singular event. Establish a process for your program and include it in your policies and procedures manual. Be sure to follow these procedures every time a relationship ends—no matter what the reason.

### **Conduct Private, Confidential Interviews with Mentors and Mentees**

Have mentees and mentors meet with staff and with each other. Listen to and support both as they sort out what happened in the relationship and what (if anything) went wrong, and help them remember the good aspects of the relationship and the positive things they did.

Provide them with questions they should ask of themselves and each other that will help them articulate thoughts and feelings, such as these:

1. What was the most fun activity?
2. What should I *not* do again?
3. Did we achieve the goals we set?
4. What did we learn from each other?
5. What will we take from the relationship?

### **Ensure Mentors, Mentees and Parents/Caregivers Understand the Program Policy on Meeting Outside the Program**

During the exit interview, review your program's policies about mentors and mentees contacting each other outside the program, and help the mentee define the next steps for achieving personal goals.