Elements *of*
Effective Practice™

Newly revised and updated to reflect
the latest in quality mentoring research,
policies and practices.

MENTOR
NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP™

Overview

As a strategy for helping young people succeed in life, mentoring works. It helps give young people the confidence, resources and skills they need to reach their potential.

But like any youth-development strategy, mentoring works best when measures are taken to ensure quality and effectiveness. When the tool of change is a close relationship – as is the case with mentoring – everyone involved should proceed with care. The risks and improvements to the young person are proportional to how long the relationship endures. The longer a relationship lasts, usually the closer the bond and the greater benefit to the youth.

The guidelines presented here are geared toward helping mentoring relationships thrive and endure. They include measures any mentoring program can implement to offer the best mentoring possible – mentoring that does everything in its power to help young people and keep them from harm's way. These guidelines are based on solid research – research that affirms the importance of accountability and responsibility in meeting young people's needs. And, they are based on experience: The first mentoring *Elements of Effective Practice* were developed and published in 1990 by a national panel of mentoring experts brought together by MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership and United Way of America. For more than a decade, those *Elements* served as the gold standard for mentoring.

These new guidelines are the culmination of a process that, once again, brought together many of the nation's foremost authorities on mentoring. In 2003, this newly formed group began by reassessing the existing *Elements*. They took the best of those *Elements* and added new ideas and new practices that reflect the latest in mentoring policies, practices, experiences and research.

For additional details about the research that underpins these guidelines and to learn more about the approaches to executing them, visit Mentoring.org. Every day, you and your mentoring colleagues help young Americans achieve their dreams. Thank you for your dedication – and for continuing to raise the bar.

Critical Steps

If you already have a mentoring program in place, use these guidelines to help you improve your current practices. Or, use them as a benchmark for determining how your program is doing and for fine-tuning your practices.

If you are considering initiating a mentoring effort, you will want to first conduct an assessment of local needs and the assets your organization already has to meet them. Or, you might conduct an environmental scan, a process that identifies community and state priorities, needs and opportunities in the context of the economic environment. These tools help ensure your proposed initiative is an appropriate response to an identified youth need. You will also need to confirm that people are ready and willing to invest in your program and that demand and support for your program services will be ongoing. Further, your needs assessment should help you determine whether individuals and organizations – such as, schools, faith communities and volunteers – are willing and able to refer youth and/or provide mentors, and should confirm that your organization has the capacity, commitment and capability to run a quality mentoring program.

By following these guidelines, you can be sure you will be doing your utmost to ensure that mentoring does, in fact, work for America's young people by providing the best mentoring experience possible. For ease of use, these comprehensive guidelines are divided into four sections:

- **Program Design and Planning**
- **Program Management**
- **Program Operations**
- **Program Evaluation**

The *Program Design and Planning* section includes comprehensive guidelines you can use to launch an effective new mentoring initiative. Under the *Program Management* and *Program Operations* sections, you will find guidelines for managing and implementing the many elements of your program if your program is new, or fine-tuning certain elements if you have an established program. The fourth section – *Program Evaluation* – guides you in analyzing your program to ensure it is safe, effective and able to meet the goals you have set.

Program Design and Planning

Design the parameters for the program:

- Define the youth population that the program will serve;
- Identify the types of individuals who will be recruited as mentors (such as, senior citizens, corporate employees and college students);
- Determine the type of mentoring that the program will offer – one-to-one, group, team, peer or e-mentoring;
- Structure the mentoring program – as a stand-alone program or as part of an existing organization;
- Define the nature of the mentoring sessions (such as, career involvement, academic support and socialization);
- Determine what the program will accomplish and what outcomes will result for the participants, including mentors, mentees and sponsoring organizations;
- Determine when the mentoring will take place;
- Determine how often mentors and mentees will meet and how long the mentoring matches should endure;
- Decide where mentoring matches primarily will meet – workplace, school, faith-based organization, juvenile corrections facility, community setting or virtual community;
- Decide who are program stakeholders and how to promote the program;
- Decide how to evaluate program success; and
- Establish case management protocol to assure that the program has regular contact with both mentors and mentees concerning their relationship.

Plan how the program will be managed:

- Select the management team:
  - Establish policies and procedures; and
  - Implement ongoing staff training and professional development.

- Develop a financial plan:
  - Develop a program budget;
  - Determine the amount of funding needed to start and sustain the program;
  - Identify and secure a diversified funding stream needed to start and sustain the program;
  - Determine the amount of time each funding source can be expected to provide resources;
  - Establish internal controls and auditing requirements; and
  - Establish a system for managing program finances.

- Implement the program:
  - Recruit program participants, such as, mentors, mentees and other volunteers;
  - Screen potential mentors and mentees;
  - Orient and train mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers;
  - Match mentors and mentees;
  - Bring mentors and mentees together for mentoring sessions that fall within program parameters;
  - Provide ongoing support, supervision and monitoring of mentoring relationships;
  - Recognize the contribution of all program participants; and
  - Help mentors and mentees reach closure.

- Plan how to evaluate the program:
  - Decide on the evaluation design;
  - Determine what data will be collected, how it will be collected and the sources of data;
  - Determine the effectiveness of the program process;
  - Determine the outcomes for mentors and mentees; and
  - Reflect on and disseminate findings.

Program Management

Ensure the program is well-managed:

- Form an advisory group:
    - Define the advisory group roles and responsibilities;
    - Recruit people with diverse backgrounds to serve on the group; and
    - Facilitate the advisory group meetings to improve programming and management.

- Develop a comprehensive system for managing program information:
    - Manage program finances;
    - Maintain personnel records;
    - Track program activity, such as, volunteer hours and matches;
    - Document mentor/mentee matches;
    - Manage risk; and
    - Document program evaluation efforts.

- Design a resource development plan that allows for diversified fundraising:
    - Seek in-kind gifts;
    - Hold special events;
    - Solicit individual donors;
    - Seek corporate donations;
    - Apply for government funding; and
    - Seek foundation grants.

- Design a system to monitor the program:
    - Review policies, procedures and operations on a regular basis;
    - Collect program information from mentors, mentees and other participants; and
    - Continually assess customer service.

- Create a professional staff development plan:
    - Provide ongoing staff training; and
    - Build on staff members' skills and knowledge.

- Advocate for mentoring:
    - Advocate for pro-mentoring public policies and funding at the local, state and federal levels; and
    - Encourage private sector leaders to adopt pro-mentoring policies and provide funding.

- Establish a public relations/communications effort:
    - Identify target markets;
    - Develop a marketing plan;
    - Gather feedback from all constituents;
    - Develop partnerships and collaborations with other organizations; and
    - Recognize mentors, mentees, other program participants, funders and organizations that sponsor mentoring programs.

Program Operations

Ensure strong, everyday operations:

- Recruit mentors, mentees and other volunteers:
    - Define eligibility for participants, including mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers;
    - Market the program; and
    - Conduct awareness and information sessions for potential mentors.

- Screen potential mentors and mentees:
    - Require written applications;
    - Conduct reference checks, such as, employment record, character reference, child abuse registry, driving record and criminal record checks;
    - Conduct face-to-face interviews; and
    - Hold orientations.

- Orient and train mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers:
    - Provide an overview of the program;
    - Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations; and
    - Discuss how to handle a variety of situations.

- Match mentors and mentees:
    - Use established criteria;
    - Arrange an introduction between mentors and mentees; and
    - Ensure mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers understand and agree to the terms and conditions of program participation.

- Bring mentors and mentees together for mentoring sessions that fall within the program parameters:
    - Provide safe locations and circumstances; and
    - Provide resources and materials for activities.

- Provide ongoing support, supervision and monitoring of mentoring relationships:
    - Offer continuing training opportunities for program participants;
    - Communicate regularly with program participants and offer support;
    - Help mentors and mentees define next steps for achieving mentee goals;
    - Bring mentors together to share ideas and support;
    - Establish a process to manage grievances, resolve issues and offer positive feedback;
    - Assist mentors and mentees whose relationship is not working out; and
    - Ensure that appropriate documentation is done on a regular basis.

- Recognize the contribution of all program participants:
    - Sponsor recognition events;
    - Make the community aware of the contributions made by mentors, mentees, supporters and funders;
    - Actively solicit feedback from mentors and mentees regarding their experiences; and
    - Use information to refine program and retain mentors.

- Help mentors and mentees reach closure:
    - Conduct private, confidential interviews with mentors and mentees; and
    - Ensure mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers understand program policy regarding their meeting outside the program.
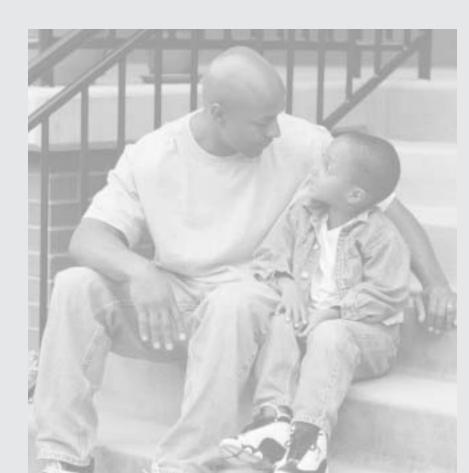
Program Evaluation

Ensure program quality and effectiveness:

- Develop a plan to measure program process:
    - Select indicators of program implementation viability and volunteer fidelity, such as, training hours, meeting frequency and relationship duration; and
    - Develop a system for collecting and managing specified data.

- Develop a plan to measure expected outcomes:
    - Specify expected outcomes;
    - Select appropriate instruments to measure outcomes, such as, questionnaires, surveys and interviews; and
    - Select and implement an evaluation design.

- Create a process to reflect on and disseminate evaluation findings:
    - Refine the program design and operations based on the findings; and
    - Develop and deliver reports to program constituents, funders and the media (at minimum yearly; optimally, each quarter).

For additional details about the research that underpins these guidelines and to learn more about the approaches to executing them, visit Mentoring.org.

A Glossary of Terms

Mentoring:

Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee.

Types of Mentoring:

Responsible mentoring can take many forms: traditional mentoring (one adult to one young person); group mentoring (one adult to up to four young people); team mentoring (several adults working with small groups of young people, in which the adult to youth ratio is not greater than 1:4); peer mentoring (caring youth mentoring other youth); and e-mentoring (mentoring via e-mail and the Internet).

Locations of Mentoring:

Mentoring can take place in a wide array of settings, such as, at a workplace, in a school, at a faith-based organization, at a juvenile corrections facility, in a community setting and in the "virtual community," where e-mentoring takes place.

Duration of Mentoring:

Because relationships and a sense of bonding occur over time, the duration and consistency of a mentoring relationship is very important. At a minimum, mentors and mentees should meet regularly at least four hours per month for at least a year. There are exceptions, such as, school-based mentoring, which coincide with the school year and other types of special mentoring initiatives. In such special circumstances, mentees need to know from the outset how long they can expect the relationship to last so they can adjust their expectations accordingly.

Source: Jean E. Rhodes, Ph.D., *Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002.)

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Steering Committee

Rosemary Townsend
Baylor University Community Partnerships

Sandy Maskell
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

Marilyn W. Smith, Ph.D.
Communities In Schools, Inc.

Susan K. Patrick
The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership

Dave Van Patten
Dare Mighty Things, Inc.

Mary McCarthy
Everybody Wins! USA

Lynda Downes
The Greater Philadelphia Church Mentoring Network

The Greater Philadelphia Mentoring Partnership at United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Deborah Knight-Kerr
Johns Hopkins Hospital Youth Mentoring

Liza Bray
Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.

Susan G. Weinberger, Ed.D.
Mentor Consulting Group Chair, MENTOR Public Policy Council

DeVone L. Boggan
The Mentoring Center

Kari Davis
The Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota

Jay Smink, D.Ed.
National Dropout Prevention Center

Ann E. Ensinger
NYC Department of Education

DeEtta Merritt
TeamMates Mentoring Program

Jayme Marshall
United States Department of Justice

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Jean Rhodes, Ph.D.
The University of Massachusetts Boston

Mim Wilkey
Wichita YMCA/Kansas Enrichment Network

Sandi Hackman
YouthFriends

Lead Staff

Tonya T. Wiley
MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership

Advisory Committee

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United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Virginia Mentoring Partnership

Wisconsin Mentoring Coordination Council

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MENTOR is leading the movement to connect America's young people with caring adult mentors.

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership
1600 Duke Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: (703) 224-2200 | FAX: (703) 226-2581
Web site: www.mentoring.org
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