

MENTORING MODELS: TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

Many aspects of the design and planning of different types of mentoring programs are similar. Other aspects are unique to a certain type of mentoring. To help you think through the unique aspects of your program, we asked several mentoring program experts to offer tips. Refer to these tips as you plan and design your program.

Traditional (One-to-One) Mentoring:

- **Remember that your overarching goal with traditional mentoring is to achieve a close bond between a young person and an adult.** Thus, socialization and friendship are your primary objectives.
- **Set aside a certain amount of your budget for unexpected materials and activities.** As your program gets under way, you can observe the types of activities your mentoring pairs enjoy most (painting, for example) and use the set-aside funds to buy appropriate materials.
- **Consider the young person's needs and screen mentees, as well as mentors.** Sometimes, the tendency is to put the most challenging youngsters into a traditional one-to-one mentoring program. However, some of those young people can't handle an intense relationship with an adult and simply are not ready for traditional mentoring.
- **Ensure that your mentor screening is complete, rigorous, intense and documented.** And make sure all potential mentors understand, at the outset, that they will undergo intensive screening.
- **Arrange for mandatory mentor training six to eight weeks into the mentoring relationship.** And plan to hold regular meetings with mentors; offer additional, more in-depth training about youth development issues; and guide mentors to other resources, such as Mentoring.org.
- **Clearly define and reinforce ground rules.** Because one-to-one relationships are intense, you need to ensure that all participants, including mentors, mentees and parents, understand boundaries in terms of what is allowed and what is not, regarding such things as spending extra time together or giving gifts.
- **Provide ongoing supervision of the match.** Supplementing existing screening of mentors serves as an additional mechanism to mitigate risk in your program. Processes for ongoing monitoring and supervision enhance oversight of mentors and mentees.

Group Mentoring:

- **Work with the school (or youth-serving agency where the mentoring takes place) to establish your program goals.** With group mentoring, the goals are often socialization, academic support, building self-esteem, goal setting and bonding with peers.
- **Involve only participants who can benefit from this type of mentoring.** Recruit mentors who can handle the dynamics of working with groups of young people and young people who can benefit from a group setting.
- **Take special care in designing a termination policy.** With group mentoring, if a mentor or young person decides to leave the relationship, that decision will affect everyone else in the group.
- **Offer additional mentor training to help adults understand group dynamics.** Examples of training topics include team building.
- **Have patience in achieving goals.** With group mentoring, it takes time for all members of the group to get to know one another and gain a level of trust. A group will move more slowly, so goals will take more time to achieve.

Team Mentoring:

- **Help participants understand how to work in teams with diverse personalities and styles.** One of the main goals of team mentoring is teaching young people how to work together to achieve goals.
- **Consider setting a wide range of goals,** including building self-esteem and confidence and helping young people understand their commitment to community, learn to set and achieve goals and develop positive peer relationships.
- **Make sure the mentors on a team are as diverse in background as the young people they are mentoring.** With diversity, the chances are greater that young people can find mentors they can relate to.

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring:

- **Work with teachers to develop or adapt training for peer mentors.** The way you train young people to be mentors—as well as what topics you cover—will differ from the way you train adults. Teachers can help you design effective training that takes into account how young people interact with one another and what peer mentors can do to keep the mentoring relationship on track.
- **Ask school district personnel to help you develop a curriculum and activities for your peer-to-peer mentoring effort.** Assess what support participants really need and provide it.
- **Provide structure so that peer mentoring pairs are not tempted to lose focus.** Adolescents are more compliant than adults in attending trainings and in taking part and cooperating, so take advantage of every opportunity to provide supervision and training.

- **Make sure you have a diverse group of mentees and mentors according to risk status.** You need to have a balance of kids who are easy to deal with and those who are difficult to deal with. You don't want negative behaviors to take over.
- **Get parents' consent to take part in the program.** Make sure the mentee's parents consent to let their child be mentored by a peer. And get the parents of the peer mentor to consent to let their son or daughter mentor another youngster.
- **Try to recruit freshmen or sophomores as mentors.** While you don't want to turn down a good mentor of any high school grade, by concentrating on recruiting younger high schoolers, you can help encourage long-term relationships.

E-mentoring:

- **Be realistic about what you can achieve.** Because there is no face-to-face component to e-mentoring, many relationships do not evolve into the intense relationships characteristic of one-to-one mentoring. Consequently, set goals that seem achievable, such as making sure e-mentoring pairs connect on a regular basis to share ideas, talk about topics of importance to the mentees and seek guidance.
- **Protect participants' confidentiality and privacy.** Use tools such as *Mentors Online: The E-mentoring Tool Kit* to provide a safe, secure e-mentoring environment.
- **Make sure your e-mentoring program is all technology based.** Automate everything from the application to the matching process. Develop a database that works with your e-mentoring software.
- **Make sure you have resources, initially and later on, for Web and technology development.** You will need a lot of program oversight, human resources and time to make your e-mentoring program work.
- **Establish a policy for how often mentors and mentees connect with each other via e-mail.** To build a strong bond, mentor pairs should e-mail each other once a week.
- **Consider serving middle or high school students.** E-mentoring works better with older kids because they can concentrate better and are more apt to keep a relationship going.
- **Offer structured activities that encourage mentees to open up and write more.** Because most e-mentors and e-mentees meet through e-mail, they may find it hard to open up, especially when writing is not a young person's strong suit.
- **Recruit mentors who are technologically savvy and like to work with computers.** Such people will be more likely to go the distance.