

Mentoring Program Development:

A Start-up Toolkit

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National Mentoring Center. (2003). *Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring: A Guidebook for Program Development*. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: Portland, OR.
<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/foundations.html>



The National Mentoring Center (NMC) a project of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) assists mentoring projects in developing and implementing evidence-based programs through the provision of training and technical assistance activities, information services, the development and dissemination of a variety of print publications, and by conducting special projects in collaboration with OJJDP. The NMC also works with Federal and State agencies as well as other National mentoring organizations to ensure the delivery of high-quality, coordinated youth mentoring services at the community level. <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring>

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Getting Started In Youth Mentoring

I. *Developing Your Program Plan*

Getting Organized

Starting up a mentoring program from scratch takes a lot of work and requires a significant amount of resources. If you are thinking about developing a mentoring program the first thing to do is get organized. Start by writing out your initial thoughts and broad answers to the following questions. In the planning process that follows you will fully develop the concepts you start with here.

- Who are the kids you want to serve?
- What impacts on their lives do you want your program to make?
- Who are the mentors you will recruit?
- Where will the mentoring take place?
- What resources (time, money, staffing) do you need?
- What existing programs already serve or could potentially serve these youth.
- Who will assist your staff in developing the mentoring program?

This is also the time when you will want to develop an understanding of the existing resources listed at the end of this toolkit and review the Elements of Effective Practice: http://www.mentoring.org/common/effective_mentoring_practices/pdf/effectiveprac.pdf

Conducting a Needs Assessment

Once you have answered the basic questions it is now time to get out into the community and investigate the needs of the youth in your community. In a needs assessment you are looking for the challenges and problems facing youth, as well as the existing services available to youth in the community. By comparing the needs of youth with the services currently being provided, your agency will be able to determine the unmet needs that your program can address. This needs assessment will give you the "big picture" of what is happening in your community and the role your agency might play. The needs assessment should include the input of community leaders and other youth service agencies. This type of communitywide assessment will help you design a program that fills a real need in your community and whose services will be in demand.

Create an Advisory Council or Steering Committee

By soliciting the input of community leaders, youth, parents, school officials, partner organizations, and other stakeholders in the planning process you are ensuring that your program is moving in a direction that will meet the needs of everyone involved. Many programs choose to create an advisory council or steering committee, composed of representatives of the groups mentioned above to help with the planning process. In some cases your agency's existing advisory groups might be able to handle the planning tasks while in other cases you may develop a new committee. An advisory council is a great way to foster community partnerships while getting the guidance your program needs to better serve the community. The most successful advisory groups are ones that ensure that youth are represented as equal partners rather than as silent observers. Youth should have meaningful roles in guiding the program development.

Develop a Mission Statement

Informed by the needs assessment, your mentoring program should next develop a mission statement that drives all programmatic activities, as well as your short- and long-term goals. This mission statement should be carefully crafted and should reflect the diverse voices and needs of all program stakeholders, including the youth and the community you serve. Your mission statement should be fairly short and to the point, yet still answer the question, "Why do we exist?"

Write a Program Proposal

Once you have your program mission statement you will need to then build a complete proposal for how your mentoring program will operate. Taking the time to write a proposal will help you in a number of ways. First, it is critical to finding funding for your project. Second, a proposal forces you to consider all of the resources you will need to implement your mentoring program. Finally, a written plan will help you stay focused on the needs of youth and how your program will meet those needs. The goal of your program proposal is to demonstrate that you have carefully thought out your program and assist you in being accountable to those who provide support for your program. A typical outline for a program proposal includes the following headings:

- 1) Statement of community need based on a community needs assessment
- 2) Specific problems to be addressed by your program
- 3) Goals and objectives of the program
- 4) Project Strategy/Design including:
 - Youth Selection and Orientation
 - Mentor Recruitment, Screening, Orientation and Training
 - Matching Mentor and Mentee
 - Mentor/Mentee Relationship and Activities
 - Parental Involvement
 - Monitoring/Supervising the Match
 - Evaluation Methods and Processes
 - Sustainability
- 5) Management and Organizational Capability
- 6) Program Budget

Write a Resource Development Plan

Once you have developed your plan you will need to find the resources to initially fund the program and sustain it over time. It is important not to underestimate how challenging it is to find sustainable resources. To assist you in finding resources you will want to develop a short-term and long-term plan for resource development. Your resource plan sets the course of action for how you will initially fund and sustain your program. A resource development plan includes resource development goals and objectives, strategies, timelines and assigned responsibilities for making the plan happen. Remember that resource planning thinks about grants, local business support, fundraising and possibly other forms of support such as in-kind donations.

II. Implementing a Mentoring Program

Let's now assume that your plan is written and you have secured the resources to actually develop your program. The next step is to develop your program's written policies and operating procedures, which will allow you to implement your mentoring program on a foundation of research-based effective practices. These Policies and procedures should reflect the components that will make up the structure of your day-to-day operations. The critical program design components are:

Recruitment and Marketing Strategies

The first step in creating high-quality mentoring relationships is finding appropriate and suitable adults who are committed to volunteering with your program. It is important for your program to have a structured recruitment and marketing strategies that are targeted for the specific populations of volunteers that you are hoping to attract to your program. Your targeted recruitment strategies should attract the different groups of mentors that are needed to address the needs of youth within your program.

Eligibility Criteria

Your program will need to define eligibility criteria for participants, including mentors, mentees and parent/caregivers. The eligibility criteria should be written and communicated to all youth, mentors and other volunteers in your program.

Screening Process

One of your program's biggest responsibilities is to adequately screen your pool of mentor applicants to ensure they are both safe and suitable for the young people in your program. It is important that your program develops and implements standardized screening process for potential mentors and mentees including a) written applications, b) reference checks (such as employment, character references, child abuse registry check, driving record check, and criminal record checks), c) face-to-face interviews; and d) an orientation program.

Orientation and Training

One of the most important first impressions that you set for potential program participants occurs during your initial orientation sessions. It is very important to create well-organized, goal-driven, and accessible orientations for all potential mentors and mentees. This orientation may take place during an initial recruitment presentation or act as a follow-up for interested individuals, but it should always take place *before* the volunteer application and screening process begins. Following the screening process your program should have a structured training program for mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers that includes: a) an overview of the program; b) clarification of roles, responsibilities and expectations; c) discussion of how to handle a variety of situations; and d) concepts and strategies to help build the relationship between the mentors and youth.

Matching Process

Matching youth in your program with an appropriate mentor is crucial, not only for the success of that individual match, but for the overall success of your program. As with your recruitment, screening, and training efforts, your procedure on making matches should be a reflection of your program's goals and objectives. The first step in creating

a matching procedure is the development of your matching criteria. Your program needs to identify what qualities you will be looking for in your mentors and mentees that will allow you to make a good match. What these criteria actually *are* will depend on the type of program you have and, as mentioned earlier, must be aligned with your program's mission and goals.

Monitoring and Supervision

All the effort that went into recruiting participants, delivering pre-match training, and making appropriate matches will be wasted if your program does not provide ongoing support and supervision. Your supervision and monitoring process should ensure a) the safety of meeting locations and circumstances; b) that matches have resources and materials for activities; c) continuing training opportunities and peer-support; d) assistance to mentors and mentees in negotiating and achieving goals; e) management of grievances and offering positive feedback; and f) ensure that appropriate documentation is done on a regular basis.

Recognition of Mentors

Volunteers are the single most important asset to the success of mentoring programs. With all the time and energy it takes to recruit, screen, train, and match a mentor, it is imperative that programs develop and implement a support system for their volunteers. Your program will need to develop strategies to recognize and retain mentors that include recognition events; and increasing the community awareness of the contributions made by mentors, mentees, supporters and funding agencies.

Structured Match Closure

The end of the relationship, for whatever reason, can be difficult for both the mentor and mentee. Your program should provide support services for both groups to help them make the transition out of the relationship and, when applicable, prepare them for a possible new mentoring relationship. Your program will need a structured process that helps mentors and mentees reach closure. Most commonly closure includes confidential interviews with mentors and mentees; and ensuring that mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers understand the program's policy regarding future contact outside the program.

Program Evaluation

Conducting a program evaluation helps your program know if mentoring is making a difference in the lives of the youth being served. Evaluation can help refine and improve services while also providing key information and statistics that can be used in marketing and securing funding for the program. Evaluation tells your program's story. In order to effectively demonstrate program success your program will need to develop and implement a structured evaluation plan.

III. Collaborating with other Youth Service Providers

Finally, your mentoring program will only be successful if you recognize that your program cannot exist alone on an island. For you to be successful, you will need to collaborate effectively with other community organizations. This includes not only organizations with whom you have formal partnerships, but also less formal collaborations and relationships with other youth service agencies in your community. The field of youth development is broad and diverse and your youth mentoring program is typically one of a range of services provided to youth. By integrating into this network of other youth service providers, your mentoring program can potentially develop new interagency program efforts, influence local public policy, and expand the resource and support base for the long-term sustainability of your program. In addition, collaborating with other youth-serving organizations allows your mentoring program to stay informed about other services available to youth in your community.

Resources to Help You Start a Mentoring Program

Websites

National Mentoring Center: <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring>

Highlights: Training curriculum, Mentor Exchange peer-to-peer listserv, other technical assistance materials, newsletters, resource library, and annotated web links.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>

Highlights: Links to OJJDP publications on mentoring.

EMT Website: <http://www.emt.org/publications.html>

Highlights: Downloadable program development and mentor training materials.

National Mentoring Partnership: <http://www.mentoring.org>

Highlights: Program Database, Elements of Effective Practice, Research Corner, Ementoring Clearinghouse, Online Tutorial.

Peer Resources Network, Mentoring Directory:

<http://www.peer.ca/mentor.html>

Highlights: Numerous resources on developing mentoring or peer coaching programs.

Public Private Ventures: <http://www.ppv.org/>

Highlights: Numerous research publications on mentoring and faith-based initiatives.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America: <http://www.bbbsa.org/>

Highlights: Information about the BBSA organization, Links, Impact Study.

Information Technology International <http://www.itiincorporated.com>

Highlights: Program evaluation resources, National JUMP Evaluation information.

Training Manuals and Books

Arevalo, E., & Cooper, B. (2002). *Running a safe and effective mentoring program*. Los Altos, CA: Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. (1994). *Pass it on: Volunteer recruitment manual. Outreach to African-American, Latino/a and other diverse populations*. Philadelphia: Author.

Bowman, R.P., & Bowman, S.C. (1997). *Co-piloting: A systematic mentoring program for reaching and encouraging young people*. Chapin, SC: YouthLight.

Creative Mentoring. (2001). *Elements of effective mentoring: A mentor training manual for the in-school volunteer mentor*. Wilmington, DE: Author

Demarco J. (1993). *Peer helping skills: A leader's guide for training peer helpers and peer tutors [for middle & high school]*, Center City, MN Hazelden/Johnson Institute.

Grossman, J.B. (ed.). (1999). *Contemporary issues in mentoring*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: the risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Smink, J. (1999). *Training guide for mentors*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

United Way of America. (1990). *Partnerships for success: A mentoring program manual*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

White, L.T., Patterson, J., & Herman, M.L. (1998). *More than a matter of trust: Managing the risks of mentoring*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center.