



Group Matching Policy/Procedure

Best Practice Resources - Developing a Match

This sample Matching Policy was compiled by staff at Oregon Mentors using our knowledge and examples from the field. It can be modified to fit the context of your specific mentoring program. Your matching policy should be detailed in writing in your employee handbook, reviewed during an orientation, and where appropriate, modeled for new staff through an on-the-job training process.

Making a Match

Research Informed Practice:

Evidence-based research in the field of mentoring suggests that youth outcomes are strengthened when program goals align closely with the background and experience of potential volunteers, and when programs pair youth and adults with shared or similar interests.¹

Agency Statement:

(Insert name of agency) has adopted a policy and process for matching volunteer mentor and youth participants. Mentor coordinators or other staff making matching decisions will use the following procedure when placing volunteers in a group mentoring context.

(Insert explanation of program's goal and rationale for order of match criteria). E.g. Given that *(Insert name of Mentoring Program)* supports youth in foster care to help them attain higher education, our matching strategy involves pairing youth with adults who have achieved higher education and who share similar experiences or interests with our youth participants. Criteria that a coordinator should consider during the matching process are listed below and ranked in order of application.

- Common interests (Including Academic Interests/focus)
- Shared/similar experiences
- Personality compatibility
- Geographic proximity
- Development stage of the youth

Group Matching Strategy

When developing a new mentoring group the volunteer coordinator will need to consider many layers of relationship dynamics which may influence the group's interactions and ultimate effectiveness. When selecting participants for a given group the volunteer coordinator will consider:

Mentor to Mentor: Two adult mentors should be matched to every one group of 5-10 youth participants. The ratio of 1 adult to every 4 youth is a best practice standard in the field of mentoring and will be held as the ideal youth to adult ratio for this program. Mentors should be matched to groups based on complimentary styles and experience. For example, an experienced mentor should be matched with a less experienced mentor. Similarly, a high-energy mentor should be paired with a less

talkative or more introspective mentor. There will always be a minimum of 2 adult mentors per group.

Peer to Peer: In general youth should be placed in groups with other youth of the same or similar age and development range. Personality styles should also be considered when establishing groups. Youth who have a proclivity to act out with certain peers/friends should be split up to avoid deviancy training. Ideally, a positive, self-identified youth leader should be placed in every group. Groups should also be established based on shared goals and similarities of participants. For example, groups might be established around specific goals like career development, academics, outdoor recreation, problem solving, leadership development etc. Youth participants can select the group most relevant to them and their learning goals. While it's sometimes easier for youth and adults to develop rapport with others with whom they share similarities, it's also important to remember that exposure to diverse personalities and experiences is an important ingredient for building cultural competency, tolerance and individual growth.

Mentors to Groups: Mentors with more experience and comfort in group facilitation should be utilized in new and potentially challenging groups. New mentors should build experience working with young people who are more comfortable and experienced with group facilitation and less likely to act out. In some cases, a junior mentor may be assigned to a group that has 2 older co-mentors. A junior mentor is typically a youth seeking leadership experience who is several years older than the youth participants.

¹DuBois, D. et all. "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence." Psychological Science in the Public Interest. (2011).